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The new things of God

The New Things of God



Sermons

By
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*To the
dear memory of
My Mother*

“ Our modern world looks as if it were getting ready for a new conception of Christ. There is gathering from all points of the compass of serious religious thought a volume of insight and appreciation of Him that must finally overwhelm the public mind with the sense of His absoluteness for humanity. . . . Everywhere the vision is opening to the reality of His presence in the world. The old Christ conception is becoming new in the current thoughts, insights and appreciations of the time. There is a gathering discernment towards this great centre. . . . The worth of the individual, the reality of social union, the sanctity of home, the infinite meaning of love, the eternal validity of our ideas of righteousness, freedom, and God, all the ultimate realities of our human world, are the creation of Christ.”

GEORGE A. GORDON, “ *The Christ of To-day*,” pp. 30, 31.

PREFACE

THESE sermons are offered to the public not as representing a new theology or a new interpretation of the Gospel of Christ. They reveal the character of the regular preaching in a quiet city church of the Congregational order as it is heard from Sabbath to Sabbath as presented by one in whom it is the expression of a settled faith in Jesus Christ tested by some experience and applied to the needs of to-day, and as it finds welcome reception by a loving, faithful, God-fearing congregation.

Its newness lies in the fact, not only that we are living in an age of new thought, but that growing experience is ever leading Christians to new views of God and His love which are invariably accompanied by something of newness in the understanding of God's Word. In this way we are getting our new conception of Christ.

As the sermons have not been unattended with evidence of blessing to some who heard them, it is my earnest hope that there may be blessing in them also for some who may read.

As I believe that the preaching of the Gospel is God's appointed way of bringing in His kingdom and of saving the world, I have abiding confidence and grateful joy in my calling. I am glad to try to show, so far at least, what is the Gospel that to-day is preached in our churches and to cherish the hope that it may be a message from God to some who would like to know it but never go to hear it.

HENRY A. STIMSON.

*Manhattan Congregational Church,
New York, Sept. 1st, 1908.*

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I

THE NEW THINGS OF GOD

“And He that sitteth on the throne said: ‘Behold I make all things new.’”—*Rev. 21: 5.*

WE are indebted to Dr. George Matheson, the late distinguished blind preacher of Glasgow, for the saying that the difference between making new things, and making things new, is that one is of the head and the other of the heart.

We flatter ourselves that we can make things new. Our friend has broken his leg and we watch him come out in his convalescence. The doctor has assured him that his leg is as good as new; but we notice that he carries a cane and walks gingerly. We send our broken parlour chair to the cabinet-maker, and he returns it with the assurance that it is stronger than it was before; but we are nervous when our stout visitor turns to sit in it. We bear unconscious testimony to the insufficiency of our work when we speak of the recreation of the summer. Why do we not say re-creation? It is because we know that the heavy work of the year has left its mark, and that the wearied nerves will never again be exactly what they were before

the strain. We are glad if we can give them recreation, for we know too well that as the years go by nature's forces in us cannot be re-created

But when we come to God's work, how different it all is! Here there is no distinction between the head and the heart. God's work is perfect, and when He makes old things new, the new powers, and the new joys, and the new life will indeed be better than the old. We turn to this vision of the glories of the last day, given to the Beloved Disciple in his solitary exile, and we are able in some degree, to catch with him the meaning of the wonderful sentence, "And He that sitteth on the throne said, 'Behold I make all things new.'" That is well worthy of being the crowning characteristic of the Divine work, the sufficient glory of God Himself in the day of His recognized triumph. Let us give attention then for a little to this thought,—God's joy in making things new.

God's great work is in the realm of the soul. Creation itself prepared for the Redemption. The earth is the arena in which the tragedy of human sin unfolded and in which, in the fullness of time, God's provision to rescue man from sin and to reveal Himself in the glory of that finished work, was to be accomplished. The work

has a scope that we can feel, but it is hard for us to grasp it in its details. We know something of the degradation of the sin, of the hopelessness of the destruction which it works in the human heart, and of the apparent impossibility of making the old new.

Some can remember their own first experience of serious transgression with its startling revelation, its sudden and awful shock, its strange feeling of loneliness, the complete isolation in which we felt ourselves cut off from all old associations, even from the friends nearest and dearest, who had held us in their hearts up to that sad hour. How can we ever be the same again? How can we ever put ourselves back into the old relations or hope ever again to be loved as we once were? It is true that nobody knows, and the first impulse is to trust in the protection of a profound secret; but alas! we know that the clamouring voice in one's heart seems to sound not only in the circle of one's friends, but also in the universe, as it sounds indeed before the bar of God. We cry with the prodigal: "I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son." And with the Psalmist, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight." But we cannot cry with him, "Purge me with hyssop

and I shall be clean. Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." That is beyond our utmost imagination.

It is true that years may have passed since that sad day. We have got used to ourselves and the strange situation. Our sensibilities are dulled. We have adjusted ourselves to the new conditions. We have lowered our hopes to meet the dullness of our feeling. Sin has lost much of its vividness and, therefore, of its guilt. We have come to be ordinary men and women, living the common life and putting God and the judgment far off. We have discovered that, after all, nobody does know, and what is not known may well be forgotten. We put out of our minds all that we can of disagreeable memory; and we have successfully adopted the cheer that comes with daily activity and indifference to the consequences of the past. We are not making things new, but we are adjusting ourselves to the old,—planing it down to the level of the commonplace, where its pangs disappear, even though its pleasures must necessarily be discredited.

It is to men in this condition that God comes with His work of Redemption. Into this world of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ came with the proclamation of a Divine Love which at once challenged the sinner to recall his past in all its

vividness, and to face the realities of his personal condition in all their truth,—to lay his heart bare before God, if not before men, and in the full light of that divine inspection and with all the sting of an awakened conscience to confess his sins and to seek the forgiveness which is so freely offered and so fully bestowed. Arising from his penitential knees, he is startled with the sense of a new life springing up in the very depths of his soul, a new joy, a new hope, and a new courage, the amazing surprise of new possibilities. The gradual comprehension of the new fact that he is a new man in Christ Jesus comes upon him and he turns humbly and timidly to his old life, prepared for the growing testimony to the amazing truth that God has indeed created a new heart within him and given him a new spirit, that the old man in him is dead and all things have become new. He who was, if not an enemy, at least a stranger to God, has become a child in his Father's house, an heir of the promise of God in Christ Jesus his Lord. Already permitted to be confident of a strength not his own which will help him to do right, and of a pardon so complete that even in the last day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, there shall be no trace of accusation, and even the memories and the records of the past shall be utterly blotted out.

This is the truth with which, by comparison with our own feeble efforts at renewal, we are so overwhelmed when we come to face God's making old things new. When John Wesley was dying, in a brief moment of returning consciousness he asked: "What was the text that I preached upon last Sunday?" And when one standing beside him repeated, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor that ye through His poverty might become rich," he exclaimed, "Yes; that is it. There is no other." Facing eternity, he gained a new view of the wonder and the perfection of that redemptive work which, finding him a hopeless sinner, had caused him to be born anew into the life of the Son of God. A little before he had said, "When I get to heaven, I want very much to see King David and to talk with him; and most of all, I want to talk with St. Paul." The reason was plain. These were the men who knew as few others the meaning of the renewing work of God in a sinful soul. The one had fallen before terrible temptation and had cried out in the agony of his soul for the forgiveness which lifted him up and put a song upon his lips. The other had been the chief of sinners and had become the triumphant witness to the Crucified and Redeeming Christ.

A modest, gentle, kindly business man once stood before me with shining eyes, telling of the joy that had come to him as the result of his giving himself in middle life to the Lord. "To think," he said, "that for more than twenty years I have tried to do this for myself and could not; and now in one hour the Lord has done it for me."

Horace Bushnell late in life was addressing the students in Yale College. Recalling the day when, long years before a tutor in the college, and a stout unbeliever, he had struggled with himself, and by the grace of God had surrendered and begun the new life, he said, "There is a story laid up in the little bedroom of one of these old dormitories which I pray God the recording angel may know, allowing it never to be lost."

Think of our Lord's joy in His disciples, in the thief on the cross, in the woman at the well. How He yearned over them; how He strove to make the love of God appear to them, and to awaken in their hearts, the glad belief that God can make old things new. And then, at last, the sudden breaking in of the revelation, the vanishing of the doubts and fears, and the dawn of the new life in the faces that were before Him! What is all this but the suggestion of the joy in God's heart when He does His

wonderful work of re-creating sin-sick souls and giving the new life where death had come to reign.

But this is by no means the only indication of the divine joy in making old things new. There is the joy which God has in changing bitterness to blessing. We cannot escape the bitter cup. Sorrow, and failure, and disappointment, and pain are the lot of all. Sooner or later, every one must ask, "Is life worth living?" and in view of the misery of the passing hour, must feel that the hateful answer is forced upon him. The bitter cup has come, and it darkens all our life. We know that it will pass, but its memory is fixed; and its successor in some form is sure to tread upon its heels. No one is exempt; the experience is so universal, and the occurrence is so frequent, that it is not strange that in many a heart all life settles into a dull endurance, and in many a soul there is an abiding conviction that the game is not worth the candle.

In our better hours we try to grasp the meaning of it all. We search for evidence that there is a deep underlying good, and that the immediate outcome is a discipline which leads to strength. We think of men like Prescott, the historian, facing in early manhood oncoming blindness, and giving himself with unflin-

ing courage to the laborious task of the student until he made himself the great historian of his country.

We see young Henry Fawcett, the Cambridge University graduate, suddenly shot in both eyes in the hunting field by a gun in the hands of his father,—the most pitiful of all conceivable accidents—instantly pulling himself together, trying to comfort the crushed heart of his father, and promptly devoting himself to the plan of life which he had been brooding over, and then proceeding to make himself through long years, the eloquent, courageous, successful tribune of the English people,—uplifting the oppressed, delivering crushed and overworked toilers from their hopeless task, pleading in the Parliament in which he had won his position by his dauntless and persistent courage, always the cause of the neglected and the needy; dying at last the most loved man in his native land.

A wonderful sentence comes to us from the Middle Ages. Out of the turmoil, the vice and the bloodshed of the Florence of that day, we hear the voice of the great poet as he says in his immortal words: “In sua voluntade è nostra pace.”—(“In the doing of His will lies our peace.”) How did Dante know that? Has any thought risen higher than that through all the centuries? In the doing of God’s will, the sur-

rendering of ourselves to His appointment, the accepting of the cup because He sent it, is not only the discipline we need, not only the promise of strength and attainment, but, far more than this, the peace, the deep abiding divine peace of the soul.

I have a friend now in the prime of his great success as a preacher struck with oncoming blindness and bravely keeping at his work. Reading a recent writing of his, I find this sentence; commenting on this theme of the sorrows of life as God's appointment, and the blessed peace that is to be found in giving one's self to doing His will, he says: "When we have learned this one lesson we are ready for heaven." Think of the divine joy when the Father can look down upon such a soul transformed already, so far, at least, into His own likeness, His crowning work in all the universe,—a soul rising to respond to His love, and finding its new life in His gift, leaping to devote itself to His service. Is it any wonder that in that last day when such shall come to Him, an unnumbered multitude out of every country and nation and clime, He shall say as the crowning truth of the final triumph: "Behold I make all things new."

But once more,—mark the joy that lies in God's work in making the unproductive fruitful. The Old Testament is full of the promise of fruit-

fulness. The land shall blossom and shall laugh with its fertility. The barns shall be full, and the fields under God's blessing shall whiten with the rich harvest. Our Lord's promise is "Ye shall bear much fruit." This is to be the measure and the reward of a true discipleship.

There is that in every heart which responds to this thought. We can all understand something of the feeling of the farmer leaning on his gate and looking at the waving fields of grain about him. He has planted and cultivated and waited for the harvest, and here it is. He has made the waste land fruitful, and his soul is filled with a supreme satisfaction.

Look at the light in the face of the young father over his new-born child, or the joy of the mother as for the first time she presses her infant to her heart. Life has produced life. Fruitfulness has come, the blessed gift of God. We all know its significance; even the dullest and weariest long for its privileges.

I sat the other day on a platform looking into the bright faces of the graduating class in a great woman's college, and as they passed in long procession before their president to receive their diplomas, I noticed among those blooming girls, one gray-haired, middle-aged woman. What was the meaning of her presence in that

senior class? She was a teacher of many years' experience, but she had long carried the consciousness of her own limitations. She had never had the privilege of a college education and the thought had grown with the years that she could not do her best work, could not really rise to her finest possibilities in consequence. So she had laid down her work, and now in middle life had come to college, had suppressed all thought of comparison or of humiliation, and had entered as a freshman, had slowly pushed herself through the successive years until now, with gentle face, she stood with those young girls to receive the well-earned diploma which gave to her the promise of a new youth, because it brought a sense of new powers.

Here then is the picture of God's work of making old things new. With a new fruitfulness giving to men and women, His children, a new courage, a new cheer, a new understanding of life and of Him, by which their life is exalted, their labour made productive, their sorrows, and trials, and failures, and discipline wrought into every web and woof of His plan for a finished and glorified creation. And all this not as a work of the head only, but as a work of God Himself in the fullness of His being. Heart and head, divine intelligence and divine love combining to do the work

that is so much needed by men, and which, more than all else, reveals the true character of our God.

And now to what does all this lead? What purposes should it awaken in us? What vision of life should dawn upon our thoughtful eyes? Are we not summoned to do our part along the line that God Himself indicates? The Church is a power house. To it is given the dynamic of the spiritual life to use in doing the work of God on earth. Jesus Christ has come to dwell in it and to inspire its life. It is not sufficient for it to go on in old ways. We live in a new day. We have new possibilities. We should reach out for new results. Christianity is something more than a method of saving individuals, infinitely blessed as that work is. It has become the social gospel. No man lives to himself. We can only prove the reality, then, of the new life when we find it going out and laying hold of others. They must share the life of God in us if that life is to be real in our own hearts.

God has a plan for each several life. We are labourers together with God in striving to work that plan out, but the sole condition on which this can be done is that others share in the work. No man can do it single handed. Therefore, the fruitfulness of the

Christian must be sought in the success with which he brings others into sharing the blessings which mean so much to him, that he and they together may press forward in both the knowledge and the service of God. We must together be apostles, that is, men sent, not simply disciples, that is, men taught. We are witnesses not simply to the word which God has spoken, but to the life and the joy and the purpose which are revealed in God Himself. The joy of making all things new becomes the measure and the test of the work of the Church of Jesus Christ and the follower of Jesus Christ alike.

So, as individuals, we have a new summons to mutual affection. It becomes our privilege to bind up broken friendships, to help men to comfort, to be careful to guard against speech that wounds, to be, on our part, watchful and constant to make new joy. Love becomes not merely love to God; but God's very own love glowing in the hearts of men reveals Himself in their love one for another.

So we eagerly seek new openings for a fruitful service. We find this in every improvement in the circumstances of our life,—better conditions even in material things,—these mean better work, more eagerness, more willingness to help, a prompter readiness to make sacrifices if

need be, in order that the work which reveals God may go forward.

A minister friend of mine a while ago asked a gentleman coming to New York from the country what had led him with his family to come to unite with his small church instead of going to one of the great ones; and the prompt and smiling answer came, "Because I thought I could lift a little harder here." Here was a disciple who knew the heart of his Master.

At last all things shall be new. God's work will be done. We shall see as we are seen and know as we are known. The mystery of life will be opened, and the darkness forever will be gone. The other day a minister, a dear friend, told me that as he closed his service, he saw in the aisle at the door a lady member of his church, whom he knew had lately been stricken with blindness. He paused for a moment before leaving the pulpit to observe her. She was slowly making her way through the crowd, guiding herself down the aisle from pew to pew with her outstretched hand. He went at once to meet her, and as he took her hand, he said, "My dear Mrs. ———, I am so sorry for you, but it will all be light up yonder, and then you will know why God has permitted this great affliction." She lifted her shining face towards him and said, "If I am so happy as to get to

heaven at last, I shall let bygones be bygones, and not trouble the Lord for explanations."

"In that day," said our Lord, "ye shall ask Me nothing." Your joy will be full. Then God will indeed, for us, have made all things new, as only God can.

II

THE NEW WINE AND THE OLD BOTTLES

“No man putteth new wine into old wine-skins ; else the new wine will burst the skins, and itself will be spilled, and the skins will perish. But new wine must be put into fresh wine-skins. And no man having drunk old wine desireth new : for he saith: The old is good.”—*Luke 5 : 37-39.*

THE great question in religion to-day is how to adjust the old to the new, for the new is dominant. Everywhere we are under the influence of new thought, so that we have new science and new truth pressing for recognition in religion as in everything else. It is sometimes said that there can be no new truth in religion, but only new forms of truth. It is a statement hardly worthy of discussion, as it resolves itself merely into a matter of terms. Our concern always is with truth apprehended in definite form, so that the form becomes of the essence of the thing itself. Disembodied truth we do not know, if indeed it exists. Therefore, the question of new truth, by which we mean truth freshly put in its relations to the problems and the people of to-day, is just as real a factor in life as is new truth in science, where beyond all question it exists even

though the material out of which it is shaped is as old as nature itself.

When we come to religion, we may be sure that Jesus' way of adjusting the new to the old is the right way, if we can only rightly understand it. The intelligent man of to-day holds himself ready both to heed and to use new truth from whatever source it may come to him. In this respect whatever his temperament may be, he is a radical, and the old drama which long ago spoke of Jesus as "the first true gentleman," if it were dealing with the life about us, could with equal propriety speak of Him as "the first true Radical." What may be called, therefore, the radicalism of Jesus is a matter of as truly modern, as it is of vital, interest. If we can rightly understand it, we have the pattern and the rule for the Christian.

Men are in the habit of interpreting radical to mean going to the roots of things, and to be content with a definition which lies so close to the etymology of the word. But before we accept this as sufficient, it is well to consider how easily derivations may mislead.

A skeptic, for example, is supposed to be a man who looks into things. He peers from under his shaded eyes. But as a matter of fact, the skeptic is quite as often the man who does not see. -He is the man who doubts, and the

man who doubts is very near to being the man who does not know, and who is suffering the perils of his ignorance. He is skeptical because he permits himself to remain more or less contented in this attitude of uncertainty ; and uncertainty means hesitancy ; and prolonged hesitancy loses both opportunity and strength.

As a matter of fact, the radical is very often the man who sees only one side of a question. He is one possessed with some single form of truth, which, because it is new to him, and therefore bulks large in his thought, and possibly in his self-importance, appears to him of prime importance to the world. Or, he grasps one principle, the impulse of which is so masterful in his own life that it seems sufficient to indicate the whole range in which not only his life, but all life, should move. As a consequence, whatever the derivation of the word may indicate, experience shows that in very many relations, the radical man is the erratic and the one-sided man. It should not be so, of course, but human nature being what it is, it is the common experience.

Furthermore, the radical man is generally a man who in proportion to his radicalism is impatient of others. His tendency is to flock by himself. He becomes denunciatory and forgetful of the fact that the best test of truth is its

application to other minds, and that only as we find others accepting that which we hold, do we really gain a true and available hold upon it ourselves.

Jesus' characteristics were all the opposite of this. Beyond all dealers with new truth, He was patient and gently considerate even of His enemies. The truth that was revealed to Him of God had gradually to sink into His mind, and apparently for years to dwell there, adjusting itself to His thought, until only at last after thirty years was He prepared to proclaim it to the world.

When His disciples, in the first rush of their early enthusiasm, threw themselves in a truly radical spirit upon the world, His prompt rebuke was: "Ye know not what spirit ye are of." He stands out in contrast with the great leaders of the Old Testament day. Moses would be the better type of our modern conception of a radical, as he stood before the rock which he was to smite, saying in his impatience: "What shall I do unto this people?" But in his more instructed time, when he was alone with God on the mount, he approached nearer to the type of Jesus, as he prays that the people may be forgiven and spared, and if God cannot do that, he pleads that he be taken as a vicarious sacrifice for them.

The fact is, the word *radical* is not altogether a safe term. Dr. Horace Bushnell long ago said that words have a power of their own, which in many cases is a positive trend. For this reason he deliberately refrained from using certain words, like *liberal*, for example ; which, as he said, carries one whither he would not go, and comes to have a meaning neither true nor gracious. The same is true with *radical*. It ought to be a wholly safe word, indicating thoroughness and the command of patience and strength. As a matter of fact, it does neither. Yet, holding in mind its derivation, we can remember that Jesus did go to the roots of things, that He did take up with new thought, that He did press the issues which were before Him and that He was a Radical therefore in this sense,—that He could do this and still maintain that attitude which makes this safe and wise.

For example, He discarded “old bottles.” The “old bottles” of His day were Judaism, its traditions, its forms, its services, its sacrifices, its all—even its law and its Sabbath. It is hard for us to understand the shock of this. He was by birth and training a Hebrew. His mission was for the time wholly among His own people. He had to reach them by using their shibboleths and starting with them in the

accepted positions of their own thought and life. The symbols which He was to discard were symbols of the best things which then existed in the world. They had been the means of holding the Israelites a separate race, and maintaining among them the worship of the true God, when all the world lay in the darkness and despair of heathenism.

It is always difficult to separate symbols from truth, or in this sense, the bottles from the wine; but whether hard or easy, Jesus did it, and He did it so thoroughly that He aroused the bitter hostility of His neighbours and friends, and in consequence hastened, if He did not make inevitable, His own death. From the standpoint of human history, this might be regarded as an immense loss. In the light of what experience teaches us in similar positions, we say, "How much would have been gained if He could have done differently; if He could only have held to the past more firmly and, at least for the time, been content to put the wine into the old bottles, even at the risk of losing some of it!" Because He did not He lost Israel almost entirely, and from that day to this the Jews have been largely outside of the pale of His Gospel.

But for all that, His method was unquestionably the wise one, and He stands for the Christian

the true Exemplar. We must fear in His name that conservatism which we think strengthens man's hold on the forms of the past. The things to which we have been accustomed become to us almost inevitably the embodiment of the truth, if not essential to it. The customs, the ceremonies, the books, the point of view which mark the circle of our life and the range of our thoughts stand to us as landmarks, the removal of which imperils all that we value. We need the help of His example to learn to keep the bottles distinct from the wine, and to hold ourselves not only patient of change but expectant and ready at any time to pass in review the bottles, with that honest search for breakage or inutility which will lead us at any time, if there is reason, to cast them aside.

Another significant fact in our Lord's dealing with the situation was the confidence that He showed in new bottles. He promptly chose new disciples. They were men wholly untried, and needing to be taught from the very beginning, but He trusted Himself and His Gospel to them, even though in doing so He had to break with the accredited leaders and teachers of His own early life. In the same way, He took up new methods. He not only banished entirely the method of teaching in vogue among His people, but He instituted a new

evangelism by which He went out Himself among the common people and taught in the market-places, on the hillside and on the shore of the sea, wherever hearers could be found and taught freely whoever came, regardless of whether they were properly scholars or not. Indeed, He quite abandoned the distinctions of the schools and showed Himself as ready to teach an outcast woman, or an ignorant heathen, or a Roman soldier, as He was to teach the chief rabbi of the Jews.

In the same way, He promptly organized or prepared the material for the organization of a new Church. The conception of an ancient and historic Church which looms up so large to us and seems to many so vital in the development of Christianity never meant more, or really stood for more, than it did in Israel in His time. The Temple was its embodiment; and the ritual of Israel, in the thought of His people, dated from Moses. It had abundant life, and it knew no competitor, and yet Jesus is seen turning from it and adopting a course and teaching principles which at once discredited, and would inevitably overthrow it. He laid the foundations of the Church of the people, so simple in its form, so unhistorical in its methods, that all it required was two or three gathering together with the desire to worship

God according to the dictates of their own hearts; and to it He gave the assurance that God would reveal Himself and that His Spirit would dwell in them.

In the same way He founded the Christian community, an entirely new conception, made up of people of all kinds, taken at random out of every condition of life and every nationality, as they might happen to come, binding them together and making use of them for the unit of the new social organization to which He was to commit His Gospel and so reveal Himself. There never has been an instance in history where a new teacher so completely cast himself upon the new methods which he introduced or for which he opened the way.

His Church has been trying new bottles ever since, following His example and, as they believe, obedient to His desire and teaching. His disciples, after His death, are to be seen scattering everywhere, organizing churches, and using in that organization whatever gave promise of usefulness that they found in the community, whether Jew or Greek, that lay about them. Paul stands as the very apostle of this new method, adapting himself in his teaching everywhere to his audience, quoting their literature, recognizing their prejudices, availing himself of the machinery of their lives, and proving in

his work the adaptability of the new religion to the immediate needs of all. Indeed, so far did movement in this direction proceed in the first centuries that scholars have found difficulty ever since in their efforts to disentangle what they would regard as the original teaching from Greek forms of thought and Roman influences of organization and development.

In modern times we have seen the Church take up with undiminished enthusiasm the modern method of the Sunday-school, of the Young Men's Christian Association, of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour, and scores of other forms of organization and work according to the immediate need. Everywhere it has held itself ready to use "new bottles," and to commit to them the new wine without hesitancy.

This leads us to observe the entire confidence which Jesus also put in the new wine. We exclaim of all this new thought with which we are so overwhelmed, "How good it is!" What refreshment it brings to life; what eagerness it gives to the scholar in every department of research; for our point of view has changed in regard to almost every department of knowledge. The world has a new science, and a new hygiene, and a new economics, and new methods of business and of

industry, so numerous indeed that they have long since passed beyond enumeration, if not beyond recognition. Religion has come in for its share, and we are crowded with new questions of documents and dates and authorship and methods of interpretation. We have still the old Bible, but it is a new book in the light of a new knowledge.

What is all this to the new thought which opened to the world in the teaching of Jesus Christ and to His own mind when with His growing life He was able to grasp the message which was given to Him, and to understand the length and breadth of its application? He stood in an old and worn-out world. The light of heaven was in His soul. It grew upon Him with His growth. It illumined His thought in all its widening powers. It possessed Him in every part of His being and by so much it isolated Him from the life about Him. But His message was to the world as it was; and we see Him committing Himself to His task without reservation, bringing to bear upon every one He could reach the truth which filled His own thought. No more striking illustration of this can be seen than His conversation with the woman of Samaria. She stood for what is lowest and dullest and most hopeless in human life. He apparently ignored that, and opened

to her at once the vision of God as a Spirit, to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, sweeping away the traditions of centuries,—the crutches upon which feeble men have leaned as they have sought to walk in God's service, and striving to bring even that darkened soul at once to the consciousness of her own powers and possibilities as a child of God.

The method He pursued with her may be taken as characteristic of Him. His confidence in the truth, new as it was in the world, was absolute ; and stands as the abiding lesson for us. The new truth is always for the world's knowing. It has a blessing in it. Whether it comes in the crude religion of young converts, or in the eager enthusiasm of sectaries, there is something in the very newness of the impression which it makes in any heart, which gives it power, and which keeps the world alert and fresh in its interest in the truth.

This is a very old lesson taught by the Lord Himself in every word and act and the whole spirit of His life ; but how often has it needed to be reasserted and how often and how sadly the Church, even in its best days, has forgotten it ! Indeed, we are all tempted to think that we have found the measure of knowledge and of truth in ourselves. We glory in settled convictions, and also in clean-cut statement

of them. We forget that the moment truth comes to be defined it begins to be dormant, and that definitions are valid only for those who form them and the times in which they live.

Paul was never truer both to the spirit and the method of the Master than when he said: "I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on towards the goal, unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Perhaps never was his exhortation more needed than when he said: "Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded; and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you;" if we may interpret this as emphasizing for us the open-mindedness and readiness to receive new light, and confidence in the light when it comes, which was the characteristic of our Lord.

But when all this has been said, there remains the fact that our Lord emphasizes the preciousness of the old wine. He was Himself well taught in the religion of His fathers, and, far beyond the teachers of His day, He recognized the truth that is in Him, and gave Himself to bringing that truth in its purest and most precious form to the apprehension of men. The Old

Testament, the Bible of His fathers, has never been more precious or more truly the means of the message of God to the world than it has been since He took it up and brought its hidden mysteries to light through His Gospel.

The world, it is true, is full of new truth to-day, but the old truth remains, the comfort and the strength of the old saints. How much there is to be thankful for in this! Never was there more reason to appreciate the restfulness of a quiet faith than in this day of upheaval when everywhere the foundations are disturbed and so many are at sea. We may well thank God for those about us who, in the strength of established habits of prayer and worship and walking in the footsteps of Christ, are little disturbed by the excitement or the vagaries of the new world. They have long walked with God. They know Him and they have no least doubt that He knows them; and their abiding hope is not disturbed that in His own good time He will take them unto Himself.

The old wine, indeed, is good; even if we drop the word of our older Version, and do not claim that it is "better." In God's kind Providence there is a place and there is need for all; the old and the new, in all their forms, are of use. Let not the one despise or rebuke the other, but in the spirit of the Master Himself let us learn with

patience to follow the light as God may give it to us, and so dwelling together in love, prove that love is of God, and that where men will to do His will, they shall know of the doctrine.

III

THE SAVING FAITH.

“And he said: ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’”—*Acts 16 : 30-31.*

THE Bible is full of declarations of the power of faith to save men. The Old Testament record is gathered up in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews where the series of patriarchs and prophets from Enoch and Noah on through the long story are described as living by faith, and being what they were because of their faith.

The New Testament charges faith with a new light and power. Jesus says: “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed ye shall say unto this mountain ‘Remove hence to yonder place,’ and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” His parting benediction to the woman of the city, a sinner, was “Go in peace; thy faith hath saved thee.”

Reginald Campbell in expounding the “New Theology” says, “No man was ever saved by believing anything.” This is either a play upon

words, like saying "No man was ever saved by a rope"; or it is a strange perversion of the truth. Salvation is a matter of religion, and Mr. Campbell again says: "Religion is the response of the soul to the universe." This is like saying that filial piety is the response of the babe to its mother's milk, as the mother produced both the babe and the milk. God creates both the soul and the universe, and there is a sense of dependence and craving which may be regarded as opening the way for "the response of the soul to the universe." But there is no religion in this, and no possible interpretation of what we mean by being saved.

The definition of Clement of Alexandria is far better. "Religion," he says, "is the response of the soul to truth." But while this is better, it still is not adequate. Religion, in fact, is the response of the soul to God. We are God's children and it is unnatural not to respond to Him,—to think His thoughts, to enjoy His love, to obey His will. Therefore, religion, which must be looked upon as the natural property or life, of the soul that is made in the image of God, is that which permits and bears testimony to the steady flow of the life of God in the soul of man, and the growth of man in the knowledge of God, and in the accomplishment of the purpose of God in his creation and sonship.

What the Bible means by faith is just this. It is the voluntary, loving, steadfast response of the soul to God ; and the Christian faith is that faith in God as made known to us through Jesus Christ His Son. When, therefore, to-day as Christians we have any concern with the matter of the saving faith, our thought must be directed to the teaching of Jesus Christ, and to that kind of faith which originates in Him.

In the story from which the text is taken, we have to deal with the jailor of Philippi, probably a Roman soldier and certainly an idolater, a man who does not know God. He is suddenly brought to the condition in which he sees his need. The heart which is made for God, and cannot rest apart from God, gains a sudden conception both of itself and of its deepest want. With that awakening consciousness, the jailor moved in ways that he little understands, but recognizing, either in the events which are transpiring about him or in the character of the men with whom he is dealing, something beyond his apprehension and yet something that strangely appeals to him, addresses them in the familiar words of the text : "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul's answer is : "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." What that means to him is simple and

indisputable. It means that he give up his heathenism as a religion, that he abandon his idols if he have them, that he turn from the life which that heathenism permitted or involved, and that he accept the God of the Christian to whom he addressed himself for guidance and for help. The God to whose service he is thus summoned is a reality, personal and most powerful. It means a complete change in the man within and in his life without. In this sense the text stands as a declaration of an abiding truth applicable to all who may ask the same question.

That it does not mean what it is often interpreted as meaning is clear when one considers the circumstances under which it was uttered. Believing in order to be saved is by no means a mere intellectual process by which a man receiving light where he was before in darkness, or being moved to views which before to him were vague or unknown, makes an inward resolve that henceforth he will accept that truth or hold those views.

Manifestly in relation to certain forms of truth, there is no choice for any man to whom they may be presented. The truths of mathematics, for example, or the demonstrations of physical science. A man may wonder at them, may find it difficult to understand or to explain

them ; but in proportion as they come within the range of his mental apprehension, he must accept them ; and there is no virtue in that necessity. It is said to him, "You see," or "You hear." And when it is clear that he does see, and does hear, there is no excuse for his not accepting, and there is no virtue if he does accept them. Possibly a "Brother Jasper" may deny the demonstrated fact ; then the world laughs. But on the contrary, in regard to God and the obligations which grow out of our relation to Him, there is always freedom to accept or to reject. And whatever we know or come to possess of moral character lies in the extent to which we do accept or reject. There is a personal responsibility which no man can deny or escape.

Some men rejoice in the certainty of mathematics and the demonstrations of science, and draw comparisons unfavourable to religion ; but as a matter of fact, a much higher value attaches to faith, looked upon as an act of believing which rests upon the choice of the believer, for it involves a comprehension of truth as seen in its moral relations, of ourselves as departing from that truth, and of the duty of changing our entire attitude towards it.

We learn that God has a purpose with us. There is an idea presented of what God wants

of us. He made us for Himself and He made us so that we are required to use all our faculties in working out His plan in us and with us in His universe. As we come to know what that plan of God is through the promptings of our own hearts or through the presentation to us of the truth of God, we are summoned to accept it. We must make a choice, and that making of the choice is the characteristic act by which we prove our sonship with God, who is Himself the one perfect moral Being; for we recognize at once that that choice which we are called to make carries with it the determination of our moral character.

In a recent discussion Professor Royce of Cambridge, asks, "What is it that constitutes the present moment as distinct from the past and the future?" And he answers, "The past and the future can be stated in terms of time and space, but not so the present. In the last analysis the present is the point in existence between the past and the future where it is possible for us to exercise the power of choice." We look back upon the past that is gone, and upon the future which is not yet attained; on the vantage ground of that poised moment between the past and the future which we call the present, we make whatever of decision life seems to require of us. That is, in fact, all we know of

the meaning of the conception of the present when we try to present it to our minds. In this present moment we are called to choose God. It is the perpetual choice for every recurring present moment so long as we live, being what we are, the children of God. As a matter of fact, we do so choose or so reject God ; and in so choosing Him or rejecting Him, we are perpetually shaping our life in a course which becomes more and more definite as we pass on into the ever oncoming future. That summons, therefore, of the present moment to choose God is simply the summons to have faith. It means to give to God the hours that are coming, which belong to Him and which He has entrusted to us that we may use them in His service, for this is the true interpretation of life.

The sinner, then, is the man who chooses wrong. He turns his life away from God's purpose, and he repeats that choice more or less consciously as it presents itself to him in successive moments of his existence. He creates for himself quickly the habit of deciding that choice adversely. There is the abiding difference between the saint and the sinner, between him who serves God and him who serves Him not, between the regenerate and the unregenerate man, between the good and the bad, between heaven and hell. That difference

turns all upon what we know as faith, which is the predominant choice of God.

We sometimes think of this distinction which rests upon the choice of God and which is denoted by the word faith, as being wholly artificial, but it is perfectly intelligible to the man on the street. Bernard Shaw says the men and women about us "are helpless of better things because they have no will to be better." That is, it is not a question of intelligence at all; it is a question of this recurring choice, which is with them the perpetually wrong choice because they have no purpose or desire to make it a different one. Maeterlinck¹ says: "There are on all sides people to whom thousands of events occur which seem charged with germs of heroism (that is, of a better life), and nothing heroic appears when the event has passed. Jesus Christ meets on the road a group of little children, a woman of evil life, or the Samaritan at the well, and humanity arises thrice (that is, in each instance), to the height of God."

There is the significant fact, that we all of us are full of promises. We have in us the germs of better things. But the years go by, and they amount to nothing. Doubt proves to be not only weakness but sin, for in doubt one

¹ "La Sagesse," page 25.

refuses to follow his higher nature ; we continue doubters because we find no adequate impulse in us to do differently ; and so we go on in the path which, diverse as it may be in individuals, leads us all away from God and further and further from the possibility of ever attaining the ideal of which we dream. We heed Jesus Christ, we listen to Him, we put ourselves under His guidance, and at once the ideal begins to become the real, and we find God. A new power has awakened within us by which we make the choice which changes our whole being. The interpretation of that choice in its results is the discovery that we now are sons of God. God has come to us, and we have opened our hearts to Him ; the one has answered to the other. This is what the Bible means by the "renewed heart" and the "regenerated soul." It is new in every thought and emotion. It is born again, in that it possesses powers which before seemed not to belong to it. The proof of this lies in the new life which follows. That choice in the present makes life for the future. The harmony at once appears between what is within a man and what is without. The soul in this sense does answer to God's universe, for God is everywhere, and hitherto it was only the soul of the sinner that gave Him no place. When

that soul admits Him it comes at once into touch with all else about it in which God dwells. Nature speaks with a new voice. The morning stars begin to sing, and the very earth about us answers to the song of the heavens. Spiritual life is the life of God in the soul of man. It comes through taking Jesus Christ into the heart, for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." To be a Christian is to see the supreme worth of God as Jesus Christ reveals Him. It is taking the attitude of Jesus towards God, finding joy in God, and in loving, trustworthy obedience to Him, promptly, in every new hour of decision, putting God first and everything else second.

That was the experience of the jailor when in the consciousness of that new choice in his heart, he abandoned his heathenism and cast aside his old life as a garment, and offered himself to be baptized. For with this attitude towards God, there is also the taking, on the part of the believer, of Jesus' attitude towards men. We find him bringing his whole household with him. This compelling sense of the need of having those about us share our new life, and of helping them as we have been helped, to the new choice, is what constitutes a sense of brotherhood such as can be created in

no other way. The talk of human brotherhood is idle vapouring, in the face of the passions and temptations and selfishness of the common life. In exceptional cases it is true that it does appear with startling power, because every one, in spite of himself, has something of divinity in him, even though in many relations he may not have done all in his power to declare it, and in the bitterness of his heart, may even deny its existence. But for all that, it is a permanent possibility in the hearts of men, and a permanent factor in the advance of human society, only so far as the revelation of God in Jesus Christ leads men to take His attitude towards their fellow men ; and Jesus becomes at once the pattern and the abiding inspiration to a brotherhood which endures and satisfies, because it brings men nearer to God as an actual experience, and shows them what the real meaning of that love of God is which works out in love one for another.

So, this faith by which we find salvation means also taking Jesus' attitude towards one's self. It means the recognition on the part of the sinner that he is a man "called of God," that God looks upon him as a father does upon a son, loving him with an individual love, and giving to him not only His interest, but setting His heart upon him, and having for him a defi-

nite and particular plan of life which is full of blessing. Then the penitent believer discovers that he has found his life in losing it, that is, he has found the love of God for which he was made, deep in his own soul, to be something quite distinct from the life which he was living in the world about him. His eyes are opened to see beyond the veil which shuts out that life from this. He sees in this life now the beginning of that larger life in which when the things of this life have passed away and perished, the things that endure will come to be his forever. He discovers that he will be kept from sin by oneness with God who has made him for Himself and who so loves him that He has given His Son to die for him.

Thus the answer to the question "What must I do to be saved?" means to do that thing which will put away from us consciously and deliberately whatever has shut us out from God, and, seeing that Jesus Christ has brought to us a knowledge of God otherwise unattainable, to trust and follow Him. The love of God for us is made manifest in Jesus as it could be in no one else. We have opened our hearts to it through Him, and accepting His guidance and placing our hand in His, we begin to follow Him in that path which we now are assured will lead us into fullness of life because it will

lead us into fullness of fellowship with God, and into fullness of fellowship with our fellow men, and into the fullness of all that is best in ourselves.

IV

THE LIFE THAT IS LIFE INDEED

“Charge them that are rich . . . that they lay hold of the life which is life indeed.”—*1 Tim. 6: 17-19.*

THE Revised Version gives a new emphasis to a familiar text. For “eternal life,” we have “the life which is life indeed.”

There would seem to have been little need for Paul to exhort the rich of his day to lay hold on life. He was writing to Timothy, his representative in the Asiatic cities. They were the centre of a great commercial and highly luxurious civilization. Professor Dill's recent “History of Rome in the Time of Nero” gives a graphic picture both of the greatness of the wealth and luxury of the day, and of its wide diffusion. The life of the time was so extravagantly sensuous as to have become a byword; so that we have no difficulty as we consider the luxurious life in our great modern capitals in understanding what was the condition of things socially in the first century in the chief centres of the Roman Empire, and largely also

throughout the adjacent territory. It extended indeed to the distant provinces. Paul was perfectly familiar with it; and now in his farewell words to the chosen disciple who is to take up and carry on his work, we can hardly conceive of his feeling the necessity of urging Timothy to exhort the rich to make the most of life in the terms in which they understood it.

Years ago when our own West was new and the struggle for money was intense because it was scarce and hard to come at, as measured by the fact that the legal rate of interest was one per cent. a month, Mr. Beecher, then in the prime of his powers, went through the West delivering a lecture on "Money," in which he exhorted young men to possess themselves of it. It seemed to those of us who lived in the West quite a work of supererogation. True as was all that he said, and keenly interesting as was his way of saying it, it did seem as if there were other messages of which the young men of the West at that time had more serious need. But we find the Apostle closing his epistle with this injunction, that, though they are rich in this present world, among other things, they lay hold on "the life which is life indeed."

There must have been some urgent meaning

in the message for the men of that day ; and doubtless it is there also for us.

There are two words in the New Testament which stand for life. The first "Bios " indicates life in its particular forms ; for example, life as happy, or long, or satisfying ; as when Paul in this same letter speaks of a "quiet and peaceable life," and when Luke in his Gospel describes the thorns in the parable as indicating the "riches and the pleasures of life," or, again, speaks of the Prodigal as "having squandered all his living."

The other word "Zoè," means something very different. It is the frequent word in John, writing of Jesus. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "I am the Bread of Life." "The Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Paul uses it in many instances, when he speaks of "everlasting life," or "the life which is hid with Christ in God." This is evidently something very different ; and this is the life that he indicates in our text, as that which he would have the rich urged that they do not fail to get.

To help us to understand what this life is, we will follow the guide of men of widely different thought who have given attention to it.

From Professor Reuss of Strassburg, for ex-

ample, we have the suggestion that it means "a life that deserves the name because the perspective of death does not cast a shadow over it."

Here is indeed a marked difference between the two kinds of life. The life of the "Bios" in whatever form it presents itself, whether happy or disturbed, whether satisfying or incomplete, is perpetually overshadowed by death. We are all aware that a great change is coming; and the great change will put an end to existing conditions. A life that is independent of death, above and beyond it, must be something different. Look at Death either in the ghastly form of the horrid skeleton of Italian art, or as the gentle solemn figure of the great English painter, Watts; the result is the same. It sweeps all "Bios" away. The palace of the king and the hovel of the poor, with impartial foot it enters and carries everywhere desolation and emptiness. The rich millionaire whose familiar figure was for more than half a century present upon our streets, and whose death the other day was the occasion of estimating the probable magnitude of the fortune which he has left, has inevitably left that fortune and passed out of the busy activities of the life which had absorbed and apparently satisfied him for so long a time, as completely as the little child who was crushed

beneath a heavy vehicle on the crowded street. The beautiful palace on Fifth Avenue of the great promoter, with its marbles and its priceless pictures and the solitary woman sitting there in her beauty and gorgeous apparel, is as completely desolate because its owner will no more return, as is the room in the crowded tenement from which the father has just gone forth to his death under the falling derrick.

As related to this aspect of life, death is always the same, and has always been the same. Prof. Rhys Davids speaks of the "sorrow of being at the mercy of forces which whirl one relentlessly upon the wheel of life" as at the heart of all the great pre-Christian religions. It is testimony to the fact that men always and everywhere have felt themselves under the shadow of death, and even now we find them continually yearning to escape by escaping from life itself.

It is something very different that Paul presents in his charge to Timothy. It is a life that has no such shadow, and whatever its nature, is greatly to be coveted, and must be worthy of any effort or sacrifice. For this reason alone it demands an attention which justifies its being pressed even upon those who, though they are wealthy, and think that they possess all things desirable, are utterly without it.

We turn in another direction, to the late Bishop Westcott; and we find this sentence: "We believe and we strive to spread the belief that life is as the man is, that if the man is sordid, selfish, narrow, mean, his life, however affluent, will reflect his character."

Here we have still the "Bios"—the life about us in its superficial relations, but as presenting even in those relations the picture of a deeper and a truer life, the life which is a counterpart of the man himself and which will endure as he endures. A man's house reflects his culture. It indeed reflects himself so completely that to the observant eye it tells his history. Passing from room to room or from floor to floor, one sees even in the furniture and the pictures the story of his own growth and the refining of his taste, no less than the improvement in his circumstances.

So, a man's ways are always himself. We say: "I did not mean to be rude;" or, "I did not intend to be mean;" but you were, all the same; therefore, you are. The words that you spoke or the acts that you did were yourself. You did them because you were capable of doing them, and therefore disagreeable as they often are to observe, and melancholy as is the revelation that they make of ourselves, they must be accepted as being of ourselves, for we

have only done that which we were capable of doing, and which, under the circumstances, we did.

This is so widely true that thoughtful men everywhere recognize it. A recent French writer, Bersot, speaking of Arcachon and its pleasures, after a long description, says: "As for happiness, why, there as everywhere else you must yourself bring it with you." Scherer, commenting on the statement, says the same truth applies even to institutions and the forms of civil society. They depend upon what men bring with them. Our Anglo-Saxon history abounds in evidence to the same effect. The respect for law, the dignity of the person, the standards of conduct and of morals, even the conventions of life and the methods of doing business, all are witness to the character which we regard as typical of the Anglo-Saxon everywhere. We can adopt Westcott's phrase, therefore, and believe that "life is as the man is," and that it is worth while to live so as to preserve and to express in one's self what is best. In doing this, we come at Paul's conception of the life which is "life indeed." It is the perpetuation of what is best in man as a child of God, a man living with a purpose of being true to his inheritance, and of working out in himself that representation of God which is worthy of his divine parentage.

Some one wrote to Mr. Gladstone towards the close of his long life: "You have so lived and wrought that you have kept the soul alive in England." It was great praise. It meant that with all the glamour of life amid which he lived,—its titles, its pleasures, its opportunities of wielding great power and winning great honours, he had had before his mind "the life that is life indeed," and had so lived as to make England recognize its reality, and to help the people of England attain to something of its possession. Mr. Gladstone was so far obedient to the injunction of the Apostle, and his splendid career is for us a translation of the exhortation of the Apostle into the most compelling terms of modern life.

Turning to still another of the thinkers of our day who have recently departed, we find another statement in the words of Matthew Arnold, which widens our thought. He says: "The kingdom of God, the grand object of Jesus Christ, the grand object of Christianity, is mankind raised as a whole into harmony with the true and abiding law of man's being, living as we were meant to live."

Here is the picture of a refined and uplifted society in which all the members recognize that they belong as a whole not only to one another but to God, and that God has a purpose for

them individually and collectively, and that He has written that purpose as an abiding law which governs man's being, if he will but recognize it and make use of it. There is a plan and there is a law, and we are meant to live according to the one and by the help of the other. This is exactly Paul's conception which he put into the word "Zoè" and which he describes as "the life that is life indeed." He speaks of it in his letter to the Romans as "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." It indicates a life which is both present and eternal. It realizes itself in man as he is; and, indifferent to death, it reaches into the yet unrevealed life which lies beyond; and, here and there alike, it reveals God's purpose and God's plan of human existence. It makes this life not a probation merely, in anticipation of, nor a portal simply to furnish entrance to, the life beyond, but it makes it a true part of that life. It gives dignity to every moment of earthly existence. It crowds upon us the supreme significance of every choice which we are called to make as having its effect upon our character, and so having its effect with relation to the life that is everlasting.

The supreme question becomes at once, "How can I live this life?" When we ask that question we find in our hearts that we not only are not living that life as it should be lived, but

in the midst of the pressure of temptation without, and the confusion of temptation within, we do not sufficiently care to live that life, or to make any effort to do so. Indeed, if we will but be honest with ourselves, we find that we are in rebellion against that life and its obligations. We speak of ourselves as sinners, but we discover that sin is largely lawlessness, according to the Old Testament tongue, that is, resistance to this higher law of our being which we not only do not obey, but which we do not care even to regard.

We need at this time at the very beginning of our thought of ourselves in relation to "the life that is life indeed" an outside help,—help from God Himself to overcome the lawlessness which has won such a firm hold upon our very nature. It dawns upon us how, not for the rich only, but for us all, there is supreme occasion for the Apostle's injunction. He tells Timothy to exhort the rich not to be arrogant and self-confident, to set their hope not on the things of this world but on God, for only as God comes even to their help, with all their wealth, and with all their power, and with all the fullness of the life which they enjoy and seem to possess, have they any hold whatever on "the life that is life indeed;" and that these things in which they trust and of which they possess themselves are

indeed the very things which most hinder their attaining to that life. We all, like them, each to the measure of his opportunity and under the pressure of the temptations which are peculiar to his own experience, are in the same confusion, and are bound by the same fetters. We all, whether rich or poor, need to come, as Nicodemus did, to Christ, and ask Him the same question: what must we do that we may lay hold on this eternal life? And His answer to the Jewish Rabbi is the answer for us all: "He that believeth hath life, and he that believeth not hath not life." In other words, only as men realize their need and the utter failure of their attempt at finding life in the fullness of an earthly life whose sufficiency is in the things which they possess, do they turn to God seeking that help without which the inevitable death will come as the final destruction. The things that perish in the using are not life. They but reflect one's self, and we do not want ourselves perpetuated, if that self is to be the present self, with its weaknesses, its passions, its temptations, its guilt, its abiding regret of the things we have done that we ought not to have done, and the things we have left undone that we ought to have done. We know that "the wages of sin is death," and that "eternal life is the gift of God." We want, therefore, God to

give us that gift. He offers to do so, and the exhortation that comes to us to-day is that we lay hold of it, and with grateful hearts accept it through Jesus Christ, who brought to us the knowledge of God and the knowledge of life.

V

THE PARADOX OF LIFE

“He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”—*Matt. 10: 39.*

TO the Christian, life is neither a tragedy nor a farce, for God is in it all. But in many aspects, it is a paradox.

A paradox is a statement which seems contrary to common sense but which nevertheless is true. The old epitaph, “What I spent I have, what I kept I lost, what I gave I kept,” and Jesus’ word, “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,” and again “Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, even that which he hath, shall be taken away” are paradoxes. So also is the text: “He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.”

Life itself is a paradox, for men seem to live, when in fact they are dying, they seem to gain, when in fact they are losing, they seem to win, when in fact they are defeated. For

this reason, as long as men have lived on this globe, life has been interesting, and not easy to understand. Indeed, it is a perpetual challenge even in its simplest forms ; it always presents itself as a mystery and unfolds in forms of paradox.

From the Christian standpoint, there is the paradox of sacrifice. "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me" is our Lord's command. He brought life in its fullness, and at once He talks of its abandonment. The charm of life is an abiding inspiration and always an effective one. Here is a summons to turn aside from what is pleasurable. The obvious scheme of life is that of culture, or self-realization. We call it Hellenism, for the Greek in his best days gives us the type. If you have a talent,—music, art, invention, business, whatever it may be—make the most of it. Realize yourself. Recognize that you have an individuality, which means an endowment. Therefore, improve your distinctive possessions. In so doing you make your best contribution to the world about you while you do the most for yourself. Say to every demand which would turn you aside, "Why should I?" You have both the duty and the privilege of choice. There is a physical "me," a social "me," and a spiritual "me."

These often conflict. The problem always before us is how

“To move upward working out the beast
And let the ape and tiger die.”

This is the question pressing upon us all. Training is necessary for this. Therefore, we seek the training. Discipline is the condition of success. Therefore, we endure discipline. We win self-culture by self-denial. The measure of every act, the test of every value is its relations to the fullness and sufficiency of our own attainments. In other words, from the standpoint of visible life, everything turns on what we may call success, that is, upon the smoothness and the efficiency with which we are able to develop our own especial gifts or possessions.

Now, over against this Jesus says: “Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone,” and He finds here the true law of life in its finest and largest relations. In other words, the obvious is not true. The paradox stands out with compelling power. There is a finer culture, a nobler victory, a higher development to be won than along the lines which present themselves so obviously.

The law of this higher life is that we are to win by losing. We are to do without if we would truly possess. We can only really find

ourselves by sacrificing ourselves and making self entirely second in the motives by which we are governed. The fine saying of the Japanese Samurai, "To be defeated, therefore to conquer," begins to be intelligible. History seems to declare its absurdity. Victory rides with the heavy battalions and the big guns, and continually perches on their banners. To be weak means to suffer, and the older the race becomes and the more advanced its progress, the more loudly it proclaims its gospel of success.

But over against this stands the truth everywhere illustrated in the individual that the law of sacrifice, that is, the surrender of the present good, the turning aside from the selfish purpose, the exalting of the unseen over the seen, even losing one's life in devotion to a higher good, has been the method of making that higher good real, and also of attaining it; and indeed is the only method by which the individual, and, in so far as he is an element of it, the race, can attain to that perfection and fullness of character and of life which corresponds to the ideal which is hidden deep in every heart. However great the reputation that may be won or the success that is achieved on selfish lines, we all feel the failure of the life which does not recognize this law of self-sacrifice.

Towards the close of the story of his life,

which he wrote when at the height of his great reputation, Herbert Spencer has a chapter on "A Grievous Mistake." It is the account of the only occasion in his life when he was induced, as he himself says, to give active support to a purely philanthropic movement. In this instance it was for the protection of the weaker peoples with whom England comes in contact. He regrets it and thinks it was not only a grievous mistake but one to be held notable in all his experience because it was not promotive of his own individual health, and possibly did some harm to it. Whether it was wise or not from the standpoint of health, the way in which he describes it, and his whole attitude towards it, mark a selfish aspect of life which casts a shadow over his otherwise great reputation, and makes one feel how complete is the failure of any life, judged by the higher standard, when it does not recognize the law of sacrifice and the demand for unselfishness, especially if one would really play any large part in the affairs of the world.

Life presents also to us the paradox of service. As Jesus put it, "Whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister, and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant." Men have a natural and general ambition to serve God and

men, and to make life large by making it profitable. When a rich man dies who has been a great merchant or banker, the world points to what it calls his great success. He has contributed to the accumulated capital of the world and to its industries. Many have been dependent upon him for daily bread, and because of his labours it is conceivable that many in the years to come will be profited. But for all that, the chief measure of his success is found in what he has done for himself, and in the property he has left to those who are his natural heirs. All feel the limitations of such service, however great, or however extensive the business which has been created. The true measure is found when we compare it with a ministry of teaching, or of healing, or of sacrificial leadership, such as that of Lincoln, or of his great secretary, Stanton, both of whom had "the glory of dying poor." The world is already profiting beyond measure by the arrest, if not the complete annihilation, of certain fearful diseases like yellow fever and the plague, because of the heroic sacrificial service of a few doctors who here and there have gone into the enemy's camp and fought a fight, sometimes at the price of their own lives, by which the secret of the disease has been discovered and the true method established by which it is to be successfully overcome.

Now and again we see some great teacher who for years has turned aside from the prizes and occupations and even pleasures of the common life to devote himself to the education of the young who came under his instruction, or to refine and civilize and make fruitful the methods by which education is secured,—some Froebel, or Pestalozzi, or Thomas Arnold, or Edward Bowen, or President Harper of Chicago University, who, stricken with fatal disease, worked on with unrelaxing energy to complete his task until he surrendered to death. After the same fashion, Christian missionaries are to be found in all the darker parts of the earth, forsaking the delights of home and native land, living among savages, everywhere busy in creating languages, literature, civilization, establishing homes, giving life to people otherwise without it, and all with no thought of gain or other inspiration than that of sacrificial service.

Before such lives as these, we all recognize the truth of the paradox that the true leader of men is the one who is most completely the servant of others, finding his life by losing it. He is the servant of all, therefore the greatest of all.

Again we turn to Herbert Spencer and read the story of his talk with Huxley towards the end of his life when he said: "It seems all

one can do is to make his mark and die," to which Huxley replied: "It is not necessary to make your mark. All one needs to do is to give things a push." Forgetting one's self and doing something for the service of others is the noblest and best contribution that any one can make to life.

Then there is also in life the strange paradox of the ideal. "The things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The things seen are houses and money and fame and applause. These are all very real and for the time very absorbing and very satisfying. Can the unseen be more valuable? Jesus said at the end of His ministry: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." He had none of these things, and yet there was the note of victory and the sense of an attained ideal. That ideal, we recognize, always dominates the real. It is that element of life without which it ceases to be life in any large true sense. It becomes existence, it is true, but existence that is dull and commonplace and sordid and in no sense satisfactory. This is Jesus' teaching throughout: "He that findeth his life shall lose it." The vision of better things was always before Him. Life is a growth; therefore, it involves death. Life is a victory; therefore, it involves

sacrifice. Intellectual life is not acquiring, so much as it is giving out, and the power of giving out is in large degree the measure of all possible attainment. Hoarding seems everywhere to be wasting. We receive that we may give. We love because we are loved. We give ourselves for men because Jesus Christ gave Himself for us. Character is made by denying one's self, and character is the finest fruitage of life. Suppose Jesus had turned away from life because of the demand for sacrifice or service or the pressure of what we call the realities ; how complete would have been His failure and how little the world would have gained !

If, therefore, we would find our lives, here is at once the method and the test. Do I appreciate the significance of the paradox? The choice that is presented to me may at any time be of the immediate good, of the personal advantage, of the thing which lies close at hand. But the paradoxical alternative is sure to be opposed to it, in the higher advantage, the more enduring good, the finding of the truer life which lies in turning from the tempting gain and accepting instead the self-sacrifice, the unselfish service, the choice of what seems often visionary because it is so truly the ideal.

What are the real marks of failure in life? Self-seeking, claiming always the best that is at hand, rushing for immediate advantage, surrendering to the ways of the street because others do the same, letting the other fellow care for himself because we have enough to do in caring for ourselves. All these are of that finding of life which shall surely lose it.

And where lies the highest success? In the sense of duty done, of self forgotten, and God and men served, for these have always helped men onward and upward and have secured whatever we recognize as enduring good in human history.

There is something in every heart that responds to the song of Teckla in Schiller's tragedy :

"I have tasted earthly bliss,
I have lived and loved."¹

When one has really known the joy of the true life which springs from sacrificial love, one has indeed tasted the highest happiness and learned something of the real meaning of life.

¹ *Ich habe genossen das irdische Glück, ich habe gelebt und geliebt.*

VI

THE MORAL VALUE OF ANTIPATHIES

“O ye that love Jehovah, hate evil.”—*Psalms 97: 10.*

MANY passages in the Bible express God's abhorrence in terms almost too strong for polite ears. He says in Isaiah: “Your appointed feasts my soul hateth.” In Amos: “I hate every false way.” In Proverbs we have: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,” and in the Psalms: “I hate and abhor lying.” These instances might be multiplied indefinitely.

Over against this may be set Lord Chesterfield's description of the moral degeneracy of his times: “In court you may expect to meet connections without principles, enmities without hatred, honour without virtue, appearances saved and realities sacrificed, good manners and bad morals.”

God has evidently given to what we may call moral antipathies a value not always understood. The phrase “righteous indignation” is often used to cover very unrighteous passion. Nevertheless, the strength of one's repugnance

to certain things and the heat of one's antagonism to certain doings stand closely related to the strength of one's moral convictions. It is true that that splendid Roman Stoic and gentleman Thraseas, said he feared to hate sin too much lest he should hate the sinner. Nevertheless, there is a wholesome feeling in certain repugnances and antipathies in which we may be conscious of sharing God's feelings; so much so that attention can be given to the text without fear that in these days we shall be carried over the border line between hating sin and hating the sinner.

It is an old distinction which has long since been recognized as not only possible, but desirable, and which lay very close to that early teaching upon which civil society was to be established. Plato in the Republic points out that it is the function of society by a carefully regulated education, to implant right instincts and antipathies in the growing mind of the child at a time when he cannot know the reason of things, in order that as the mind develops it may recognize the right reason by a certain inner kinship, and may welcome truth as a friend.

There are many suggestions in nature of the value of repugnances. Pain, for example, to which all living things have repugnance, is in

the plan of nature, protective. It is always to warn against oncoming danger, the warning to which repugnance gives prompt response. It is notable that pain diminishes greatly in normal life, or altogether ceases, when it has no further value as warning. The hare will cry when the hound is close, but when actually in the jaws of the hound its cry ceases and it will lie perfectly quiet even though badly maimed. The cry of the horse frightened by the noises and dangers of battle is proverbial for the terror it indicates, but a badly injured horse will hobble about on a broken leg and graze as if its wound was of no moment. The awful fear of possible injury has apparently subsided entirely when the injury is actual. In man, pain, for example in a tooth, is not a punishment, but a warning, that the tooth may be cared for for the sake of its preservation. The whole system of pain in natural life seems to correspond to this explanation. The same is true of distasteful odours. Their purpose apparently is to give warning against taking into the stomach articles of food that are pernicious. Many caterpillars and insects, for example, that are poisonous to birds, possess an odour which warns off the bird and thus guards against the danger. This warning, it is true, is not universal, but it is sufficiently common in nature to show the place which

repugnances and antipathies are intended to fill.

When we rise to the moral life, the same is true in a sense perhaps more distinctly marked. God has given us certain repugnances and antipathies which growing refinement and cultivation of life and of character greatly strengthen. A certain beauty attaches to goodness. Indeed, no virtue is without its characteristic charm. The world is sensible to the truth that doing well is something more than fulfilling a duty. It clears and strengthens the spirits. It opens higher regions of thought. It establishes confidence in one's intellectual qualities. It gives a just sense of elevation. The opposite is equally true, for wrong brings a sense of meanness and inferiority, as has often been pointed out. It depresses the spirits. It represses the thoughts. It awakens distrust of the judgment. As a consequence, there springs up in us a moral antipathy which is certainly a part of that endowment with which God has fitted us for the work He has given us to do. It is both natural and normal. It is given to brace and to build character.

Now the important fact is that we can lose this quality of the soul. Therefore, the need of the summons of the text as a Divine command, and as a warning constantly to be renewed.

Just as frequent contact with what is repugnant to the life of the body de-sensitizes the nerves which receive that contact, so that as the touch loses its power to transmit sensation when it has been frequently brought in contact with overheated surfaces, and as the eye loses its power to perceive delicate visual impressions if it is subjected to too strong a light, the moral touch and the moral vision and the moral hearing may all be impaired and even destroyed by abuse. Here is the great harm of reading bad books, or hearing bad stories, or thinking bad thoughts, or presenting to the mind through any channel evil suggestions. We lose the sense of shock. We can grow so strangely accustomed to even the grosser forms of evil as to become entirely unconscious of their significance or morally indifferent to their true character.

This is the explanation of the fact that in so many circles of society unmistakably respectable, stories will be current, language will be used, scenes will be witnessed, books will be read which once would have utterly shocked the same people, and which, to those outside their circle and not accustomed to their ways, make them a continual surprise. There comes to be set up a conventional standard of judgment, which is merely the expression of the habits of

thought and life into which a given group of people have fallen without ever raising serious question as to the reason of the habits which in their circle have become common, or the judgments which have come to be universally accepted.

An elderly lady recently said of a certain play: "I am an old woman and not over-particular, but I wondered as I sat there how those young girls could sit chatting with the young men, their attendants, without blushing to the roots of the hair as the play proceeded." The explanation lies in custom. The young girls, like the elderly lady herself, were doing as others did in their circle of society, and the habit of witnessing such plays, which in the older person had required time to gain sufficient mastery over early traditions to permit her sitting with something of comfort, had not yet, even in her, advanced to the stage in which she could look without surprise upon young girls who could do the same thing.

The same is true of conventional judgments. We come to tolerate evil in any form; impurity, selfishness, gambling, *risqué* speech, untruthfulness, little dishonesties, petty meanesses, hardly noticing them and not at all appreciating their real character because they are so common in the life about us. We be-

come used to them. We adjust our views of life to accommodate them, and we lose all sensitiveness as to their true nature, until we lose entirely the power to hate evil. With the loss of that power, the antipathy to evil becomes a permanent moral degeneracy. This was Lord Chesterfield's grievance, and marks the condition into which the society of London in the eighteenth century had fallen.

Over against this is the summons of the Bible to those who call themselves Christians to cultivate that attitude of mind towards every form of evil which will alone make a robust Christian character possible, and without which there can be no abiding foundation for a truly Christian society. A vigorous antipathy, indeed a positive hatred, which, addressed to the common forms of evil, finds persistent and adequate expression, is a weapon put in the hands of men who love righteousness, with which to fight the battle of the Lord. It is not inconsistent with that life which suffereth all things and is kind, for a love that does not discriminate between the evil and the good, and loses sight of moral distinctions in its dealing with others, may become in itself a promoter of immorality.

Men everywhere need the help which comes from the fact that in the plan of God the

way of the transgressor is hard. It is just as much the duty of a civilized and Christianized society to see that evil does not go unpunished, as it is to see that the good is rewarded. Much of the easy-going public opinion as to what is right and what is wrong, and much of the obliquity of current life even with those who esteem themselves better than others and sometimes call themselves Christians, is due to the fact that this distinction is lost sight of, and that to such a degree modern society has lost the power of righteous indignation or has become over-sensitive to its exercise. The consequence is, that evil, and even vice in its grosser forms, practiced by those who are prominent in the community, goes unrebuked and even defiant; whereas popular indignation and outspoken rebuke are the evidence of a healthier public sentiment and the necessary condition for a more wholesome public life.

This indignation appears everywhere in the utterances of the great prophets of the Old Testament. It was the first step in the reforms which they were sent to introduce and was not found to be incompatible either with the proclamations which they made of the love of a merciful God or the visions which they had of the glories of the new life wherein dwelleth

righteousness. When men found themselves stung by their rebuke and lashed by what seemed at times the fierceness of the Divine wrath which spoke through them, the nation was aroused and the way was opened for the reforms upon which the preservation of the national life and the fulfillment of the promises of God depended. Those prophets have stood from that day to this as the inspirers of all who have set their hearts to fear God and work righteousness in the world, who have been willing to face obloquy, and to endure loss even unto death, if only they might save the world from something of its sin. In them has shone the full splendour of that humanity into which God had breathed His own image, and which afterwards was redeemed by the sacrifice of the Son of God who gave Himself for the sins of the world. We walk feebly in their steps and often are found lagging far behind ; but their method and their word abide, and inspire the heart, as well as the psalm, of the man to whom vision is given to-day. We hear it again in the words of one of our most virile modern poets:

“ I think the immortal servants of mankind
 Who, from their graves, watch by how slow degrees
 The world soul greatens with the centuries,

Mourn most man's barren levity of mind ;
The ear to no grave harmonies inclined :
The witless search for false wit's worthless lees,
The laugh mistimed in tragic pleasures ;
The eye to all majestic meanings blind.

“ O prophets, martyrs, saviours, ye were great,
All truth being great to you. Ye deemed man more
Than a dull jest God's ennui to amuse :
The world for you held purport. Life ye wore
Proudly, as kings their solemn robes of state,
And humbly, as the mightiest monarchs use.”

And it is in no way inconsistent with the prayer of Robert Louis Stevenson that God would make us “temperate in wrath, and down to the gates of death loyal and loving to one another.” Where there is no moral indignation there can be no manly self-control, no self-sacrificing loyalty and no self-forgetting love.

¹ William Watson.

VII

THE FAMINE FOR GOD

“Behold the days come saith the Lord Jehovah that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah.”—*Amos 8 : 11.*

THERE is an interesting story in connection with this text. This is the first written prophecy in the Old Testament, the first in the series of prophecies which are grouped together at the end of that book. The author, Amos by name, gives us his date. He lived during the reign of Uzziah in Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel. These reigns were long and prosperous, covering the middle of the eighth century before Christ. The astronomers enable us to fix one date definitely as that of the eclipse to which reference is made in the prophecy. It occurred in the year 763 B. C.

We also learn from the records of the kingdom of Assyria that Assyria was at war with the king of Syria and Damascus for years, beginning with the year 754 B. C. The prophecy itself, therefore, may be applied

to the last ten years of the reign of Jeroboam from 759 B. C. to 749 B. C.¹

It was a time of great luxury and wide-spread prosperity in the kingdom of Israel. The country was at peace with the surrounding nations. Trade had opened, and with the inevitable outcome of abundance of wealth for a people of the temperament of the Jews.

Amos describes himself as a herdsman or shepherd of the little desert sheep which are found on the hills of Southern Palestine. He was also a gatherer, or, as it is in the original, a pincher of the small wild figs which are poor and scarce and have to be gathered one by one. We can see him lonely, poorly clad, wandering with his sheep over the hills, gathering as opportunity offered his little baskets of fruit for sale as he had a chance, to add to his scanty supplies. He tells us that his home was in the little village of Tekoa which was situated on a ridge some 2,800 feet above the Mediterranean Sea twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Travellers inform us that from that ridge one can see the blue waters of the Mediterranean to the west, and to the east a glimpse of the Dead Sea lying in its deep basin four thousand feet below, with its ever solemn suggestion of the tragedies

¹ This account of Amos is based on the graphic narrative in Dr. Horton's "The Hidden God."

which have been enacted on its waters. It always carried to the minds of the dwellers in the neighbourhood the memory of the awful destruction of the cities of the plain, and its water noxious to all life was in itself an emblem of judgment and death.

To the north a glimpse can be had of the Mount of Olives standing watch over the Holy City and Mount Zion close by. To the south was the Arabah and the Desert of the Wandering. In the solitude of the hills, this shepherd having always before him a suggestion of the history of his people and able to give place in his heart to the memories of his fathers, can be pictured brooding over the past and wondering what God had in store for Israel in the days to come. The spirit of prophecy had come down from time to time upon single Israelites ; doubtless, the stories of Elijah and Elisha and Samuel and many others whose names have since been forgotten, upon whom the spirit of the Lord had rested, and who had been used by Jehovah to call His people back to Himself, were fresh in his heart. He was not an educated man and found time abundant for communion with his own heart and for talking with his God, who was the God of his fathers.

In these crowded days no one finds time either for knowledge of himself or for much

thought about God. It is the price we pay for the privileges of our later civilization. The days are so full and there is always so much waiting to be done that, even when we seek occasional opportunity for rest and for thought, the things of the outer life so crowd in upon us that it is well for us if we do not lose altogether the power of meditation.

It was not so in those early years with the shepherd as he walked upon the hills of Palestine following his poor little flock and keeping his eye open for the occasional small fruit to add to his store, or as he sat at night with his sheep about him, or in the little fold, and looked up at the stars. God must have seemed very near to him, and the thoughts that rose in his heart, if not always the voice of God, were always welcome material for his own reflections, and found ample space and time for their unfolding.

It was his business from time to time to go to the nearest market, which would be in Jerusalem or further north at some town in the Northern Kingdom, for distances in Palestine are all short, to dispose of his gathered fruit or his occasional lamb or fleece of wool. We can picture him in the streets of Jerusalem or Samaria,—a quiet stranger unnoticed in his somewhat familiar shepherd garb, wondering at the luxury and

the bustle that he saw on all sides, feeling a stranger among his own people and more and more impressed with their absorption in the superficial life of the town and engaged in the eager occupations of business or pleasure which were so alien to his own thought.

The Spirit of God was in his heart and he felt himself moved to speak as a prophet. We can imagine how difficult it must have been for him either to get a hearing or to find utterance.

The man from the country to-day who may have been something of a prophet at home, the Sunday-school teacher, the regular attendant at worship, the well-known leader in prayer, the exhorter at the mid-week service, coming to the great city so readily loses his gift of prophecy. The city overwhelms him. He is held by the glamour of its pleasures or absorbed by its opportunities of business. He is caught in the rush of its incessant occupations, and quickly discovers that he has small time and small inclination for the things which were so precious to him in his country home. To-day such prophets are about us on all sides, but they have lost their gift or, at least, have ceased to be conscious of their calling. We have many of them on our streets and not a few as the casual worshippers in our churches who are altogether unprepared even to answer the summons which is extended

to them, to take their place, to do their part in helping the cause of the Lord in the great city. They are awed and dazzled by the city. Its very greatness oppresses them. They become self-conscious and forgetful of the power which God has promised to those who will do His will. They find occupation for every hour and excuses on all sides for departing from their old habits.

But Amos was a man from the country held by a high impulse. He is overwhelmed by what he sees, and he becomes aware that the Spirit of God is upon him and that he has a message which must be delivered.

His little prophecy that has lived from that time to this and found its place in the sacred records of his people consists of three short sections, the first and second chapters, then the third to the sixth, and then the seventh to the ninth,—each with its own separate message all holding together and leading to the single result. He begins with the proclamation of the judgments of God to fall upon the surrounding nations. Israel has entered into sympathetic intimacy with her neighbours and is giving way to the temptations of the heathen, while she is satisfying herself with the luxury and wealth which are coming to her from their trade; but God's wrath on Edom and Tyre and Moab and Gaza is gathering, and is soon to fall. This

was not a new thought in Israel, but it comes with a new emphasis and with something of startling surprise in days of peace and great prosperity, when as to-day the distinction between the Christian and the world about him is fading away and men find it easier to believe that after all, there is not much difference between them.

The second section is of a distinctly different tenor. The judgment of God is in store also for Israel. The message is, "You only have I known : therefore will I visit upon you your iniquities." It is a new and a startling declaration. Hitherto God has been the Protector of Israel. He has gathered her out from among the nations, has shielded and blessed her, and she has come to believe that she is immune from the consequences before which others are to fall. The prophet emphasizes her peculiar calling. But to the amazement of his hearers he makes that the ground of her judgment. Because she had been so blessed of Jehovah, because she is His chosen people, *therefore* will He punish her in the day of her transgression.

A recent German commentator says that Amos is "one of the most wonderful appearances in the history of the human spirit." And Dr. Horton of London, preaching upon the story of Amos, says, "Never was there a bolder thing

than for this simple herdsman of the desert to go into the wealthy and prosperous kingdom of Israel to say, 'You are prosperous; you are luxurious; you are religious; you are the people of Jehovah: therefore the Lord will punish your iniquities.'"

The prophet proceeds to denounce their religion as a matter of form and ceremony. "Bring your offerings. Keep your fasts. But of what use are they? God is a God of righteousness and of truth. You simply mock Him." The religion that He requires is a religion of the life, a religion that before all else means character, and you offer external worship instead. Does He care how elaborate your services, how splendid your sanctuaries, how thronged the audience, when the heart and the life are not clean before Him? "Because you are His people, because He loves you, therefore judgment shall come for purification and for deliverance."

Then comes the third section enclosing our text. A change is coming. The days are at hand when "there will be a famine in the land, not a famine for bread nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall run to and fro and seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it." At last the Lord will bring back the captivity of His people "and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit

them. And they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof. They shall also make gardens and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah, thy God."

Here then is the burden of the prophecy. In such times, when prosperity abounds and religion degenerates into a matter of ceremony, and the Lord's people fall into the ways of the world, there grows up a scarcity of hearing the words of the Lord.

The word of God is not a book. There are plenty of Bibles in the world to-day. Indeed, there never was a time when so many were distributed. The printing-presses of Christendom fairly groan with the innumerable volumes. Nor is the word of God preaching. Churches abound and times of prosperity see them built and rebuilt in ever more magnificent form. The greater the wealth of the community and the more easy and abundant its luxury, the more gorgeous become its churches, the more elegant their ritual, and the more eloquent their preaching.

The word of God is the voice of God in a man's soul. As the Saviour put it: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

It is that voice which, through whatever channel it comes and in whatever words it declares itself, becomes the compelling voice in a man's heart, awakening him to a new consciousness of his relations to his Maker. That is the voice which grows dull and is not heard in times of worldly prosperity. It is in our times the voice of God in the call of Jesus Christ. It sounded loud and clear for all men and for all time in the voice of Him who came from His Father to give His life for the world. The sacrifice was accomplished. The message was delivered. But in times of prosperity, such as we see to-day, Jesus Christ is disregarded. There is no place for Him or for His message in the worldly life. He is crowded out and His voice is silenced in hearts which are stuffed with the things of this world. There may be plenty of worship, and yet be a famine of the word of God. The days are full and life is thronged, and there is not much room in the minds of men. When their thoughts are absorbed with other things there is little room for Jesus Christ.

But men cannot always live in this way, and the want of the hearing of the word of God will in time become a famine, for men are made for better things. There is a hunger and thirst in the soul which will declare itself. No matter

how great a man's possessions may be in other things, they will not satisfy this deepest of human needs.

Some time ago, the skeleton of a man and a few fragments of clothing were found in an Arizona desert, together with a small pouch of gold fastened in a belt. The day had come when despite his gold, to get which he had staked his life, the need of food or water had become clamorous, and he had been compelled to make the final effort to satisfy that need, which cost him his life. What remained of him was eloquent of the existence of this need which neither gold nor food and water can satisfy. No matter how much a man may have of the things of the world, this cry of the soul for the hearing of the voice of God will take on an insistence which cannot be silenced, and the forgotten or despised need will become a veritable famine.

I sat in a beautiful parlour some years ago, while a man past middle life paced up and down wringing his hands and moaning, "I knew it all the time. I knew it all the time." The hour had come in which the voice so long silenced, insisted upon being heard, and in that hour everything else fell away from his thought under the strain of a necessity which must be heeded. "Tell me where I may find Him," be-

comes the cry of men such as we are, who, no matter what we have been doing, or how far we may have wandered from our Father's house, are still His children, and must recognize our sonship, and must yield to the inexorable need of our nature. Because God has chosen us and manifested Himself to us and sent His Son to die for us and fill our lives with blessing, *therefore*, will He visit us in our wanderings and make us to know both Him and our necessities.

When that famine declares itself, blessing is not far off. God speaks to the soul in order that it may hear; and hearing, that it may know Him and find life in Him. This is the last word of the prophet: "The day will come when the Lord will bring back the captivity of His people."

It is said that Amos has no message of the love of God, that we must go to his contemporary, Hosea, for that. There we have the message in its fullness. But Amos foreshadows it. His cry is a warning one. But it is a warning that opens the way for blessing. The proclamation of the coming famine is also the proclamation of the coming supply, and the consequent peace. Because Israel is the child of God, she is not to be forsaken. Because we are the lost sheep whom Jesus Christ came to seek and to save, the cry of our soul for the

word of God when it is heard, will prove the signal of a blessing that is not far off. The summons, therefore, is "Why wait? Recognize the need to-day. Give voice to the cry of the soul. Ask, and you shall receive. Seek, and you shall find." Or, as a fellow prophet put it: "Ho, every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters, yea drink wine and milk without money and without price."

We have to do but the one thing that is necessary, namely: recognize the need and anticipate the famine. The supply is within the reach of every man who will have it.

VIII

HOW TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD

“ And what doth Jehovah require of thee but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”—*Micah 6 : 8.*

WE know little of the prophet Micah. He seems to have had small concern for himself and has only been careful to tell us that his home was in Moreshah which was a little village on the Philistine plain some twelve miles west of Bethlehem. He is without parent or child, so far as the record goes. However, he gives us an indication of the time in which he lived,—the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

The burden of the Lord is upon him and he tells what he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. His life must have been a tolerably long one, and his prophecy, which was spoken evidently towards its close, was delivered near the very end of the eighth century before Christ. The prophecies of Hosea and Amos had been spoken before this, and the threatened destruction had already come upon the northern kingdom of Israel, in the capture

of Samaria by Sargon and the army of Assyria after a three-year siege, followed by the deportation of the people into a captivity from which they were never to return. The great host of the Assyrians had worked along the coast down the highway which led past his home to Egypt, and there the decisive battle of Raphia had been fought in the year 719, and the Egyptians had been defeated. Later the Assyrian forces had attacked the southern borders of Judah, capturing a number of cities, and had threatened Jerusalem itself. In answer to the prayers of the people under the lead of Hezekiah,—a God-fearing king,—a sudden and overwhelming disaster had come for a time upon the forces of the enemy, and the story of their destruction under Sennacherib, their leader, was to become the theme of many a future tale. What the future had in store for the kingdom of Judah was not yet revealed. She was tempted to seek to protect herself by alliance with Egypt and possibly with other neighbours as against the Eastern invasion. Isaiah already had arisen as the great prophet in the city, warning the people of the danger of such an alliance, and striving to turn them back to an abiding faith in Jehovah.

There had been great prosperity for many years preceding these days of crisis, with the

inevitable results which the earlier prophets had announced. Luxury, and oppression, and self-indulgence had taken the place of an earlier righteousness. The rich had sought alliance with men of their own kind among the heathen. They had given their daughters to them in marriage. They had established with them business connections that were profitable and widely extended. They had introduced their manners and their morals into Israel. In a word, they had made the life of Jerusalem as much like the life of New York as we can conceive. In their elect circles we can hear them talking almost in the language of to-day, discussing foreign "Counts," frequently visiting "Paris," assured of large incomes with no further labour than cutting off coupons, and striving hard to find amusement for themselves in the Bohemianism of their day. Drunkenness and gambling, with disregard for the welfare either of others or of the State, were prevalent. Men were living as if God were not, and life had no ultimate responsibilities.

Then it was that a country preacher appeared, in the form of a prophet. What his previous training had been, we do not know. Other prophets, like Amos and Jeremiah, were particular to record their own unfitness for their

new rôle; but Micah seems to have been absorbed with the situation in which he found himself, and the compulsion of the Spirit of God that had come upon him. His name signifies "Who is like God," and that he is conscious of its meaning is suggested by the play upon names which appears in his opening message and that his closing word is a sentence which is but an enlargement of his own name: "Who is a God like unto Thee?"

We can picture him talking to people in his little village, stirring their hearts, and gathering there an audience which told the tale of his strange eloquence to their neighbours, until he feels compelled, little prepared as he is, to go down to the city and speak there in its streets. Doubtless, he met Isaiah, the eloquent city preacher, and found himself in accord with him. Perhaps through his influence he found access to court circles. In any case, he is the only prophet directly mentioned by another. Jeremiah (26:18) says that Hezekiah heard him, and was moved by him to special prayer, which led the Lord to withhold the judgment with which the city was threatened. False prophets abounded, and were doing exactly what men in public position and even some ministers are found doing to-day,—going to the capitol to speak in the interests of evil doers, and by elo-

quent sophistries to make it appear that drunkenness and oppression and legalized gambling are not the evil which they are thought.

His message differs from that of his predecessors. Like them he denounces the evil of his day. "Woe!" he cries, "to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house." "They hate the good and love the evil, and their prophets make my people to err." "They cry peace, and they even prepare war against the Lord." "They build up Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity." "Their leaders judge for reward, their priests teach for hire, their prophets divine for money."

To them his message is that the Lord is among them and judgment is at hand. But this is not the burden of his message. He has a vision of the future. God will still do great things for His people. He sees as in a vision the mountain of the house of the Lord established in the top of the mountain. As one looking across a valley buried in the mists, he sees the great mountain peaks beyond, painted in the glories of the rising sun of a new day. Israel is to be exalted, and passing away from

her sins and her punishment, is to be established in the eyes of all peoples. As a flock that has been scattered, she shall yet have a shepherd. Bethlehem which has given David to Israel and the long line of her kings, shall give still a greater leader who in the days to come shall appear as the vicegerent of God. The nations shall see and wonder, and God shall have compassion upon His people and turn again and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. He cries out as he ends: "Who is like unto our God?"

In the midst of this prophetic vision, occurs the text: "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?" You rich men seek to compromise with God by great gifts, or by building churches, or by establishing philanthropies, offering money as the price of exemption from criticism, and in the hope of escaping the final condemnation. Will any such service deceive Jehovah, he says, or for a moment be accepted? What in fact does the Lord require of you? I will show you what He requires. Nothing but this: "To do justly, and to love mercy,¹ and to walk humbly with thy God."

¹ I retain the familiar word of the Authorized Version, as it seems to me better to express the real sense of the text than the "Kindness" of the Revision.

Here then is the heart of the whole prophecy. What does it mean? The words are very simple, but let us look at them closely.

“To do justly”; manifestly, first of all, towards God. Israel’s distinction among the nations had been that her God was not as their gods. Their gods were gods of fear, to be propitiated by awful sacrifices, and to be held in perpetual terror. But Jehovah was to Israel a God of righteousness and of truth, a God whose service was a service of blessing and of peace. He had called their ancestor, Abraham, out of a far country and had led him by a way that he knew not, and had talked with him as a friend, and had made for him a new inheritance. He had called Jacob up out of the bondage of Egypt, had led him through the wilderness, and opened a path for him through the sea and through the river, and established him in the Land of Promise. He had called Moses from the desert, and David from his sheepfolds. He had delivered Israel from her enemies and caused her to flow with milk and honey, and established peace in her borders, just so far and so long as she had been faithful to her service and had kept His commandments. Her hope had always been in Him and His promise which had never failed. The future was to be hers because of the past and because

of the covenant with her God in which lay her life.

What now does Israel owe to God except gratitude and love, as a heart that has received blessing must answer to the heart that has bestowed it. Through the long service Israel had been slowly and with difficulty arriving at this conception of God, of His character, and of His service. It all is clear to us, for we know in a still larger and truer sense that God is love, and that He so loves the world that He has given His Son to die for it. It is far clearer to us than it could be to them that what God has a right to require of every man is response to His heart. He is no constraining creditor seeking the payment of a debt. He comes with no threats of arrest for failure in power, or will, to pay. The obligation under which we are is indeed a debt, but it is a debt of gratitude. It is a debt which every heart that would be true to itself must recognize, and in recognizing, find its true joy and its true life. Therefore, the very first thing that God requires of every man is that he shall make this response, long before there is any question of service or of large relations to the world about us. We must first settle this question of what we owe to God Himself. Then comes, however, our duty to our fellow men, for if we do not love

our brother whom we see, how can we love God whom we do not see? If we do not deal justly with our neighbour, recognizing all the obligations to him, under which we are in the common life, what truth is there in the declaration of our love and of our allegiance to the common Father?

So again with the second phrase: "To love mercy," or "kindness," as the Revision gives it. It is the loving-kindness of God which leads Him to seek and to save that which is lost. That was a new thought in Israel, that God could forgive the sinner, and that His love would not diminish or be withdrawn even in the face of persistent weakness. This had been the great message of Hosea: "How can I give thee up, O Israel!" In his own pitiful experience with a sinful wife, that prophet had been taught the meaning of a forgiving love, and in the strength of that had been sent by the Lord with His message to Israel. The Divine messages of earlier days had now gained a new significance. The loving-kindness of God had come to mean the revelation of that Divine grace in which God in the Person of His Son was to be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." There is open to the prophet the vision of the new kingdom of God, in which, not

only, righteousness shall dwell, but in which the bond shall be the gratitude of loving hearts whose sins have been forgiven and whose life has been restored, when it had seemed there could be no pardon and there was no hope. His summons, therefore, to the people is not only to open their hearts in loving gratitude to God for all His goodness, thus dealing justly with Him, but to go deeper than that, and to pour out their truest affection in love for One who forgiving their sins, could so take them away and blot them out that they never again would be known, casting them, as He says, into the depths of the sea. His summons, therefore, is that his countrymen shall so turn to God. They are to love one another, they are to build up a God-fearing community ; but before that they are to be sure that they have established this love of God as a possession in their own hearts, that they feel their own sins, and love Him because He first loved us. Doing this, they will be sure to love one another.

Then, finally, "Walk humbly with thy God." Here we have a word which occurs nowhere else in the Bible. Translators have struggled with it. The earliest of them, the Greek translators of the Septuagint, render it "Prepare yourselves to walk with God." It seems to point, in the original, to that devotion of one's self

to the purpose of knowing God which leads one to put everything else aside, to examine his own heart and life, to humble himself into a sense of his own ill desert, which shall, as it were, empty his heart of all else, that God may come and dwell in it. It points to a private and personal discipline, and recalls the many other instances in the Bible where a man is spoken of as "dwelling in the secret place of the Most High," or entering into secret intercourse with his Maker.

This is what the prophet leads up to. A walking with God, which is an intimate and personal matter for which a man is to prepare himself, and which he is to make first in his purpose. It reminds us of that phrase of Cromwell: "A man has so much religion as he hath between God and himself alone, and no more." It is an exhortation to make sure of, and then to practice, the presence of God. It is an old form of stating what we term spirituality, that is, the reflection in a man's spirit of this intimacy which he has been permitted to establish with God. It is the actuality of the Divine Presence which is to be realized only by those who know its meaning and set themselves with all their heart and soul to secure it. It is the very heart and fountain of all true religion, the only source of the life and

power, in the strength of which the work of life can be done, and true service to God can be rendered. To attempt to live without it is the reverse of the nature in which as children of God we are made. It is the interpretation of our Lord's prayer in which we are taught first to say "Our Father which art in heaven" with some true sense of its meaning, before we are permitted to pray with expectancy "Thy kingdom come"; offering ourselves to do what we can to bring in that kingdom. It is the early form of our Lord's saying that we are to love God with all our heart, and our soul, and mind, before we can love our neighbour as ourselves.

Here, then, is the wonderful message of the old prophet. We have never gone beyond it. We never shall. It is the most modern of religious requirements, as it is the most ancient, and the most unchanging. If you and I would know God and be His servants, if we would know life and win peace, if we would do our part in the world about us and so live as to have some hope of heaven, here is the method of it, and the whole of it: "To do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk in secret with thy God!"

IX

THE RADIANT LIFE

“They looked unto Him and were radiant.”—*Psalm 34 : 5.*

WHAT a splendid word the Revised Version of the Bible gives us here in the change from “lightened” to “radiant.” The text that before was of doubtful significance, and could be passed without challenging attention, suddenly arrests us. To be radiant means to shine by inner light. It is the quality of the sun, and not of the moon. It marks access to inexhaustible reservoirs, perhaps, like radium, to be joined to some vast storehouse of power in nature and in God.

Look at the face of a little child radiant with pleasure, with interest, with imagination, or what you will. It suggests fullness of life in its freshness. We remember Wordsworth’s line :

“Trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.”

Look at the face of a youth radiant with love, hope, joy. Life has come in larger fullness.

New fountains have been opened, new possibilities have come to be realized, and larger ones are at hand. Look at the face of the strong man radiant with the sense of triumph, of work accomplished, of an end attained,—eloquent of new and still deeper satisfaction. Look at the face of the dying saint, radiant in a yet more beautiful sense with the vision of eternity and the unrevealed splendours of the life which is hid with Christ in God.

Everywhere in them all we see fullness of life, powers from God all called forth, all exercised,—interest, enthusiasm, delight, strength, attainment, knowledge, vision. We believe in the infinitude of life. We are prepared to accept the word of revelation that man is a son of God, that “eternity” is “hid in his heart,” because we see this radiance in his face. One recalls Correggio’s great painting of the Nativity, “La Notte,” in which the radiance from the countenance of the infant Jesus illumines every face of the onlookers, and repels the darkness of the stable in which all are gathered. It is a suggestion of the fullness of the life that is in man as a child of God.

This radiance is eloquent also of the satisfaction of the soul. Man was made for this, and here it is at last. No matter what has been the particular experience, or at what

stage in life it has come, when it is there it indicates attainment. The ideal has been realized ; the effort has been crowned ; the fullness of life has brought satisfaction ; and now the whole being seems to shine with the sense of attainment which fills the soul.

But, also, it is the challenge of the unattained ; the radiance is luminous as indicating something yet to come. There is more to do, more to enjoy, more to achieve, and the radiance that shines in the eyes and in the face marks the eagerness of a soul which has visions of this. The present is not so real as is the future, and the future holds still more than the present has attained. In short, here is the whole man, his possibilities no less than his attainments. His past, his present, his future, gathered together summoning him to be ready for all that is before him.

In some way, the old Psalmist had met such men. He had looked into such faces. He knew something of their experience, and so he speaks with full confidence. Anybody could see what he sees. It is visible in the lives which are open to all. These men of whom he speaks are radiant, and the light is genuine. It will not fade. They were radiant as he looked at them, and his comment is "Their faces shall never be confounded." The ex-

perience is so real and so deep, the change, in fact, is so abiding and so satisfying, that no matter what happens they can never be put to shame. The Bible has the story of many such men, from Enoch who "walked with God and was not, for God took him," till we come to the very end of the New Testament and behold the beloved disciple with radiant eyes gazing upon the glories of the New Jerusalem, the city come down from God out of heaven. Above all, the picture of Him in whom men beheld "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

The testimony concerning them all is the same. "They looked unto Him, and were radiant." It is the effect of their vision of God, His light, His love, His joy, His life found entrance to their souls and filled them, and now shines forth.

We ask: "How did they do this, that such result was obtained?" The answer is, they turned away from everything that hindered. Open their story anywhere. It is always the same. Abraham left his home and his country and travelled far as a stranger, not knowing whither he went, because he was willing to give up everything, that he might obey God and find Him. Joseph, the captive, a slave and a stranger, gives up the position and

turns from the temptations which would have brought him the pleasures and the triumphs which beguile other men, in order that he might be faithful to God. Moses, forsaking the pleasures of Egypt, retiring alone on the mountain, offering his life in sacrifice for his people that God may be honoured, comes again to them with the shining face, which is ever after remembered as needing a veil that men might look upon him without distress. Daniel, in his chamber with his windows opened towards Jerusalem, and face upturned to his protecting God, shines through the centuries with a radiance which has lost nothing of its glorious strength. Paul, in his blindness, turned from the life which was challenging his young strength that he might give himself to the service of the unseen Christ who spoke to him on the way. John, the son of thunder, with softened countenance and gentle eyes, filled with the love of his Master, now the Beloved Disciple, first to realize in its fullness, the satisfying blessedness of that intimacy with Christ which was to be the comfort and the peace of countless souls in coming ages.

One and all, they are the types of men who, turning away from everything that hinders, attained the sufficiency, the strength, and the peace which lie in finding God and being found

in Him, and their faces shone with a new light. Henceforth there was for them no anxiety and no regret. They had left all so completely that there was no thought of turning again to what lay behind them, and they already had found such supreme contentment in what God had brought into their hearts that they had no concern for the future. Come what will, it can only bring God to them in greater fullness. They had made their choice, and it needed not to be reconsidered.

Furthermore, these men really sought God. It was not knowledge, or success, or pleasure, or even happiness that had led them to their choice. Moses perhaps is the best type as he goes alone up Mount Sinai. Men are continually trying to locate Sinai. They have sought it in the Arabian Peninsula and on the borders of the Persian Gulf. They have made pilgrimages and have built monasteries and even given up everything that they might live permanently on the lofty summit. In fact, it never will be known. God has kept it from men's knowledge lest they should set up an altar there and turn their thoughts to an experience in the far ancient past, and lose sight of the fact that every man has his own Sinai. The world presses hard, with business and pleasure and strife for success, and one by one,

when the hour comes, we are all summoned to choose between these things and God. With us, as with Moses, the treasures of Egypt are to be left behind. We are not only to forsake them, but deliberately and carefully to seek another treasure more real, more satisfying, but less easily apprehended. God is to be sought in self-denial and in self-discipline, in sacrificial service, and in the set purpose of attainment, cost what it may. As our Lord put it, we are to forsake all and follow Him if we are to be disciples indeed. Only when that search is undertaken with sincerity, and when the heart has gathered up all its strength with Divine help to devote itself to God, does the radiance appear in the face, which is the witness at once of the realized attainment and of the satisfying joy. When Moses came down from the mountain and his face shone, men knew that he had looked upon God. He had found Him whom his soul sought, and in that finding had come the vision which filled his heart with a light which henceforth would never fail in his eyes.

These men of whom the Psalmist speaks as looking upon God and being radiant, were men who had asked God for help. They sought the vision which did so much for them. They were men of prayer. How frequently in the story of Jesus do we read that He turned aside

in the desert or on the mountain that He might pray. That prayer was not the ordinary supplication of men who are merely seeking relief from present burden or the gratification of some pressing desire. It was not the confession in which the burdened soul pours itself out in prayer for forgiveness, nor the spiritless petition of the heart that is troubled with the cares of life or dulled with the satiety of its pleasures. It was the eager and buoyant up-springing of the soul which knows where to find God and turns to Him in the assurance of His presence and of the vision of His satisfying love. That vision reached its completeness on the Mount of Transfiguration, and the radiance that there shone from His face, seemed to the amazed on-lookers to change the very nature of His body and to transform His common garments into robes of unearthly texture and celestial beauty.

This vision of God that has been attained by those who have made the sacrifice, or put forth the supreme effort, or paid the unstinted price, the prophet, the apostle, or the martyr, Daniel in the den of the lions, Paul before Agrippa, the aged Polycarp in the arena lifting up his face and saying: "My Lord has never denied me. How can I deny Him?" is the true source of the light which "never was on land or sea," of the radiance of countenances that are at peace

with God and of souls that have attained to fullness of life.

They gave themselves to God utterly and this is the testimony. They looked upon Stephen as they stoned him to death and they bear testimony that his face was as "the face of an angel." Striving to depict the Virgin Mary in the presence of the Angel of the Annunciation, painters have concentrated their efforts upon the countenance which in the glory of its entire surrender, shone with the light which has made her face the ideal and the dream; and with all their efforts, they never have been satisfied with the result.

It is given to us all to know the nature of that radiance, but not to realize its fullness. That is reserved for the day when we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him, the day which will bring the attainment of that perfection of character which, as the outcome of the finished work of Christ, will mark the completed purpose of God in the soul of man.

So it was given to the Psalmist to be stirred by this light in the faces of some men whom he knew, and to recognize it as the supreme good that comes to men when they are obedient to God and surrender themselves to His love and to His service. It is the declaration of the unchanging truth that man is made in the image

of God, that the life that is in us is life from God, and that only as that life is realized in something of its fullness by the turning of the soul to its Maker and the opening of the heart to the inflowing stream of His love, do we attain for ourselves the contentment which marks the abiding peace that comes when our every power has been called to its noblest exercise and we have found our home in God.

X

CHRIST THE RESTORER

“And He said unto him : ‘ Verily, I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.’ ”—*Luke 23 : 43.*

SOME years ago a New England judge, the most prominent man in his town, appeared before the committee of the local church asking to be received into membership on confession of his faith. There was no revival, and there had been no previous intimation of the change in his heart or life. He said, “You will be surprised. I am not influenced by anything that has occurred in the church ; I have not been converted by any sermon ; but I cannot stand the influence of the life of my neighbour Deacon Blank. For thirty years I have observed that old man, and at last I am convinced that his life is governed by a higher power than any that I have known, and I have sought him to learn how I might have the same influence in my life ; and I have given myself to his Lord.”

A few weeks ago a high class Hindoo, a young Brahmin, drifted into a Bowery mission

one Sunday night. He remained at the close of the meeting to talk with the leader. He was travelling for purposes of study in foreign lands, had been for some time in England and had come to this country in pursuit of further teaching. He had been untouched by anything he had heard of Christianity in India, or had seen either in London or in New York. But what he heard and saw in that mission meeting, in the testimony of the men who told what Jesus Christ had done for them, reached his soul. And before he left the company of that plain leader who remained with him till two o'clock in the morning, he had kneeled by his side and given himself to Christ.

Here is the key to what happened on the cross. It was the first manifestation of the power of the deathless Christ, the first instance in the long line of men who have been saved by Him, the first witness to the Saviour who lives to-day. We turn to that hour to see exactly what happened.

Attention has generally been absorbed by Jesus' promise of immortality when He said to the thief: "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Many arguments have been drawn from it as to the immediate transfer of the penitent soul at death from the life of earth to the life of heaven, and the nature of

that Paradise into which the soul goes in companionship with its Lord. But we can pass all that by for the hour. Precious as it is, there is something of greater consequence.

The story is of a highway robber being executed for his crimes. He was evidently a hardened man, and the hardness of his heart and life is indicated by the expressions of his companion who, in the fierceness of his agony, cursed Jesus, as he cursed himself and everybody within reach. But this man in the hour of his death finds himself crowded up against Jesus. Their experiences for the moment, in the crucifixion, are identical. He turns his face towards Him and in some sudden and unexplained way he is won by Him. It is immaterial just how. Sometimes we can tell how confidence and love are born. Often, we cannot. We use a convenient word and say there is an instinctive something in us that now and again moves us to another. It is sufficient to know that something in the soul of that dying robber answers the look in the face of the suffering Christ. We have no description of the Saviour's appearance, and the efforts of artists through all the centuries to depict Him for us have resulted only in representations of tragic pain and a countenance full of repellent agony. There is no record of words that were spoken.

It must remain sufficient for us that in that supreme hour the long dead inner self of the thief awoke. His soul was discovered by another; and that discovery of his soul carried into his heart the conviction that there was One who believed in its existence. It suddenly was shown to him that that other, at least, believed that goodness was still alive in him. In this way, all unexpectedly to himself, his soul was suddenly brought to his own knowledge. It was made once more to live for him because it lived to another better than himself. There had suddenly come into his life One filled with a divine love. That love had embraced him just as he was; and in a moment all had changed. Up to that moment he had been living what he had come to believe was the only life possible for him. He once had known a better life. Since then he had often dreamed of it, but it had altogether passed away; and so completely had it gone that to him it was dead. He had ceased to believe in the very possibility of its existence. Life had become to him what life is to any man given over to the pursuit of reckless evil,—little more than a living death. Its joys were forced. Its possibilities were only of a more hopeless bondage and a deeper discontent. What he knew of himself, he knew that others must know, or coming to

know, would regard as he regarded it. He saw no door of hope within the range of his own experience, or as possible to him through what might come from without. He was now meeting the penalty of transgression which he had long anticipated,—a penalty which he knew to be just, as he had known that it was inevitable. The only end of a career that had not halted at any wickedness was a punitive death.

In a moment his evil life had changed in its relations. It had become what Maeterlinck calls "a goodness that had got off the track." He did not know it so. He never had for a moment so regarded it, nor had that thought been presented to him. But here is One who does so regard it, One so different from himself, so different from all other men he had ever known, that the sudden revelation of His view of him,—the thief,—strikes him with compelling force. It seems to say: "Stop, think! If this is so, and my life is goodness that has got off the track, perhaps it can be put back." Here is One who still believes in him, or the suggestion would not have sprung into his heart. He is a man who has lost his way. It was his own doing,—his reckless disregard of the right way, his headlong rushing into evil. He has known that and he has faced the consequences. He pleads no excuse, and he knows no palliation.

He is the engineer who has run his train past the danger signals and has smashed it into the station house and killed innocent people. He has sprung from the engine, and fled with the purpose never again to take a throttle in his hands. He has ruined himself as completely as he has destroyed others. He has cherished no lingering thought that the past could be undone or that there was any hope for him of being other than he now is. His life is as evil as his heart has become hard, and he is steadying himself to face the onrushing death with closed teeth and with tongue that shall not utter a cry.

But here is a sudden and overcoming thought. Can it be possible that his perversity is a power of devotion somehow inverted, that his bitterness and his hate are a sweet affection soured by misdirection? In ignorance of himself and of God, he has been driving himself to destruction because he did not know that even for him there was still a heaven and One to help him to attain it. Now he awakens. He is not wholly lost. There is One who believes in him. It may be, therefore, that life for him is not forever turned to death. It has not all been wasted and destroyed. This Saviour who has come to him, though at such a late hour and in such strange conditions, but who sees in him even in the

agony of death, the possibilities of life, can save him for that life. Because Jesus believes in him he begins to believe in himself. He believes in Christ. Paradise is his because his soul has been awakened, in fact born anew. He has received life as a gift from One in whom the Divine Life cannot be extinguished for Himself or for His fellow sufferers. He was dying, and from the physical death there was no escape ; but he was dying forever blessed, because in that supreme moment he was made aware of the Divine Love and the Divine Saviour able to save him from himself, because Jesus so believed in him that even in that hour of the consummation of his guilty life, Jesus saw in him a soul made in the image of God, and summoned that soul by the power of a love that could both awaken and forgive, into the life for which it was made and out of which it seemed to have gone so hopelessly astray.

Men everywhere are discussing Christianity. The whole problem centres in Jesus Christ. Men argue about Revelation, about the Bible, about the fall of man, about miracles and the like. All is unconvincing. Then men turn to Him. When we come to know Him as Paul knew Him when he cried, "Who art Thou, Lord?" and heard the answer, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," in prompt self-sur-

render we are moved to say, What wilt Thou have me to do?

Then we know Jesus Christ for Himself. It is His Presence,—the Light of God that shone in His face,—that awakens us and makes for us a new life possible. We can be born again. We can be set back on the track. The right direction can yet be given to our powers. Life with all that it means and with all that we tried to forget in it once more opens before us. We give ourselves to Him and then everything falls into line. The Resurrection, the miracles, the mystery of the Incarnation all are as they should be. They could not have been otherwise. God has indeed redeemed the world unto Himself, and the glad heart of the penitent sinner cries out, "Because He lives, I shall live also."

It is this awakening of the dead self, the discovery of one who believes that goodness is still possible in us, that awakens in our hearts the conviction that that goodness is still within our reach. No matter who I am, or how low I have sunk, or how weak I have proved myself before temptation, or how completely others have cast me out, Jesus Christ believes in me. He has come to seek and to save me. He has given Himself for me as truly and as completely as if I were the only sinner in all God's universe, for He came to seek and to

save the lost, no matter how many or how few, and as a true seeker of the lost, He is in search of the one that is lost, and the joy among the angels of God over the finding is as true over the one as over the million.

With the finding of the lost and the revelation of the redeeming love, comes the gift of the new power. The life that He bestows is a genuine life. It continues. It unfolds from within. It reproduces itself. It bears a fitting fruit. Joy and peace and self-control and strength come with it. One who but now was dead is alive again. The fear of death vanishes. He has confidence in the life beyond because he has the assurance of the life that now is. Paradise is a reality because it has already begun in the soul, and all because the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is the revelation of One who believes in us long after we have ceased to believe in ourselves.

Here then is the commission for every disciple of Jesus Christ. It is to get goodness back on the track, to help men believe in what is still in themselves. They have tried to destroy it. It is buried under the consciousness of what seems a burned out life; though it is deep beneath the ashes it is a live coal still. They do not know it. They do not believe in its possibility, only because they do not know

Jesus Christ. The business of the follower of Jesus Christ is to be Jesus Christ to them, to show that He believes in them by believing in them first ourselves. As we are able to do this, Christ speaks through His disciples to those who are in need of Him, and the Unseen Christ reveals Himself in the faith and the love of His disciples.

One day there stood in the doorway of a Fifth Avenue house, a poor outcast girl. The mistress of that house had come across her in some philanthropic work, had taken her to her own home, while she sought in vain to find her a permanent place in order to make a better life possible for her. When finally she failed, with tears in her eyes, she had to tell the poor girl that she could find no place that was open to her; and with bitter thoughts in her heart, the poor wanderer had turned again into the street. Now she returned and when once more she stood in the presence of her would-be benefactress, she said, as explaining her return, "I could not stand your crying." She had not believed in the reality of her desire to help. She had been herself so long an outcast, and had so entirely given up all hope, that she could not believe that any one believed in her. But the manifest strength of the love that had sought to save her, speaking through the tears that

could not be repressed, had touched her heart, and now she came back with a new purpose, because it had aroused within her a new hope.

“Behold how He loved him!” was the unwilling confession of the onlookers as Jesus stood by the grave of Lazarus ; and it was that conviction breaking into men’s hearts on the left and on the right during the three brief years of the Saviour’s ministry which drew about Him the disciples through whom the coming of His kingdom in the hearts of men was to be made possible.

The other day a rich man who had long neglected his church and was turning away to a life of indifferent carelessness spoke to a minister who chanced to sit by his side ; after talking with him quietly about his life and the needs of his soul, he suddenly said : “ Why has no one ever come to me as you do, all these years ? ” It was the sudden discovery that there was one, though a comparative stranger, who still believed in the possibilities hidden in his heart, the possibilities of deep and true spiritual feeling, the possibilities of a kindled love for his Saviour, and of the re-awakening of the soul that had allowed itself to be buried under the cares and the pleasures of a crowded life ; it was this that reached and touched that

heart and called it back to the life which it seemed rapidly to be losing forever.

This, then, is the message of that story of the thief, the witness to the reality of the power that lies in the love of one soul for another, as it bears testimony to God who is Himself love, and who is not willing that any should perish. The love that believes in us is the very love of God Himself using a human love in all its pitiful helplessness to bring us to the knowledge of a divine love which even the hardest heart cannot daunt, and by which even the chief of sinners can be saved.

XI

DEFEATING GOD

“And He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”—*Matt. 13: 58.*

THEIR unbelief must have seemed a very small matter to the men of Nazareth. If they gave any thought at all to their manner of receiving Jesus, they must have said, “We are treating Him a good deal better than when He was here before.”

At His previous visit they had risen in great anger and rushed Him out of the city to kill Him by throwing Him over the cliff. Now they have no such feelings. They do not oppose Him, or even argue against Him. Indeed, they are rather indifferent than otherwise. If they think at all, they may find it rather difficult to account for their change of attitude,—difficult to explain either why they were so stirred up before or why they are so little concerned now. As it is, they are disposed just to let Him alone.

They talk about Him, they ask perhaps who He really is, what He has done, and what He

is trying to do ; but they do not care enough even about their own talk to pursue the subject very far, or to trouble themselves to get answers to their questions. They find it easier simply to pay no attention at all. They have other concerns that are more interesting, if really not more important. One has his farm, another his merchandise, and a third has married a wife. They are very much like the multitude of men to-day.

But this was Nazareth, Jesus' early home. At the height of the Galilean's ministry, when men were saying that all the world had gone after Him, for some unexplained reason Jesus leaves the neighbourhood of Capernaum and the shores of the Sea of Tiberius, where He found so many willing hearers, and crosses the country to work among His own people. "Even His brethren believed not Him," is the brief sentence of the Evangelist in another connection. Perhaps it was that He could not bear to think of their persistent separation from Him that led Him in the day of His greatest success to turn aside and go back to them. He hoped that at last they would open their hearts, and that He might have the joy of knowing that they and the neighbours among whom He had grown up, the community which we can imagine He most loved, would change

their attitude, and give Him the support He so much sought, or perhaps, more exactly, would not be left out from the blessing which it was His privilege to bring to them, as to the world. In any case, He had come to Nazareth for the last time. There may have been some risk about it. Perhaps He thought that they might even again attempt to kill Him. But whatever the thought was, the fact is that He had turned aside from people who were greeting Him with demonstrative approval, and from a section of the country where the wave of His popularity was sweeping everything before it and where His career and His message were alike approved, to go once more to Nazareth. The shadow of the cross was already reaching out towards Him. It was but a little more than a year before the end. His feeling of the imminence of that end must have been intensifying. His anxiety over His mission and for those whom He loved must have been rapidly deepening. What He had to do must be done quickly. He may already have realized that it was His last opportunity of appealing to the people of His early home. In any case, it was their last chance.

And now He could do nothing. The brief record is, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." As we trans-

late it into the thought of to-day, we read, "Those men of Nazareth defeated God."

The record in its simplicity is deeply significant. Jesus could do something for them. He taught them in their synagogue, in so much that they were astonished. God can always do something, whether men bear or forbear. He causes the sun to shine on the just and on the unjust, and the rain to fall on the evil and on the good. God's blessings are new every morning to all of us, whether we believe or not. God is true to Himself in that He is very loving and very pitiful; but there is a limit even to what God can do.

In this particular instance the record stands that Jesus could do "not many mighty works." The significance of the statement appears when we ask, "What were His mighty works?" For the answer is, all that He did to make God real to men. He had come for that purpose. Men have always had a traditional worship. These Jews perhaps always had said their prayers. Many of them were good fathers and mothers, and doubtless reasonably honest men and women. The ordinary life went on quietly and regularly among them. They were easily content with a traditional religion, and with so much quietness of conscience as comes with religious habits that are substantially maintained.

But God was not real to them. They had no vivid apprehension of His presence or of His love, or of the kind of service which God seeks from us all. Their affections were like the affections of most men everywhere—set on the things which are nearest them,—the daily concerns of the common life. They had no true sense of God's love, of His righteousness, or of His justice, no fear of God as the final Judge, no clear recognition of what God needed to do for them as men whose hearts are weak before temptation and soiled and hardened with many a sin.

Jesus had come to change all this. He sought to do it by what He said about God, by what He did in God's name, by what He showed Himself to be as He presented Himself in the beauty and the purity and the charm of His own life and character, winning men to a higher purpose and revealing to them the blessings of a new life, helping them at once to escape from the bondage of their past and to come out into the new life of the sons of God. His mighty works appeared only when men heeded Him enough to begin to see. Then everything that He did took on something of the supernatural. God drew near to men and made Himself known in His words and in His works, as in Himself. This was the work which no other had ever

done and which constitutes the miraculous element in the revelation of God in Christ.

And now they treated His words lightly and tossed them about as if they were no more than the casuistry of the rabbis. His deeds, so peculiar to Himself in their beneficence and in their wonderful power, they swept aside. They even said, "He has a devil. These exceptional works are witness to Beelzebub." Himself they ignored. "He is only another rabbi, one more of the many talkers." So they did not believe. And because of their unbelief His mighty works in their behalf were not performed. He could do nothing. Therefore He went away and never returned. The record stands as we read it, and Nazareth remains a monument of lost opportunities. It is a little village to which the traveller goes to find that it has no other monument of Jesus than the cliff over which His neighbours would have thrown Him in their hot passion of hate. And all this because they did not believe. The reason is not far to seek. "Mighty Works," are what God alone can do. They are what show God to us, and show us to ourselves. They are whatever makes God real, or makes real to men the heart of religion. "God and the soul, the soul and God," as Harnack says, "is the substance of Christianity." All else is secondary.

Jesus came to reach the souls of men. Not to believe in Him is to close the soul to God, and to shut out God from the soul. If He is prevented, therefore, from doing the one thing for which He has come into our earthly life, God is defeated in what may be called the supreme purpose of the Divine Heart. For as the creative work at the beginning led up to man as the crown of all, so all God's providential dealings lead up to the manifestation of Himself and the opening of men's hearts to His indwelling.

As the public rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel in its delivering Him to Pilate, and their pressing him to execution, so the rejection of Christ by the refusal of the individual soul to hear His message and heed His summons is that rejection which thwarts, not a passing impulse in the heart of God, but defeats what may be regarded as the eternal purpose which underlies all God's relation to His children. He has made us for Himself, and if we are not willing to give to Him His own, if we persist in closing our hearts to Him, if we, in a word, do not believe in Him or in His purpose concerning us, in that we do not receive His message or recognize His presence in the Person of His Son, our Saviour, then all that God purposes to accomplish in us is defeated, and we are left to a life, if it may be called a life,

from which God is excluded, and in which the consequences of our own ignorance and our own willfulness, and our own spirit of rebellion must be faced. Therefore, the rapidity of the change which takes place in the heart that is careless, and the finality of the result ; for indifference quickly passes into doubt, and doubt stiffens into denial, and denial hardens itself into persistent antagonism, and the soul that will not believe becomes the soul that at last has been fixed in hostility to its Maker. No wonder, then, that the mightiest of all God's works is the changing of the soul of the sinner. It is a marvellous process in which attention is first arrested. Anxiety over one's self quickly follows. Effort begins to appear in our awakened purpose to strive for something better ; and faith blossoms, as the gift of God Himself bringing the assurance of forgiveness for the past and strength for the future, and, at present, a surprising peace.

This was what the men of Nazareth rejected. They did not know it. They had little care. We may think that they would have done very differently could they have been aroused. The fact remains that Jesus Christ had come to them, had walked in their streets, had taught in their synagogue, and had appealed to them in all the ways He found open to Him ; but they

ignored His presence. They would not believe. And because of their unbelief simply,—not their antagonism, not their arguing against Him, not their seeking even to kill Him,—but simply because of their unbelief, He had to go away from them never to return ; and Nazareth is what it is to-day.

Many are those in this Christian community who are walking in their steps. To many, alas ! it would appear, as to them, Jesus may have come for the last time. That you will yourselves determine. Oh, do not sweep the thought aside. The text and this sermon are one more appeal. Defeat God ! and what remains ?

XII

THE BEAUTIFUL DEED

“ But the Lord answered, and said unto her : ‘ Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things : but one thing is needful : for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. ’ ”—*Luke 10 : 41-42.*

OUR sympathies join with those of the world which for many centuries have gone out to the much troubled Martha. Her experience pictures the common lot. It is appointed to us all more or less constantly to be anxious and troubled ; at least, we feel that we cannot escape it. Either our own necessities and condition, or the necessities and conditions of those about us, press hard upon our hearts. Even the lightest hearted and the most joyous among us, pausing to look back, are so conscious of the cares that have attended us, the trials through which we have passed, and especially the many failures we have made, the good resolutions broken, the purposes not attained, that when we find ourselves looking into that little home at Bethany, our hearts go out with quick sympathy to the burdened sister.

But whatever may be the common experience or whatever is the peculiar contribution which such care-taking souls make to the common life, and however great the obligation under which we are to the Marthas in our own homes and in the life about us, our Lord on this occasion passed that by in order that He might call to our attention and speak with peculiar solemnity of another aspect of service which Mary's conduct gave Him the opportunity of emphasizing.

Whatever our first impression may be, we cannot fail to note with what care He expresses His judgment, and with what manifest purpose He put it in a form to make it solemn teaching for His Church and His followers for all the future.

He was far from depreciating Martha's service or Martha's affection. It is expressly said, "Now Jesus loved Mary and Martha," as well as their brother Lazarus.

There is no occasion for making comparison between the sisters or entering into discussion as to the blessing of such careful service as Martha rendered. We are free to turn our minds in the channel of our Lord's thought, and to seek to discover, if we may, just what was the great truth which then filled His thoughts and which He sought to make up-

permost in ours. So we ask ourselves before the open text, "What was it in Mary's act which won for her and for it such distinguished preëminence?"

We all know the difference between the gift that is the expression of a grateful heart and the gift the value of which lies in its costliness. The worth of the one is exactly measured by its price in the market, by the immediate use to which it can be put, or in the exchange which it will secure. The other may have no market value. It is but a withered flower, a bit of ribbon, a leaf sent in a letter, some fragment of handiwork, but it is the expression of a love that is embodied in the gift, a love that tries to find utterance, that does not wait to obtain a gift of value, but that knows its own worth, and rejoices in the opportunity to pour itself out upon the one who has called it forth.

St. John gives us an account of another incident in this little home in Bethany, where Mary produced a box of costly ointment and poured it out in anointing the Saviour's feet, while Judas challenged the waste and figured the money value of the gift if only it had been sold that it might be given to the poor.

In what seems to be another account of the same incident, St. Mark couples with it the expression of our Lord, which is illuminative of

the thought before us. "Let her alone," He said, "she hath wrought," not "a good work," as it is in our English Bible, but in the more expressive Greek, "a beautiful work," "upon Me."

It had in it just that added touch which gives true value. What the beautiful form is to the vase, the delicate fragrance and exquisite colouring to the rose, the fineness of finish to a work of art, the charm in personal bearing, that which we feel, but find it difficult to describe, what makes one thing so much more precious than another having apparently equal usefulness, this lay in this act of Mary's.

It is because love carries this power in itself to make the common deed, the casual word, the passing opportunity, the occasion for its expression. The love-inspired act differs so much from any other! Mary in some way was doing a beautiful deed, and our Lord recognized it, and seized it, and held it up in perpetual remembrance as marking that relation to Himself which He often characterized as of superlative preciousness.

We all know what it means in common life, but we ask ourselves, "Are we thoughtful of it? As the days and weeks go by, are we mindful to seek occasion for it? Do we do this beautiful deed in our relations to those we love in

the home, in the circles of friendship, in our daily intercourse? The caress, the spoken word, the turning aside to sit at the feet,—in some way to give utterance to the affection that fills the heart and carries with it its perpetual delight to ourselves and those whom we love, are we mindful of it? Or do we allow it to be crowded aside by what we call the pressure of business, or the multitude of our cares, or the justifying excuse that it has been expressed before, and everybody knows it already? Here at once is the summons of the text for more frequent expression of love that conquers all, of the love that satisfies the heart, the love which is in itself the joy and the supreme content of life.

But this was by no means all in Mary's act. Love seeks comradeship; and comradeship is both the fruit and the root of love. Such dear friends walk hand in hand. We find strength in the sharing of a living presence. We utter our casual thought with the sweet consciousness that it is understood, and with eager expectancy of the prompt and sympathetic response.

How desolate is the life which finds no response, the lonely life of one who has no comrades, or who has schooled himself perforce of hard necessity of nature or of experience, to withdraw within himself as the snail within his shell, and to travel in abiding loneliness.

It is beautiful to think that our Lord, in His complete humanity, longed for that and responded to that which we find sweetest and best in our own life.

The cherished friend is coming to our house. How often we busy ourselves anxiously with careful preparation, only, when he comes, to find ourselves too tired for the enjoyment of the intercourse, the thought of which has filled our heart in anticipation. But when we are wise, how careful we are that there should be no such interruption, and how promptly, when the friend has come, we put all else aside and heart answereth to heart in the loving intercourse which often in its long experience but finds its full fruition in that again we are together.

Mary greatly welcomed the returning Christ, who now drawing near on His way to the crucifixion scene, and soon to leave that shadowed home never to return, sat at Jesus' feet. Is it any wonder that His eyes turned to her, that His heart opened in glad response, that His pulses throbbed with all the feelings with which we look upon those we love for the last time, and are so glad to recognize that the love we have for them answers back in the same love for us.

This indeed was the blessed possession that was never to be taken away from Mary. In all

the years to come, she was to carry as a treasure in her soul, the memory of that hour. She had sat at Jesus' feet, she had looked into His loving face, she had seen in the depths of His eyes the preparation for the giving of Himself for her and for the sins of the world. The memory of that hour was to remain so vivid, so satisfying, so compelling, in all her later life, that she entered at once into the knowledge of that new intimacy with the Risen Lord which was expressed in His promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

But we have to go still further. Mary's act bore testimony that she recognized what Jesus is in Himself, and what He demands of every soul that will come to Him finding life.

When we read the Old Testament, we are always aware that it is the story of the revelation of God to men like ourselves, with the same weaknesses, the same needs, the same exposures to temptation that we have. The revelation of God through this service is given under limitations which exist in our own lives. God was striving to make Himself known to the world, but He could only do it in so far as the hearts of a common humanity were opened to the knowledge of an Unseen and Holy God.

When we turn to the New Testament, there

is a significant change. Here is the story of One who comes with supreme claims. He is separated at once from common men. He bears in Him the fullness of life that is in God. He says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He says, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." He says, "Those whom the Father hath given Me, I have kept." He says, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." His claims do not change or cease from the beginning to the end. His efforts always are directed to leading those who gather about Him to a true understanding of Himself. His teaching, His miracles, His companionship,—all have this one purpose. Slowly, with great difficulty, and always with manifest incompleteness, even His most intimate disciples are led to this knowledge. Not until after His death and His resurrection do they even seem to be fully aware of the meaning of His teaching or of His true character. But here in the course of it, as the end draws near, we find in this woman, one of the sisters whom Jesus loved, the expression of a heart which seems to have opened as other hearts about her had not, to a true understanding of His Person. Instantly He responds to it. Quickly He exalts it, and emphasizes the one thing needful, which is recognition of Himself, the opening of the heart and the surrendering

of the life with satisfying delight, in its obedience to Him. He says, "Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." So Mary stands as the type and the pattern for those who, in the years to come, shall find Christ, and finding Him shall enter into life. The weary world burdened with its sins, the broken heart conscious of the guilt from which it cannot escape, the eyes that have long been blind to the evidence of a Divine Love, and the ears that have always been stopped to the voice of God calling men to know Him, and, knowing Him, to love and serve Him,—all now find themselves addressed as never before and led in ways hitherto closed to them, to that knowledge of God and that acceptance of Him and His power to save which brings the foregoing things with life and peace.

This was the message of the disciples after the Resurrection. Around this truth gathered the early Church. Upon it it framed its creeds, which were simple statements of fact, not theological discussions. It bore testimony that the Father Almighty, the Maker of the heaven and the earth, had come in the Person of His Son Jesus Christ to be incarnate in our world, to suffer and to die for our deliverance from sin, to rise again that He might open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers, and in due time to

come again to be the Judge of all. It was this testimony to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world, the revelation of God that was in Him, and to His power to bring men to God and to bring God to men, that constituted the new Gospel, around which and by means of which the Christian Church came into existence and proceeded to cast up the highway for the coming of the Kingdom of God in all the world.

Mary therefore was apparently the first, of all who heard Jesus Christ, to recognize something of the fullness of the Godhead that was in Him. And in that hour, so near to the hour of His crucifixion, it is easy to see with what solemnity and joy the Lord, passing on to look down upon Jerusalem and weep over her, gazes for a moment into the shining face of the disciple, who was in her newborn faith, the prototype and the picture of the multitude which no man can number, who in the ages to come are to proclaim Him their Risen Lord.

Finally, Mary's act emphasizes the fact that there are times and seasons in our relations to God. The Lord's ministry was rapidly passing away. The opportunity for the privileges of loving expression and for personal service would be few. Mary seizes this one as it passes; and the wisdom of her act, not to say

its supreme importance, is what the Lord recognizes and approves. It is not permitted to us to live always on the heights of Christian opportunity or of spiritual privilege. There seem to be often periods, sometimes long, in the average life when the pressure of daily duties is too heavy for us and anxious cares overwhelm even the most spiritually minded Christian,—periods in which it is hard to throw off the oppression of the daily burden or to escape more than imperfectly, from the cloud of depressing care.

It is well for us if we can, with Martha, busy ourselves about the necessary duties and hold fast enough to our faith to make it a tribute of service to the Master Himself.

But there are times when the Lord means to give us surcease of care, and to lift our spirits into the light of His countenance, and to create in us the radiant joy of a Divine companionship,—times when our spirit responds to the spirit of God, and when we are permitted to hear the voice of God calling to us as the still small voice spoke to the prophet after the whirlwind and the fire. Then is the golden opportunity for the man who would know God. In such hours, the Master calls us to new duties, or opens to us new doors of opportunity, or seeks to bestow upon us new joys in new revelations

of Himself. Well for us if, with Mary, we recognize the hour and the privilege.

Mary was perhaps the first of the followers of our Lord to discover that He wants not so much our work as ourselves. In itself, what is our work in the Kingdom of God anyway? How small, how ignorant, how ineffective, and how insufficient it is compared to the power of God to accomplish all that He desires and to bring in the Kingdom of Christ when He wills! But He gives us the privilege of working together with Him for our sake, rather than for His. The work is for our development and our discipline. It gives meaning to our daily life. It exalts it to the plane of God's eternal purpose and makes it a part of that very eternity into which at last we are about to go, and of which we learn in time that this life is indeed a part. But the value of this service lies in its being an expression of personal allegiance. "My son, give Me thine heart," was not only the original invitation, but the enduring one. It never has been outgrown or transcended. The expression of the love of the heart, the individual devotion of the soul in its entirety, will ever remain the best response to the Divine call, for we shall never cease to hear the injunction, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily

and follow Me." It is the surrender that is involved in the following, the completeness of the satisfaction that is found in being with Him, that constitutes the exalting reward and the sufficient service.

Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, is the emblem of this attitude on the part of the true believer in every age. She anticipates the disciples themselves in discovering that though we have the privilege of inviting our Lord, He comes as the host rather than the guest. "If any man hear My voice and will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." How little even the disciples caught of the true meaning of those most significant last three words, "he with Me"!

We welcome the royal guest to our humble home. We busily prepare for Him. It is a great honour in the eyes of all the community that He should come to break bread with us. We have prepared a table and made ready our frugal meal. It is the best that we have, which we are offering. Now He stands at the door. We hasten to open it. He smiles upon us with loving response. When lo! we discover that His hands are full of gifts. He comes indeed to receive and to do us the honour of entering. In fact, He comes laden with that which will enrich all our life. He partakes of what we

have to offer, but in the partaking, He bestows upon us gifts beyond price. For He is our Lord, He for whom and by whom and in whom all things exist, He who has access to the treasure house of God, He who being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich!

This is the form in which His invitation comes to us to-day. By the thoughts in our heart, by the words of His Gospel, by the prickings of conscience, and the longings in our own souls for better things, He is calling us to arise and follow Him, without waiting to make ourselves better or to prepare offerings which may be worthy of His acceptance. He invites us to come just as we are, because He loves us for our own sake and for His; and His invitation is, indeed, that if we will come unto Him, we shall find life, and finding life, shall have all.

XIII

ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE

“Jesus said unto him, ‘If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth.’”—*Mark 9: 23.*

THE Revised Version gives a new force and beauty to this familiar text. In our Lord’s interview with the father of the demoniac child, following upon the scene of the Transfiguration, the Authorized Version reads, “Jesus said unto him, ‘If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.’” The Revision puts it, “Jesus said unto him, ‘If thou canst!’”—in amazement that any one should question the sufficiency of God, or the willingness on His own part to be the minister of God in such a work of healing. There is not a word of discussion as to the character or extent of the need. That was plain to every onlooker. There was human misery in its most distressing form,—a father’s heart rent and bleeding over the hopeless condition of his son lying on the ground foaming and grinding his teeth before them all. He had come to the disciples, and now he says in his

despair, "I spake with Thy disciples that they should cast it out and they were not able." Seeing Jesus approach, with a last despairing hope he had turned to Him, and he cries, "If Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us." To this cry, our Lord answers. He turns at once to the treasure house of God, so vast, so sufficient for every human need, so near at hand, and so available for all. The world had not known it; and the world would not now believe it. To this end, He Himself had come. He had left the joys of heaven, had taken upon Himself our sicknesses and borne our sorrows, that He might deal with just such suffering as this. Now He says, "Here is help immediate, ample,—waiting for your use, if you only knew it, if you would only open your eyes to see it and your heart to take it in."

On the doors of the vaults in some banks, you can see time locks. They are so arranged that when the vault is closed, it cannot be opened until the hour of business the next day. Bankers have learned that no vault is safe when the man, who carries the key or possesses the combination, may be attacked in his home by robbers and forced at the point of a revolver or under torture, to go with them and open it. In defense against the weakness of human nature,

the time lock has been invented, and now, no matter how great the need, how large or how small the treasure thus protected, it is safe against any one's approach or any one's use until the appointed hour.

Suppose the treasury of God's love were so guarded. Suppose that it were closed under specified conditions, to be opened, and its treasures made available only at certain hours and seasons to meet certain needs, or at the demand of a certain kind of applicant. How strange it would seem! How comparatively useless for our necessities! As it is, it not only is not so closed, but the door stands forever wide open, and our Saviour as He addresses the suppliant father, seems to turn and wave His hand to show the nearness of the treasure, the openness of the door, the availability of all the resources, not only for him who stands there the suppliant, but for every man in all conditions. Over it is written "Whosoever will may come." All that we have to do is to see this and to believe it, and to believe it so far forth as to take advantage of it. Jesus' astonished exclamation, "If thou canst!" is forced out of His heart by the surprise that any one in whatever need should question the abundance of the supply.

So much for the words themselves. They

give us occasion to ask, "What is the meaning and what the place of faith in religion?" The Bible uses the word from the beginning to the end,—from the moment when Abraham believes in God, and it is "counted unto him for righteousness," to the end where the great multitude that no man can number, is made up of those who have believed and who have followed the Lamb who now sits upon the throne. We ask, "What is this believing, this having 'faith,' upon which so much depends in the Gospel of Salvation?"

Let us pass by at once the ordinary illustrations to show what is the place of what we call trust, in the common life. Everybody knows that trust, or confidence, or faith,—whichever term we use,—is necessary in all human affairs.

Why does not the little child walk? He has desire and he has muscular strength, but he distrusts himself. He fears that he will fall. The mother puts out her finger and the little hand closes about it, and quickly he gains the confidence which is necessary for the first step. So the growing boy learns to skate, and to leap, and to vault as he acquires confidence in his own ability to do the thing to which he is moved. So in turn the man engages in large affairs. We wonder at the courage with which the business man will invest so much of his cap-

ital in the great structure or the new industry, or the costly patent,—the amazing enterprise with which the commerce of the world is carried on and great ventures are taken in far-away lands. It is not the work of the youth, but of the man who has learned through long experience to trust his own judgment ; and that confidence now vindicates itself. So the community creates its institutions and uses them because it has learned to trust in the stability of the social organization. We trust our neighbours, we trust the police, we trust the means of transportation in the city, we trust the Government. We go about our daily affairs and we return and retire at night in peace because of this which may be called our social trust. Everywhere faith appears. Everywhere faith is necessary alike in all situations. We mean by it that conviction which enables a man to summon all his faculties to unite in the purpose, or the act, or the mental state in which all his energy works itself out. Our habits are established, our feelings are gratified, our experience is made profitable. In short, the purposes of the hour are accomplished.

But passing from all these familiar illustrations, let me lead your thought in another direction. Consider the relation of the parent

and the child. As you look at the little child, you see merely an infant, but the father of that child has a vision far different. He sees all the possibilities of the future, the joy of his own heart through the years of the boy's growing life, the perpetuating of himself in his son, the heir of his business, the inheritor of his purposes, the life that is projecting his life and the work to which he has given himself into the years that shall follow his departure. Therefore, because he has that vision, he devotes himself without restraint to the welfare of his son. His money, his time, his anxious thought,—all go to the education of his child. He lavishes his affection upon him. He gives him his constant care. He accumulates for him his property. He devotes all without restraint. And the reason is manifest. He has faith in that little child. On the strength of the vision that he has of the future, his faith lays hold of the unseen, and makes it so vivid and so real to him that his whole life is governed by it. When he stands with that infant in his arms in the church for consecration in baptism, this is what is before his mind. He sees all the blessed possibilities of a human soul, the gift of God. He treasures the promises of God concerning it. He looks for divine help in doing his part for the attaining of those hopes. He

recognizes the need of a strength higher than his own. He asks the Church to join with him in their prayers for that help, because he is aware that there are possibilities in the future of his son greater even than he himself can imagine, and which are measured only by the goodness of God.

Or, take another illustration.

Two distinct forces are always to be recognized in the development of government and the organization of human society. These forces express themselves in opposing parties variously called the Conservative and the Radical, the Tory and the Liberal, or what you will. They represent those on the one hand whose thought is set upon institutions which they value because of their age or because of the smoothness and efficiency of their working; and on the other hand, they represent those who exalt principles above institutions. The antagonism is deep and permanent. According to the one, principles exist for institutions; according to the other, institutions exist for principles. These forces always clash, and in their struggle, human society moves forward and institutions and governments are developed. We constantly hear it said that men are tired of this perpetual turmoil. They wish we had in America a military despot, or, if not

that, some form of fixed monarchical rule, that we might be spared the endless disturbance that comes from recurring elections with all the agitation and wrangle they make. They would be glad if the presidential election might occur only once in eight years or in twelve years, or better,—not at all.

The reply is that what they call disturbance and unrest is in reality education. It is the opportunity for presenting truth to men, for the restatement of eternal principles, for the awakening of the minds of men to know the meaning of life, of order, and human society; that, in fact, nothing is more precious, nothing is better for developing and magnifying the human mind than this same disturbance. It shakes men out of their selfishness and their sloth. It forces them to consider the interests of others no less than their own, to look forward and backward over human history, to weigh and measure the elementary forces which are never to be ignored.

In just this lies the preëminent greatness of President Lincoln. More than any other president from the days of the Fathers was he called in the critical hour to choose between institutions on the one hand and principles on the other. The issue was sharp in an unparalleled degree. On the one side, were

the institutions of Slavery and State Rights, and the Constitution of the United States, and the decisions of the Supreme Court, and the fixed interpretations and habits of the people based upon tradition and on established custom. On the other side, were the eternal principles of human liberty,—the right of every man, whatever his colour or his condition, to the pursuit of liberty and of happiness, and the abiding conviction that human society can only develop and human welfare can only be attained for any man and any class in proportion as liberty is secured for all. He made his choice, and in that choice he showed and secured his own preëminent greatness. He made himself forever the ideal of the party of liberty not only in America but in the world.

I asked one of the Russian revolutionary leaders who was with us winter before last if he did not believe that the aristocratic party in Russia could be reasoned with, that one by one they might be made to see the truth as he and his compatriots hold it; and he answered "No." "But," I said, "they are men, and all men are open, whether they know it or not, to the force of argument. Patience and incessant presentation of the truth will in time break down unreasoning opposition however stubborn." His answer was, "Not in this case.

There is nothing to be done but to kill these men." "Then," I replied, "you do not believe that they are men. You think them beasts, for only beasts cannot be reasoned with, and must be killed to be overcome." "Yes," he said, "they are wolves and not men." "Very well," I replied, "then God help you, and God help Russia, for from such men as you and from such as you represent, there is absolutely no hope."

Here, then, is the place of faith. It is the witness to our belief not only in things that are not seen, not only in principles that are enduring, but in men, and all that is best in men as children of God, endowed with reason, with a conscience, and with a will to choose between the right and the wrong, between the better and the worse. Everywhere this power of faith is demanded. It is the one essential thing in every form of human life. Is it strange then that faith is the essential in matters of religion, that the saving of the soul, man's crowning possession, turns upon faith? The vision of the unseen is not an idle dream. It is the awakening of those powers by virtue of which we are children of God. That many times repeated text of the Scripture is in three words: "The just;" that is, those who find life, who realize the purpose of God and enter into

it, "shall live;" that is, shall know that life, and make it their own, "by faith;" that is, by the use of this power by virtue of which we are men and not beasts, by which we can summon all that is within us and our very selves to that life which God in His loving kindness has opened to us, in which escaping the bondage of sin and of passion, breaking away from our own despairing habits, our enduring helplessness, we can by the divine energy planted within us, rise into that better life where we shall know God and have strength to serve Him. "The just—shall live—by faith!" for there is no other way in which men can live.

When God summons us then, to believe, what does He mean? He means that we shall recognize that we are not made for this world only. We are not like the beasts of the field which to-day are here and to-morrow are gone, not to return. But, as the wise man of the Scripture has put it, "He hath set eternity in their hearts." God has planted in us that capacity for better things, which, when we come to ourselves, we interpret in Augustine's phrase, "Thou hast made me for Thyself, and my heart cannot rest until it find itself in Thee." Faith is the summons to recognize this, our high calling of God. It is our committing ourselves to that which is outside and above one's self,

reaching up and laying hold of God's truths and of God Himself, the awakening of our better self, the summoning of our spiritual energies that we may be what God intended us to be.

So this summons of faith is a summons to recognize that God is over all, both in this world and in the next. We owe Him love and service. We must give to Him the final account. He has a vast treasury of good to bestow, joys now, and possibilities beyond. Faith is then the loving response of the soul to God, whom to know aright is life eternal. Faith is the recognition of the fact that remembering God is opening the door for the sweetest and most enduring joy. Earthly pleasures pall and fail; the keenest of them and the most promising of them in time prove as empty as the most trivial. But when the soul awakens to know God, when it gathers all its powers and gifts for His service, it discovers in itself a new capacity of pleasure, a new fullness of realized joy, which is like manna to the hungry or the opening of the very fountains of life to the thirsty. It is a force recognized by the soul, bringing at once an infinite peace as it tells of the joys that are beyond, and of that life where we are to be hid with Christ in God,—the life where we shall “see as we are seen and know as we are

known." The ancient religions of India have made much of the thought of Nirvaña where human existence shall be lost in the eternal. The faith of Christ makes that yearning a reality and gives us in definite form, the possession of that fellowship with God, which the human heart must forever crave.

Faith tells us that we can never reach this possibility or experience these joys by ourselves. We have not attained to them here, and we know it, and God knows it ; and we cannot attain to them and will not without God's help. Therefore, the summons to a faith which lays hold upon God as the helpless upon the strong, and by means of which the very strength of God comes into our life and into our hearts ; which enables us to do what otherwise would be impossible, and to work out by Divine help, the Divine purpose in us. So, the faith becomes the Gospel of Jesus Christ, bearing testimony that God has come to us in the person of His Son. In that way the life of faith becomes a blessed reality. For, Jesus does not rebuke us for our sins or our follies. He does not argue with us over our possibilities or our shortcomings. He simply presents Himself. We see in Him what we should be, and also what God is, and through Him the love of the Father lays hold of us, His children. We begin to long to

be better men and women for His sake. We long to attain to the joy and peace which fill His heart. We long to grow into His likeness and to reach the possibilities which are realities in Him. We long, in short, to know and love the God from whom He comes and whose witness He is. Then we hear His voice and we follow Him. We believe. We choose. We give ourselves to Him ; and then comes the new life. We begin to live by faith. It is not our doing, or our making life for ourselves. It is God's giving His life to us, renewing our hearts, forgiving our sins, cleansing our very souls from what is defiled and would destroy. So, faith,—living by faith—is the one underlying truth of the whole Bible because the whole Bible is true to life. “Believe, and all things are possible.” Stand off, keep away, remain on the other side, hold back, hesitate, argue, doubt, and what follows? Even God can do nothing, and the gulf between us and Him becomes impassable.

XIV

HINDRANCES AND HELPS

“Jesus saith unto him, ‘Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know Me, Philip?’”—*John 14: 9.*

THERE is an infinite pathos in these words uttered as they were by our Lord in His last interview with His disciples. The three years of His patient labour with them, striving to make Himself known to them and fit them to be His disciples in the future, were behind Him, and before Him were Gethsemane and Calvary. It was, therefore, the last hour of their intimate relations and of His eager service. One was immediately to deny Him; another had already planned His betrayal; all were to forsake Him and flee. We wonder that after all which had transpired such words could now be spoken. But the experience of the twelve disciples stands in such close connection with our own, and touches all life at so many points, that there is reason why we to-day should ask how it was that they did not know Him better.

One reason was, I imagine, that they had

not begun early enough. They were all grown men and probably most of them well on in middle life before they met the Lord. We all know how hard it is for men of that age to change their method of thought or of life, and how still more difficult it is to open the mind so thoroughly and to reconstruct all one's views so completely as is necessary to understand Jesus.

Now and again we hear parents expressing fear of their children being persuaded to become Christians or to join the Church too young. They say, "Wait until they come to years of discretion": as if in the years of ignorance of their own hearts and of the meaning of temptation they did not need all the help that could possibly be given them by the teachings and surroundings of the Church, and by the responsibility of the solemn confession which membership requires, to strengthen them against the perils which lie before their young feet!

One wonders how any one can raise such questions when he has before his mind the knowledge of his own personal history and of the promptness with which Satan begins his work in the youngest hearts. The fact is that the heart begins very early to lose its sensibility to religious truth. It has its appropriate sea-

sons for spiritual impression, just as truly as the mind has for intellectual apprehension, and as the body has for exercising new functions or putting forth new powers. If these years are allowed to pass without taking advantage of the opportunities they present, not only do they not recur, but the heart becomes so truly indurated that truth which once would have made a vivid and permanent impression now receives slight attention, and only with exceptional difficulty gains acceptance. The habit of unbelief readily establishes itself, the mind having the quality of fixing for itself the grooves in which it runs and from which afterwards it is growingly difficult to lift it. We get accustomed to live away from God, just as children brought up away from home not only know little or nothing of home, but become accustomed to their separation from it.

Add to these the consideration that if opening the heart to the love of God is postponed until adult life, by just so much is time for growth in the knowledge of God curtailed. If the great business of life is such growth that we may know God with something of fullness and personal apprehension, that our faculties may enlarge under that knowledge and the truth of God not only be made clear to us, but gain power with us, then by just so much as

the time is curtailed, is the growth impaired. Men may persuade themselves that by postponing an answer to the claims of religion until adult life, they gain power of understanding and know better what they then undertake, but the fact is abundantly proved by the history of the Church in all ages and in every condition that by far its largest growth is from those who come in early life, and, what is of still greater significance, that lapses in character are most abundant not among such young people but among those who join in later years. Experience abundantly confirms the impression that the younger the life that is consecrated to God, the surer is likely to be both its growth and its steadiness in that service.

Philip, it is true, was one of the earliest disciples, finding the Lord with John and James and Peter and Andrew at the time of his baptism, but nevertheless the three years of discipleship, given to men already settled in the life without Christ, had proved all too short for that understanding of the Master, and that complete acceptance of Him, for which He looked, and which laid such a burden on His heart when in His last hours He did not find it in them.

Another reason why Philip had not better known the Lord was the fact that the great

event in the Saviour's ministry,—His sacrificial death—had not yet occurred. We are apt to judge people by some single great event in their relations to us rather than by the constantly recurring incidents of daily intercourse. As a matter of fact, these incidental acts are the important ones in the revelation of character and in the establishing of affection, though we fail to remember it. The love of the husband and the wife, ripening and strengthening with the years, becomes what it is at last, so much sweeter and richer and fuller than it was imagined at the outset, not because of certain single great acts which may have been possible in the demonstration of affection, but because of the daily intercourse. In fact, "the thousand unremembered acts of kindness and of love" have bound them together, and made them to so know and love each other that their hearts have melted into each other until the weaknesses and even the faults that pertain to every human soul are either altogether overlooked, or become in themselves a new reason for tenderness and for love. The same is true of the relation of parents to children. The day comes when the son or daughter wakes up to discover what the love of the father and of the mother have been through the long years in which they watched over and provided for

them, though the years have left perhaps no single event so prominent in marking that care that it stands out notably in its effects. The child discovers that it is not any single thing that has been done or not done which is important as marking the true relation, but rather it is the whole life ; and each year, as it came and went, has given so much opportunity for the manifestation of the parental love, which through all has never wearied or weakened or changed.

Philip and the other disciples were looking for the great event, the shadow of which had rested upon our Lord's life certainly during the last months of His ministry and, perhaps, more or less through it all. They had been touched deeply and held by their daily intercourse with Jesus, but significant as were its notable features as we look back upon them to-day, it had not yet been so impressive, as to establish in them that knowledge of Him which prepared them for these last critical hours. In fact, it was with them very much as it is with us all, for with us religion has become an ordinary experience, often a commonplace one. When we are aroused by the testimony of others, or driven in some way to sharp self-examination, we find that we are waiting for some great manifestation, some exceptional moving of

God's Spirit upon our hearts, some revelation of God in our individual lives or inward experience, that shall lift us into a state of understanding or of spiritual fervour that would justify our confession and satisfy our deepest desire. But God's plan is that we shall learn to know Him in the ordinary relations of life, that we shall find room both to know ourselves and to put ourselves to the test of that service which will bring to us the full and satisfying knowledge of God in the common duties and relations of the life which He has assigned to us each. It was to this end that our Lord prayed that His disciples might not be taken out of the world, but kept from the evil. This earthly life, with its humdrum details and daily routine, is the arena upon which we are to win our honours and gain the fitness for our privileges as children of God which shall make that relationship a reality.

It is easy to see how in the exceptional circumstances of the short years of their walking with Jesus, the disciples failed to appreciate the opportunity of knowing Him in this relationship rather than in the startling events towards which their anticipations were turned.

So we come to the question practical to ourselves, "How shall we, the disciples of to-day, know our Lord as it is His desire, and our

privilege, that we should?" Several things are to be said in reply. We have not the opportunity which the early disciples had of hearing the voice and looking into the face of the Master, but we can observe the life and the spirit of those about us who love Him. We can know Him in those who live nearest to Him.

Herein lies the power of the missionary on the foreign field. He comes to a community which has never seen a Christian, with a message to deliver. The message is new, but he, himself, is newer and stranger than his words. Whether he is aware of it or not, attention is at once fixed upon him, as little by little he comes to be known to the people about him as having no selfish motive, and as animated by a love which is so strange to them as to be difficult to understand. But as it declares itself more and more unmistakably in his daily personal life and in his hourly intercourse with them, they are prepared to receive his message and to learn the character of the Lord who is his Master and whom he serves.

Read the story of John Paton in the New Hebrides, or of Livingstone and Coillard in Africa, and it is easy to see how such men were able not only to live many years unarmed and unprotected amid savages and in surroundings

that would have been full of imminent danger to any ordinary white man, but to win such a personal influence as to make their names a power long after their death, and to open the hearts of a multitude to the Gospel that they preached and lived.

Herein lies the worth of the biography of such men, for example, as General Gordon. One cannot read that book or the life of Fénelon, or Madam Guyon, or Frances Haver-gal, and many another of the same class, without feeling that the knowledge of Christ is within the reach of men and women in no essential respect different from ourselves, and without being moved to test ourselves by that knowledge and to strive to gain the same Christlikeness. General Gordon was a born fighter, but being such by nature and temperament the wonder was that everywhere whether in England or China or the Soudan men gave him their hearts. Many men were abler, many more brilliant, many more assured of success, but there was that in him that made men love him and trust him. All felt that here was a man in whose very face shone the love of Christ which filled his heart, and they recognized that there was in him that intimacy with Christ and that fullness of personal knowledge of Christ and perfect allegiance to Christ which made

him different from other men and gave to him an irresistible charm.

When the saintly Archbishop Leighton had left the room in the little inn where, as the story goes, he had been storm-bound for a night, a travelling business man who had been detained with him, arose and said: "If only such a saintly man as he is fitted to go to heaven, what will become of me?" When the next morning the good bishop appeared, that stranger came to him with heart filled with penitence for his sins, and asked how he might find forgiveness and be led to the same knowledge of the Lord which so possessed him.

This is the blessing which saintly lives diffuse in their ordinary intercourse, and this is the influence which is open to us all in the fellowship of the Church.

Jonathan Edwards wrote the "Life of David Brainerd," his young son-in-law, the saintly missionary to the Indians in New Jersey, in which were sayings like this: "I long to be as a flame of fire continually glowing in the Divine service and building up Christ's kingdom to my latest dying moment." That little book, filled with the presence of Christ, as disclosed in the life of one wholly given to Him, fell into the hands of the young Englishman, Henry Martyn, and sent him far away to try to do a

similar work in India, saying, "Ten thousand times more than ever do I feel devoted to the precious work. O, gladly shall this blood be shed, every drop of it, if India can be benefited in one of her children." Years afterwards travellers in Persia, where Henry Martyn died on his journey through central Asia on his way home, found aged men who remembered him and spoke of "that young Englishman" as "the most beautiful soul" they had ever seen.

We shall know more of Christ as we acquaint ourselves with the lives of those who have lived near to Him in the past, and put ourselves more and more completely under the influence of those about us who are living nearest to Him to-day.

Then again we shall gain larger knowledge of Christ as we bring our lives to the daily test of His. A more careful honesty, a more watchful governing of the temper and of the tongue, a more tender consideration of those about us, lest we wound, or grieve, or injure, a steadier purpose of purity, the putting up of a stouter fight for every form of Christian manliness and courage and patience, will bring to the innermost heart a perception of the character of Christ and a sense of nearness to Him which cannot fail to give a sense of knowing Him that will bring blessing and peace. This is the

ultimate reward of such faithful self-discipline. It not only gives access of strength, fitness for larger and more, and more fruitful, service, the sense of personal power and inward peace, but it also makes real the presence of the Lord Himself. It secures His entrance and abiding in the hearts which are thus enlarged and fitted as His abode.

So also prayer as a habit and as a ripening experience gives knowledge of Christ.

Phillips Brooks said, "We cannot think ill of one for whom we habitually pray." Such is the power of prayer to drive evil out of the heart and to open the springs of the sweeter life. This is an immediate blessing that comes as a by-product to the exercise of the God-given power. But a further blessing and an even more assured product is the immediate and constant sense of the presence of God in prayer. The heart that has shut the world out, and gathered in hand its faculties and brought itself in the quiet of its seclusion to the foot of the throne of grace, quickly has such a sense of nearness to God that the knowledge of God, the understanding of His love in Jesus Christ becomes a distinct and abiding possession. So prayer, whatever may be said of its value as petition or as praise, brings this priceless acquisition to the soul of the Christian who appre-

ciates his privileges and trains himself in the habit of constant and thoughtful devotion. Herein lies also the great value of public worship and of the sacraments. No Christian can make constant use of them without steadily growing in the apprehension of the Lord and winning an increasing sense of intimacy with Him.

If, then, the Lord's words to Philip are expressive, what must be the sorrow in His heart when to-day He finds disciples who are willing to live without that knowledge of Himself which He has a right to expect in them? Here is a method simple and accessible to all whereby that evil can be removed and He can be spared that pain.

For ourselves we may consider, as we close, the blessing that comes with this fuller knowledge of Him. It opens the way for His love for us. He had just said in His intercourse with the disciples: "Ye are they who have continued with Me in My trials." "And having loved His own who were in the world," John says, "He loved them unto the end." This is the expression of His desire to dwell in intimacy with His disciples, and the record years afterwards of the blessing that comes from that. It is this indwelling of Christ in our hearts which gives power over ourselves.

His love drives out all lesser loves. The love of self, so destructive and so humiliating, shrinks into nothingness in the presence of His greater love. The temptation to surrender to trivial things, and to find no time for God, and to give way to petty impulses and unworthy thoughts and passions, is quickly overcome when one is conscious of his relations to Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. Because He longed to see His disciples grow to the full stature of a splendid Christian manhood with mastery over themselves and over the world, He spoke with such eager pathos of His desire that they should know Him. Such would be His words were He with us to-day ; and, speaking to us across the years, His word to Philip is our summons to know Him as is our privilege, and to welcome Him as is His due.

XV

THE ENLIGHTENING OF THE HEART

“Having the eyes of your heart enlightened.”—*Ephesians 1: 18.*

THE Revised Version changes the familiar text to read not, “having the eyes of your understanding enlightened,” but “the eyes of your heart.” The Apostle Paul is a bold coiner of speech. When in his first letter to the Corinthians, he had occasion to write of the necessity of self-discipline, he said not, “I keep under my body,” but “I beat my body in the face.” The temptations of the flesh are as an enemy in the arena which is to be met with all the fierce vigour of the trained athlete, and subdued both with skill and violence. When he writes to the Romans of the impelling impulse which had long held him to the purpose of crossing the sea to bring the Gospel to them, he says, “I am a debtor to the world.” He owes to them what they never owned and do not value, but the possession of which, in his own mind, is to him a burden as of a debt which must be discharged.

Again, in his second letter to the Corinthians,

he exhorts them to beneficence with a vision of these late days when money is the overwhelming temptation and the greed of gain possesses men as an intoxication until they are, in the frenzy of the Exchange, described as being drunk with money. He speaks of beneficence as a charism, the grace of God,—a virtue to be obtained by no human effort, but only by divine enduement.

So, finally, in his second letter to Timothy, his beloved disciple, bidding him farewell, he speaks of his death, which was near at hand, in nautical terms, as of a ship putting out to sea; "The time of my departure is at hand." He is going out upon that last voyage from which no traveller returns,—to him no uncertain trip,—a journey to the desired haven, the home for which his soul longed. In the same way in our text, he coins a phrase and speaks of the enlightenment of the heart.

But Paul is no mere maker of phrases. He knew the temptations of the flesh. He was burdened with the great need of the Gospel for the world. He understood the power of the love of money. He had a vivid anticipation of the joy of heaven. Therefore, the terms which in the successive instances he used.

Now he has a burning desire for rich blessings upon the church in Ephesus to which he is writing. He proceeds eagerly to describe them.

His prayer is that God may give to them a "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him," that "having the eyes of their heart enlightened, they may know what is the hope of His calling." That hope, in his thought, meant the full content of the Christian life as it is hid with Christ in God, the joy of faith, the assurance of growth, the peace of a quiet spirit, the sense of fellowship with God and intimacy with Him the source of all good. "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." You recognize the difference between an inheritance and a mere possession. The new life into which they were called is, in Paul's view, an inheritance,—something not won, not deserved by any right in one's self, but a treasure passed down to the possessor by the benefaction and love of one who has possessed it beforehand. The gift of God through Jesus Christ is in his eyes a possession too rich, too beautiful, too precious to be described in words, but something to be entered into and taken possession of and enjoyed by the help of the Divine enlightenment. He seemed to see what we often see, young men entering into inheritances for which they have no fitness, which, instead of being a blessing, prove a curse, as in their inexperience or carelessness, the treasure is squandered, or the great business is destroyed,

bringing evil to themselves and ruin to others. His earnest prayer is that these dear friends in Ephesus for whom his heart yearned, who were his children in Christ, might know the value of their inheritance, and by the blessing of God, might be prepared to receive it. "And the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." He knew the power of God in his own heart and life. What he could not do for himself, God had done for him. In the strength of this new power he had lived his twenty years of renewed life. He had shaken off the old life with its purposes and passions, with its loves and hates. He had become a new man in Christ Jesus, and through all the years of his great ministry, he had been sustained by that power, conscious to himself, and visible to others wherever he went. The power of God had been manifestly upon him. He had conquered his enemies, because he had been enabled to conquer himself.

And now about to speak for the last time, from a far-away prison, to these young Christians, his eager prayer is that they too may know the exceeding greatness of the power of God, that it may do in them all and more than it has done in him, and that, not their understanding simply, but their hearts may be filled with the consciousness of it, and that their whole being may

be so possessed with the spirit of God that they shall have no difficulty in living the new life into which they are born. All this, he describes, as wrought for them "in Christ." He has described his own life as a Christian, as lived "in Christ." He loved to use the phrase, he dwelt upon his relation to Christ as life in an atmosphere which always surrounded him, which fed and sustained his whole being, from which there was no danger of his escaping, and which finally became a part of himself, as it were, of his nature, as the sea is to the fish, and the air to the bird. The Christ whom God had raised from the dead had called him, Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor, and had forgiven his sins, had renewed his life, had accepted him as a disciple and sent him forth as a witness, and was now waiting to receive him as a friend. In His name he had preached, in His power he had fulfilled His mission, and the life that was in him had passed on to these other disciples. He would have them know that power in its fullness, and find their joy, their strength, their peace in this life in Christ. So, when he comes in the narrow compass of a dictated letter to send his farewell message, he compresses his whole thought into this burning prayer,—that God would open the eyes of their hearts, that they may know and feel all that he feels.

Here then is the something that we want to apprehend. It has been said of our day that "the age needs not light on the understanding but dew upon the heart." We all know what it means to have the intellect enlightened. Everywhere we are encountering new knowledge. The sciences are all new, the practical affairs of life are conducted in new methods, with new instruments, and we may almost say, with new purposes. We live not only on a new continent, but in a veritable new world. Enlightenment of the understanding seems at times the single, all-important necessity. All our great system of schools, and colleges, and universities is to the one end of providing this enlightened understanding for the growing generation ; and we summon the young people to every sacrifice to attain to the enlightenment which is so much needed. We are charmed when we come upon any indication of what it holds in store for them. When Professor Agassiz came to America and made his first journey westward from the seacoast, he sat all day in the train looking out of the window, for everywhere he quickly discovered what no one else had seen,—signs of the action of the great glacier of the ice period upon the surface of the continent. Every rounded hill, every pond in Massachusetts, every undulation in the levels

south of Lake Erie was to him the proof of the theory of the Ice Age as he had held it. And these indisputable signs of a great geological epoch had lain openly before the eyes of generations of men who had been blind to see them. The record of geological history was written on the very face of the continent, and up to that hour no one had read it. With what excitement he turned the leaf of the great story! With what interest he told what he saw! With what open-eyed wonder people responded to the new teaching!

We want enlightened intelligence in matters of religion. There are truths as new, as important, and as interesting in regard to revelation, and in regard to the Bible. A new theology is the demand and the inevitable product of every age. Many men are intellectually too lazy, too blind in their intelligence to deal with these new problems or to grapple with new thought. We may well pray that the Church everywhere, and all believers, may have as a gift of God, enlightenment of their understanding. Continually we are tempted to put forward what we call our "ideas" or our "opinions," traditional views for which we have only the authority of ancestral teaching, in the place of knowledge which we have gained for ourselves, or to which we have given any labour in the effort to establish it.

Paul truly was the last of the early believers to disparage the understanding, or to think lightly of its importance. But he knew something far more important than that. Therefore, his prayer is not for the enlightenment of the intellect, but for the dew of heaven upon the heart. The heart is the man, and the man must be reached if the work of God is to go forward. Sadly, we discover that the enlightenment of the intellect goes but a short way in changing the character. Character rests upon decisions of the will, the abiding purposes of life, and these are determined primarily by the feelings. It is therefore the enlightenment of the heart, the stirring up of the feelings, the opening of the deep wells of the soul, and the appeal to the essential nature of the man himself that alone answers the call of God, and that alone can make men free, in the large sense of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The mere accumulation of knowledge is like the stuffing of the stove with fuel—it remains as cold and dead as the iron itself until the fire is kindled, which alone can transform it, and set free its imprisoned energies.

When we meet a man thus transformed, one in whom the eyes of the heart are indeed enlightened, how all hearts open to him!

Some years ago, a young Scotch professor

came to America. He travelled from college to college. Everywhere the young men flocked about him, and he held their hearts in his hand. His tongue was as a tongue of fire, and his face shone with the light that won all hearts. What was it that gave Henry Drummond his power? He was a traveller, but there were many others more venturesome and with more thrilling tales. He was a scholar, but by no means of the first rank. He was a fluent speaker, but that means little in a land of fluent speakers. His power lay in his personality. Every one who sat before him felt that here was a man with a heart, a man in whom the love of Christ was the supreme passion, and whose whole nature had been surrendered to that love and was now permeated with that consuming passion. The love of God which had taken possession of him became in him love for his fellow men,—a deep, generous abiding love. Hearts everywhere responded to it and multitudes of young men were awakened into a new life and started in new paths because Henry Drummond opened the eyes of their hearts.

We have only to ask then how this prayer of the Apostle is to be answered? It involves the breaking off of the crust that forms upon us all and the letting in of the light which, coming from God, should, as John says in his Gospel,

“lighten every man, coming into the world.” The answer to this prayer manifestly must come first of all by the gift of the Spirit of God. As the Apostle himself said, “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts.” The light which he and his fellow disciples saw was a light not their own, but from the Spirit of God. They were only too eager to bear testimony to it. “Things which eye saw not and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him, unto us God revealed them through the Spirit.” This was their glad testimony. It was the light of the glory of God as it first shone in the face of Jesus Christ, which had come to shine in their hearts, and which the Apostles so longed to see shining in the hearts of all about them.

We have a quick, tender sorrow for men who are blind. Every one instinctively helps the blind man lest harm befall him, impelled with a common desire to do something to make up to him for the inexpressible loss. How much tenderer and more compelling sympathy should we feel for those who are blind in the things of the spirit! This is the measure of the Apostle’s desire, the impelling impulse behind his prayer, as he looked to God to do what men cannot do

for themselves, and as we hear him to-day praying for us and appealing to us to look to God also for what we cannot do for ourselves.

This is the great gift from God which Jesus Christ came into the world to bring. When Paul stood up to bear witness to it, there were few about him who could confirm his word or even understand the meaning of his message. But the world to-day is filled with men and women in whom the light of the glory of God, as it shone in the face of Jesus Christ, is in a measure also revealed. Everywhere something is known of that light. Everywhere men are ready to recognize the enlightening of the heart and the change of the life that comes with the acceptance of His word. So, the answer to Paul's prayer is to be sought in hearing the summons of Christ to follow Him. It begins in confession of need, in the crying out of the heart for forgiveness, in earnest purpose to do the will of God, in the confession of Jesus Christ, and taking up one's cross daily and following Him. The way is straight, and the duty is simple. It requires merely the enlightening of the heart. One need wait for no new knowledge. The little child is not forbidden, and the chief of sinners may find the fullness of the new life, as "without money and without price," so without previous preparation and without pro-

bation of any kind. Every man may, if he will, come at once to Him and get His blessing. But that Paul's prayer may be answered and the blessing may be realized, there must be the beginning at once of the clean life. The foolish heart was darkened by wrong-doing. Men have always erred in their hearts and lost the vision of truth when they have done what they knew to be wrong. Satan has been recognized as filling men's hearts, when they have been led away in falsehood and in shame. Personal impurity, as Burns has said, "hardens all within and petrifies the feelings."

If, then, men would have their hearts softened and the eyes of the heart enlightened, that they may not only know God, but that they may know and attain to their better self, this is the way of it,—interpreting the invitation of Christ to mean turning over a new leaf in beginning to lead a different life, "quitting their meanness," as has been said, stopping at once, and praying God for help to stop completely, the old wrong-doing and to give all their strength to the new purpose to do right.

This is the condition upon which the eyes of the heart shall be enlightened, and the light of God and the peace of God shall take possession of the soul. We are to remember that Christianity is not a duty to be proved. It is a life

to be lived. And it was because Paul knew the reality of that life, the possibility of it, and the attainment of it, that he so earnestly prayed for those Christians in Ephesus. His prayer for them is to-day his prayer for us, and, as it was a trumpet call from God to arouse them to that giving of themselves in which they were to be leaders in the service of God, so it is to us, one and all, the voice of God calling us to enter into our inheritance, and to know for ourselves the exceeding greatness of God's power, and the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ Jesus, if we will only have it.

XVI

THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST

“If I do not the works of My Father believe Me not, but if I do them, though you believe not Me, believe the works.”—*John 10 : 37-38.*

THE great difference between Jesus and other leaders of men lies in the harmony between His life and His teaching. He alone could appeal with unquestioned force to what all men could see of His character and His works. In every instance it was this appeal which silenced his gainsayers.

Socrates gathered the young men of Athens about him and sharply exposed the follies of their lives; and then himself turned to their loose pleasures, and justified himself on the ground of his moderation.

Goethe, the most fertile and brilliant mind of his day and the first great teacher of socialistic principles, laid hands on whatever he saw that he wanted and did not hesitate to take it for himself. He lived a life of pleasure.

Rousseau, the philosopher of love and the first to make love the dominant motive in the

novel of modern life, was himself so sensual that his very name is an offense in many ears.

The French philosophers of the eighteenth century proclaimed fine ideals and sought to introduce a new era of thought and society; the immediate outcome was the French Revolution and the weeks of the Terror.

Even our own Benjamin Franklin, the philosopher of common sense, the Poor Richard of the Wise Man's Almanac, when he went to Paris, if rumour can be trusted, found himself dazzled and won by the pleasures of that gay capital.

The fact is, as recorded by the historian of the England of the eighteenth century, that "the times when morality has been most preached are the times when it has been least practiced."

But when we turn to Jesus, all changes. From that day to this, He has held the world by what the Gospel calls His "works." The beauty, the beneficence, the consistency and the sweetness of His life impressed the men of His day, even in the face of their bitter hostility. The very soldiers turned without executing the order for His arrest, awed by the unmistakable character of the man upon whom they could not venture to lay hands.

His Gospel was new, and for this reason it gave life, because it was life. It takes a soul to

win a soul ; and only a life so consistent, so perfect, can win and inspire, and remake other lives. His speech was the speech of the people ; the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, the shepherd at his humble task, the fisherman on the sea of Galilee drawing his nets, furnished the metaphors and the terms in which His spiritual message was delivered. And that message is as charming in those terms to-day as it was in the ears of the men who first heard it.

But it was not the novelty of the speech that won for Him acceptance or that made His Gospel new. He turned to the Old Testament and found no fault with its ancient history and its archaic phraseology, but He interjected into it a new meaning, and He drew out of it that precious content of Divine Truth which had made it a living Gospel to the men of the generations before Him, and which makes it a live book for the men of to-day. He was not troubled as we are about the old doctrines and old forms of speech. The great truths which had possession of Him made all things new and all speech serviceable. The revelation of God in the past was gathered up into the new and greater revelation of God that filled His heart, and His life and spirit were what they were because of the power of that truth upon Him. He came from His Father. He did the will of His Father. The life of His

Father was manifested in Him, and when the hour came to return to that world out of which He had come, His promise was that as it was expedient for Him to go away, He would send the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who would abide with His disciples forever. This supreme revelation of the Godhead in which lies all the possibility of the Divine love, and the Divine purpose and plan of the Divine will, and all the perfection of Divine existence, was given to Him, and through Him to the world. It has been the central truth in the possession of His Church from that day. Men had no regard for it for generations. But a God who so loves the world, not sects, not a chosen people, but a world of sinners, as to give His Son to die for the world, was a revelation new and overwhelming. The knowledge of this truth gave Him His message of redemption. It fixed the line of His own immediate work. The love that filled His heart made the redemption which crowned His earthly ministry complete, and constitutes that redemption His finished work and the abiding doctrine in man's knowledge of God. So with His teaching of sin and of judgment. The burden of sin rested upon His weary heart. His teaching could not arrest its destructive progress. Nothing but a sacrificial death could stop its deadly career. There was

ever before Him the vision of the open grave. The shadow of the Cross stretched out to meet Him. Months before the end He began to speak of His death that He was to accomplish in Jerusalem. What wonder then that the vision of the Final Judgment before which all men must appear, every man to give an account of himself, constitutes a vital part of the revelation which was committed to Him? Indeed, He knew that the Father has given all judgment to His Son, and that in the person of Jesus Christ, men are to find their final Judge.

These fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith were the inspiration and the controlling power in His life; and it was His life which gave its proclamation of these truths their acceptance and their authority. They laid hold of men and possessed them, because the men about Him saw that they had laid hold of and possessed Him. The revelation that was to win the world to God was first made plain in the life of Him who was filled and controlled by them.

When we turn from Jesus to His disciples, what do we find? These are among His last words: "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the very works' sake. 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." He came from the Father, He lived the life of the Father, and He returned again to Him, that the power of God might forever abide with His disciples. Therefore, the promise that they shall do greater works than His, for His finished work is to produce its latest results through them. But the method is to be always the same. They are to be believed for their works' sake. Their life is to be the sole sufficient witness and confirmation of their testimony. Therefore, we find them acting always in His name ; Peter and John are healing the cripple in the beautiful gate of the temple and we hear them saying at once : "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this man or why fasten ye your eyes upon us as though by our own power or godliness we had made him walk? God has glorified His Son Jesus, and by faith in His name this man has been made strong, whom ye behold and know." They spoke the speech of the people ; they were men out of the ranks of the people ; but they were exalted infinitely above the people because they lived the life and did the works of Jesus. They had taken up His cause and daily they followed Him. Therefore, they could say as Paul said, "What things ye have seen and heard in me, do." It was this appeal to the witness of their

lives patterned after Jesus Christ, and, with all their weaknesses and mistakes and failures, still strenuously shaping according to that pattern, that won first the attention of the men of their day, and then the place of authority over them. "Behold how these Christians love one another!" became the universal testimony in the world in which they lived. Pliny, from his position as governor in Bithynia, wrote to the emperor in Rome: "These Christians are a people who may be seen going out daily to their work as vine dressers and plowmen singing the praises of One named Jesus whom they worship."

It was a new gospel, but not new because of the speech in which it was uttered or the power of eloquence in the men who proclaimed it, but new because of the lives it everywhere produced.

We Christians face the world to-day with the duty of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a new gospel as much as it ever was, and it must be presented as new; with new speech, just because the living speech of men is always changing, and always meant to be the expression of the life of the men who at the time are living; with new doctrine, of course, because new knowledge requires new forms of teaching and new adjustment of old truth. Every gen-

eration has had a new theology, as men have struggled to grasp truth more firmly, or to put it in larger relations. They have tossed the new forms of thought about until, as the winnowed grain, the chaff blows away and the good grain is preserved for the generation that is to follow. We need new organizations and methods unquestionably; for human life with its ever new needs requires more perfect adaptation, a more efficient application of every truth to its needs. The Church has developed agencies and devised methods without end and will continue to do so. But not in these lies the essential newness of the Gospel. Not in these either as welcoming all new knowledge or as hastening to adopt every new purpose and method that would compete with the advancing life of the Church, is to be found the freshness and the power of the Gospel. As with the prophet on the mountain, the power is not in the wind or in the earthquake. "The still small voice," bringing God nearer and carrying convictions to men's hearts, is the life of the man who himself is moulded by the spirit of Jesus Christ, to whom he has opened his heart, and whose love possesses his soul.

On all sides men are asking how the Gospel can be preached to make it more effective. How can it reach the ears and win the attention

of the thoughtless multitude about us? Suppose we return to the method of Jesus. Suppose the Christian business man without waiting for others, begins to practice a new honesty, without stopping to consider what are the customs of his particular trade. Suppose each one should begin for himself to do the things which his heart tells him are right as before conscience and before God. Suppose the Christian lawyer at once puts in practice a new code of honour, according to which he does not ask what is likely to be of benefit in his relation to his client, or what he must do in order to win his case or secure the reputation which he seeks, but asks solely what is his duty as a Christian. Suppose the physician begins immediately to practice a more careful truthfulness, setting aside considerations of his profit or reputation. Suppose the teacher of morals or history or what you will, in school or in the university, should begin to hold himself to a careful consistency, patterning his own life according to the high ideals which he must necessarily teach. Suppose that women became more careful in their watchful unselfishness; and that we all practice a new self-control, a new gentleness, a new regard for others, putting ourselves in their places, a new thoughtfulness over little things, a new care not to hurt others' feelings, govern-

ing the tongue and the temper. In short, suppose that Christians on all sides, waiting for none, should do as some small banks are doing to-day. While the great banks are standing back and saying they are ready to resume payments over the counter when everybody else will agree to do the same, here and there a bank, without waiting, has already resumed such payments, and is leading the way to a settled and healthy condition of public finance. Following this example, suppose that we all should begin to pattern our lives after Jesus' life and to apply in our relations to one another, the teachings of His Gospel carefully and prayerfully, with a determination at any cost to live lives that will be witnesses to Him. Who can question what would be the result? If in those first centuries "Christians flocked to martyrdom" and "the world flocked to baptism," who can doubt that if Christians should thus bear witness to Christ, the world promptly would bear glad witness to the truth of His Gospel.

"We may not all be saints," says Professor James of Harvard, "but we should all try to be as saintly as we can." Suppose we take this injunction as an accepted rule of our daily life, and then should connect it all not merely with a good resolution but with the great truths of revelation, with the Christian doctrine as we

hold it. Suppose we make it our witness to Jesus Christ as our Master, and through Him to God and His love, and the redemption that He has provided, and the judgment that He has proclaimed; then indeed we would have a new Gospel, and in terms so new and so fresh that the world about us could not fail to feel its power. This is "the language of the people" which the Gospel deserves. And this is the newness which will never grow old. As on that first great day, every man would hear the message in the tongue in which he was born, and would understand.

But can we do this? Yes, because we need wait for no one. Yes, because we need no preliminary preparation, no new organization, and no teaching of new methods. We can do it, but only as Jesus did, and as John did and as Paul did,—by taking God into our hearts and by surrendering ourselves entirely to His service. We cannot do it in our own strength; but Jesus promised His spirit to abide in the hearts of those who follow Him.

A century ago you might have seen in Germany a barren section of hill country occupied by five or six hundred wretched people with no schools and no church, with poverty everywhere, and no hope. They were a picture of human life at its lowest. One day there

came to them a young theological student. Turning aside from all other openings for his brilliant gifts, he devoted himself to that poor people. Twenty years or more passed away and before his death, the fame of Eisenach had spread over Europe. Thoughtful men came from all directions to study the miracle which had been wrought, for that population had grown to five thousand self-respecting, industrious, intelligent Christian people, created anew and living a new life simply because of the devotion of one follower of Christ, John Friederich Oberlin, who had come to them in the spirit of the Master and had lived among them His life.

One day you might have seen a grizzled, much worn elderly man in the heart of Africa advancing with outstretched hands to meet a young stranger. It was David Livingstone greeting Henry Stanley. You all know the story. Why did not that young newspaper reporter, having accomplished the work for which he had come and won fame for himself and wealth for his employer, hasten at once back to the coast and deliver his startling news to the world? Why, on the contrary, did he surrender himself to the influence of that quiet man, who had lived so many years in the African forest protected only by his character

and his devotion? Why did he go with him to his tent and sit at his feet for six months, until the day came when he arose, no longer a scoffer, but himself a devoted follower of Livingstone and of Christ? Because he found in that disciple of Christ, in the beauty of his life, in the simplicity of his thought, and the sincerity of his service the witness to Christ which could not be gainsaid.

Here then is the method of the Gospel for to-day. It is the old method that is ever new. It begins in prayer to God for help in trusting in Him and not in one's self, and then leads on in doing right for Christ's sake and in His name, that you may so be witness to Him.

XVII

GOD'S SAINTS

“Called to be saints.”—*1 Corinthians 1:2.*

THIS text is either arrant cant or an amazing truth. In either case, it seems as remote as possible from the concerns of our every-day life. We understand by “saints” holy men; and they are scarce. “Called of God” seems to indicate men approved of God in some peculiar way; and they are scarcer.

But it is only fair, before we pass judgment, that we take time to understand exactly what the sentence means as it appears in the New Testament. It is not a chance phrase; it occurs frequently. Indeed, nearly every one of Paul's letters contains it. The identical words open his epistle to the Romans. He speaks in his second letter to the Corinthians of “all the saints in Achaia.” He writes of “all the saints in Christ Jesus” in his letter to the Philippians, of “all the saints and the faithful” in his letter to the Colossians, and of “all the saints in Ephesus,” in his letter to the Ephe-

sians ; while in the Apocalyptic letter to the Thessalonians he speaks of God as to be "glorified in His saints," and of the coming of the Lord with His saints. Jude tells us how "Christ cometh with ten thousand of His saints." In the last day described in the Revelation, we have the vision of the "King of Saints."

Here are two distinct meanings given to the word. It is the name for those who confess Christ upon earth ; in other words, for church-members. It is also the name for the redeemed who are found in the presence of God at last. The same word is used for all followers of Christ on earth, and for glorified souls in heaven.

In the case before us, Paul chooses the name for the members of that little church in Corinth. This is the significant fact. He is not speaking of exceptional men who have come to be saints because of some peculiar endowment at their birth, or because of some exceptional spiritual attainment. We always have such men in our minds when we use the word. We are not like them. They are born spiritually minded, we say, or they have lived such exceptional lives that they have come to be what they are,—men quite distinct from the common run of Christians.

Paul addresses the men of Corinth just as

they come, good, bad and indifferent. Because they are in that little church and bear the name of Christ, he addresses them all as "called to be saints." We know very accurately what these men were. Corinth was a great metropolitan city with all the characteristics of a new town, thronged with people from all over the world, jostling one another and crowding in all directions for the opportunities of money-making,—reckless, selfish, dissolute, intent on the business in hand, driven and tossed by every chance temptation,—Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians. Out of that company, two years before he had gathered a church; and they were not yet very different from the community about them.

He had just left them, after two years of hard work, and had crossed the sea to Ephesus to engage in the still more strenuous labours which there awaited him, when news comes to him of the evils that had broken out in the Corinthian church. He is distressed beyond measure. He prays for them and longs to go back to them at once. But this he cannot do. So he writes them this strenuous letter. He pours out his affection for them and his indignation and pain at what he has heard. He describes in the most unqualified terms their doings. They are quarrelsome, loose of life, puffed up with their

own importance, covetous, revilers, drunkards, even idolaters. He says that such among them are to be disciplined at once. They are to be reasoned with and rebuked and corrected and made over with the greatest earnestness and without delay; and if any continue in their way, they are to be put out of the fellowship. Nevertheless, being what they are, members of that church, confessors of Jesus Christ, he names them all without exception "saints, called of God."

He is so distressed over them that after he has sent his letter he cannot wait for a reply. He leaves Ephesus, crosses over to Philippi and starts on the land journey through Berea and Athens to Corinth. On the way messengers meet him, bringing the news of the effect of his letter on the church in Corinth. They have been deeply stirred by it and are hastening to purify themselves. With excited joy he cries out, "What clearing of yourselves! yea, what zeal! yea, what longing! yea, what avenging of yourselves!" Their hearts are reached. They seem to be doing all in their power to realize his desires for them.

These are the men "called to be saints." No matter what they have become; they had confessed Christ; for one brief hour at least their hearts had been touched by the story of the

Divine love. They had been moved with some sort of repentance. They had asked of God forgiveness. They had felt the throbbing in their hearts of the new life brought by His Spirit. They had gone so far forward in the Christian path as to be willing to stand up to be baptized and to be known by His name. And now, regardless of how they have fallen or what may be the differences among them, Paul, as he thinks of them, sees their glorious possibilities, he addresses them as still "called to be saints," for he would have them become what they should be, and would arouse them to put forth every effort to make real their possibilities.

Here, then, is no cant phrase, but the powerful summons to those men of Corinth to be better men. They could be such. God indeed means them to be, and now he, their teacher and their friend, will not think of them in any other way. Without qualification he uses the title which proclaims their privilege as a trumpet note summoning them to make real that God-given possibility.

This is the truth for us to-day. You and I and all of us, in the sight of the Divine love, by so much as we have confessed Christ and are church-members, are expected to be and are called to be saints. No matter how we may differ among ourselves, no matter how we may

have fallen from what we once were, no matter what are the temptations before which we have shown ourselves weak, God to-day addresses us by this name. We say, "But I am bad. I have a bad nature and a hard heart. I was born so and it overcomes me ; I cannot help it." Or, one says, "I have inherited this. It runs in our family. I am not responsible for it." Another says, "I have all the marks of weakness. I am red-headed, and my chin recedes ; they talk of me as having the features which indicate weakness and proneness to wrong-doing ; I am a degenerate." Or, "I am in such circumstances that I cannot be other than I am. My business prevents it, or my acquaintances. If I were only in different surroundings, it might be possible." Or, "I am weak of will, and I make resolutions only to break them. I would gladly do differently, but I cannot help it ; there is no use for me to try," etc., etc.

And yet the message stands. We, the church-members of to-day, as truly as those in Corinth, are called to be saints, and this not by virtue of anything that is in ourselves, but by virtue of what Jesus Christ has done for us. When this letter came to Corinth, its force lay in the fact that it was from Paul. He knew of what he wrote, and they knew his life. No Christian of his day had had a deeper experience of what

Jesus Christ can do, or had been in deeper need of that work in his own heart. He always stood before them, as before every audience, aware that there were some among them who knew all about him. They would be saying: "He is that man from Tarsus, the rhetorician, the one who was such a bitter persecutor of Christians, who stood by when Stephen was stoned and held the coats of those who stoned him, who was exceeding mad against Christians, and who in himself is little better to-day." He had to speak of himself as "the chief of sinners," "not worthy to be called an Apostle," weak in appearance and in speech contemptible. He knew, better even than they did, how much there was to be forgiven in him and how much need he had to apologize for himself in all directions. But they all knew that Jesus Christ had called him, forgiven him, and planted a new life in him, and now he stood before them as a witness of that new life, in all its reality of joy and strength and peace, no less than in all its wonderful possibilities; and when he spoke of them as also "called to be saints," it was because he knew that what God had done for him He could do for them if they would only give Him the opportunity.

His words turn their thoughts back upon what Jesus Christ had already done for them.

Two things they could not forget. Jesus Christ had come to break every yoke. Some of them were Jews, and the Jews were the great formalists of the day, tied hard and fast by their traditions, Pharisees and hypocrites, many of them at least, and all of them proud of their separation from other men who were to them as dogs, or Gentiles. Others were heathen, under the awful bondage of pagan superstition. It is hard for us who for two thousand years have had no ancestors who were pagan, to understand what this is. But how strong and how enduring are such superstitions is witnessed even to-day in the common feeling towards the number thirteen, in the unwillingness to go to sea or to get married on a Friday, or to pass under a ladder on the street. For, what are these but survivals of old pagan superstitions? The heathen world about us is still held by the old fears. The woods for them are filled with demons, and life is made so dreadful to many that they do not hesitate to bathe themselves in blood in the awful effort to escape from the terror of the evil beings that surround them.

To the pagan world of His time our Lord came; and His first work was to deliver them from their horrid bondage, to make them free men and women in the redemption that He had wrought for them. We see this in the indi-

viduals with whom He came in contact,—the poor woman at the well of Jacob, for example. There was no deliverance for her from the bondage into which she had fallen, the degradation of her hopeless life, as there is no deliverance for such a woman to-day, but Jesus Christ at once set her free and opened for her the new life of one called of God. So of the Syrophœnician woman with her little child,—foreigners, alone, helpless,—they came to Jesus Christ under all the limitations of their life, as we can think of it to-day in a poor emigrant landing on our shores, and Jesus Christ made them citizens of His kingdom. John, the Son of Thunder, and Peter, the headstrong, and Thomas, the doubter, each found in Him a deliverer.

So everywhere as He came in contact with men it had been His blessed work to break their bonds. And now when temptation fell upon them and old bonds were to be put back again, with what indignation did His disciples in the joy of the new freedom, protest against the attempt! Paul in his letter to the Galatians cried out, "Who hath bewitched you that ye should think again of going back to the old condition?" They are to stand fast in their liberty. They are to be free men henceforth. No matter what their weaknesses or what the limitations of their

surroundings, no matter before what temptation they had fallen in the past, or in what bonds they may find themselves now, the Saviour who had come to them and called them out into the new Life will sustain them in it and finish His work if they will only follow Him.

The other thing that Jesus had done was to come as a living Christ to reign in the human soul. He had not died for the world and then left it to itself. He had risen again and come to stay with those whom He had chosen. The kingdom that He set up was to be in their hearts, or rather, the kingdom of God was the renewed heart of the forgiven sinner. That in itself is the kingdom, where God is glorified and where God reigns. All are alike now one in Christ Jesus. There is no difference of rich or poor, of wise or foolish. There can be no caste, no rank, no privilege, no prejudice, as between one and another, as Christ had come to seek and to save that which was lost, and the glory of His accomplished work is that out of weakness men are made strong, and that in proportion to the extent of the need is the completeness and the glory of the transformation. He had set up a splendid humanity in which all the differences between men in earthly life are to disappear, so far, at least, as would make

any one less than another a child of God and an heir of salvation.

Every one is called to be a saint, no matter who he is or what are his circumstances. This is the work which our Lord completed when in His last prayer He said to the Father: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Two conclusions follow from all this. First: No man can be deprived of this privilege. Some are rich and some are poor. Some are strong and some are weak. Some are wise and some are ignorant. Some indeed are Americans, and a multitude about us are foreigners, out of every nation and of all conditions—white, black, yellow, red,—what you will. Some have an evil inheritance and some good. Some carry with them a bad past life, and some have a very different one. But because Jesus Christ has died for the world, all are called to the privilege of faith, that is, to strength to do right, to the will to believe, to the joy of the redeemed Christian soul, to the privilege of being better men and women and growing more so. God expects this of you and me and every one of us. No man can shut us out from that call, and no conditions of life or circumstances in which we may find ourselves can deprive us of it.

I sat the other day by the bedside of an aged woman who has been for more than fifty years confined to her bed, almost all the time in pain. And she is a saint. How do I know? By her life and her words and her spirit, and the sweetness and the beauty and the strength of her character, by the patience and the joy with which she waits upon God and bears testimony to His love and tries to be helpful to those about her, making her life a benediction to many. If such a woman, in spite of what has been appointed to her in trial, may still have the joy of the saint, and attain to the growth that is hers, why may not you? And how many such there are about us on every side, with lives more burdened, with circumstances more confined, with temptations more overwhelming than ours, who yet, by the grace of God, have risen above them, and are living above them, and are witnesses to the redeeming love of God every day. They have not been deprived of their privilege. Why should we be? The text is the summons of God to enter into our privilege of being what He would have us to be; nay, what Christ regards us in His love as being already, "saints," called by His love to realize what He has made possible for us, every one.

And the other conclusion is: we cannot es-

cape the responsibility of this privilege. As it cannot be taken from us, so we cannot put it aside. "But I do not want to be a saint," some one says. You cannot escape the duty of being one. Privilege always means responsibility; and since Christ has died for you, you must face the necessity of giving account to Him at last. And in that day this is what we shall most have to account for,—not so much for what we did, or did not do, as for what we might have been if we had only accepted what He has done for us.

If looking down upon the world sunk in darkness and heathenism, God so loved it that He gave His Son to die for it, and the world has ever since been amazed at such a revelation of love, how much more when God has made Himself known to men and opened to them the privilege of sonship should He hold them now accountable for the use they make of that relation, or for their rejection of it, if they deliberately turn away and harden their hearts against it!

"Called to be a saint" is the name He has written upon every one of us. It is our privilege. It is a never-to-be-forgotten duty to make the life and the character that name describes a reality.

XVIII

THE REWARD OF SERVICE

“If any man serve Me, him will the Father honour.”—
John 12 : 26.

IT is remarkable how as His end drew near and the shadow of the cross darkened upon Him, our Lord took more distinctly the attitude of a king. Palm Sunday with its palm branches and hosannas, as we look back upon it, seems such a travesty! It was, in fact, a spontaneous recognition of this fact in His bearing and words. From now on, He walks as one conscious of His dignity. Though His death is at hand, He draws the line between those who are His servants and those who are not, and distributes gifts after the manner of a king. The nearness and the certainty of His execution did not dim His vision of final triumph, and the lowliness of His present condition did not interfere with the exaltation which awaited Him, as from that royal height He pronounced blessing upon those about Him who were faithful, and extended to them the assurance of royal favour. “If any man serve Me,” He says, “let him follow Me and where I

am there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me him will the Father honour." He was going to receive that honour at the Father's hand Himself, and in the princeliest way, He shares it with His disciples. He promises them the reward which is to be the recognition and proof of His own final triumph. No reward can be greater than that which God shall give.

A few years ago, General Roberts, the hero of the war in South Africa, returned to England. The papers were full of his praises, and people vied with one another to do him honour. The distinguished order of the Prussian Black Eagle was tendered to him, as in recognition of the fame which Europe joined in celebrating, and he was great enough in his assured position to decline it, when for national reasons the propriety of the honour was questioned.

Queen Victoria at that time was on her death-bed. She sent for her veteran general, and against the warning of her physicians, insisted that he be admitted to her bedchamber. Sitting by her side, she made him rehearse the story of the campaign, and, listening with the greatest eagerness and deepest sympathy to the tale of the sufferings of her soldiers, she did not permit him to depart until the long tale was ended. When he came from her presence, he stood consciously in the eyes of the world as

the man most honoured of his sovereign. All other honours sank into relative insignificance. The Queen had in the eyes of the world, honoured above all others this servant who served her. She had given him her confidence. He had fulfilled his trust. She set upon his service this seal of her approval.

It was like the honour which Alexander the Great showed to his friend Cleomenes, when, after a great victory reviewing his troops and distributing rich gifts to his captains, coming to Cleomenes, he simply stepped forward and putting his hands on his shoulder in the presence of all, kissed him.

This was the honour that Jesus had in mind when He gave promise of reward to those who serve Him. All other honours are as nothing. The faithful disciples of Christ are to be received by His Father. Their reward shall be at His hands, and shall be the expression of His complete approval. No happiness and no glory can transcend this.

This reward is to be given to those who serve Jesus Christ. There are two words in the New Testament for service. The one is that of the *doulos* or slave; but this is that of the *diakonos*,—the voluntary attendant. At once we picture the Eastern monarch with his personal body-guard, his chosen servants, selected for their

loyalty, and because under their guard his life and his interests are safe. This is the one to whom the reward is promised.

On that great day when the nobility of England assembled in Westminster Abbey before the open tomb in which the body of David Livingstone was to be laid, all eyes were fixed on the quiet, black man, Jacob Wainwright, who stood at the head of the coffin. He was the Zanzibar servant who with his companions had brought his master's body back from the swamp in the heart of Africa where he died, and had delivered him to the representative of the Queen at the seacoast, and had asked as his sole recompense the privilege of attending the body until he could deliver it to his friends in the distant home. Now the service was completed; and as England arose to pay her tribute of honour to the heroic man who had given his life to close the open sore of the world, all eyes were turned to the faithful servant who stood at the head of his grave.

“If any man serve Me him will the Father honour” is the surest of promises. But the honour is given not to the man who does “about right,” or as nearly right as he knows, or in a general way serves God, but to him who is the *diakonos*, the body servant, the personal follower, the one who chooses the service volun-

tarily, and having so chosen, remains true to it to the end.

Such a servant accepts the service. He sees in it a sufficiency of opportunity as well as a final reward. The service itself satisfies him because he knows to whom he is rendering it and finds his supreme satisfaction in that knowledge. Jesus' own service is the type of all such. From the beginning to the end He did the will of His Father, and doing that will gave peace and strength to His heart.

The scene on the Mount of Transfiguration is the witness to the reality of that joy. He was there given a foretaste of the final reward that, passing through the agony in the garden and the darkness of Calvary, He might be sustained by the assurance of the acceptance which awaited Him. The joy of that hour so shone in Jesus' face that it seemed to irradiate His whole being until His very garments were transformed.

Contrast with this, the appearance of Judas whose heart Satan had filled, and made him the type of the unfaithful servant who is thinking all the time of his own interest and not of his Lord's, who desires to do as little, and never as much, as possible, and who always complains of the requirements of the service.

The contrast between Judas and the other dis-

principles comes out in our Lord's last words to them. Having been with Him from the beginning, He "loved them to the end." He will not leave them friendless. He assures them of the mansions that await them which He shall prepare. They shall be with Him where He is; and their joy at last shall be full.

The true servant who has chosen the service of his own will and finds his contentment and reward in it is also one who sets himself to being like his Lord. All unconsciously, the personal attendant begins to take on something of the likeness of the king. It is a likeness which though it appears in the whole life, is within,—in the thought and in the purpose, and loyalty and love are its inspiration. We see the method of its working wherever loving service is found on earth. The husband and the wife, as the years go by, grow more and more like each other, until they think the same thoughts and have the same opinions, and the one becomes the counterpart of the other. So, walking together with Christ and having Him dwell in one's heart, must shape the whole life. Anything less than that is not a true service. It is not the forsaking all and following Him. To canton off a section of one's thoughts and call it a Holy of Holies, to hang a thick curtain before it as a place of sacred consecration, and then to sur-

render the outer court of one's life to the Gentiles, is not religion. It may present the form of worship, and be consistent with the observance of certain conventionalities which pass for religion, but it does not apply to that service to which the Lord promises the final reward. On the contrary, if one renders the service of the heart which carries the life with it because all is too little to give to the service of the Lord whom one loves, if any man serve Me in this way, He says, "him will the Father honour." How many there are about us who are doing it, who are growing more and more into the likeness of that Father in heaven to whom their service is devoted! The Christlikeness is seen on all sides of us, wherever there is a follower of Jesus however humble who is patiently walking in His steps, doing His will, and striving to bear witness to Him.

Some years ago a Swedish cook in the kitchen of a friend of mine, moved by an appeal which she had heard in her church, gave herself as a missionary to China, and went off to that distant land. Years passed. The Boxer Rebellion broke out. She returned for a short visit to the town where she had lived in America, and went to see the mistress for whom she had worked as a servant. The lady did not recognize the sweet-faced, dignified

woman who had called upon her, until she told her name. Then as she looked into her face, she could hardly believe it was the same person who years before had been her servant. Her face was transformed into a new beauty as she told of her work and of her purpose to return, now that the Rebellion was over. To the lady's suggestion of the imminent danger, she said: "Oh, they are my people. I love them and they need me." And, as with simple and unquestioned sincerity, she told her purpose and showed her heart, my friend said that her face shone with the very image of Christ. Her loving, self-forgetting service had already changed her into His likeness.

This is the supreme reward of the Christian. It grows directly out of his personal fellowship with Christ. It emphasizes that fellowship and proves how inseparable personal fidelity to Christ and loving appreciation of Him are from the attainment of that for which life is given. The wonder of it is that it is open to all. His promise was not, "If men of peculiar privilege or attainment, saints, or prophets, or martyrs serve Me," but "If any man serve Me, him will the Father honour." No life is so humble and no soul is so sinful but that Jesus Christ has come to seek and to save it; and His redeeming work is so effective that that soul, no matter

what its limitations of character or of surroundings, can be made not only fit for the Divine Presence, but capable of attaining that Christ-likeness which is the consummate reward. This is the miracle of redemption.

Obviously, this is a process which begins with the first acceptance of Christ and His service. It grows with one's growth and proceeds with a rapidity directly dependent upon the steadiness and completeness of the individual devotion. In the heart filled with the spirit of God and eager for loving service, the transformation begins at once and proceeds at a pace which quickly records itself in the life, and which even in this life attains a perfection that is recognized by all.

This is one way in which Christ fulfills His promise to dwell in His Church. It is not the only way, for God fulfills Himself in many ways, but it is a way so evident and so frequent that it may be accepted as a proof and witness of the more mysterious presence by which the Spirit of God addresses the spirit of man.

There is a story of a little German village in which the tradition lived that some Christmas Eve Jesus Christ would appear. One year Christmas came in a snow-storm and the village was wrapped in a heavy mantle of snow. The aged pastor who had spent his life ministering

to the little flock, looking out upon the snow-wrapped houses, thought it would be pleasant to walk through the village street, that passing, he might look in at the windows illumined, after the pretty German custom, with the Christmas candles, and see the happiness in the homes of his people as they gathered about their Christmas trees. It so happened that as the village children, from time to time opening the door, peered into the darkness to see if perchance the Christ should come that night, they discovered the figure moving slowly down the street. The cry went up: "The Christ is come!" and the eager parents followed the children out into the snow. The figure stopped, and looking into his face, they exclaimed: "It is only the pastor!" Then suddenly some one said: "Why, the Christ has come. This is what it means." And all saw, as it were, for the first time, the Christ shining in the eyes so full of love for them all, and in the gentle countenance which had dwelt among them through all the years.

This is the only vision of Christ which is given His people to-day. But by the grace of God it is given everywhere wherever faithful servants of Christ are living His life, and speaking His words, and are moved by His spirit. Year by year they have been growing into His

likeness, and year by year they are witnessing to His presence to the world about them. So the kingdom is coming ; so the will of God is doing ; and so the Lord's promise is preparing for its final fulfillment when we all shall see Him as He is, and be like Him.

XIX

JONAH

MANY people know the Book of Jonah only as a story about a whale. In fact, it is one of the anticipations in the Old Testament of the Gospel of Christ. As with many other books of the Old Testament, its author is not declared. Like the Books of Ruth and Job and perhaps Esther, it may be regarded as a prophetic tale. It has not the marks of a history, as its references are vague. No name is given of the king of Nineveh, and Nineveh is only described as a great city of fabulous size. Nineveh furnishes simply the setting of the picture. From various literary features of the Book, scholars generally agree that it belongs to the period after the return from the Exile.

It was the time of the revival of Judaism. The remnant of the Jews who were delivered by Cyrus had returned to their native land and found themselves at once beset with difficulties. The land had been peopled with many races,—with the odds and ends of the various countries

which had been conquered by the Babylonians. This little group of exiles was at once an object of suspicion and hostility to the inhabitants of the land. Any one reading the story in Ezra and Nehemiah will find full details of their hostility and of the plight in which the returning captives found themselves and the strenuousness of the efforts which, under their vigorous leaders, they put forth to reëstablish themselves in the land of their fathers.

They naturally emphasized everything that pertained to their religion and to their former national life. They began at once to rebuild the temple, and they enriched and amplified and made more rigorous, its ritual. They gave new emphasis to the priesthood, and new dignity to all who were connected with their formal worship. They emphasized the law of the Sabbath, making it as severe as possible, and enforcing its obligations on their neighbours, as they applied it also to themselves. They enjoined the putting away at once of all the Gentile wives who might be among them, no matter how cruel it might prove to homes and children. The period soon became one of great intellectual activity. The Jews were already beginning to scatter to other lands and inaugurating that system of trade in which they have been since everywhere distinguished. Only recently the remains of a temple

which they built far away on an island in the Nile have been exhumed, and the records have been discovered of the strength of their position and of their worship, and the amplifying and the intensifying of their ritual in that far-away land. Their intellectual life blossomed and became fruitful as the result of their contact with the great nations, and the way was opened for their part in the intellectual activity of the centuries immediately preceding the coming of Christ. All these are indications of the narrowness and exclusiveness of their spirit as they began to find themselves reëstablished by the building of the walls of Jerusalem and the favour of the government in far-away Babylon. The Jewish spirit, as it has since been known, and which has everywhere been so marked as characteristic of their race, found then, if not its birth, its renascence. Their hostility to other people, who were always henceforth to them as dogs, became confirmed. All that the prophets had been saying of the revelation of God to the world through Israel was now fast being narrowed in the thought that it was to be brought about by the dominion of Israel over all. Great as are the visions of the great prophets of the preceding period, of the day when the islands of the sea and the kings of the earth shall bring their tribute to the Messiah of Israel,

and beneficent as are the prophecies of His coming reign, the Jews on their return were little prepared to understand them, and were by force of their circumstances intensified, and rapidly becoming more and more intensified, in the narrowness of their national life and of their religious and intellectual comprehension.

It was under these circumstances that an unknown preacher and poet attained, in some way, to a larger view. There was given to him a revelation of the love of God, and of the scope of the Gospel of God, of which his countrymen had little or no comprehension.

The problem set before him was to present the new truth in a form that would challenge attention and would be preserved in the thought and religious literature of his people. He chose a form which was familiar in their experience. His message was in unison with that of the great prophets of the exile, notably of the second half of Isaiah. His phraseology is similar to theirs, and he uses something of the same imagery. There was probably some historic basis for his tale, as there was for the Book of Ruth, but we are not able to identify it; and it is unimportant in itself, as his own story is the important thing, and the method by which he presents it is only secondary.

He tells us then the tale of the Jewish prophet

who, knowing himself as a prophet, and having been prepared for such use as God had made of him hitherto, is now summoned to a larger function, and is to prove himself altogether unready. A message is given to him so unparalleled in his experience, so inharmonious at once with the spirit of his people and with his surroundings, so opposed to what appears to be the purpose of God with the seed of Jacob, that its reception among them at once awakens doubts as to its validity, if not as to its authenticity. He can hardly believe that the God of Israel summons him, His prophet, to be the carrier of such a message to the heathen. His doubts quickly become convictions, and his convictions drive him to prompt action. He turns at once in the opposite direction, and hastens to the seacoast at Joppa. The God of Israel had never had much to do with the sea. Perhaps it was an instinctive recognition of this fact and the partial surrender to the conceptions of the nations about him that led him to think that if he could get out of his native land and on the sea, Jehovah would not follow him with the same strenuous command. When he found a ship ready to sail to Tarshish, the most remote country, at the very ends of the earth, he was confirmed in his thought. We can hear him exclaim, "How providential!" as he hastens

aboard. He illustrates at once what is so often true in the Christian's experience. God opens doors for us to test us, when He intends that we shall by no means enter them.

The story hastens to tell us how God prepared him for the work that he was called to do. A storm arises, the prophet is speedily cast into the sea, and as speedily brought back again by the God whom he worships but disobeys, to the place from which he started. The reference to the Leviathan that was the instrument of his return is a figure that occurs in Jeremiah, and is wholly incidental to the purpose of the tale. It is merely the stage machinery of the drama. The prophet must be got back to land. The prophet gives testimony that all the time his heart was right. He was a real servant and lover of Jehovah, but he had yielded to a passing temptation which had carried him away by its sudden violent onrush, and the goodness of God had now brought him back in spite of himself. So, the tale at this point is interrupted by the insertion of a song of praise to God, made up of snatches of psalmody from the Hymn Book of Israel,—just such bits of song as would be used by any devout Israelite brought up in the familiar use of the hymns of his people.

When the prophet found himself again in his

own country, he comes to himself and waits and desires to know what God would have him do. The former command is repeated in identical words. It is God's custom when He gives a servant a command to a definite duty, and the servant disobeys, and, by the goodness of his God after his fall and repentance, is brought back to himself and to readiness to obey, that the old command is invariably repeated. It is the one condition upon which the Christian can hope to make progress in his spiritual life as in his Christian service. It is the crux of his faith. The thing which he refused to do, he must do, if he is to know himself and to win either strength or peace for the future. So we have in the story the command that he arise and go to Nineveh, "that great city," with the message of warning. This time he obeys. The message put on the prophet's lips is a very short one. Nineveh is to be warned of a coming judgment. In forty days it shall be destroyed. A moment's consideration of the message will show how different it is in form and substance from the words of the prophets of Israel. The message in itself in this instance is of far less importance than the messenger, or than the fact that the God of Israel sends him to the heathen. That was the wonderful truth that was to be taught. His fellow countrymen were to have their eyes

opened to the character of God and the purpose of God, for which they were little prepared. He is a God of the Gentiles as well as of Israel. He was preparing to save to the uttermost them that would come to Him by the Messiah of Israel. The days were hastening on to the time when that Messiah was to appear, and something must be done to prepare, if possible, both the Lord's people and the world for His message. That message was to be summed up in the single sentence, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life." Simple as this message is and familiar as it is to us to-day, it was at the beginning a revelation so new, so strange, so difficult of acceptance that, not the heathen only, but Israel itself would long reject it. We see the preliminary step in introducing it,—the day-star as it might be called, anticipating the rising of the sun. Hence the remarkable character of this little book. The author is not careful to give his name or any of the circumstances under which the wonderful truth was revealed to him. He was content to concentrate his strength upon presenting it in such form as will attract attention and will be remembered. So, he tells us of the prophet himself awed and humbled, journeying across the desert to the

exceeding great city. Arriving, he enters its gates and delivers at once his message. He has hardly entered than the city begins to respond. The people, their leaders, the king himself, gather to meet him. Their hearts are strangely opened to the truth. The God of Israel, whom they have known so imperfectly, but who is the one God in the heart of His ambassador, has sent His servant to them. They are awed by it and put on sackcloth and ashes, while the king orders a fast. It is a thrilling suggestion of what may be expected in God's good time in the heathen world. It is a vision given to cheer the heart of every foreign missionary, every lover of his kind.

Here the Judaism of the prophet breaks out and the narrow selfishness more or less in us all. It is just what he feared. Israel is not going to retain her distinction among the nations. The greatest city in the world is seen accepting the God of Israel. What is to become then of the distinction of Israel? What is the meaning of God's covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob? How can this prophet return to Jerusalem with the tale of what he has seen? He stops his progress; he backs out of the city and seats himself on an adjoining hill, waiting to see what it all means. Again the message of God comes to him in the picture of the plant

under whose shadow he finds grateful protection from the beating sun. A worm attacks it and it withers. He cries out in protest, and a voice comes to him : " Shall He have concern for a plant, and God be indifferent to the extremities of men, His children? "

The tale abruptly stops as if the narrator felt himself incompetent to make a fitting close, or in recognition of the fact that he had no experience of what the effect of such a revelation would be upon a prophet or, indeed, any Israelite. It required too great a stretch of the imagination. The idea of such a message and such a revelation was too new and too incongruous for him to anticipate its effect. That must be left to be determined by the actual experience. So, with wonderful self-control, he adds no epilogue, he leaves his story to tell itself and it has stood from that day one of the most wonderful visions found in the Old Testament. Comprehension of the character and the purpose of God so far in advance of the time, so splendidly anticipatory of the Gospel of Christ that it challenges our wonder and admiration to-day. It is as powerful a summons to us as it was to the Jews. It warns us against the danger of our own narrowness, our sectarianism, our reverence for our traditions and our inherited views. We also, like those Jews, are apt to pride ourselves

upon so much of the truth as we apprehend. We, no less than they, are disposed to think that the opinions we hold are important to the world in the measure that they are important to our own reputation. We find it hard to give up our peculiar inheritance or our distinctive doctrines lest in doing so we are merged in the common faith even of our neighbours, though that faith be, as truly as our own faith, in the one Lord. We, as well as they, are tempted continually to prescribe the methods by which God shall do His work with others. We look to see their habits corrected or their errors refuted, or their hearts won, or their lives made new in ways which we would prescribe or with which we may be familiar. We forget as readily as they do that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. We need continually to be taught that His mercy never fails, His loving kindnesses are inexhaustible. The drunkard in our street, and the profligate, and the criminal, are no more truly beyond the scope of the redemption purchased for sinful men by the Lord Jesus Christ than are the heathen, or than we were ourselves. It is the old truth that we all are so slow to believe, and the ancient message comes to us with its sharp point as it did to the men of the day of Ezra and Nehemiah—that not only is God able to

save to the uttermost, but that all men are brethren, and all are alike in need of the common redemption. The differences among us are so slight, so largely limited to externals, that in view of the universal need of pardon and of help to live the new life, we are alike sinners before God. "There is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one." We can hear again on the lips of this old teacher, our Lord's words, "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto Me," as we receive anew His last command, "Go ye into all the world:" and "Make disciples of all the nations."

This little book, so wonderfully preserved through the long centuries, so little understood, and so incessantly perverted by the ridicule of the thoughtless, speaks to us with the same voice with which the Saviour speaks, and summons us with the same openness of heart to the message of the Divine love, and the same promptness of obedience in obeying it, and the same recognition of a true brotherhood as that which we are called to manifest as our response to Him.

XX

THE CHURCH AND THE SICK

“Heal the sick.”—*Matthew 10 : 8.*

THERE is no question but that Jesus healed the sick. There is no question also that His disciples did the same, and that the early Church followed in their steps and, at least for a time, understood themselves to be endowed with the power of similar healing. But it is also equally true that Jesus raised the dead, and that He gave the power and the command to His disciples to do the same. His words are: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye receive, freely give.” To what extent the early Church understood this command and power as passing over to them is not clear, but on one occasion, at least, in the matter of the young man Eutychus, who, when Paul was preaching at Troas, as narrated in the twentieth chapter of Acts, fell from a window and was taken up dead, Paul exercised this power, and restored him to life. But this latter power disappeared quickly, and was henceforth never claimed.

Much misunderstanding has arisen as to this whole series of incidents. Many have felt forced to try to explain them away on the ground that in the limited knowledge of the men of that day and of the writers of the New Testament story who were not trained in weighing evidence, much was accepted as miraculous which was not so, but was simply the result of natural though possibly little known forces. As a consequence, they say, the story of Jesus and the early Church would be well freed from the whole series of miraculous recountings. In this way both Christianity and the Gospels would experience an unloading of extraneous matter which not only serves as an insuperable block in the way of the faith of many, but is an entirely unnecessary befogging of the simple gospel story.

Much labour has been spent upon this statement of the case ; on the one hand striving to prove that miracles are in their nature impossible, and that all pretended miracles, whether in modern or in ancient times, are either a misinterpretation of perfectly natural phenomena, or are the result of more or less deliberate imposture.

On the other hand it is argued that while miracles may not be events of a kind to be expected to-day, they are not in their nature im-

possible, and whether or not they occur now or have occurred in the past is purely a matter of testimony and of fact.

But this, I venture to think, is not the way with which the subject of the New Testament miracles is properly to be dealt. To those who accept the New Testament story, it is the record of a special revelation which at a particular time and under particular circumstances, God condescended to give to the world. Miracles are presented as a part of the revelation. They are not merely concomitants, or attestations of its reality, but are a part of the revelation itself. If any revelation of God to men is possible, then miracles are possible, that is, we have no such knowledge either of the Divine nature and the conditions of existence in the unseen world on the one hand, or of the Divine method of working in the visible world about us and the real nature and extent of what we know as the forces of nature, on the other hand, as will enable us to say what is and what is not possible.

The question of miracles, therefore, crowds us back at once upon the question of revelation, and it takes this form. The men who believe that all things came into existence by the will and as the act of a Supreme Being who is the Maker and Preserver of all and who we know as God, believe that that Divine Being disclosed

Himself when He called our visible universe into existence and established the lines of its unfolding and development. If He did so much, may He not be expected to do more? And if the record of the rocks and of the forests and of animal life all tell of Him, of His thoughts and plans and purposes, as also of His abiding presence and of His power as the fountain and source of their existence, may we not expect that in the life of man in his superior realms, there will be such manifestations of God as may prove congenial or necessary in the unfolding of God's purpose with him? Indeed the long story of the evolution of the planet, and of the forms of existence that are found upon it, gives evidence with no little frequency of the occurrence of events of the most tremendous significance both as cataclysms and as the introduction of new forms of existence which may reasonably be regarded as such unanticipated but entirely probable manifestations of God. Indeed, going back of this to the question of matter itself, we are discovering to-day that it is no such simple thing as it has been regarded, but in the last analysis, or at least in the form as near to what may be called the last analysis as the present state of science permits, matter itself is perceived as a substance so closely akin to what we have hitherto understood as spirit that

the line of partition or distinction is to the last degree shadowy, and that we are very far from being able to say what is possible even within what we are ready to regard as the laws of Nature, not to say what is possible viewing its relation to that world about us of which we as yet know little or nothing.

Therefore, when we come to the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the revelation of God that is found in Him, it becomes at once a matter of the spiritual life and of the Christian faith. The question forced upon every man is, whether or not he will believe that God is a present existence, to whom he owes personal allegiance and who, as the Heavenly Father, has such personal love and care for him that he owes to Him a life and a service as of a son to a Divine Father.

When a man opens his heart to this truth, Jesus Christ presents Himself as at once the messenger and the revelation of that Heavenly Father. He claims to come from Him, to speak His words and to do His will. He reveals in Himself a character which may well be accepted as divine, so beautiful is it, and so compelling in its sweet perfection. When He proceeds to exercise a power beyond that of men, it is seen at once to be harmonious with His character. It corresponds with both His life and His message in that it works for the

blessing of men. It is so wholly congruous that the men of His time who gathered close about Him and who observed Him most carefully, whether with friendly or hostile eyes, could find no fault in Him. They did not go back of His claim to be what He was.

That claim granted, all was harmonious. The miracles at once fall into place, not simply as what was to be expected, but as that which when it occurred, was recognized of all to be germane to Himself. The accounts of Him which various ones undertook to write narrate their occurrence as simply and ingenuously as they narrated His comings and goings. Indeed, the miracles, as we term them, are, if not of the very woof, woven into the very web of the story so thoroughly that they cannot be taken out without destroying the whole. The narratives may properly be subjected to scrutiny as to their authenticity and genuineness, as to the age in which they were written, and their forms of speech, but when all this has been done, it is still found that the miracles are as truly a part of the narrative as is any other section, and, in the end, will be accepted or rejected simply according as men believe that the story is the record of the Divine revelation, or is not.

This being the case, we are prepared at once

to believe that miracles in any similar sense do not occur to-day, because we have no new revelation. God is in men, manifesting Himself to the individual heart, and we make much in these days of what we call the immanence of God in His world. But no acceptance of these terms is to be understood by thoughtful men as implying that either the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, or the revelation which, in Him and at that time, God gave of Himself to men has been repeated, or is being repeated to-day. It was unique and absolutely distinct. To the Christian it stands as in itself sufficient for the Divine purpose in the redemption of the world, and of suffering and sinful men. The Old Testament is the story of a preparation for this that ran through many centuries of faith,—the world's history and Jewish history. The New Testament is that account of it which by the grace of God, the Spirit of God has guided His Church first in making and then in accepting as final and sufficient.

The Church, therefore, does not now look for miracles because it does not look for a new revelation. It does not venture to say whether miracles are possible or not, but when any man claims to have discovered a miracle or, still more, to be able to work a miracle, he is put at once to the test of whether or not he has re-

ceived or found a new revelation. This fact has continually been recognized by all sorts of impostors or founders of a new faith, whether Mohammed, or Joseph Smith, or Mrs. Eddy, who have at the outset set forth their "revelation" as their credentials. Because, having the Bible in its hand, the Christian Church does not find any new claimant offering a new message or a pseudo revelation, which, judged by the standard of the New Testament, seems worthy of its claims, it has persistently refused to accept any and all of them. It does not believe either in their revelation or in their asserted miraculous or even exceptional powers.

When, therefore, we come to the question of whether the Church stands in any relation to the condition of the physical health of the individual, or whether it has any cause to deal with the question of bodily health, the answer is not to be found either in the practices of Jesus or in His specific command to His disciples. That all belongs to a time and to circumstances far removed. The question is to be discussed and settled on entirely different grounds.

It is to be noted at the outset that there is no essential connection between religion and health. There is a connection, but that it is an essential one, or that the one becomes the measure and test of the other, is not true.

There is no slightest suggestion, for example, that the Lazarus of Bethany whom "Jesus loved," and to raise whom from the dead, He went back into the midst of His enemies, exposing Himself to the arrest which resulted in His crucifixion, was a peculiarly spiritual man. Indeed, if his bodily condition is any evidence at all, the fact that he sickened and died would indicate the exact opposite. Jesus loved him, we may be sure, not because of his physical condition, whatever it was, but for something far deeper and more permanent and more truly a part of himself.

Paul's full statement on this subject is so conclusive that it has long been accepted as the authoritative Christian teaching. He had an affliction so serious that he called it his "thorn in the flesh," "an emissary of Satan," and he prayed most earnestly, as he says, on three distinct occasions, that he might be delivered from it. But when it was made evident to him that it rested upon him in accordance with the will of God, actually "given" by God, and that it was therefore to be an instrument of God in revealing both the Divine grace and the Divine power, we find him at once glorying in his sickness and going so far as to say that he "would take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in dis-

tresses, for Christ's sake," for he had now learned that God's power is "made perfect" in our weaknesses, and that in fact, "when we are weak, then," in some large true sense, "we are strong."

In other words, bodily pain and ill health may be just as truly a special minister of blessing to the sufferer as the other ills and haps of our most uncertain and most truly disciplinary earthly life. There is no more reason for thinking that a man is more saintly because he has exuberant health, than there is because he has abundant riches ; or, on the other hand, that he is rejected of God, or forsaken, or gone astray in his personal religious life because he is below tone physically or experiences some physical ailment, than if he has failed in business or been betrayed and persecuted by those whom he thought his friends.

But when this is said, it is to be recognized that while there is no essential connection between religion and health, there is what we may call a generic connection, as between happiness and health. Jesus brought life abundant. It is natural that the body should share it. As Paul says in the eighth of Romans : "He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth

in you." In the same chapter he speaks also of believers as, notwithstanding the burdens and troubles of life, looking forward for "the redemption of the body." In the fifth chapter of his first letter to the Thessalonians, he prays that "the spirit and soul and body" of his hearers "may be preserved entirely and without blame"; that is, he recognized that the immediate and inevitable outcome of giving one's self to Christ is not only peace in the heart and joy in believing, but also a certain quickening and refreshing of the body, which will appear in a man's physical condition. It is not a necessary fact and not by any means one that furnishes a measure of spiritual life, but it is a natural and obvious fact, and the result of the generic relationship between the mind and the body. Therefore, when the question of the function or the duty of the Church is raised, we recognize at once that there is a healing and a preserving of the body made possible through faith, and that it is entirely proper that it should be connected with religion. It is so clearly and frequently a statement of the Scriptures, and is so abundantly realized in Christian experience that it is not necessary to labour the question. It may be expected; and these things at once are to be said about it:

First: This healing of the body will be found to lie within the range of what may properly be called the laws of health, that is, it will be based on knowledge and not on ignorance; it will be secured by the use of appropriate means; and it will be of a kind that can be repeated. Once stripped of all association with miracles, everybody is ready to recognize the necessity of using our intelligence in securing the best and most accurate information as to the invalid's real condition, and of then proceeding to use the most effective remedial measures which are within reach. To do anything else is as unworthy of a Christian faith as it would be unworthy of a Christian intelligence and of good sense.

God's great gift to us as human beings is our reason, and we are in every relation of life bound to use it in acquiring knowledge and in working out what we believe to be God's purpose in us. There is nothing in the nature of the case, or in the Word of God, to imply that the care of our health comes under any other rule, or is fixed by any other conditions. And because this is so, when one has found that remedy or treatment which restores the health, it may be expected to do the same again in similar cases. There is every inducement, therefore, for the use of the trained phy-

sician and of every appliance available in advanced medical practice, and for bringing these things within the reach of the suffering, as the Christian Church has from the beginning striven to do. It is working directly in the line of its character as an agency for making Jesus Christ known and establishing His kingdom when it establishes hospitals and gives high honour to the educated physician.

Second : Among these laws of health are certain ones which may be called laws of the spiritual world. The more we know of life in any form, the broader is the realm in which it extends. As has already been said, we know very little of that vast realm which lies between what we know as matter and what we conceive as spirit. Many forces are there as yet little understood and many others doubtless of which we as yet have no intimation. That these will make for health, if we can use them, seems beyond dispute. Scientific men are talking much of a "subliminal world," and a "sub-conscious self"; by which we understand them to mean this world which lies beyond our conscious knowledge. They talk of "psychic forces" as indicating the powers which are hidden there or emerge from it. No man can deny its existence, and our ignorance of the nature or the extent of those

forces not only does not disprove their existence, but invites us to investigate them, and as rapidly and, as far as possible, to take advantage of them, and to use them in every way within our power, and to the extent of our intelligence, in contributing to human welfare as to human health. That the Church has a function in this direction both in discovering these forces and in learning and teaching how to use them would seem to be obvious. It has a charter for just such a function and has long exercised it in the healing of souls. Why should it limit either its attainments or its attempts? Why should it hesitate to push out into realms not yet traversed, and to do its best to make contributions both to science and to the physical life and possibly to religion itself by such effort.

Thirdly: Among these forces which either lie beyond, or reach beyond, the laws of the natural world and extend into the larger world where our knowledge as yet is so circumscribed, is the force of prayer. Indeed it represents a world by itself. There are too many promises of God in His Word, and they are far too emphatic and too vitally significant, to be overlooked; and there are far too many instances in the individual experience of believers to be ignored, or to be gainsaid. It is not only true that there are more things in heaven above than are dreamed

of in our philosophies, but there is a whole world of experience and of the blessed life in which prayer is the chief agency of lifting men to God and of bringing the power of God to avail in man's behalf, and this without raising the question of whether this power works by natural or by spiritual laws, or whether it is of the nature of a miracle or not. It is sufficient that it exists, that it is applicable in every variety of individual need and through the whole range,—body, soul, or spirit,—of the individual life. It is God's gracious gift. It is like the uncounted treasure in the great vault of the bank. Men may come and walk about and exercise all their wisdom and their power; so they cannot have access to it. The one comes who has the right and the power to throw it open; then every man may approach in the appointed way and take what now becomes his own. The reserves of prayer belong to God and are given to whom He will.

That the Church has a blessed function which it has always recognized, and always rejoiced in, and always been sustained by, in using and cultivating the habit of prayer for every form of human need, is known to all. What would be the results, if the Church with one mind should give itself to the practice of prayer, and should use prayer, within the range with which it al-

ready knows its efficiency in doing the will of God, for the benefit of suffering humanity about us, no man can say ; but that blessing would abound and that human life would take on a new form of joy and strength and courage and hope, no man can question.

Furthermore, in the fourth place, there is undoubtedly special need of this to-day. Perhaps as never before in the development of civilization has nervous exhaustion become so common in connection with the higher forms of civilized life as it is to-day. It is certain that there is far too much disease and suffering which has this as its origin. Moreover, there is much religious unrest from one cause or another, and in consequence a wide-spread tendency to take up with whatever is mystical, if not with whatever claims to be supernatural. It is the day of the fakir, and poor human nature, suffering under the various forms of nervous disease, is easy game for impostors. There is much profit in the new doctrines and the new practices, so much so indeed that many are ready to take them up as professional healers, and many simple souls are being separated both from their money and their accustomed sanity as a consequence.

All this leads us to the conclusion that the Church can do more than it has done. It can emphasize an exacter truth and a more careful

honesty. This must be the basis of all successful dealing both with health and with religion. If people can be led to practice their religion in their daily lives, in their relations one to another by a scrupulous integrity and careful guarding against the prevalent temptation to make money quickly and to overestimate its value as expressed in luxury and comfort, much will be done to establish a quiet conscience; and that is a direct path to health.

Emphasis needs also to be laid upon regular habits of devotion. It is not without significance that the rapid development of nervous diseases is contemporary with wide-spread abandoning of private and family devotions. The habit of spending a little time morning and evening alone with God and of gathering the family for united worship and also of being regular in attendance upon church on Sunday, go far to secure that state of mind and that kind of religious faith which gives the soul self-control, steadiness and calm, and in a large degree guarantees it against the ills which come through nervous excitement or nervous depletion. It seems very clear that no single thing will do so much to meet the need of the hour, however extensive it may appear, as a change in the habits of Christians in this respect, and a return to the religious ways of the past, when these

habits of private devotion were emphasized and widely practiced.

It is the privilege of the Church also to strive for both the teaching and the possession of a more substantial faith. It is probably inevitable that times of scientific discovery and great intellectual unrest must disturb the foundations of faith, and in many minds so far change the character of one's personal convictions as to destroy their value if not their life-giving quality. There is call for the Church to point out the distinction between scholarly examination of the history and technical character of the Biblical records, and the possession of a settled personal faith in God and in Jesus Christ. The two are quite distinct, but they have been sadly confused to the destruction of the peace of not a few.

If, in view of the present needs, the pulpit should give large place to personal religion,—how it is secured, and how it is to be maintained—with a setting forth of the solidity of its foundations, and the blessings which it brings as an individual experience, much would be accomplished in the direction of both mental and physical healing, so far as the one is connected with the other.

Furthermore, there is certainly occasion for the Church to show greater readiness to help

the sick, particularly those who naturally come within its influence or in whom there is more or less manifest connection between their mental or moral state, and their bodily sufferings. It is not sufficient for the Church merely to be willing to do this. There is a manifest occasion for its reaching out for the opportunity. It, of course, must incur the hostile criticism of those who are exploiting such healing for their own personal gain. But that need not deter the Church from undertaking the task and pressing it into larger relations than it has hitherto done. The work of some ministers and churches who are attracting attention for the extent of their service in this direction might be widely extended, under careful guidance and the watchful supervision of friendly physicians, with manifest blessing to the community and strengthening the position of the Church.

In order to do this effectively, the Church must give a larger place than is customary to individual testimony. The old-fashioned testimony meeting has largely been abandoned and Christians have become silent in matters of personal faith and very shy of religious conversation. But there is a power in testimony that is not found elsewhere, and it is a distinct loss not to take advantage of it. The mid-week prayer-meeting which has in many cases fallen into

neglect would be greatly quickened and its influence vastly increased if it could be made again what it once was,—a meeting for testimony as well as for prayer—and if the laymen could be brought to feel that they owe to one another as well as to the Lord, this expression of their gratitude and of their desire that others may share with them the experiences which make their religion real and precious.

Coupled with this, there might well be much more specific prayer for definite and stated needs than is generally the custom. In times of revival, there is always a flood of requests for prayer. If this habit of making prayer direct and specific were maintained and regular meetings for prayer were given this character, it could not fail to do much for the comfort of both troubled souls and suffering bodies, as people would be led to feel that the blessing of prayer was always within their reach and the help of prayer earnest and united was available for them.

All this would bring about a closer and more immediate dependence of the individual Christian upon God. It is not enough to believe that God is immanent in the world. We need the sense of personal intimacy and friendship; if that can be developed, there will be both steadiness of faith and an efficiency of immediate

helpfulness in prayer of which many Christians to-day seem to have slight experience.

Whatever the Apostle Paul meant when he said: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," it certainly would involve a great change in the attitude of many Christians towards bodily ailments if they could take his view of what occurs when one accepts the inevitable as of Divine appointment, and is cheerfully willing to face it for Christ's sake, and go patiently forward to do His will. When Paul added the saying, "that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body," he suggested how Christians, whatever their state of bodily health or disease, may so walk with God as to be themselves conclusive testimony to the reality of the faith of Christ, and to make sure their own growth in joy and peace, whether in sickness or in health. This truly is the supreme good.

Meanwhile, in the language of Professor Barker, of Johns Hopkins, "to give peace of mind to the disturbed, to cheer the despondent, to relieve the fearful, the anxious, or the apprehensive, to embolden the timid, to enable the distracted to concentrate and to replace indecision by a fixed purpose, is to confer an incalculable benefit upon the community."

In the words of the late Dr. James Martineau

—“Whatever may be meant by the two great preternatural endowments entrusted to its earliest missionaries—the gift of tongues, and the gift of healing—they represent clearly enough the two grand functions of our religion, to bear persuasion to the minds and to bring mercy to the physical ills of men. . . . When the crowd of weary sufferers thronged around the Apostles’ steps in the city, the blind supporting the lame, and the lame eyes to the blind, or when the solitary leper saw them in the field and made his gesture of entreaty from afar, and all were healed, how better could be represented the character of that faith which has never set eyes on pain without yielding it a tear, which in proportion as it has been cordially embraced, has lessened age after age the stripes wherewith humanity is stricken? . . . In the *spirit* of these acts of Providence we may participate. While fanatics pretend to repeat their marvellousness we may choose the better part and copy their beneficence.”

For the Christian it is no small thing if, when his time comes, he has grace given to him, without undue distress or running after quacks, to “die like a gentleman.”

XXI

JESUS AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

“And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—*Matthew 10: 7.*

MANY people are troubled because Jesus did not declare Himself definitely and with authority upon social and political questions. Human slavery, the relations of capital and labour, the distribution of property, the condition of woman, the injustice of existing forms of taxation, and the problems of civilized government, were all in evidence then, and deserved the attention of any true reformer as much as they do to-day. The religion that bears the name of Christ has seen all these evils persist, and is coexistent to-day with a wide-spread divorce of private from public and commercial morality.

Many feel that it would be a great help in the removal of existing evils if a definite declaration of Jesus could be produced, or if His record with regard to any one of the existing forms of wide-spread trouble could be shown to be unequivocal. In the battle that must be persistently waged for human betterment in every

form, the importance of Christianity as sustaining the right and guiding the lines of the contest is recognized of all, and, naturally, there is a constant attempt to adduce the evidence of Jesus, and always more or less embarrassment in explaining His evident lack, if not of interest in these questions, at least of purpose to make definite statements and take a decisive position. One who was giving His life for the world could not be accused of lack of interest in these subjects, and it is difficult to explain His method with them, unless pains be taken to know exactly what that method was.

To determine this we have to go back in thought to Jesus' day. From that standpoint it is easy to see that His first duty was to avoid stirring up the Jews in rebellion against the Roman authority. They were completely under the dominion of the new and all-powerful Roman empire. They were by temper turbulent and even murderous; the Galileans especially were under the closest supervision; and as Jews, all had awakened both the suspicion and the positive hostility of their conquerors. Herod, their king, had played a double game in his ambition to have himself made the ultimate ruler; and at his death his kingdom had been divided among his sons in order to diminish the danger of successful rebellion.

Any least suggestion at the beginning of His ministry that our Lord had in view political change would have brought down upon Him at once the crushing power of Rome, and His ministry would have been ended. His saying, "They that take the sword will perish by the sword" was no more truly a maxim for moral reform for all time than it was the announcement of an obviously wise and necessary policy for Himself.

Furthermore, it was necessary for Him, before His ministry could make much progress, to change the Messianic conception of His nation. The Messianic prophecies had gradually come to be interpreted as of a great temporary ruler who, coming with Divine authority, if not with Divine power, was to reëstablish Israel among the nations of the earth, and restore Zion as a kingly capital. The Jews were looking for armies and banners. Unless Jesus could change that conception of what was in store for the world, it would be impossible for Him to gain that acceptance for the kingdom of God which it was His business to preach and to introduce. Time was therefore necessary for Him to make plain and to unfold that spiritual kingdom which He came to inaugurate.

It was, also, of vital importance that He should gain time for training disciples. His own min-

istry must necessarily be brief. The future of the cause which He represented and the ultimate success of the work which He inaugurated, and to encourage which His life was to be a final sacrifice, turned upon His leaving disciples who were so far enlightened as to Himself and His mission, and so far committed to it, that they could act as His Apostles. Therefore, for three years He gave Himself so completely to this single task, making it apparently first in His thought. At last in spite of all, one of them betrayed Him and the others were so imperfectly established that they all forsook Him and fled. But the thoroughness of His work appeared in their prompt return with the new spirit and the heroic devotion with which they gave themselves to the preaching of His Gospel, and ultimately, if the tradition may be believed, sacrificing their lives, one by one, in His cause.

The result of His policy was that He succeeded in awakening no political suspicions, and that though at last He was arrested, tried, and condemned for what was charged as being political treason, in fact it was recognized even by the Roman authorities as a trumped-up charge. His followers were apparently entirely ignored by the civil authorities after His death.

“Those eyes elate and clear,
Which neither doubt nor fear
Nor even love nor glorious wrath could blind,”

saw the constant danger, and with supreme wisdom He did His work in full view of the necessities of the situation. He succeeded in preaching the kingdom of God as at hand in such a fashion as to stir the hearts of men without stirring up political or social revolution, laying thus deep and permanent foundations for His cause. Only at last does He boldly proclaim Himself the Messiah, though He always had apparently been conscious of it, and was willing to have it recognized. Then, however, the crisis came. His enemies were forced to act, for they said, not without truth, “The Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” The danger was sufficiently real to serve their purpose, though the Romans themselves were little disturbed by it.

In view of this situation, the method that Jesus pursued in His teaching becomes intelligible and instructive. He was not content with living a true and beautiful life as the Son of God; nor was He content with simply opening heaven to individuals. The Father had sent Him to found a new spiritual society, which was to be indeed a new order of humanity. He called it the kingdom of God. It was present

in Him as a germ ; but it was to develop as a future visible reality, to spread from Him to the hearts of other men, and so in time to be wrought out and built up in human history until eventually it shall become all-embracing. The foundation of His mission is His revelation of the Father. He came from the Father. He spoke the words of the Father. He did the will of the Father. At last He returned again to the Father. His whole work was thus a proclamation and a revelation of that Father whose witness and representative He was.

This proclamation constituted a new presentation of God to men. The very name was the starting point of the unfolding of a conception of God of boundless possibilities. It suggested the oneness of nature between men as the sons of God and their Creator. It opened the way for an appeal to all that is best in the heart of man and disclosed a new side of the relation of God to men in which love, of an essential and enduring kind, becomes pre-eminent. It culminated in our Lord's explanation of His mission in His final answer to the Pharisees, when for the third time, as described in the Gospel of St. Luke, they interrogated Him as to His intimacy with publicans and sinners. He tells the story of the lost sheep, and the lost money, and the lost son, as indi-

cating God's loss in the destruction or carrying away of His property in the souls of men, and reveals the intensity of the purpose with which God strives by every means to regain His own by winning men one by one back to Himself.

This prepares the way for His presentation of Himself as the Mediator of the new Life which He reveals as opening for men, in consequence of this redeeming love of God. He presents in Himself that union of the human and the Divine which makes that union a reality, and which opens the way for His sacrificial service. As His mission closes men see in His death the consummate revelation of a Divine love which has power to bring even the dead to life. In His death and resurrection He gives proof of the victory over death and the grave which opens the kingdom of heaven in its fullest possibilities, to any sinner who will believe. It closes the grave as the final destruction of a sinful soul and reveals the possibility of the wiping out both of sin and its consequences in guilt which makes the new life of the forgiven sinner such a supreme reality that eternal joy and companionship with the Father are within its reach. By a sacrifice which is in the largest possible sense vicarious, and has results far more extensive and complete than they are explicable, in giving His

life for the world, He redeems the world, and reestablishes in the hearts of men the dominion of God.

In doing this He emphasizes man's freedom and individual responsibility. That knowledge of individual responsibility which had slowly developed by means of the revelations recorded in the Old Testament, in which, in spite of the visiting of the father's sins upon the children, the separate and wholly personal responsibility of every man before the power of God, was proclaimed, becomes in Him a central truth. He not only called men one by one to follow Him and so enter into life, but He showed how only in that way can men find life. Repentance and faith and right living, as before God, no man can render for another. In the face of all the possible sundering of the strongest of human bonds, even to the antagonizing of fathers and children, and husbands and wives, men are to hear the voice of God and individually to obey it. Christ's Gospel in its initial stages is distinctly individualistic. The redemption that it proclaims and the life that it offers are alike the privilege and declare the duty of each separate soul.

Upon this He based His doctrine of the kingdom. The new movement which He inaugurated was a redemptive process to em-

brace humanity and to continue through all time. Its first effect was to uproot paganism, in which all God's purpose with men is defeated. The evil becomes the good. God is dethroned. Love is abandoned and life becomes the arena for the play of uncontrolled passions, which, destroying all hope for the future, make even the present life a hell.

Suppose Jesus had done as some reformers to-day would have had Him do, and had begun by attacking the organization of the state. Suppose He had advocated the rule of the best men, as has been suggested by others. Both Athens and Israel had tried it, and it had ended in profligacy and phariseeism. Lord Acton's saying is an abiding truth—"No class is fit to rule." And history is full of evidence that no class has ever proved itself adequate for such a task. Suppose He had advocated the rule of the people in some form of democracy. We know now that democracy means centralization, and centralization in the end produces tyranny, at least until regulated by approved checks which even with all the advance which the modern centuries have made in the art of government we have not yet satisfactorily produced.

Suppose He had yielded to pressure like that under which society is to-day and had ad-

vocated new schemes in regard to property. If He had advocated the dividing among all according to their several needs, that is extreme Socialism, which would attack the very primal impulses to industry, would have caused production to fall off, and would have made it necessary to regulate the increase of population in the selfish interest of those who would control its growth, at the beginning of modern history men would have found their liberties curtailed in every direction.

Suppose He had done what many would-be leaders of thought are doing to-day, and had exalted the value of material good. Suppose He had made the possession of houses and lands and money the ideal. At once tyranny and slavery and selfishness and greed would have been the inevitable result. The struggle of humanity for progress in civilization would have ended in disaster overwhelming and hopeless. Suppose He had advocated the emancipation of the slave. Social revolution would have been precipitated and chaos would have reigned. As it was, with all the peculiar gifts for government of the Roman people, a beginning was barely made in the development of those forms of institution and life which have been the foundation stones of modern civilization; and the disturbance which such a revolu-

tionary movement would have inaugurated would have been sufficient to retard the world's progress indefinitely, if not to have arrested it altogether. The world was far from ready for the movement for which history has proved it had to wait another two thousand years.

Suppose He had advocated woman's rights and universal suffrage. To-day it is manifest that there is no validity in mere external agencies or systems of administration of government. These, whether they be better or worse, theoretically ideal or the opposite, find all their value in the developed character and the trained intelligence and self-control of those who are to enjoy and to administer them.

What Jesus did was to suggest no final form for the realization of human ideals. He proclaimed the principles of life, spiritual, all-embracing, perpetual. The foundation truth was that God is Father, and men are brothers. He showed in Himself what this means, and then said: "Follow Me. Obey My words. Walk in My steps. Open your hearts to receive and cultivate My Spirit. And out of this will come both the happiness of men and the establishing of the kingdom of God."

The Church which He called into being started to do this. It began by preaching His Gospel and winning men to repentance and to

the new Life. It put the Scriptures in their hands to declare the message and to guide the life. It is not a final authority or an exclusive guide. It can only be understood as other lights are turned upon it. Much light was to come from without, and the Church proceeded immediately to seek it everywhere. Each man's individual experience of his own heart, each new event in God's Providence with him or in the service which he strove to render to God cast light upon the meaning of what he received as God's word. So, the Bible grew in the understanding and in the hearts of believers, and it became fruitful correspondingly in their lives. In proportion as the Church has thus entered into the spirit of the Bible and taken the Bible into its own life, this life has broadened and deepened and become enriched. So the kingdom of God has advanced under all sorts of external conditions. Everywhere it shows creative power. It has proved itself adapted to men in every condition of civilization, taking them as they are, reaching out to their conscious need, and at once proceeding to elevate them along all lines of human possibility and attainment, so that everywhere the germ of Christian civilization has come to denote both that which is best in human experience and in human ideals. As Principal Drummond of

Manchester says in closing his new book, "Studies in Christian Doctrine," "It is the peculiarity of Christian discipleship that it is not obedience to law, however sacred, or the acceptance of a theology, however true," or, we may add, the adoption of any form of human society, however promising, "but the impress of a Spirit and a communion of Love; and if that blessed image which has dwelt as a redeeming power in the heart of Christendom were to fade out of memory, no teaching could take its place as an uplifting power, for the kindling touch of sympathy and love would be wanting."

While humanitarian enthusiasm fails, because it lacks permanent driving power, and because it cannot reach to the low levels of men to whom moral enthusiasm is not possible and spiritual ideals are either unknown or have been utterly destroyed, the Gospel of Christ everywhere puts life under the ribs of death and makes all life both glad and better. "Joy," as some one has said, "is," from the Christian standpoint, "love counting up its blessings." And the work of the Gospel of Christ is the establishing of this joy which springs in the hearts of men who know God as their Father and their Friend. The spread of the Gospel has as its immediate effect growing unrest as the world re-

sponds to the call to a better life. The business of the follower of Jesus Christ is to point out the way to that life as Jesus Christ Himself enacted it. Holding up Christ as the Saviour of the world is something more than holding Him up as a social reformer. His appeal is to men as children of God to whom He has come as the elder brother to lead them to the Father. As the eyes of men are opened to the new relationship, their duties one to another spring into controlling place. Will a man defraud or oppress his neighbour? He is his brother,—with him equally a child of God, however great a distinction may be between them along the line of earthly possessions or privileges. Will he cheat, or lie, or be impure? He is a child of the Father, and because of that relationship, is impelled to be what his Father would have him and to prove his brotherhood with the Jesus who has opened for him the knowledge of his new life.

So men recognize the need and the meaning of a Christian society as they discover the obligations and the meaning of a Christian life. So the prayer "Thy kingdom come" becomes an essential part of the prayer for the forgiveness of one's own sin, and the relations of Jesus Christ to the condition of the world about us become identical with His relation to the world within our own hearts.

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