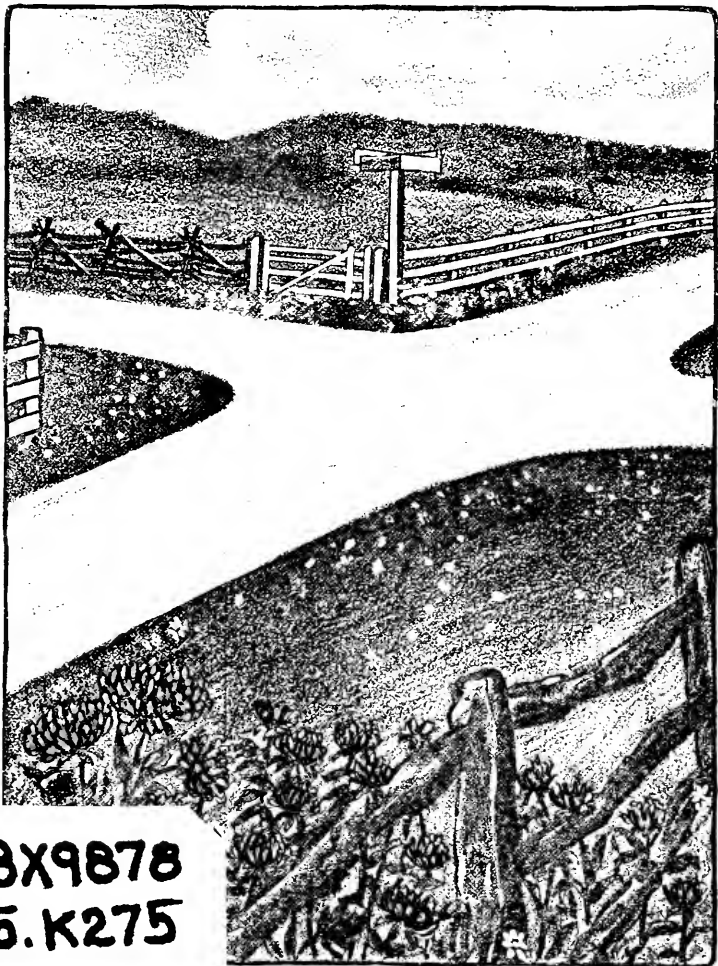


PARABLES *for*
the PEOPLE
KEISTER



BX9878
.5. K275

Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY

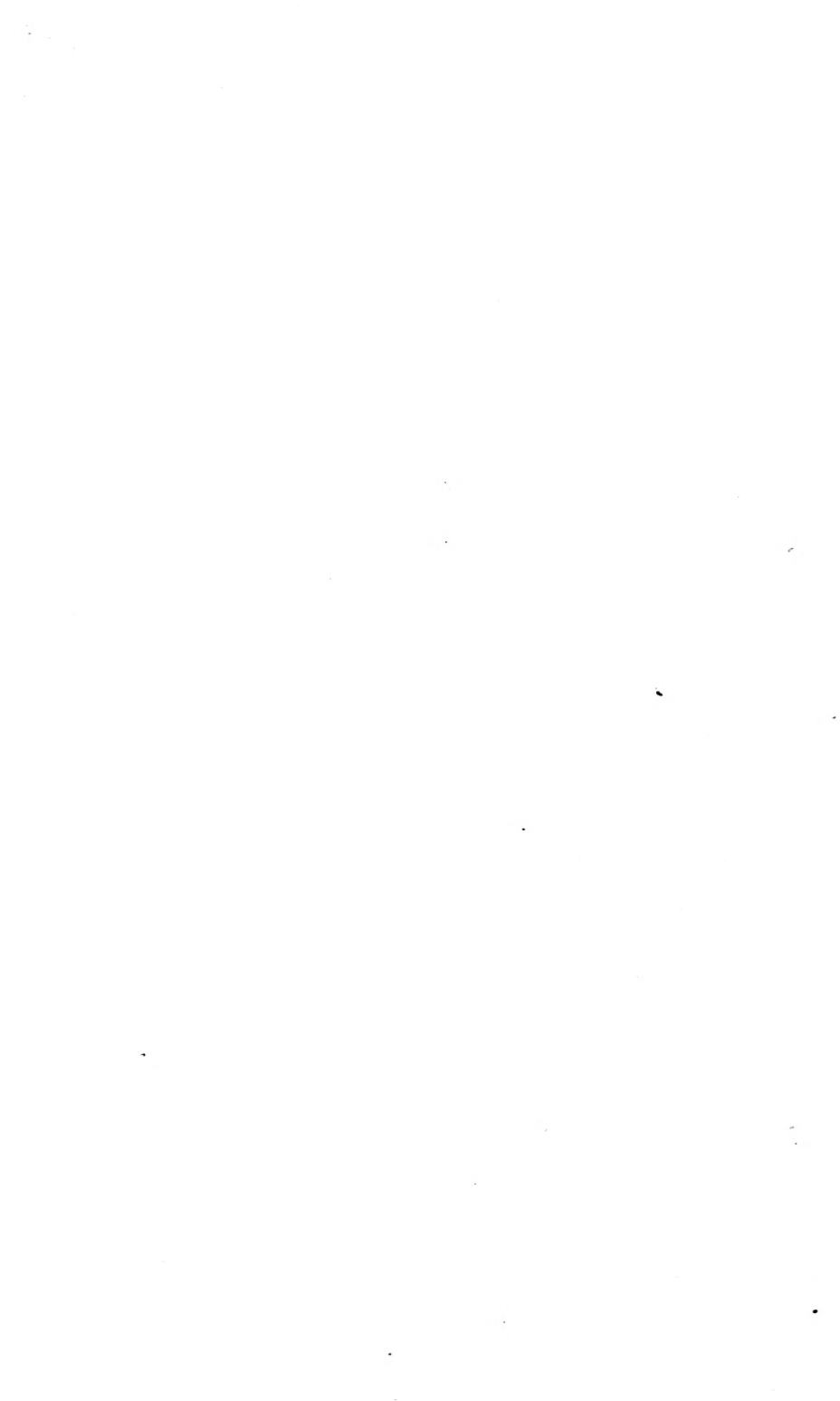


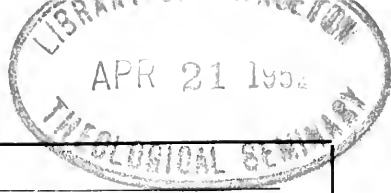
PRESENTED BY

Rufus H. LeFevre

E. 1850

1850





The parables of Jesus were neither deliberate mystifications, nor idle intellectual conceits, nor mere literary products of æsthetic taste; they were the utterances of a sorrowful heart. And herein lies their chief charm: not in the doctrine they teach, though that is both interesting and important; not in their literary beauty, though that is great; but in the sweet, delicate odor of human pathos that breathes from them as from Alpine wild flowers.

—BRUCE.



By LAWRENCE KEISTER, D.D.

Nineteen Hundred and Seven
Press of United Brethren Publishing House
Dayton, Ohio

Copyright, 1907
Lawrence Keister, D.D.
Mt. Pleasant, Pa.

Introduction

The camel that gets permission to put his nose into his master's tent—not in the fable, but in our real rushing modern life—and without further ado works his whole body in, to the discomfort and perhaps the discomfiture of the rightful occupant, might be called by a half dozen familiar names, business, sports, the club, fashion, society, etc., and every man and woman might reasonably be expected to know the name of his or her camel.

The intruder takes too large a share of the room for himself, leaves too little for his master, and often little or none at all for religious life, spiritual culture, and personal ministry in behalf of others, which are all essential to a healthful, happy life.

Certain evils are said to work their own cure, but it may be noticed that the cure is apparent rather than real, since evil never puts good in its place, but only offers a new form of self-indulgence when an old one has lost its attraction.

The camel always manages to assume the aspect of a friend, or even claims the right to govern the man and drive out every other claimant to his place. Only when men become burdened with the camel's company do they really remember that he is an intruder, that there is other company for them, that they are or can be worthy of the other

Introduction

company, and that the other is very much better than that of the camel.

When the angels sang the advent anthem above the manger-cradle of the infant Christ in the hearing and in the language of the shepherds, they rendered a real service to mankind. God had come closer to man than ever before, and this great historic fact, this supreme religious truth, was worthy to be celebrated in song:

Glory to God in the highest,

And on earth, peace among men in whom he is
well pleased.

Two worlds were interested, and each had its appropriate part, angels being permitted to sing aloud while men listened in adoration.

Citizens of the invisible world bore witness to citizens of the visible concerning the Christ. They declared his presence, the closer union of God with man and world with world. The invisible and the visible, God and man, should no longer stand apart in the minds of men, since these are brought together in the person of the Christ, the union appearing even in his words and works, and neither being plain and rational on any other basis. Henceforth the contrast and the conflict in the soul and in society is faith and unbelief, while the harmony of the soul and of society arises by means of the union of man with God, the visible with the invisible.

A fact like this deserves a place in the minds and hearts of men, and fairly demands the very first place. If the Christ claims much, his claim is only in keeping with his character. If he asks admission into the heart to take control, his presence

Introduction

works no hardship. He never comes like the camel, but, like a guest, must be invited and welcomed. What if he undertakes to govern our conduct and form our character; what if he is the soul of our morality and the heart of our religion; what if he shapes our theology and our philosophy? We have suffered no loss without a far greater gain, and silently and yet effectively the process of our redemption goes on. The angels' anthem is, as it was, for human ears and hearts, and the need of the hour will always be the acceptance of the Christ, visible and invisible, in the fullness of his life and wisdom and power. As an aid to men in the common walks of life to know the Christ in his simplicity, and continually to look to him as the soul's true Creator, this little volume has been written, and in so far as it serves this end, its work will be accomplished.

Jesus said to his disciples, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." In his relation to them he copies the divine method as applicable to human life. The Christ was sent from above down to the very level of human life in order to lift it up to the level of his own, in its perfect humanity and its perfect harmony with God. By patient ministry and by perfect self-surrender to the will of God he established that will as the law of human life, the principle of man's ordinary activity, and also of his present and future development.

His disciples are commanded to claim and receive the Spirit of God as the only means by which they can have pure motives, right methods, and true manhood. Henceforth life and death are alike to them in this respect, that both are accepted as unto the Lord. In silence and in speech they

Introduction

should never step off this basis and sink to the level of the irreligious and the worldly. They see God in nature and can speak in parables. They see him in providence and discover the principles of divine action. They see him in the Christ and are satisfied with this revelation of the person of deity. The visible and the invisible are no longer held apart in their thoughts as mutually destructive, but are brought together to form the complete whole in which the Christian lives as his world. In this entire realm the Christ has manifested himself as God and also as man, and hence the Christian is to occupy both according to the prayer and promise, "I will that where I am, there my disciples may be also." While each Christian can and must form his own views, he is not at liberty to step outside of Christ's world or try to limit himself to either part alone. He belongs to both the visible and the invisible, and has publicly confessed this article of his creed. He must be judged by this standard. His is the life of faith, being named from the principal element. He shows his faith by his works, ministering to mankind and glorifying God in the highest place in his own heart, and thus prepares himself to glorify God in his heaven, which is man's heaven also, now in spiritual fellowship and Christian hope, and then in personal presence and possession.

If men find that it costs a mighty effort to drive the camel out in order to bring the Christ in, they soon discover that it is worth all its costs, and that every man really chooses his own company, the camel or the Christ.

My World

Foregleam.

All men walk upon the same earth, yet each one lives his own life in his own world. He has his own idea of happiness and usefulness and greatness; exercises his power of choice, selects his surroundings according to his tastes, and shapes them, if possible, to his mind. He works his world over in his thoughts, the result appearing in his choice of associates and employment, his love of nature or lack of it, his use or misuse of religious agencies and institutions. He finds that thoughts, and in a measure things become his by sympathetic interest, by cultivating his capacity to appreciate them, in a word, by giving them a place in his life. Even truth itself becomes his by giving himself to the truth.

My World

WHAT a pretty little goldfish! Its beauty shows to perfection in its glass globe, where every shining scale and every motion is visible. It is not a freak, with clumsy fin and tail, but just an ordinary fish of its kind whose beauty is not in its oddity. No wonder it is kept in the sitting-room as an ornament and an object of interest.

But really it does not seem to be quite itself, for it seems to know it is not at home. From the inside, the glass globe must be a sort of glass prison, and the walls of that room prison walls, and so the little creature often appears homesick. How very unnatural to be hemmed in on all sides and be on exhibition all day, when, by nature, it prefers perfect freedom, and a hiding-place safe alike from danger and inquisitive eyes.

Its present domicile is not constructed with reference to its own nature alone,—it loves fresh water and sand and mud and growing vegetation,—but rather with reference to ours,

Parables for the People

and this new or double principle makes the mischief for our little *protégé*. The little thing might lose heart and courage for life as it moves about in its little glass house and hardly knows what to do next. It must seem like an age, if it remembers, since it had one real good swim in the pond where it was hatched and raised. But now the ends of life for it are completely changed, and it can hardly be expected to be magnanimous enough to enter into sympathy with the design of its jailer, or owner, if you prefer, and be satisfied to be seen. It may love appreciation,—we all do,—but appreciation, real appreciation, sincere and sympathetic, seeks its object at its best, and that may be the reason nature is so broad in its expanse and so varied in its aspects, giving every living thing a fair chance to make the most of itself.

In this little manufactured world there is so little space and so little variety and so very little the occupant can do as compared with its capacity for action. It looks lonely, and no doubt because it feels lonely, for if there is any creature that loves company and plenty of it, this little goldfish is the one. To add one or two or half a dozen companions never seems to relieve the situation materially, for they never grow, never breed, and never spawn in close

My World

confinement. As well have a single one and generously confer upon it every inch of the limited space and every bit of the admiration offered in that home. But just to think of it—solitary confinement for such a social nature! Why, if it could weep there in the water that would be some slight relief, if it were not then under the necessity of drinking its own little tears.

Of course, water is the natural element of the goldfish, but there is not enough of it in the glass globe to make effort worth while. There is scarcely enough to afford a real fresh drink for one hour in the twenty-four, to say nothing of a fine swimming course with the sweet sense of overcoming a resisting current and rushing over rocks and pebbles and uncounted sands. And so it quietly drinks its little pool over and over again and seems to lose the inspiring sense of liberty with which nature endowed it, but which may only await an opportunity to assert itself once more. Perhaps its slow and measured movements and its premature death are its silent protest against man's attempt to domesticate it, or even its noble appeal in behalf of the rest of its race, that they at least may be spared this burdensome captivity. Those shining scales, bright like silver or burnished like gold, and that sym-

Parables for the People

metrical form, so lithe and yet so graceful, please the ordinary eye and appeal to the most cultured æsthetic taste, but the little creature itself mutely appeals to the liberty-loving mind even if we deny to it the brave sentiment of patriotism.

II.

That great bowl, scooped out of the earth and rock and filled to the brim with clear, cool water boiling up from beneath, is a natural curiosity. No stagnant pool is that, with weeds and slime about the edges and a green scum on the surface, but a little inland lake stirring like a teakettle at 212° Fahrenheit. We wonder where all that water comes from, and are reminded of the tiny spring from which we drank in childhood, as some wild animal might have done, only this one before us here among the Alleghenies is large enough to water a regiment. A stream that disappears half a mile away reappears at this spot as a sort of surprise. The blue sky bends above us and the warm summer sun invites the little fish to play on the surface of this interesting and ornamental piece of nature's handiwork.

They come in companies and easily classify themselves on the principle of size and social

My World

relations. They seem to enjoy being agreeable. Their little heads all point the same way, and each has about the same space for his own personal convenience. They are orderly little fellows, if not really systematic. Active and alert, they appear and disappear and seem to enjoy to the utmost their lovely home, the fresh water, the blue sky, and the warm sun, and are perfectly contented and completely occupied in their individual and social life. The bird of larger size that flies close above their peaceful habitation awakens the sense of fear, and they sink a little lower or scurry away pell-mell in search of their well-known hiding-places.

Such is their little world scooped out of the earth and joined to the Juniata by that rapid little rivulet which hurries over the rocks and leads the way to the Susquehanna and the waters of all the seas. No difference how little their world may be, it is a legitimate part of a greater, even if these little fellows do not know it. No difference if they do not like the taste of salt water and are not quietly discussing a trip to foreign parts. The ocean is a necessary part of their world because it is the receptacle of the great river, the river is the combination of little streams, and the little streams are the condensed moisture borne by the clouds from

Parables for the People

the ocean. The whole system, with all its accompanying machinery, is required to produce this circulation. It is nature's way of providing fresh water for these little fish, which have, somehow or other, become the subject of our thought and which we discover are the center of a little universe that, to all intents and purposes, is all their own. If we are thoughtful and reverent we can enter their world, observe, if not really share their happiness with them, for a little while at least, and then respectfully return to our own place. Given that these little fellows are to live, they must have a world to live in, and what their life requires nature freely accords as an act of duty or of grace, and whoever will may decide which. One thing is perfectly plain, and that is these little fish look quite contented in the home provided for them by nature.

III.

As the divinely appointed lord of creation, man is permitted to bring golden carp from their primitive home in China. Because they are beautiful and because they are tenacious of life, he exercises this right, but as an intelligent and kind-hearted sovereign, he might be expected not to impose any other conditions

My World

on the little creatures than those assigned by nature. The little fish is not the only sufferer at his hands, but the little bird, and even the big horse must lose a part of his tail to please his master. Even men are made to share the consequences of his readjusting of the universe, and, most wonderful of all, he is himself included in the common lot of becoming the slave of his own customs, which all goes to show that he is a little warped. There is a twist somewhere. He is not quite level or not quite plumb, which is only a different way of saying the same thing, for each test is an appeal to the law of gravity. When a man actually thinks that any other condition and any other course is better for him than the one marked out by the law of God, and acts accordingly, then he must have a wrong notion of the true environment of a spiritual being, who is designed to be free and also worthy. A man may make a glass prison out of his personal habits, his business enterprises and connections, or the social customs of his community, and undertake to live therein, but he is far better off in the wider world of divine law and divine light. The blue sky is the best roof above us; the distant horizon is the only wall God has raised to limit us, and this recedes at our approach, and our minds, free and unlimited by the

Parables for the People

bounds set for the body, push out into open space to consider planet and star. Our spirits claim other spirits, and God, who is a spirit, as the answering other to our own.

The real value of possession is use—in the industrial sense as the farmer owns his plow, and in the commercial sense as the borrower owns the money intrusted to him, and in the æsthetic sense as the artist owns the beauty of landscape and waterfall, and in the religious sense as the devout soul claims the beauty of the Lord our God and prays that it may be upon him. And so it appears that every man can own the whole world if he knows how, or rather if he has the capacity for it all.

The rainbow I see is mine, for no other eye sees this identical one, because no other eye is just where mine is, and so no other can see the colored reflection of light from the same drops of falling water. In nature, as in grace, God can exalt the individual man without fostering a selfish and offensive egotism. His aim is egoism, a noble selfhood, which is a center and also an object of love. The visible world is required to make room for this man, and even be subject to him. The home and society, the state and the church are to open their doors to him and give him an abundant entrance, for here in the realm of human life, with all its

complications and contradictions, he is to be shaped into what he shall be, if not what he ought to be. Here he is to enter the kingdom of God definitely and deliberately, and so to indicate his purpose, by the grace of God, to enter heaven at the proper time, not asking for any limitations of its life for his special convenience, for any change in its law to suit his individual character, or any diminution of its glory for his personal accommodation.

Men who throw the emphasis on ownership of the material kind are limiting their life and not enlarging it. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possesseth, but in answering the ends of his being. He is not built for the glass globe of custom, but for the open sky of the divine ideal. The rich man has lost the scent and pursues a phantom. The poor man thinks he wants a share, at least, of the rich man's money, and forgets that he is walking over and past his true treasure—"the poor have the gospel preached unto them." The one exalts his dear dollars above his dear life. The other dreams of dear dollars and fails to profit by dear duty, which brings with it the sweet assurance that he who seeks first God's kingdom and righteousness shall find that by divine arrangement all the needful things of life, food and clothing, shall be added

Parables for the People

to him, like a lean-to beside a building. Each stands at the center of his own world and thinks and acts according to the proverb, "A man's way is right in his own eyes." Each makes his own world, using, of course, the materials he finds about him. What if this is the common practice? What if public opinion sanctions it? What if it is even necessary for every man to construct his own world? The possession of things material is but temporary and without reversion. Every acre of land, every dollar of money, and every atom of his body man surrenders before he finally leaves this world. The organizations of earth, however great and powerful, and however useful and necessary to life and well-being here, suffer continual change and await their final dissolution. And so we conclude that this world is not man's world after all. He may regard it as his, and the only one he has or ever will have, but it fades away after it has furnished him a place to begin life, a place of toil and trial, and last of all a tomb, and in his empty palm there is no earthly treasure found at last. The old commandment, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," remains, and a new one is added, "Covet earnestly the best gifts," which means, Be as spiritually minded and religiously rich as you can.

My World

We own by admiration. We are strong by gentleness. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," is a practical principle in the true philosophy of human life, and every man must accept it and apply it if he is to be made free from the tyranny of custom by entering into the kingdom of divine law and divine life. As we learn to love the sweet scenes of nature they are ours, and as we comply with the behest of duty we hear these words floating in upon our hearts, "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The man who looks upon Niagara and sees nothing but water to drive turbine wheels and dynamos cannot possess Niagara except in the commercial sense, and Niagara cannot possess him in the magnitude of its power or the grandeur of its beauty. The man of commercial instincts thinks of lighted cities and a full purse, while the man of æsthetic taste thinks of luminous minds and a love of the beautiful satisfied but never sated. The way into the heart is the way out, and if this be kept open it leads into the Juniata and the Susquehanna and the great ocean beyond. Henry Van Dyke is both prophet and poet when he writes:

**Self is the only prison that can ever bind the soul;
Love is the only angel who can bid the gates
unroll;**

Parables for the People

And when he comes to call thee, arise and follow
fast;
His way may lay through darkness, but it leads to
life at last.

IV.

The easiest word in the English language, or any other for that matter, since it must be common to every tongue as it is common to human life, is the word that has its illustration in infancy, being before and behind the word "mother." Love is admiration for a person because of what that person is or may be, an admiration that rises into downright devotion. No wonder it becomes the liberating and lifting power in the man when its first object is mother and its last and supreme object is God as revealed in Christ. God is love and God is free, not being limited from without but only from within, and very wonderful it is that he offers this same kind of life to men. "Thou shalt love," is his command because it is his ideal for men who are just as slow and just as quick to learn as they are to obey.

The assertion of Jesus, "Not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father," cannot rest on appearances. We see nothing happen when the sparrow falls, no tremor of nature, no recording angel to note the final catastrophe

My World

in that little life. His assertion rests on another basis, his knowledge of God in relation to this world, a knowledge which is far better and more complete than ours. Perhaps it would modify or even radically change our world if we could see as he sees or even believe him when he tells us what he sees and knows to be true. Old things might indeed pass away and all things become new. Right under the rough husk of the visible we would discover the invisible and eternal, and with the ardor of a supreme affection we would surely claim it as our own.

Then let us ask again the question of those first inquirers, "Rabbi, where abidest thou?" Listen to his answer, which comes as an invitation to each of us, "Come and ye shall see." He leads the way while half doubtfully we follow him and enter *his* home and *his* world. The dream of the human heart becomes its reality! How human he is, more human than we! His sympathy with men is deeper and wider than ours, his gentleness and his faithfulness transcend our own beyond all comparison, for they correspond with his power of will and humility of heart. He is true to the law of God in spite of custom so respectable and so imperious in scribe and Pharisee. He is a man and not simply a Hebrew, and he is more

Parables for the People

than man, a fact that dawns upon us and is attested by his refining and uplifting presence, by his delicacy of perception and his sweep of thought, by his power of love and purpose. We listen and look and wonder and begin to say within ourselves, "This is he of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote." We identify him to our own satisfaction as the fulfillment of promise, and touch the throbbing heart of human history.

We are being transformed by the renewing of our minds, and our view of things is changed, our view of life, our view of God. We are transfigured by the presence of the divine and, like the two disciples of old, we forget our temporal surroundings, fail to report the appearance of that humble home or to describe the features of that wonderful face. We were in his world. We saw him and so we saw God, the beatific vision of earth, to which we are all invited when we have the faith to seek it and the purity of heart to realize and enjoy it. We envy not Moses at the burning bush or the three favored disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, for he that sees the Christ sees God, and that is the vision that satisfies the soul. God's world must be very great and very beautiful, and the Christ admits men into this world where they become conscious that they

My World

are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you"—if ye continue in my world, says Christ, in my thoughts and plans, my love and purpose, with my ideals ever rising before you and the mighty motive of my life rising up within you, you may ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.

Thus we dwell in his world in fact and not only in fancy, and indeed we have less use for fancy the more we realize the kingdom of God as a present fact and become the objects of its beneficent influence. We may call that the Christian's world, whether we find it in the heart or the home, in social or industrial or political life, in church or state.

V.

One world may lie within another, as we have seen in the case of the goldfish in the glass globe and also of the minnows in the mountain pond, and even of man as the many-minded inhabitant of the earth, who may rise up and really become a citizen of the kingdom of God. One world should harmonize with all others, the natural with the supernatural, the novelist's with the scientist's and also the Christian's,

Parables for the People

the farmer's with the business man's and the poet's, for this harmony is essential to the comfort of the respective inhabitants of each, for the better understanding of each and all worlds by men who are accustomed to think, and for the proper appreciation of the one great world which we may call the universe of God.

One world may lie far away from another, or it may be so near that you can step from one to the other, changing worlds, if you please, by a turn of the head, the glance of the eye, or the transfer of attention to a new object of thought. Now, we may be in one world and a moment later in another, that of the goldfish, the minnow, or the man. Each one is complete in itself and also a part of another and a greater, and yet each is very different from the other two. One is unnatural, one is natural, and one is supernatural, including all below that is consistent with itself. The world each man conceives and constructs centers about the supreme principle of its own life, whatever that may be, and thus it appears that no two men have just the same in every particular. Indeed, men invite each other into their dwelling-places, their mountain ponds, their glass globes, and even seek to make each other over in order that they may fit and enjoy the world they themselves occupy. The made-

My World

over man might well rejoice if the process were always conducted by one who was greater and better than himself, and hence the Bible points to the Christ as the one who is best able to do so great a work. As a man made over by the Christ, the Christian finds that he has a new principle of action and not merely a modification of the old, a new order of duties which is the reverse of the old, a new basis of being which is the Word of Christ, and so the Christ himself. He has become a new creature with a new principle of action, a new order of things, first things being put first and second things second, a new basis of life, and so the least world in which he lives and moves and has his being is an integral part of the one great whole which the Christ has named the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven.

However great and good, however bright and beautiful, that world may be mine by my own choice and by my personal entrance into its charmed circle of life and fellowship; mine as the rainbow is mine particularly and exclusively; mine as the field of my thought and activity and attainment; mine because the forces of the kingdom of God sweep about me in helpful coöperation; mine in accordance with the promise of God and in answer to my own earnest prayer; mine as really as I myself

Parables for the People

am real and my own; mine as long as I remain within its sacred borders, whether that be for an hour or an age.

Afterglow.

THE LIFE WORTH LIVING.

Great God, to Thee, who lovest me,
My soul I freely render,
In prayer and praise through all my days,
O Thou, my soul's Defender.

Thy word comes down to be my crown,
Thy word so true and tender;
With hope and love and Spirit-dove,
Of life the gentle lender.

My work assigned by Thine own mind,
Thy work so sweet and saving;
Thy work and mine Thou dost combine,
The work my soul is craving.

Life springs again in many men,
The life that Thou art giving;
The life divine for which we pine,
The life that *is* worth living.



Some Sign-Boards

Foregleam.

Along the path of life sign-boards are set which men must learn to read and regard. These silent witnesses tell facts the traveler needs to know, and know well enough to use for his own profit. A man may take up his life journey as a matter of necessity and not of choice, which is sad indeed; he may pursue it to occupy his time and see the sights, which must eventually become burdensome; but it is possible for him to awake to duty and attain in moral and religious life till life becomes interesting and absolutely inspiring. Then he never wishes to wander from the way and be compelled to turn on his track and retrace his steps. Onward, ever onward, is the motto, and duty becomes the divine direction, freely given, to prosper him in his journey and aid him to attain his journey's end.

Some Sign-Boards

THE traveler who hires the railroad to carry him has an easy task as compared with the one who takes the public highway and strikes out across the country. The one buys a ticket for his destination, which the railroad man calls "a point" because for him it never flattens out into a place, boards his train with a hundred others, and settles down for a pleasant journey, with no further anxiety concerning his transportation or safety, but with a keen desire to "come in on time" and no apparent effort to make friends by the way. The other becomes his own passenger agent, assuming all risks and inconvenience, and provides his own transportation with lines and whip in hand, let us say, for the "auto" has not yet vindicated its value as a comfortable means of travel and a satisfactory method of observation. The country road affords sights well worth seeing—hill and valley, schoolhouse and church, our civilization in miniature if we take this as a sample of the whole, and life-size if we see it for itself alone. What ruts there are in these country roads, and

Parables for the People

mudholes, too, breakers on the hillsides and bridges in the valleys where the brook finds its way. Here we are at the crossroads, (not the editorial *we*, let me explain, but the *we* of real, unofficial companionship,) and must choose our road as between a possible two or three.

These country sign-boards are quite interesting, if not very artistic, and however condensed their directions they are always profitable and often almost indispensable. Every division of the road makes them more interesting, and we are glad to see them even when we are sure we are right. The traveler might criticise the spelling and correct the estimate of distances, and even show by comparison that they do not fully agree among themselves, but he never on these accounts rejects the directions they give by deliberately and defiantly turning aside and going the wrong way. The mistakes are not inspired, of course, but the good will and good sense of a very ordinary sign-board is discoverable by a very ordinary traveler. As a good appetite is the best sauce, so a real interest is the best instructor.

Experience is a very great teacher, who wisely requires in her pupils honesty and candor and earnestness, and when a man stands at the crossroads with no other counselors than the sign-boards, bless them, he is likely to have all

Some Sign-Boards

three of these virtues. No country store? No, not at this one. Nobody coming? No. We look about us, but there is no house in sight, and not even the grave of a suicide. What a lonely place! Well, we can have it all our own way this time, unless some fairy comes under cover of approaching darkness. If only that sign-board told a little more, or we knew the roads better, or—but here goes, this is the best we know and the best we can do, and we proceed accordingly.

Really it seems as though we were here once before. There is something familiar about this place, or it may be just a repetition of a common crossroads' experience? Choice is a frequent necessity. No man makes his life journey on two bands of steel, nor can any man go two roads at the same time, either physically or morally. Men who try to divide up and go both ways in morals and religion end up by discovering their delusion. "Here lies" might be written over the grave of many a moral suicide, and we tread lightly at the crossroads in deference to the dead. The happiest man is the one whose choice shows no effort at division now and no cause for regret in after years. To be sure, right choices cost an effort, but they yield a return. At the crossroads a man learns to know better who he is and what his work is.

Parables for the People

He is not harmed but helped, being better able to read the next sign-board, to decide right in case of doubt, and to commit himself confidently to the right road while as confidently forsaking all others, and so he develops the essential qualification of a good traveler.

II.

The lamp of ancient design has become the symbol of knowledge, and we propose the modern sign-board at the country crossroads as the symbol of choice and decision. A fine basis is thus afforded for the organization of a new society, the election of a new set of officers, and the creation of a new kind of greatness. Let the first article of the constitution be, "The name of this society shall be the Crossroads Sign-Board Society of the United States of America." As a large membership is needed, the conditions should be easy and inviting. All dues should be paid promptly and bequests solicited, as it takes money to sustain any organization, even an insurance society, especially if the relationship of the chief officers be large. A beautiful badge in the form of a button with a sign-board at the crossroads done in silver on a black background, or in gold on a green field, would be an ornament to the wearer, a

Some Sign-Boards

gentle reminder, and at the same time a public profession of his faith. Daniel, the great Hebrew prophet, can easily be claimed as one of the early members of this society, for it can be shown conclusively that he was a man of wise choices and worthy decisions. This post-humous membership conferred without the knowledge or consent of the candidate shows clearly a certain appreciation of goodness and greatness on the part of this society, and can be referred to as a sort of moral asset and a religious endowment.

Whether such a society could do more than others now in existence to aid men to right choices and firm decisions remains to be seen, but, of course, its efficiency should be tested, and we should optimistically labor for the best. Somebody would be willing to become president for honor or pay, and all the other offices could be filled on the same terms, and even a respectable number of men and women could be found who would kindly pay their dues to support a cause so benevolent, thus giving body and bottom to the whole affair.

Until this new society is well on its feet, we shall be compelled to rely on the ordinary agencies—the political party in politics, with the aid of an occasional reformer, the beautiful, the brilliant, and the rich in society, the man

Parables for the People

of affairs in business, the man of culture in education, and the man of God in morals and religion. Men often regard morals and religion as the one field of doubt and distraction, just as though religious truth was the hardest and not the easiest kind of knowledge to acquire, even from early childhood. They refer all questions to the intellect, and because the intellect cannot answer them, they conclude there is no answer. Were religion a theory only and not also a life, their expectations might be realized by this process, but since it is a life as well as a theory, another faculty, the choosing and doing faculty, must be called to the aid of the knowing faculty, or rather the choosing and doing faculty must act the chief part and have the knowing faculty as its handmaid. Do the next duty you know to do and another will become plain, so that you can never get into a corner with no duty before you. That looks like a sign-board; and here is another: Distant duties may not be clear to us, but present duties are, and these are the only ones we are called upon to do, and so we are as safe in our moral and religious life as we are on the country roads we never traveled before, and where we read the sign-boards only when we come to them. If any man will do duty he shall know duty, and hence in morals and religion the

Some Sign-Boards

answer to the question, How know? is the one word, Do.

The man who discredits his ability and his faith to do his plain duty may yet have the faith and ability to try, and that is all that is really required at the start. He may fail, but his failure teaches him something concerning his ability as well as his inability, something concerning the best way to do that thing, and a second trial may be all he needs in order to succeed in doing what he really could not do before. At first he had faith enough to try, but now he has enough to try again and even enough to succeed. He may pray, "Lord, increase my faith," but he keeps on using his present ability and giving his faith an opportunity to grow according to the divinely appointed method of increase. Only personal choice and decision and attainment admits any man into the Sign-Board Society of which we are already growing decidedly proud.

III.

Men are unwise as well as willful when they quarrel with God's sign-boards and lift their wills in resistance to his commands. They would find it very dangerous to be disobedient, if, while God is stronger than they, he was not

Parables for the People

also out of sight better. A good Christian takes his will out of his sins as a good business man takes his capital out of a bad investment, or as much as he can. The good man invests in his virtues, and nothing so opens his eyes and awakens his mind to the true and beautiful and good as perfect obedience to the teachings of Christ as far as he understands them. His meat is that of his Master, who did the will of God and always seemed strong and nerved for duty.

The Christian prays, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," thus adopting the will of God as the law of his personal life. This law being settled from both sides, by his own choice and by divine decree, appears well established and reasonably reliable. Then, too, if he obeys God's will in all things, God becomes the sharer of his acts, his responsibilities, and even his enjoyments. No decision is his alone, and no result is only from God. And if he knows that God bends over him like a mother over her child, he will waste less energy in anxious care and have more room for courage and happiness. If the world has never been disappointing to him, God has not. No chilling wind of doubt ever comes from that quarter. The divine will fits the human will in its needs and ambitions, and the human will fits itself

Some Sign-Boards

to the divine until the divine will is done on earth and until earth fades from view and heaven actually appears.

When little children are interested in the stories of the Bible, is it because these narratives appeal to the child's imagination, or because they describe real persons who deserve sympathy or censure? who are examples of evil or good, to be avoided on the one hand and followed on the other? Older people may find it necessary to cultivate a taste for the Word of God because they have never acquired it, or because of the enforcement of duty, which leaves the flavor of failure if not of fulfillment. The sense of sin is not agreeable, but the Bible awakens it not because it is unpleasant, but in order to help men to the sense of salvation which is sweet and satisfactory.

Intelligent people read, and the only question is, what they are to read, papers, magazines, and books being offered to old and young and adapted to their tastes as well as their needs. In some books there is a bad atmosphere. It is tainted. There is a subtle spirit of falsehood which makes the true look false and the false appear true, the just appear harsh and the unjust gracious. In other books there is a good atmosphere, fresh and fragrant and wholesome, reminding us of pines and hemlocks and

Parables for the People

winter winds. The writers are not hemmed in by the hedge-fence of custom or the worm-fence of theory, or hampered by little personal conceits, but lead their readers out upon the solid earth of duty and under the open sky of truth. The thing that gives consistency to a book is its plan secondarily, and primarily its author, whose spirit broods over its pages like the spirit of God in creation; and hence above its pages, above its plan, we find the real constitution of the book in its author.

In still other books there is little or no atmosphere. They are close and stuffy and labored. They smell like an unused parlor and look like an ordinary attic. The reader is in dread lest he should bump his head on the rafters, because the writer just elbowed his way through his pages. He had no sweep of vision, no satisfactory system of thought, no soul that could envelop you. You could not breathe freely or feel at home in his chapters because the author's world was low and narrow and mechanical.

The best book ought to have the best atmosphere and approximate the ideal in this as in every other respect. The atmosphere of the Bible is sweet and pure and satisfying to the honest heart. It affords breath like the air and vision like the sun. It opens the heavens

Some Sign-Boards

above us, reveals the earth on which we stand as our present but not our permanent home, and even shows us the hell that yawns beneath the sinful soul. It has length and breadth and height and depth, enabling men to see what they are by nature and what they can be by grace. The Bible never makes evil attractive, directly or indirectly, by accident or implication. It is the book that makes evil look bad and good look good. It is not one book among many, but the one of the many, never being properly placed in comparison with books of human authorship. In the Nineteenth Psalm, David compares the law of God with the works of God in creation, and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says the law is not worn by time like an old coin or like furniture that is often moved, but that it lasts like the heavens and the earth, remaining through the centuries without the loss of jot or tittle by use or even misuse. As God's book and as man's book, having lived through the centuries of the past and having brought life and light to millions, we must look upon it as the freshest and most vital book in existence to-day.

Parables for the People

IV.

The union of the visible and the invisible in religious life is marked by a line plain enough for any one to see, just as the voice of the Holy Spirit is loud enough for any one to hear. That line passes through the Christian Sabbath, the Holy Bible, and the Christian church, all of which belong to the visible and the invisible. Men can see that line on the calendar on the wall, on the dial of the clock, and in the life of any consistent Christian anywhere. It falls across the pulpit in every Christian church, the center-table in almost every home, and under the very eye of the devout Bible student. It appears wherever a Christian church is built, wherever a congregation meets to worship God or even two or three are gathered in the name of Christ. That line should never be obliterated by worldliness or skepticism in any form, but should remain distinct and visible without the aid of the pretentious medium, the delusive clairvoyant, or the self-hypnotized Christian Scientist. No man need remain in doubt, since he can see for himself. The kingdom of God, visible and yet invisible, in time and yet eternal, is with us as a fact and a force, becoming visible to men wherever it touches and transforms them. Its power is apparent, and the cause must be equal to the effect.

Some Sign-Boards

God has entered human history and human life, and the next duty for men is not to explain away so great a historic fact and so vital a religious truth, but to adjust themselves to the one and make room in their hearts for the other. The man who stands beside the Christ needs no commentary on the words, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," and the man who does not stand there will scarcely be aided by any explanation. Men who minister Christ's pardon and peace, his hope and happiness, think less of lower life and lower ministries. What the world gives, it soon takes back again, and so the Christ says, "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Every dollar a man may possess, every acre he owns, every atom of his body belongs to this world and stays right here, whether or not he bestows it by gift or by his last will and testament. "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," says Jesus as he departs, not recalling his gifts, but intending them to be our permanent possession, like other gifts of God.

The great, good men of the Bible illustrate life on the basis of Bible truth and teaching. Listen to the brave words of Daniel the man and Daniel the prophet, two characters blending harmoniously in the one person, "Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let

Parables for the People

thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another." What a fine chance to become rich and great in a moment, and fairly, too, by rendering the king and the nation a true service. This opportunity of a lifetime, just what many men are waiting for, sudden wealth and instant greatness, is just what Daniel did not desire.

But who was this Daniel, that he could afford to reject such an offer? A Hebrew captive in heathen Babylon, a devout man whom the angel Gabriel visited with the most gracious assurances of divine favor, a man of noble birth and noble character, a prophet of the living God. Not every man is as wise, or knows that devotion to God rises above loyalty to an earthly ruler, or believes that royal manhood outranks earthly honors, outweighs earthly riches, and outlasts both. Not every man who knows all this acts accordingly. Only Daniel's faith makes Daniel's choice, shows Daniel's courage, and shines with Daniel's constancy.

V.

The good man is the man God can aid and use. Instead of giving place to the devil, he gives place to God, and God gives place to him. The only place the good man really wants or

Some Sign-Boards

really can fill is the place God gives him. Seek God, and let honor and office seek you, looks just a little like a sign-board set by Jesus at a certain parting of the ways. Not greatness of place and power, but greatness of soul satisfies a soul, and for every great soul there is a place as great and an honor equal to its worth. If this were not true, the friends as well as the enemies of God would here find an argument against him, against his goodness and wisdom and power, against his kingdom and government, and even against heaven itself, the home of the good, which must be great enough to satisfy the good, however great they may be or become.

For the good man there is a habit of duty and a helpfulness of duty and a happiness of duty, and he needs all three in their proper proportions in order to relieve and finally banish the feeling that duty is too heavy to bear. Like gold, its weight equals its worth, and no man complains of the weight of his purse or deliberately relieves himself by throwing it away. With even less reason would he cast off duty, since its weight measures its worth to him.

Duty is an old word too little known, too little cherished, too little loved. Libertinism on one hand and Puritanism on the other must not be allowed to chill our ardor for this old

Parables for the People

word which we should ever make new and keep fresh in our life, individual and family, social, religious, and political. When it droops or withers, it must be revived and kept vigorous and vital in our morals and religion, for in turn it becomes our keeper. Duty is the highway of the soul, which is the greater traveler, excelling the body in its movements, however the latter may be aided by modern means; the door of admission into the brotherhood of the spirit where companionship is sweet and true and lasting; the password into the society of right choices and noble decisions to which belong the good, if not all the great, by their own election and not by ours. Duty is a divine word, written in the Bible and in the heart of man, and when it is set up as a sign-board along life's journey, the honest, earnest traveler learns by happy experience that it marks the trysting-place of God.

Afterglow.

THE SCEPTER OF THE SOUL.

Say no to thyself somewhere,
Lest thou never can say thy yes;
And lest something that 's bright and fair
Thy spirit may never possess.

Say no to thyself just there
Where thy no by the Christ is placed;
For that no means a yes elsewhere,
And *His* yes by thee must be traced.

Say no, to say yes, dear friend,
That the Christ you may stand beside,
Who said no and then yes to the end
That sinners might be justified.

Say yes, to say no, dear friend,
Thus to drive out the bad with good;
To thy heart the desire to lend
Of Him who for righteousness stood.

Concerning Conclusions

Foregleam.

A plan, like a rose, grows on a stem. A man's purpose is the stem that produces and sustains, gives form, and color, and consistency to his life and character. His purpose is formed in his own mind and then projects itself in his plan, which comes back to bless or burden him—for, from his own creation he draws his inspiration to work, his wisdom in adapting means to ends, and his courage to carry it to completion. On the one side his plan corresponds with his body, and on the other with his spirit. He impresses his plan upon the materials on which he works, but as it rises before his mind he regards it as his ideal, and so, whatever his lot in life, a man should be both a realist and an idealist.

Concerning Conclusions

CLEAR ideas like clear water and clear air help us to see to the bottom of things if we are looking down, and to the top if we are looking up, and since we build on the one and in the direction of the other, we need a clear view of both. The seed the farmer sows is the bottom for him, and the harvest he reaps the top. For the architect the finished plan and the completed building occupy these respective places. The logician has premises and conclusions in "the orderly procession of his thought." The Christian accepts the Christ as his *alpha* and *omega*, his beginning and his end, his foundation and his ideal.

When they are worked out to their completion, conclusions come at the end, but if they are not to appear accidental and undesirable they must begin at the beginning and stay with us all along the way. In fact, they do this very thing when we are not aware of it, or not until our undefined plans begin to show themselves in results. Then our minds may clarify till we see our plans like we do the pebbles at

Parables for the People

the bottom of the spring or the wandering clouds in the sky. Our conclusions are the objects of our thought and purpose and effort, the plans and specifications on which we are working consciously or unconsciously, our ideals in process of realization. No wonder we are concerned about them from the beginning as well as at the end, for they are shaped like crystals in solution, and once formed are not easily changed. The man who takes good care of his farm or his business may discover that he has neglected himself shamefully. The woman who shows up well before the glass may be lean in soul and angular in spirit. Both may make the sad discovery at the end of life that they have reached no desirable conclusion, while both can testify to the logical outcome of their chosen course of conduct.

It may seem like a heavy burden to lay upon childhood to anticipate its own future and prepare for it, to form some idea of itself as it is and as it shall be, to dream prophetically of its own life and work and attainments. This burden may appear less onerous when we remember that moral sense in childhood is clear and convincing, that the elements of worthy life are not at all mysterious, but quite plain, appearing in settled precept and living example, and that low ideal may be lifted, and impending

Concerning Conclusions

defeat turned into glorious victory. The farmer who faces the soil has no better chance to raise a good crop than has the Christian who faces the Christ to form a good character. We owe a debt of gratitude to King Solomon for this sentence: "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." This simplifies things for us and enables us to see clearer. It says something that needed saying, and says it in the best way. "The end of the matter"; yes, that must be considered in the catechism and in the counting house, in the kitchen and in the pulpit, at the end and at the beginning, and all the way through from the beginning to the end.

II.

If we really could put the end all at the end, as many try to do, what real connection would the end have with the rest of life? What connection would it have with the mind and character of the man? If a bad man were to wake up good at the end of life, he might easily think he was not really himself and be able to prove it. Oak lumber grew as oak. Conclusions are in the warp as well as the woof of the fabric, and so a man must learn about conclusions very

Parables for the People

early in life, and even before he knows anything concerning them his parents or guardians must know something for him.

Some men have more right decisions at the beginning than others have at the end of life, a sort of self-imposed handicap for the latter and a very important addition to the resources of the former. Worldly men regard themselves winners in the game of life and not losers, gaining time to do their own pleasure, opportunity to use means destructive to Christian character, and as a sort of offset relying on the good Lord in a general way to save their souls at the proper time. Even some professing Christians seem to be infected with this view, and try to see how much of duty and truth and righteousness they can surrender and still be regarded as Christians. A little truth may be kept to make much error respectable, or a little error may remain while much truth holds sway and steadily roots out the remaining error.

A Christian may appear to be weak and emaciated, and actually be weak and even feel that he is weak because he is half Christian and half worldling. He is a compromise measure and not an original resolution. In this respect he is unlike the Christ, who is the way and the truth and the life without ifs or ands

Concerning Conclusions

or buts. No modifiers are needed to tone down his words concerning himself, and no commentary to tone them up or lend them meaning. He came to save men who need to be saved and to present them before God without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. A great task, that! but he is working in earnest and with great success replacing man's weakness with his strength, man's compromises with his completeness.

Christians may cavil at the word "perfect" found in the Bible, but the fact that Jesus used it, and used it as a test of character, should be sufficient to impress them with its present worth and practical importance. Men apply it in their own affairs with their own interpretation. They have their plan or ideal, and when they succeed, even measurably, in working it out they are willing to call it perfection. They apply their standard,—every way of man is right in his own eyes,—and so the Christ applies his standard to the Christian who works out his ideal, and no better word can be found for the result than the one the Bible uses.

There is a nice way of obeying the Christ in appearance and yet doing as we please, of following him and yet setting a limit to our devotion, of believing in him and yet working out

Parables for the People

our own ideals. We fit our salvation into our selfishness as a useful part, affording comfort in sorrow, security in danger, and respectability any time it is needed. If the Christ is accepted as our personal Savior, it is only to save us from sins we select; if he is welcomed as our Lord, it is with the reservation of the veto power. On these terms our Christ becomes our servant waiting on our wish rather than our Savior, our assistant to aid in time of need rather than our Lord. The Christ of God came to minister and not to be ministered unto, to minister to manhood that the sinful and broken may be saved and perfected. This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent, that ye respond to the Christ as one sent by God, that ye receive him as his person deserves and his work requires. He comes as Savior, and so men must be saved by him, and as Lord, and so men must be ruled by him. The fiber of the Christian, like the grain of the oak, belongs to his growth and reveals not only orthodoxy or the acceptance of a creed, not only respectability or conformity to custom, but the hearty acceptance of the Christ as his ideal who is to become real in himself to the very limit of his capacity.

Concerning Conclusions

III.

A man does not become a God by being an imitator of God, as Paul commands, or by becoming like the Christ, as John declares he shall be when he shall see him as he is. Man has human nature and not divine nature, and Jesus shows us that human nature carried to heaven is human still. When the Bible tells us that God created man in his own image, it does not say that man can attain to deity or take the place of God. It does say, by the pen of Peter, that he can become a partaker of the divine nature through the promises. In fact, the Bible shows that he is not a complete man, not all he can and ought to be, not even on the way to become his best until he is a godly man.

On the other hand, the Bible shows that when Jesus became man he continued to be God. Possessing both a human and a divine nature, we call him the God-man, no other sharing his place with him. He is able therefore to act for both and to represent both. In his life and work he fulfills the law of God as a man, meets the need of man as sinful and salvable, and the result is atonement. In the person of Jesus Christ, God is seen in loving relation with man, and man is seen in perfect harmony with God.

Parables for the People

This great religious truth realized by an individual in his own personal experience bears the name "regeneration" when we call attention to the new life of the believer; "conversion" when we think of his change of front in order to his change of heart; "salvation" when we consider his rescue from a lost condition, his restoration to a right life and the favor of God. There are progressive steps in the salvation of any man, but they all lead on to perfection, the partial pointing to the complete Christian, the immature to the perfect. Full salvation, or the complete surrender of the will to God, may be attained slowly through years of personal experience, but should never be deferred to old age or regarded unbecoming to the young man or the young woman. An hour approaches, however distant, when a full surrender of the will must be made by each and all and a full salvation realized, and that hour may come to the young as well as the old—then shall the spirit return to God who gave it. If full submission is commendable in a dying hour, and if this is the condition on which the dying man receives dying grace, of which we often hear, may it not be the condition of receiving a living grace equally valuable? At any point in life we might expect to find above an open heart an open heaven.

Concerning Conclusions

A full surrender to God or a foul surrender to Satan are the alternatives before every man. Look ever so carefully, he will find no really neutral ground in morals, no other path, no third person. Therefore, men must know God in order to love him, and Satan in order to beware of him; see God in Jesus Christ and Satan in anybody who gets between them and God. No one has any legitimate business there, and Satan is the one who conducts an illegitimate business, his servants sharing this with him, as the servants of God share *his* kingdom and *his* work.

When a Christian can say, "If I ought to do this duty then I want to do it," he has within him the soul of obedience. He never needs to become empty and hollow and finally collapse. He has resisting power, and the one effectual barrier to the evil outside seeking entrance and control is his will to be good sustained by the will of God. This arrangement commends it, since a man should always have his will with him, his will to resist wrong and do right, and in that case he finds God present and in full sympathy with him.

Men may think they can lift duty off the basis of divine command enforced by human conscience and build it upon personal convenience supported by human custom. This home

Parables for the People

product in morals and religion may be admired like a new style in dress and even become popular. We should not forget, however, that right and wrong are not engaged in a little game of "pussy wants a corner," each changing places with the other at the first opportunity or varying with the change of public opinion. Our reason and our conscience, aided by the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, will keep us true to the old order, which is very durable and sufficiently ornate.

The wise man thinks less of the ashes under his grate than of the bright, warm fire in it, and our thoughts should dwell less on the ashes of life, the residuum left after each day of service, till the soul takes its departure, and more on the flame of our spiritual existence, just as the mind of Moses was fixed on the burning bush because the bush was not consumed and no ashes formed. That was life without residuum, wonderful to him and to us. How wonderful that the infinite God can create a finite being who can have the infinite God as the object of his thought and affection! He *can* have and he *must* have. Nothing short of deity will satisfy this finite creature; nothing less than the infinite God; and so we discover an element of the infinite in the finite, a thread of divine glory in our human nature.

Concerning Conclusions

IV.

The Christian who has duty plainly before him, knows just where to strike and then shows a disposition to glance off, is not quite in earnest. His religion is a secondary matter, and his glancing strokes are dangerous to himself and others. He should adopt a creed that is practical and personal, the individual "I" taking the place of the customary and collective "we" and the more distant "they" so convenient in conversation of a certain type. He should have clear ideas in religion, and as an aid to this end the following is offered by way of suggestion:

1. I accept the Christ of the New Testament as my Savior and Lord; the Holy Spirit as my guide into all truth and my Comforter at all times; God the Father as revealed by the Christ and the Holy Spirit as the object of my worship.

2. I take the four Gospels to tell me how to be saved from sin, the Acts to show me how to be sanctified, the twenty-one epistles to teach me how to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Christ, the Revelation to John to give me a vision of the ascended Christ, of the future history of the Christian church, and of my own future home; and I take the whole Bible to

Parables for the People

reveal to me the will of God as the law of my life here and hereafter.

3. I claim the peace of God as my present and permanent possession; the love of God as my motive in the inner circulation of my life and also in its outer activities; the glory of God as my ambition; the people of God as my people, and the kingdom of God as the field of my life and labor.

Our creeds should shape and also show our convictions, and our convictions, like our bones, should remain with us. Right convictions never need changing, and, like our bones, they should not be fractured or broken. They should grow with us in size and strength and usefulness, and be the basis of mental and moral action corresponding with the basis of muscular action of the body. Of course, we never needlessly exhibit our bones, but respectfully cover them with the soft flesh of courtesy and keep them warm with the lifeblood of kindness. As nature makes a mighty effort to repair a broken bone, so should a man to restore a fractured conviction. Two hundred and eight bones are required to equip a human body, and about as many settled beliefs or convictions to give form and strength and consistency to a man as a mental and moral and religious unit.

Concerning Conclusions

As there is a place for every conviction, so every conviction should be in its place.

Our creeds, whatever they may be, eventually become our convictions, and are not simply the formal expression of them. Hence we do well to continue to "believe and confess before all men." They are not sign-boards pointing to roads we do not intend to travel, unpleasant conclusions we seek to escape, ideals which we regard futile or false, but symbols of truth, expressions of life, embodied spirits, our creeds becoming our convictions even as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

V.

A shabby character is worse than shabby clothes beyond all comparison, but both are sure to become shabby unless the owner keeps them in repair. Like good clothes, good character tends to scuff and wear out. It evolves downward instead of upward unless men make special provision for the upward evolution. This is a historic fact, even if it looks a trifle like a dogmatic declaration. The body fails by reason of disease and injury, by accident and old age, and clothes lose buttons, need patches in out-of-the-way places, and frequently the old suit must give place to a whole new out-

Parables for the People

fit. However proper and becoming it is for a good man to be well dressed, ordinary clothes cannot reduce the real worth of an extraordinary man. Were men and women required by law to wear clothes that matched their characters, to be in appearance what they are in fact, what a revolution would be wrought! With no chance for argument and deception, the rogue in business and society, in church and state would think the judgment day had come, while the honest man would rejoice in his integrity as well as in his clothes. The convict would stick to his stripes or his stripes would stick to him. The smooth rascal who always passed for a gentleman would find a new job and a new set of friends. Here and there an innocent man, falsely accused and unfortunately condemned, would say triumphantly, "I told you so." Of course, this will do to think about, but it is not likely to take place till Gabriel sounds his trumpet, and in the meantime men must take life as it is.

In fact, life is just a course in a kindergarten. Men and women have their object lessons and are called upon to learn from the most ordinary tasks and experiences a wisdom that is above the ordinary and which is absolutely necessary in order to happiness and well-being. If they fail to learn wisdom from the

Concerning Conclusions

ordinary duties of life, for example, to keep their feet securely on the plain, solid earth of fact and truth, to discover an agreeable variety amid the apparent monotony of life, to see how the meanest duty is related to the most important, these duties will become uninteresting and even repulsive.

In the well-regulated home, the ash-pan must be carefully carried out every morning and emptied on the ash-pile. Ashes are inert and lie where they fall unless lifted by somebody or some breeze, or as often occurs both go to work at the same time without premeditation or any real coöperation. Ashes are considered a symbol of mourning, but the contents of the pan may blow all over you without reference to your sorrows, and you are very likely to forget the symbol while contending with the real stuff. But let us remember that we are optimists and prefer to think of the one who carries out the ashes as having sweet communion with common things, observing the changing air currents between the kitchen door and the ash-pile and rejoicing that his work brightens the fire in the grate and hurries up the coffee on the cook-stove.

At last we see that while we are practical we must be philosophical; while we are useful we must be poetical; while we are realistic we

Parables for the People

must be idealistic; and as between the realism and the idealism of the man with the ash-pan and the author of the ordinary work of fiction, give me that of the man with the ash-pan. There is something so substantial and ordinary, so wholesome and homelike about it. It belongs to real life, and that is the only kind that becomes ideal. The only path to the ideal for any of us is through the real, and that path is open to the housekeeper and the farmer, as well as to the preacher and the poet. Any one who can be real in himself, real in any sphere of life and labor, real in his relation to man and God, can also be ideal, and ought to do it. The ability brings with it the obligation. The man who wishes to be ideal, wisely begins by being real. He easily assures himself of this fact by personal experience and careful observation, and comes to the conclusion that the real man is the only one who develops naturally and necessarily into the ideal man, and that this conclusion is not less clear to the mind than to the eye are the pebbles at the bottom of the crystal waters of the spring or the bright stars in the depths of the cloudless midnight sky.

Afterglow.

THE BIRD ON THE TOPMOST LIMB.

I saw a bird with a glossy coat
Fly up to the topmost limb
Of a tree so tall that as I looked
My head soon began to swim.

That bird in black chose that very limb
Of all in that graceful tree;
And seemed at rest at that altitude—
It never would do for me.

Admiring th' bird on the topmost limb,
I thought how faint I would be
To take that place, were it strong enough,
The top of that poplar tree.

But I must rise to the topmost limb
Of some tall tree, I am sure;
The tree of life with its topmost branch,
And there I must rest secure.

A duty high, none beside so high;
A day beyond which is none
For me on earth; but only an hour
When my life and work are done.

The courage shown on the swaying limb
My courage must emulate,
When I shall rise to that solemn hour,
With all of my little weight.

I can, I know, be just as secure
As th' bird on the topmost limb,
If, with my friend of the glossy coat,
I have wings and feet like him.

By faith will *I* walk and not by sight,
(Her visions *my* eyes shall greet;)
And offer *my* prayer more fervently
For faith as my wings and feet.

The Meaning of Method

Foregleam.

A method, like a coat, is made for individual use and, of course, should fit the man who is inside. The method a man adopts or constructs fits close enough to show the outlines of his figure, what he is and shall be, and even the presiding principle in his mind. From the moral and religious standpoint there are two methods—that of worldly wisdom, based on appearance and force, and that of divine wisdom, based on truth and gentleness. Men take their pick. Some, however, try to combine the two, but eventually discover that they cannot work two methods any better than they can serve two masters, that a man's method often accounts for his efficiency or inefficiency, his success or failure, and that only the man himself fully accounts for his method.

The Meaning of Method

THE hand of the engineer lays hold of the locomotive at the throttle-valve, the air-brake, and the reverse lever, and not at the wrist-pin. There is a world of difference. Intelligence tells at the throttle, while force rules at the wrist-pin, and no man could imagine that his arm of flesh is stronger than that ribbed arm of steel which transmits from the cylinder to the drive-wheels a power measured by pressure to the square inch. The engineer governs his machine by means of its own force and mechanism. His task is to direct the power harnessed under his control, moving his machine forward or backward, increasing its speed or slowing down and bringing it to a full stop. His strength is never pitted against that of his machine, or lent to it, however heavy the grade or ponderous the train to which it has been coupled. He is not needed at the wrist-pin, but takes his place in the cab where intelligence tells and reason ought to reign.

The ordinary man resembles the locomotive in action, if not in appearance, being con-

Parables for the People

structed with reference to motion. His desires and motives, his aims and ambitions, and even his likes and dislikes are steam in the boiler. He generally carries a few pounds for ordinary use, but must fire up before he can move very fast or very far. His will is the engineer who governs the man, or rather the man who governs himself, and when he does so we name this power of self-control his will, which is a great convenience to his friends and no inconvenience to him. He keeps his desires and ambitions, his aims and motives, and even his likes and dislikes under control, using them for his own advancement and avoiding open switches and a thousand other causes of accident. When a man gets tired governing himself according to the law of God and his own constitution and seeks relief, or what he generally calls "freedom," by throwing the reins of self-control on the neck of desire, thus permitting desire to develop into passion, the passion for pleasure, which comes easy and early, or the passion for stimulating drinks and drugs, which comes by careless cultivation, or the passion for money, which comes naturally and increases with success in a regular geometrical progression, he loses hold of the open throttle, the air-brake, and the reverse lever, and if he tries to save himself, as he often does, by laying hold of the

The Meaning of Method

revolving wrist-pin of the evil consequences of his folly, he feels quite sure of an impending wreck, and that somebody will be hurt. For once he is a prophet and foretells his own future, and that of any other man in his condition. A man is part headlight, and not all will, but his headlight is often smashed by his will. As a matter of business and safety, if not of morality and religion, a man ought to know himself like a competent engineer knows his locomotive, or be content to get back in the train like a common gondola or box-car to be pulled by a safe leader. He must know how to regulate and shut off the steam of desire and ambition, how to slow down on the curves and down grades, how to use the reverse lever in case of emergency by an act of quick intelligence and heroic will, and, in short, to apply his mental power and physical strength where they will do the most good. He must know himself as he is known and enter into the design of his Builder and Maker in order to insure "a safe run."

II.

The word "how?" with a question mark after it, may call out the whole story of a man's virility and success. His method accounts for his work, quality and quantity, and even the

Parables for the People

man himself, notwithstanding the fact that he first originates or adopts his method to aid him in his work, adopting, of course, a method in keeping with his character and his aim in life. His method faithfully reflects the man at the moment of his choice. It is a "snap-shot," and may become a picture of "long exposure" or even a composite picture true to life at many times, and so at any time. A study of methods is therefore a study of men from one point of view, and a very good one, too, for it shows them as they are and not simply posing. Method becomes the useful little straw that shows which way the wind blows in a man's life, the personal quality in his handwriting that attests the genuineness of his signature, the finger-print that individualizes him beyond doubt or question.

Generally there is more than one way of doing things, but we naturally suppose there is one way easier and better than any other. The marksman can miss the bullseye at the top or bottom or on either side, but to hit it requires a center shot. There are a thousand ways of doing pretty nearly right, but only one of doing right. Two and two make four, and three and one are four, and in either case the one result is as good as the other. A hundred other ways of reaching the same result would

The Meaning of Method

be perfectly legitimate as a mathematical process. Two millions plus two millions are four millions, which may represent respectively the actual investment in dollars of some famous financier and the actual proceeds of his legitimate business, or it may represent the original capital with an equal amount added by means of capitalization to reduce the rate of interest on the investment, but not the actual income of the owner, and also to double the price of stock, if not its value. The greatest financiers wish to be agreeable and levy their tolls in the nicest possible way. They evidently prefer to violate no law of the land and to be considered fairly respectful to the Ten Commandments. Judges and juries, the press and the people, the state and the church, are all trying to make up their minds on this new subject in finance and morals. The science of mathematics never assumes the right to relieve moral beings of moral responsibility. Two and two make four, and the moral teacher cheerfully accepts the result from the mathematician and the financier, but he asks a like courtesy when he goes back of the figures to take a look at the method by which and the man by whom this result was secured. The financier must not recklessly resolve to rule the moralist out of court, for both are responsible to government, human and di-

Parables for the People

vine, and mathematics should therefore keep step with morality. When the financier claims the right to sell beef and coal and oil at his own price, he makes his mathematics rather than his morality the architect of his fortune.

We all know what we think of the preacher who by his profession, if not by his superior knowledge of religious truth, seeks to overreach his people. Instinctively the old word "hypocrite" comes into use again, though scribe and Pharisee are long dead. The physician who uses his greater knowledge of medicine to delude his patients or fill his pocketbook deserves to be called a "quack." The lawyer who finds means to fleece his clients or thwart justice by means of his knowledge of law bears the name, "shyster." In this first decade of the twentieth century, men are trying to make up their minds as to what they think of the financier who uses his superior knowledge of business for selfish ends, and abuses the confidence of the people in order to make a fortune, and do it quickly. The word trembles on our lips. It must be spoken soon, for it is needed for immediate use. This one creature unknown in that earlier age was unnamed by Adam in Eden. Satan uses his superior knowledge to delude and destroy men, while the Christ uses his to save and sanctify them, and the Christian, be he

The Meaning of Method

financier, lawyer, physician, or preacher, must work out the Christian and not the satanic idea, and no amount of profession or professionalism can cover up bad practices or atone for bad principles.

The man of money must be the man of morals and of manhood as well as of mathematics. He must keep manhood in view, his own and that of his employee, for the two stand or fall together. If he respects manhood in himself, he will respect it in other men, and if he neglects it in others he will neglect it in himself. Manhood will rise and money sink in his estimation as he learns from the Man of Galilee, who knew his own worth as a man and who placed the highest possible estimate on every other man. Here only can the financier learn to keep his mathematics in right relation to his morals, and subordinate money to manhood in shaping and applying his method.

III.

A piece of fine philosophy held and advocated by a small class of religious teachers and just a few others as a matter of convenience, needs to be considered with care, however respectable its origin or plausible its appearance. This doctrine generally passes unchallenged, else it

Parables for the People

would not pass at all. But here it is, and being of age it shall speak for itself.

As good men and true, we are charged to enter into conflict with sin, but not the sinner, the wrong but not the wrong-doer; to resist the evil method but not the evil man, the policy but not the perpetrator. As good men and true, we are likely to hold the opinion that a sin and a wrong, a method and a policy, however evil and injurious, remain quite harmless and inactive so long as they are not adopted and worked out by some man. Could we conceive of them existing in the middle of a ten-acre field, they would work no hardship there, for the evil only begins when some man adopts them as his own and brings them forth to foist and force them upon society.

As good men and true, we are charged to hate the sin but love the sinner, and this we cheerfully do in the fond hope that the two are not inseparable. Under the leadership of love we must try to save the sinner from his sin, but in case the sinner loves his sin we cannot love him for loving his sin, and in case his love for his sin becomes supreme, little room is left for our love to act upon the sinner's heart, however much may be in our own. When Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone, says Hosea. He looks upon the sin and the sinner as inseparable.

The Meaning of Method

arable, and love is without opportunity when the two have become one.

Ezekiel records the words of the covenant God of Israel, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Here the sinner appears as a sinner, and men are not permitted to know his particular sin or separate it even in thought from the perpetrator. The prophet tells nothing of the temptations under which that soul labors, the circumstances which might be offered in extenuation of its acts or the much-mooted excuse that others were guilty of the very same sins. His word is the declaration of individual responsibility, universal in its scope and individual in its application. The method of excuse and palliation and extenuation should never be confused with the method of mercy and goodness and grace, or put forward as a substitute for salvation. Solomon asserts that "though hand join in hand the evil man shall not be unpunished." Men may belong to the club or corporation or even the church, but intoxicating drinks will still intoxicate, neglect or misuse of the Sabbath day is still desecration, and, in short, sin against God is still sin, however common and customary.

Jesus knew the difference between sin and sinner as well as any religious teacher who has yet appeared, but we never find him looking

Parables for the People

for sin anywhere except in a being capable of obeying and also of disobeying God. With him, vice, like virtue, seems exceedingly personal. When he looked upon the wayward Peter and called him back to himself by way of repentance, he showed his perfect knowledge of human nature, following up his first act by a second not less important in the restoration of his disciple to his favor, as he asks the pathetic question, "Lovest thou me?" Love me so that my love may be unhindered by your heart. Only when this personal relationship is restored completely does the mind of the Master rest, for only then could the mind of his disciple rest once more. To his unreasonable and unrelenting opponents he said earnestly and openly, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites." Being the truth, he could say no less. They were one with their sin, one with error in the very presence of truth, and love no longer had any way of entrance or place of rest in their hearts. "Woe unto you," are his stinging words, and not simply, "Woe unto your evil ways and deceptive policy and graceless method."

In the fineness of his philosophy, no Christian can afford to part company with Jesus or set aside the wisdom of God revealed in his Word and applied by his Spirit.

The Meaning of Method

IV.

That virtue is individual and personal tries our faith far less than to believe that vice fits a man so closely. It is pleasanter and easier to own that goodness takes possession of a man, forming his will and filling his thoughts, than to admit that evil holds the same place and does the same work. But excellence of character, like defeat, is more than a garment to be laid aside or resumed at pleasure. Evil, like good, radiates from the center of the man. Hence the men of the Bible are not merely characters like those of the novel or the drama, which are carefully described in appearance and attractively represented in action, but real persons with moral quality plainly set forth and religious life clearly depicted. These higher categories of being are not left empty or enigmatical. No uninspired writer has ever given us so deep and true a view of human nature as it is, and as it ought to be, covering the whole range of life from the lowest depths of vice to the highest altitudes of virtue.

When children in school "copy" and so pass on in their course of study without really learning their lessons, they suffer two consequences: They fail to secure the education they appear to be working for, and they succeed in getting

Parables for the People

what they do not desire—serious trouble on the ever-recurring examination days. In like manner Christians who copy other Christians fail to learn the lessons of life as taught in God's Word, by his good providence, and by his Holy Spirit. Such Christians do as other Christians do, their chosen examples seldom being the best in sight, and at this point the Christian copyist falls below the child in school. By copying they fail to attain, each for himself, a satisfactory religious life, and the days of trial find them unprepared for trouble. Will they fail in the frequent tests of life? Can they copy at the final examination on the day of judgment? or is the wisdom of that day the same as this and every other, all crying out in unison, "Christian, don't copy, but learn for yourself the lesson of life while you may"?

Gold-plated Christians are less valuable and less durable than the solid kind who need no alloy to harden them for use, but wear all the better for being in the neighborhood of twenty-four carats fine. The pure in heart are able to see God in the Bible, in the Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and wherever he is to be seen by men. The Christian sees God especially in the Holy Spirit, who is to him a person of prime importance, having convicted him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment like any ordinary

The Meaning of Method

sinner, and then comforted him and guided him into all truth like any ordinary saint. His method of dealing with men is individual and personal and becomes exceedingly interesting and instructive. Any man can discover where the Spirit classes him, whether with sinners to be convicted and saved or with saints to be comforted and guided. No man need be in doubt concerning his place before God. There is a meaning in the divine method of dealing with men, and early in life and once for all they should learn to know its significance, since it is the wisdom of God applied to the individual and personal need of each one, whatever be his spiritual state or standing, and since the proving of our faith is more precious than gold, though it be tried with fire.

The selfishness of one man can hardly be harmonized with that of another for any considerable period of time, and must, therefore, bring the two into conflict and personal opposition. No intelligent man expects this principle to be universally applicable or to be forever enforced for his personal convenience. Only when he is deluded by some selfish desire which controls him inside and out does he really believe others expect him to do just as he is doing. Eventually the odds will be against him, and in favor of the man of Chris-

Parables for the People

tian principle who is not only unselfish but also sacrificial. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes the Christ became poor; while he possessed divine power, he refused to call for angel deliverers, but gave himself over to the cross; throughout his life he always did those things that were pleasing to God the Father. The Christian still rules his own heart, but he rules it in the name of the Holy Trinity. The Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar ate considerable grass before he knew that "the heavens do rule," and this old ruler, so proud of the city he built, may have a wider relationship than we are accustomed to think. Two ideals as different as the worlding's and the Christian's can hardly flourish in the same heart or home while oil and water refuse to mix, and if we adopt the Christian's ideal we must claim the Christian's assistant, for the Holy Spirit is the living link between the Christian, the Holy Bible, and the Holy God.

V.

The mythical theory of Strauss, first published in 1835, startled the Christian world. The legendary theory of Renan, issued in 1863, won many adherents, of whom a remnant may still be found. But the gifted Frenchman

The Meaning of Method

looks more legendary to us to-day, and the great German more mythical than the Christ, who stands many centuries farther from us in history, but nearer in fact and in person, being real to us in all that makes men agreeably real—fine intelligence linked with good will, sweet sympathy associated with right moral purpose, and deep devotion to man corresponding to his devotion to God. The Christian of to-day must therefore be real, and not mythical or legendary. He must be clearly defined to the eye of reason and genuinely solid to the touch of faith. He is described in the Bible, and even illustrated. He is charted there and can be found like a lighthouse. Not a floating island, not a cloud without rain, not salt without savor, but the very core of reality, being real at the center where he touches God and at the circumference where he meets his fellow-man. Being filled with all the fullness of God and protected by his providential care, he can neither collapse from within nor be crushed from without.

The center of the earth is inside of itself, the center of its weight and also its rotation on its axis, but the center of its motion in its orbit is in the sun. Likewise the center of a man is in himself, being a real unit and making his own choices, but when he chooses the Christ,

Parables for the People

and is chosen by the Christ, then he centers in the Son of God. The Bible shows us God in relation to men and men in relation to God, and no age, no theory, no philosophy should ever be permitted to obscure this vision of life and being. The Hebrew poet declares of the covenant God, "Thou wilt show me the path of life," while Jesus asserts concerning the Holy Spirit, "He shall guide you into all truth," and so guidance and goodness are no longer doubtful questions, but certainties of the most comfortable kind. Men need a guide who knows human life from infancy to old age; who knows its proper course and outcome; who knows man's weakness and remembers that he is dust; who knows his ambitions and also his limitations; who knows us each as individuals and never loses us in the multitude; who knows us personally and deeper and wider and higher than we know ourselves. Wonderful it is to have such a guide, but without him we are adrift on an unknown sea.

If this interpretation of the meaning of method is found to be scriptural, then experience will show that it is sensible; if it teaches us not to copy and counterfeit as Christians, it also urges us to be genuine and genuinely good; if it deals with the man as well as with the method, it is because of the necessity of the

The Meaning of Method

case; if it soon loses sight of the wrist-pin, it is because it seeks to give every man a firm hold of the throttle-valve, the air-brake, and the reverse lever.

Afterglow.

A MIRACLE TO REMEMBER.

Bring again the loaves and fishes,
Place them in the Master's hand;
Then, responding to his wishes,
Share the fruits of his command.

Oh, how sweet to be his servant!
Oh, how good to do his will!
May our love be far more fervent;
May his loaves the many fill.

What he doth he knoweth ever,
What he asks of us for aye;
Calling us to high endeavor
That our faith he thus may try.

Joined with Christ in life and labor,
Feeding still the multitude;
Truth we offer to our neighbor
As his own God-given food.

The Use of Means

Foregleam.

There is a simple science and a homely art, which we all are compelled to study practically, if not theoretically; namely, the adaptation of means to ends in the affairs of our ordinary, every-day life. Both offer opportunity for profound study. This unpretentious science may carry us far if we follow it faithfully, nor should it become less practical by becoming more profound. This every-day art smoothes the path of life and aids attainment. As great discoveries in natural science have proved most useful, so the knowledge and skill gained by any man in the use of means brings its reward in the form of success in industrial and commercial enterprises, in social and professional life, in the construction of character, and in the realization of personality on the divine pattern.

The Use of Beans

THE wild flowers I saw the other day blooming on the hillside attracted the bee and the butterfly, and, perchance, the humming-bird, or even the little child whose natural sense of beauty happily remains with it, growing as it grows, and continuing through all the years of toil and care and not withering even in old age, when the senses are less acute. The sense, like the love of the beautiful, should never droop or die, and to the thoughtful man its existence becomes a testimonial of the beneficence of his Creator, an evidence of the immortality of his own spirit and a prophecy of his future home which must answer to this need of his nature. The wild asters in blue and pink and white on the hillside fill a place beneath the blue sky and, with the goldenrod and the honeysuckle, now barren of bloom, serve to accent the quiet beauty of early autumn.

If we could call to our side Asa Gray or Herman Mueller or Charles Darwin, to discourse to us about the flowers, their varied forms and manner of fertilization, telling us

Parables for the People

how they behave and everything else we wanted to know, we should surely be happy. Or would we prefer the great Teacher of Nazareth, who considered the lilies of the field and invited others to join him in this original work in nature study? How close he brings the lilies to us and how close he brings us to the lilies! They become our instructors and even our friends to remain such, let us assume, while they live their brief life, and we as their surviving friends are permitted to stand sorrowfully by their graves year after year, till at last their distant descendants will hopefully bloom above our own. Men and flowers are closely, and we may say inseparably associated the world over. No doubt both are intended to be lovely and pleasant in their lives, and so in their death they are not divided.

Our Teacher, who really comes in answer to our wish, tells us the secret of the beauty of both flowers and men, which we very much need to know and had failed to discover for ourselves. The flowers of the field grow without cultivation by man. Here is a place for reason to set her foot. An invisible relation exists between God and the flowers. He clothes them in beauty, and does it without any visible effort on his part or toil on theirs. Thus their beauty is accounted for fully and satisfactorily, and

The Use of Means

reason feels the force of the conclusion, if she is true to herself. The fact we have under consideration is observed in nature, accurately stated in language, and properly recorded in the teachings of Jesus.

The flowers, unlike men in their toil and strife and effort, become beautiful by natural development alone, slowly and silently using the means provided in soil and sunshine, in rain and dew and air until they transcend even Solomon in all his glory. To be fairly outdone by one little flower that appears to do nothing at all but just grow, to be beaten by a lower form of life so that it becomes an example of the right relation to God, when *we* ought to be nearer to God than it is or ever can be, to be second to a blossom that grows on the hillside without human care, sustained by the thin soil among the rocks, watered by dew and rain, caressed by the winds of summer, and nurtured by the rays of the sun, ought to be enough to humble human pride and bring any man and every man submissively to the same great God to be clothed in beauty.

Surely we each and all owe a debt of gratitude to our instructors, and also to the flowers, or rather to Him who made them and made them beautiful in order that we might see the touch of his hand and be sure of his personal

Parables for the People

presence and his beneficent purpose. Dealing with well-known facts in the most candid and trustworthy manner, our Teacher has led us to a conclusion that ought to be conclusive and satisfactory, because it is strictly scientific as related to the facts, logical as regards method, and beneficent in its outcome. This lesson in botany which rises into æsthetics and philosophy and religion, from the material to the spiritual, from the natural to the supernatural, should never be lost upon us as long as the flowers are with us and as long as we are with the flowers.

II.

“Go to the center somewhere,” was the crisp advice of a wise man who modestly called himself a parish preacher. In making his wisdom ours we are credited with knowing which direction to take as well as having the means to get there. Men are pleased to be credited with ability of this kind because they already know or are sure they can find out. Indeed, if they fail to find out for themselves, they will never know very much that is worth knowing or know anything very well. The teacher’s secret is to get scholars to want to learn, and so escape the heavy task of trying to teach what they do not want to know. After this first lesson is

The Use of Means

mastered, any other is comparatively easy, the lesson of the flowers, their beauty, the real cause of it all, and the scholars' privilege to be clothed in like manner. He may start with the lilies of the field or the wild asters on the hillside and safely find his way to the center.

He should carefully note the successive steps of his progress, and be able to describe the path he pursued. When he studies the lily and the wild aster as plants, he is plainly within the limits of the science of botany. When he makes their beauty the basis or starting-point for the study of beauty in general and proceeds into the realm of mind and spirit, he is in the realm of aesthetics. When he discovers the cause of beauty in the flower and in the man to be one and the same, and finds that God is ever an active agent in both fields, as evidenced by effects, he has stepped into the field of philosophy. When he discovers God as an active agent and comes into his very presence, when he learns that he is closely related to men as well as to the flowers, and that he should be related to God by personal confidence and obedience, he then finds himself in the realm of religion.

The appeal to reason is quite as plain and direct in the Bible as in books on natural science. "Consider the lilies," comes as a request

Parables for the People

to any honest thinker to take the flowers as an object of thought and then proceed to any legitimate conclusion in the course of our mental activity. It is a friendly effort to get the man to want to know, then to use means to this end, and not to stop short of any result, however far-reaching. Let botany lead on to æsthetics and philosophy and religion, if it will, but he will ever be true to reason, to his subject, and to himself.

The modern distinction between science and religion and the supposed opposition of the two seems to have been overlooked or ignored by the Christ. At least that distinction served no purpose in his teaching corresponding with its importance in the speculations of men of our age. The effort to fence off science from religion and to account for all we can see about us on the basis of material things, physical forces and natural laws, has led some scientific teachers to a partial, inadequate, and false conclusion. Their first dictum was, Nature must not tell us of God, and presently they enunciated another which was really contained in the first, Nature cannot manifest God. Botany must not lead us into æsthetics and philosophy and religion. The scientific man must keep away from the center whatever else he does or leaves undone. He must not follow the advice

The Use of Means

of the parish preacher or the method of the Christ.

On the sensible supposition that every man is morally bound to use his reason for his own well-being and to make the best and the most out of everything about him, we are at a loss to know what better use he could make of the lilies than that which Jesus made of them. He grasps his subject in its widest reaches of significance, as a part of creation and as a means of conveying great truths to our minds, and any additional knowledge we may gain of the structure of plants, the formation and function of flowers, only enriches for us the lesson he has taught. These new facts fall within the outline of his thinking. He has gone to the center, and, while he leaves much to be said by scientific men, there is no new ground on which reason can set her foot and no new conclusion possible which shows that science and revelation are and of right ought to be in conflict, but just the very opposite appears; namely, that nature ought to teach men about God, that men ought to be more beautiful than the flowers, and that God wishes to provide a garment of beauty for man which is in keeping with his rank in creation.

If men fail to get to the center, it is not for lack of means, but only of use. For many

Parables for the People

men the neglect of means is a larger subject than the use of means. The neglect leaves a man poor, while the use makes the same man rich in possessions or thoughts or character. But who is so poor that he cannot get a start in spiritual life? Who so indigent that he cannot own an aster? Who so careless that he would not use it for the best possible purpose? Who so thoughtless as not to get the aid of the great Teacher when it is so kindly offered? Under his tuition any man can proceed from the wild aster and get to the Center of all beauty and all being, and do it fairly and logically. If a man is really determined to be a man, it is hard to understand how he can fail to see the flowers or to want to know about them, and so become an earnest, sincere student in botany, and consequently in æsthetics and philosophy and religion. He cannot reasonably limit himself or honestly steer clear of the center.

III.

A lifetime of practical training must suffice to confer skill in the use of means and cultivate judgment in adapting means to ends. Some nice calculations may be required to determine what should be done and the resources under our control. The three Guinea fowl that walk

The Use of Means

along that woven-wire fence want over into the yard where there is fine picking among the ripened seeds, but only one uses its wings, while the other two, in spite of a good example and in total neglect of their wings, continue to walk back and forth unavailingly. Many a fence rises between men and their success in life. They see what is to be overcome, some only in part, while others survey the whole situation from bottom to top. This complete view is likely to suggest the way to get over and the best means to be used.

The skill of the mechanic and the genius of the inventor have been combined in our age as never before to master the problem of rapid transit in the air and over land and sea. Every applicable fact of science and every new method of construction are made to contribute to the one grand result, speed combined with safety. Men are working toward the limits in the strength of materials, the combination of natural forces, and the endurance of human faculties and powers. Just here may arise a suspicion that we are overworking the inventor and the mechanic and forgetting the minister and the man.

In fact, a man may faithfully wind his watch each day and his clock each week, and then carelessly forget to wind himself. He may

Parables for the People

actually forget that he is run down on both sides, the physical and the spiritual, or perhaps never really know it. A good night's rest brings the physical weight up to the top ordinarily, but sometimes it requires a vacation and the aid of the doctor. He raises the spiritual weight by Bible study, prayer, and religious activity in general. He winds up by means of good resolutions well kept, by devotion to duty, and by consecration to the Christ, who is always with him as his Friend and always above him as his Greater. He discovers that he and his watch require regularity, and that just any time will not do for him or his watch, for if he attends to it just any time he happens to think of it ten to one he will think of it half a dozen times one day and not at all the next. His memory works better by rule than by random.

The future of any boy is sufficiently safe in his own keeping, if he is a good boy. When Jacob left the old home and journeyed alone to Haran, he saw, in a dream, as he lay sleeping at Bethel, that wonderful ladder which was a way to heaven. Jacob saw that way at Bethel, while Jesus saw it anywhere; Jacob in a dream, Jesus when awake; Jacob became aware of it and of the presence of God as his head rested on a stone, Jesus as his thoughts

The Use of Means

rested on a little flower. Jacob needed the dream, but Jesus saw with open eyes as he stood in the full light of both worlds, the material and the spiritual. For him there was no need and no room for dream or vision, since his faculties were keen through obedience, his attitude of mind rendered him receptive to God and the Spirit of God rested upon him.

The oak grows taller if it has but a single stem and comparatively few branches. We note with wonder the respect shown by the tall tree for the law of gravity. It would be dangerous for the tree to fall out with the plumb-line, and in case some mighty wind sways it to the east or west, the north or south, it does its best to get back to the perpendicular as a whole or in part as new shoots start out again. Men may have a natural tendency to grow aslant and pattern after the storm-swept tree or the leaning tower, but they know a way of straightening up if only they would use it. Any man can safely be tall if he is also true, if he is straight and perpendicular, if he lives in the light of the vision God gives him and faithfully points to his Center.

Parables for the People

IV.

If a man gains the standing in the school of life of a master of means, his real rank is not far below the bachelor of science fresh from college, or even the man with the advanced degree of master of arts. As a matter of means, he is versed in a sort of universal science that may be applied equally well in botany and æsthetics and philosophy and religion, and until a better name is suggested let us call it the science of common sense.

The adaptation of means to ends by Deity is more intelligent and more effective than that of man, and hence in mechanical construction, if not in the formation of character, man is often a mere copyist. When he shapes his boat for the water, he studies the form of the water-fowl. When he seeks to sail through the air, he applies the principles discovered in the structure of the bird's wing. When noble character is his dream, he takes the Christ as his ideal. When, in the study of a lower form of life he is tempted to limit himself to one phase of the subject, to the neglect or even the rejection of all others, let him remember that his Teacher is looking over his shoulder and offering a contribution from his own mind. Let him remember also that he is more like his

The Use of Means

Teacher than the lily or the aster, and that he must expect to learn more from his Teacher than from the object of his study. The teacher's contribution is an important, if not a governing factor in the scientific teachings of any man, just as it is a very important, if not a principal factor in the religious teachings of Jesus. The true teacher in either field, science or religion, will be faithful to facts, thorough in investigation, and sincerely respectful to man as intelligent, moral, and religious. He never betrays reason by the kiss of sophistry, or knowingly leads a student to conclusions that prove false and delusive. Hence any teacher who dislikes to have the Christ look over his shoulder can hardly claim to be a candid student who is sure of the results of his own investigations.

If God touches the flower with the blush of beauty by means of the sunlight in the ordinary course of nature, then we may reasonably expect that in the ordinary course of human life he can also touch the spirit of man by the Spirit of God in order to bring it to that degree of perfection which is the divine thought of excellence in the realm of character and personality. Man need not stand at the foot of creation if only he wants to stand at the head and become an example of beauty to the flow-

Parables for the People

ers, being as much fairer than they as he is more exalted in the scale of being. As he looks upon the flower, let him think of the beauty designed for him by the same great Artist.

The boy plays truant without fully realizing the nature of his act of disobedience and deception or its effect upon his conduct and character. Men and women, who are but children grown, discredit the Sabbath day as set apart by God or deny the need of such a day when they fail to use it as a day of rest from ordinary toil and a day of religious activity and spiritual culture. On the basis that man is an intelligent, moral, and religious being, either view is repulsive to reason and contrary to experience. Better, far better is it to accept the lesson of the lilies, remain in the class and under the eye and care of our great Teacher.

V.

The Gnostic of the second century knew too much for his own good, and the agnostic of the nineteenth knew too little. The one undertook to answer unanswerable questions concerning God in his essential being, the source of moral evil, and the extended chain of existences he conceived to fill up the space between God and man. The other refused to accept the

The Use of Means

teachings of the Christ concerning God and man, and cherished the idea that God is not really knowable, until it became the governing principle in his philosophy. The Gnostic sought to paganize Christianity, while the agnostic thought to substitute science as a system and a method.

The plain, ordinary man, who is a master of means and versed in the science of common sense, comes too close to the flowers to deify science or betray the Christ. In spite of fanciful theories he feels the force of fact and truth, and his reason sets her foot on solid ground in the very face of misleading arguments. He reaches conclusions in botany and æsthetics and philosophy and religion that he is not willing to surrender. They are fairly and honestly his, and he is not at liberty to barter them as he would the products of farm or factory.

The college professor of questionable Christian character demands perfect freedom in theorizing as well as in investigating, and appeals to men to respect his vagaries because of his office, when he might be expected to rely solely on his appeal to their reason. The man who asserts that he is an artist, and then appeals to sensuality by his nude and suggestive figures, can hardly complain if decent people are inclined to deny his claim and even doubt

Parables for the People

his sincerity. The false prophet still wears sheep's clothing in order to look innocent. He assumes to be what he is not, and so prevents the development of a character such as he imitates. The effort of any man not to be himself is sure to fail, for whatever he appears to be he is himself after all.

God commands, but never compels men to do their duty as intelligent, moral, and religious beings. Paul persuades men to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is their spiritual service. The means of spiritual life are with us, but the disposition to use them must be cultivated. "Come unto me," says the Christ. Not by violence, not by deception will he win men. If ever a man belongs to God, it will be by the exercise of his own will freely and cheerfully, because intelligently and conscientiously. His life may long be continued on the earth, but his heart will ever welcome the lesson of the lily, the goldenrod, and the wild aster, a lesson which, in its depth of meaning and its breadth of thought, it may take him a whole lifetime to learn. Beautiful is the lily by the touch of God, and yet more beautiful may be thy spirit, O man, for thou dost stand nearer the Source of beauty in the scale of being and verily thou canst rise higher in the measure of thy realization.

Afterglow.

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS.

In nature all around me
I hear the voice of praise,
As creature and creation
Their wordless hymn they raise.

The song of bird is welcome,
The music of the breeze;
The running brook so quiet
Is well designed to please.

The joy I find in nature
I share a little while;
It comes from my Creator
And brings to me a smile.

The pleasures sin can offer
Are not to me the same;
But bring a tired feeling
And leave a sense of blame.

Not more of these will bless me
But less and less, I trow;
So joy I seek, another—
My Bible tells me how.

God's Book is one of blessing;
Concerning Christ it tells;
The hope and help of mortals,
And in my heart he dwells.

How wonderful and pleasant
This Book of love and life;
Its message is the music
That banishes my strife.

My Christ can make me happy,
For he can make me true.
Yes, Christ has made me joyful,
For he has made me "new."

True joy is not the bottom,
But top of everything;
And as we climb the higher
The louder may we sing.

No wonder that the Christian
Can sing so very well,
Since more and more of heaven
And less and less of hell

Is filling up his spirit;
The songs the angels sing
Become supremely joyful
As through his sôul they ring.

The best is not the bottom,
But always at the top;
Then climb, you pleasure seeker,
You never need to stop.

Just take your open Bible
And do as it has said;
You'll glory find and gladness
A crown upon your head.

Motive and Motion

Foregleam.

Motion is a familiar fact known from childhood, by personal experience and observation. As we are active we live physically, mentally, and spiritually. The inactive man lives less than the active man, the uneducated less than the educated, and the morally and religiously undeveloped less than the spiritual-minded man. Motion appears to us as an effect and also a cause. The movements of matter declare the presence of force, and force leads us back to mind and will. In the movements of mind we discover motive at the center of the current. According to Revelation, love is the motive of the divine mind, and should be man's master motive. Love as a motive is not self-destructive, but self-existent, and hence easily eternal; and so the life of the love-moved man must bear these marks.

Notive and Motion

THE noisy little brook which appears to have lost its way half a dozen times in its crooked course across the meadow, and the great river which appears to move so slowly and silently, are interesting each in its own way, and we never seem to tire of the sight or sound of either one. The song of the brook successfully counteracts "the song of the shirt," and we find a real relief from toil and care as we rest upon its grassy banks and listen to its unpretentious music. There is enough sound to be company for us, enough similarity in its notes to give consistency to its song, and enough variety not to become monotonous and wearisome. The individual sounds are separable by the attentive ear, while the combination is harmonious, and the ever-recurring order of the principal tones, with the numerous grace-notes beyond the skill of human artist to render, is restful and refreshing to the sympathetic listener. It is nature's lullaby, and she sings it sweetly. Many a weary one who wanders far in search of rest would do well to sit on the

Parables for the People

banks of the meadow-brook, be soothed by its music, and have the wrinkles of care stroked out of his forehead by the gentle hand of nature.

The music of the great river is less easily understood, less like a popular air, and more like a classical composition. Its tone is restful and reassuring like that of the brook, and calls us back to the calmness and confidence of health and strength and the simple life. Do you hear that low *swish* as the water brushes by the banks? Many sounds mingle as it ripples over rocks and shallow places, all keeping well up in the scale. Even when the stately river breaks into the rollicking rapids there is something serious in its music, something that tends to make us very thoughtful; but when it rushes over a precipice and roars like a mighty organ its music almost overpowers us, and we try again and again to comprehend this wonderful composition. The reckless leap, the rising mist, the rainbow so near us touch the mind through the eye and heighten the effect by way of the ear.

But what is it in the river and in the brook that fascinates us? Is it the water flowing in one continuous and unbroken stream? Is it the magnitude of its power suddenly liberated before our eyes? Is it the dancing waves that

Motive and Motion

never grow weary and the ascending spray that loves the light? Is it the gentle tones of the brook and the irresistible strains of the mighty cataract? Or is it because we see our life represented before us in the flowing water as it pursues its course in one unbroken stream? Uninterrupted, it flows on, and even the precipice cannot break that continuous flow for a single moment or the fraction of an inch. Our life is likewise continuous, and its motion should produce a music not less sweet and restful, not less impressive and inspiring. Its varied experiences change the stops and swells and even the key, but it is one grand composition, now reminding us of the grassy banks of the brook and now of the slow-moving river or even the waterfall with the mist and the rainbow.

II.

Motion in the brook means money for the miller whose wheel it turns, and in the river the quickening or retarding of the pulse of commerce according to its direction down or up, but for the happy lovers who drift listlessly with the current or row heroically against it the effect is much the same—the quickening of the pulse of affection. Motion means life, being a condition of life on the green banks of

Parables for the People

the brook or the placid surface of the river. The Dead Sea is dead since no creature has been created to inhabit its briny and motionless waters. The prison cell is hated because it is a bitter limitation of life. It restrains the body and may even place limits about the mind and spirit unless the prisoner is a Martin Luther in the Wartburg castle or a John Bunyan in the Bedford jail.

The wind-wheel, which becomes so lazy on a calm day and when the breeze stiffens into a steady wind appears to be trying to make up lost time, is very picturesque in Holland and very matter of fact in America. In the home land it is for business, and in the foreign land it is for beauty as well as business, if the word of the traveler is to be taken. Its power is one remove from nature, but we can easily think back to the invisible agent that lays hold of its extended arms and lends it all the force it exerts without any apparent diminution of its own. The steam-engine is simply a contrivance to convert the power of a gas into mechanical motion, and so we can see right through the engine to the real force behind it. The dynamo does not create electricity, but only the electric current which the electrician knows how to transmit and apply to his uses. To the philosopher the dynamo becomes a window through

Motive and Motion

which he sees nature as the real power behind the machine, not all of nature or all of her power, but just a part, just enough to convince him that this energy of nature is totally beyond his ability to estimate.

Had the circulation of the blood been discovered earlier in history, good use might have been made of the fact by medical science, but the probability is that it would not have served any practical purpose five centuries or even one century sooner. Discoveries are generally made when they are most needed or as soon thereafter as convenient, otherwise they lie dormant like an unplanted seed. Need awakens effort, demand calls forth desire, and desire sets the man in motion, and then he often finds that the thing he wanted was not far to seek. In many instances, discoveries appear to be mere accidents, but it must be borne in mind that the man who fell unexpectedly upon some scientific secret or valuable mechanical device was looking for something, or at least was wide enough awake to know a useful thing when it presented itself before his eyes.

Knowledge arises when the unknown becomes active in the presence of the active, knowing mind. The invisible becomes visible. That is to say, a man sees what he did not see before. The invisible is just the same as it was, but

Parables for the People

the beholder now knows it is there and what it is by means of what it does. He knows how to control it and use it for his own purposes, and what need can there be for this invisible agent to step out into the open just to be looked at? Perhaps it would be dangerous for us if it were to offer us the exhibition.

One thing is quite plain, and that is, the visible and the invisible in nature are not so far apart as men sometimes think, and the two cannot be separated from each other. A second fact is equally clear; namely, that motion in nature calls forth the mind of man into action, whether in the form of thought and investigation or of effort to control the forces of nature for his own comfort and convenience. A third fact quite as important, and which should be quite as clear to us, is that motion in nature is not the result of mere machinery, but is somehow and somewhere dependent on mind for its existence and always and everywhere for its manner of manifestation.

III.

Widely different as they are, there must be some connection between mind and motion, and it is worth our while to discover it. Star dust might rotate after it got a start, but the

Motive and Motion

hardship of the scientist is to get the initial motion. Perhaps there is a sort of circulation in spiritual and material things of which we do not know as yet, or know less perfectly than we should. In shaping and unfolding our philosophy let us not put off till to-morrow what we can do to-day, unless we are sure a limited delay will aid us to obtain a better theory of things. The motion we find in the brook, the river, the air about us, and the blood in our veins, is so very beneficent that we feel like attributing it to mind rather than matter without argument or even question. We could not get on without this motion in us and all about us, and we are so well confirmed in our faith that we are willing to follow it to its farthest results.

When the sacred writer asserts, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," he gives a fair explanation of the origin of both, and far more satisfactory than the theory that they originated by chance or always existed. Reason rests in unity or adequate cause, and chance does so very little creative work, however good its present opportunities, and matter in and of itself is so very inert that it appears reasonable and scientific as well as religious to rely upon God for the acts attributed to him in his Word. In fact, the Bible

Parables for the People

stands out not only as the best word we have in religion, but also in science and philosophy, enabling us to trace our steps to the "Cause of causes that can do all things."

We find intelligence in close connection with motion, and its orderly manifestations and intelligence linked with good intentions. The mind we are really thinking about has wise and gracious purposes, and evidently takes great pains to carry them out for our well-being. We have ample reason to believe that this mind governs these motions according to fixed law, for the forces producing them always act the same way. Moreover, this mind of which we are thinking must be governed itself by law, never being notionate or erratic, but always intelligent and reasonable and well-disposed toward us, and hence we conclude that it is moral and always impelled by a right motive.

If the brook can set the poet's fancy in motion, there must be a way across from the brook to the poet and from the poet to the brook. If Niagara Falls impresses the minds of multitudes to such a degree as to attract them long distances to behold, there must be some desire in these minds answering to the wonderful spectacle. This way across from the material to the spiritual, and *vice versa*, is

Motive and Motion

used unconsciously by us, and only when we begin to reason about it do we really become unreasonable; then we become so earthy, so unimaginative, so lost to faith as to call a sudden halt. We think we are matter of fact when we rule out one kind of facts and try to build our world of the other alone. But motion and force are all about us still, and we must necessarily count on them; we must use them; we must be blessed by them in spite of ourselves.

Going up on one side we get motion. Going up on the other side we get motive. In matter we see motion and in mind we see motive, and discover that motion in the brook is dependent on motive in the mind who created it. Motive is mind in motion, and mind in motion sets matter in motion. Motive and motion stand in the relation of cause and effect, primarily, and the wonderful windows of creation allow us to see enough to enable us to complete our view by the use of our reason.

There is a bridge across from mind to matter, but science has not undertaken to find it. This task it leaves to religion. Science limits itself to the laws and phenomena of the material universe and the human mind as intelligent and moral. Religion considers man as spirit, as related to God, as primarily and essen-

Parables for the People

tially immaterial. No wonder religion has always looked upon science as its handmaid and not as its master. The sphere of religion embraces the whole scope of existence, visible and invisible. The spirit of man, invisible yet real, stands as one fact side by side with that other, the invisible God who is not less real in his existence and agency. The manifestation of God in Christ presents the prime article of faith and knowledge in the Christian system. The Christian accepts the facts and truths God has made known through Christ, verifying them to his own satisfaction and gaining a place of vantage from which he can easily see he is not alone on an island, but in close relation with the invisible world of good or perchance of evil. From this viewpoint he sees not only the motion in life, but the motive back of all right motion, namely, love. Here the dove of honest inquiry brings back her olive leaf in testimony of subsiding doubt and as a first-fruit of the new world purified and prepared as the dwelling-place of man. Here his faith rests in security and here his reason must fold her wings or prepare to rely upon them forever.

IV.

Who could have interpreted for us the parable of the wind save the great Teacher of Galilee? He takes this invisible force in nature as the symbol of the invisible spirit of man. "The wind bloweth where it will, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." This force in nature becomes manifest to us only in part, and we cannot follow it to its limits and sources by our own unaided powers. It goes beyond the bounds of our knowledge. The spirit-born man is likewise a living, moving agent in the unseen world of the spiritual, and our own powers must be supplemented by divine aid if we are to know our past, our present, and our future.

The divine element has its place in our character and life, and we must give to it its full value. In other words, we must Christianize our philosophy, or our philosophy will paganize us. We can follow Christ or some other master, but we cannot follow both at the same time. We must Christianize our science, or our science will materialize us. Nor need we be less scientific because we keep the way open between the visible and the invisible, or because we regard mind as well as matter, or because we consider

Parables for the People

man as a moral and religious as well as a material being. Common sense and reason and Christian faith are brethren that can dwell together in unity. The world by wisdom knew not God, in an earlier age, and history is sure to repeat itself if at any time men undervalue the great facts of revelation, the invisible man and the invisible God.

One path alone leads up to God—obedience. This is the direct road and the short cut. Back of obedience you will always find love, just as you find love back of revelation. Love in God and love in man are alike and have affinity each for the other. Being the same in both as principle and motive, God and man come into harmony and coöperation on the basis of redemption as set forth in the New Testament.

Moses conversed with God on Horeb as an individual and as the representative of his people who enjoyed the privilege of prayer. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and with this vision he asked Philip to be content; but his disciple had not seen all there was to see. He had not looked past the visible form of Jesus to the invisible God who dwelt within. He had stopped short with the physical and visible, even when the means to pass over into the invisible were provided for his comfort and convenience. The manifesta-

Motive and Motion

tions of superhuman power and wisdom had not led him to discover superhuman love and life. For him the world was yet divided, since God was yet invisible.

From the wind-wheel to the wind that turns it, from the steam-engine to the steam that is its real power, from the dynamo to the electric current which it produces, the mind moves easily and without doubt or question, and so from Christ to God the mind finds no real barrier outside of itself. The vision is before us, whether we see it or not. Shame would redden the cheek of any man who professed to be intelligent and yet could not contemplate these invisible forces in nature. A sense of shame tenfold deeper might be expected on the face of the man who comes into the presence of the Christ and yet fails to perceive the personal presence of God.

V.

No perpetual motion in mechanics has yet been discovered, however diligently it has been sought, which raises a strong suspicion that there is none to discover. There may be a perpetual *motive*, however, which would be much more useful, and when found we should "make a note of." It would serve to steady a man and make him less vacillating. It would move

Parables for the People

him in one direction and give him the sense of progress, which is very agreeable. How fine to have a motive as constant as the law of God and as consistent as the divine will! If love moves God, and if love ought to move men, then men, Christian men, Spirit-born men have a motive like God, which does not vary from age to age. No one will take this to be the fabled fountain of youth, but it looks much like a real fountain ever open and ever refreshing to the aspiring spirit of man. From this point of view the immortality of the soul looks like a fact of science, a principle of philosophy, and a truth of religion, each separately and all three together, a sort of trinity of truth in which reason and faith can together rest and rejoice.

The man who forever has motive will forever have motion. He will forever live and move and have his being. He cannot drop out of existence or sink down in decay and despair. He will not drift helplessly into inaction and unconsciousness, but will live consciously and forever. His life is his inheritance, eternal life, eternal in quality and so in duration. He has motive and motion and belongs to the invisible as well as the visible, since each is his by actual possession, and since his life requires them both for its completion.

Motive and Motion

God is love and so God lives, and if the good man loves he lives also. He loves the eternal God, the invisible God, and his life is eternal and invisible, being hid with Christ in God. Behind the motions of his body and mind lies the master motive in his heart and in the heart of our Father who art in heaven. Oh, the egotism of evil, which tries to be satisfied with itself! In the realm of human character, nothing is more impressive except the humility of a true Christian. This egotism proves to be very tenacious of life and undertakes to be everlasting and even eternal or self-existent. Because of it sinful men think you are interfering with their rights when you interfere with their wrongs. Evil shall slay the wicked, but a wicked man might be expected to make sure of his escape from a destroyer who lies in wait for him. Love may become his motive, his principle, his life, but only as he cheerfully gives it place in his breast. Truth cannot be captured and caged like a bird, but it can be won like a friend, loved like an equal, and obeyed like a superior. Each and every one must therefore look upon the Christ till he sees God for himself.

If we considered the religion of the Christ the universal religion, the universal philosophy, and the universal science, then we would con-

Parables for the People

sider it the universal duty of men to become Christians. So far as truth is concerned, Christianity is all-inclusive, and the knowledge that is not true is scarcely worth knowing. Men worship somewhere. Every man bows at some shrine, serves some master, accepts some revelation of God. The Christian sees God in the Christ, accepts the Christ as his Master, and worships God as revealed by him. He lives next to the Christ on one side, next to the Holy Spirit. God is his nearest neighbor, and therefore the good man says concerning himself, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage."

The Christian has the sweet sense of Another who enters the inner circle of his life as the Soul of his soul and relieves it of its burden and loneliness. Life is no longer the mystery it was to him, a maze in which he wanders, dark with the shadows of sin and final reckoning, but ever more wonderful on account of its known facts, because of divine grace and providence, and by reason of divine promises which gather in themselves his past and present and future. The one real mystery that remains is that of divine love, which proves to be inexhaustible in its freshness and fullness of life. As he ascends step by step the mountain-side of worthy motive, he finds himself in the com-

Motive and Motion

pany of good men and the good Spirit. He learns the lesson Philip had missed and sees God in Christ. He begins to say with Paul, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me"; to understand the words of Jesus: "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you, and to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." He has the sense of Another who is as real to him to-day as the visible Christ was real to the men of his age; as real as the presence of God in Christ was real to his first disciples after his resurrection; as real as the wind that fans his cheek, the river that flows so majestically before his eyes, or the brook to which he listens as it gurgles through the meadow.

Afterglow.

THE SENSE OF GOD.

In a quiet hour there came to me
A sense of God as good;
More sweet than ever before I knew,
And truer to me than ever true;
So sweet and so true, and yet so new,
The sense of God as good.

In a trying hour there came to me
A sense of God as wise;
Who ruled my heart with a gentle hand,
And led me away from the sinking sand,
And bound me close with an unseen band,
The sense of God as wise;

In a trustful hour there came to me
A sense of God as near.
My God was great and my God was good,
And came to my heart, and there he stood
While I bent low, as any one would,
When God, my God was near.

In a holy hour there came to me
A sense of God as love;
And with it came such a sense of rest
As human tongue has never expressed,
But belongs to those whom God has blessed
With th' sense of God as love.

In a happy hour there came to me
A sense of God as life;
A vision arose upon my soul,
The brightest ever I saw unroll;
The vision of life as one great whole;
And God, my God was life.

Sweet Rest

Foregleam.

There are words that aid us to ascend like the successive rungs of a ladder. Each word keeps its own place, but each one invites us to rest our thoughts on the next higher in the ascending series. Our physical life is marked by birth, and growth, and maturity, while our Christian life begins with repentance and faith and regeneration. Two words may complete the unit of thought—as night and day, sorrow and joy, toil and rest. No man rests satisfied in one half or one third of these units of life, but requires the complete whole for his completion. For the Christian these units grow greater and never less, and among the words that abide he finds faith, and hope, and love, holiness, and happiness, and heaven.

Sweet Rest

THE first words of a little child linger long in the memory of fond fathers and mothers. Instinct enables it to let them know its needs, but when its pleasure is expressed by a smile and its sense of another by the words "papa" and "mamma," the development of its mind has already begun, and also its education. Those first words are not merely sounds, sweet and musical, but also evidences of training and first-fruits of individuality. They cannot be counterfeited, and however imperfectly spoken are perfectly understood and perfectly lovely. They show three very important things—the child's capacity for thought and speech, his adaptation to the conditions of life, and his ability to realize the great end of his existence.

A word, like a tripod, rests securely on three legs, being spoken by some one to or for some one and about some one or some thing. Like carrier pigeons, they are the messengers of some mind to some other mind, telling of persons and things and thoughts. The snail leaves traces of its course across the rock, but the bird

Parables for the People

in its flight and the ocean liner in its voyage make no beaten track. Many a movement of the mind remains unrecorded outside of the thinking mind itself, but here and there a record is made in the words and sentences and chapters of a book which becomes the banks of a stream on whose current the reader may wish to float.

Two questions concern the reader: Who is the author? and, What is his philosophy? What is the meaning of his words and sentences and chapters? Through the words of a friend, spoken or written, we easily see his thought and himself. His expressions are adapted to our joy or sorrow, our needs, and even our prejudices and personal limitations, and we are won to the cause of truth, and never error, let us cheerfully hope, by the tact and sympathy that thinly veil the one whom we are glad to claim as our friend. Words call out another mind in response and become the channel of communication both ways.

The relation of words to things is less intimate, if not less real. Words spring from the mind and not from the things, but are to represent or recall to the mind tangible things and even intangible thoughts. The grammarian finds eight kinds in common use, the lexicographer tells us what they all mean, and the

Sweet Rest

philologist traces them up in literature and history to their origin. These three public servants are held in honor for their work's sake, but never discredit or supplant experience as a teacher by whom word and thing are linked together in the mind, the former being made as nearly as possible the true representative of the latter. In short, a man must rely upon himself to learn what words stand for and what men mean by them. He may know what they ordinarily mean and what they ought to mean, but to know what they do mean in a given case he must get back to their author, whether an infant in arms, an associate in life, a scientist or a philosopher, a politician or a statesman, a man of affairs or a man of God, or even God himself speaking by his prophets in the earlier age of revelation or by his Son in the later age.

II.

The power of speech, man's present and presumably his permanent possession, and the power of song, are two great common gifts conferred upon high and low, and offer a natural basis for cosmopolitan feeling and fellowship. Religion, and especially the religion of the Bible, has furnished themes and inspiration for the musician and the orator, and both

Parables for the People

might be expected to look forward like prophets to heaven as their proper paradise. Shall not words have their best meaning there and music its grandest illustrations?

If beings are more glorious in heaven than on earth, if the spirit of man is more than now, if the new heavens and the new earth surpass those we now enjoy, glorified men must have larger molds of thought and forms of expression. Language and music must keep pace with unfolding life. Excellence of character may there appear in the face without the aid of voice or act, and personality free from the limiting power of evil must expand unhindered, while its simplicity renders it intelligible to one of like nature, but we may well wonder what power of articulate and musical expression and enjoyment will belong to such a being. If goodness is greatness and human life has no external limits, man's future means increased capacity to receive from others and express his own mind. Here human language will have its last evolution and be adapted to human need, for the third time attaining perfection as regards the speaker, the one spoken to, and the truth declared.

National life shows in music as well as in language, a fact that will remain perhaps till one song is sung and one tongue is spoken in

Sweet Rest

the kingdom of God. Written in two languages, the Bible is being translated into many, and may yet bring them all into one again by means of its ideas and ideals, which are not ethnic, but universal. Attempts to popularize a universal language, however scientific in construction, have proved abortive. No mother ever taught the scientific language to her child. Science cannot undo what God did by means of the confusion of tongues, for God only can save and unify the race. His is the gift of language as of life, and both are fairly mysterious to man. Wise men can trace words to their roots and learn much they wanted to know and about an equal amount they might as well not know; they may insist on reading the whole history of the past out of the structure of words, only to find that language is still very confusing; for lo, the cherished theory of one learned man is ruthlessly overthrown by another only a little more learned or who has had the good fortune to live a little later, when newly discovered facts of history laid low the theory created with so much care, its only remaining use being as a monument to the industry and ingenuity and also the folly of its inventor and advocate.

Adam scarcely appears as a schoolboy, but rather as a school-teacher, when he names the

Parables for the People

animals just as men to-day name things they discover, an element in chemistry, an island in the ocean, or an asteroid in space, and the first man filled his place about as well as the last, so far as we know. Language is a gift to be called forth and cultivated in the child and also in the man. Both learn the language of earth and both should master the language of duty and devotion, of prayer and praise, of the Bible and the kingdom of heaven. Here, for the second time, inspiration becomes a necessity in order that men may understand the inspired Word of God, which is inspired because it is the language of the Spirit of God, because it is the text-book of the spirit of man when under the tuition of the Spirit of God, and because it is the universal language of the spirit of man, by means of which the divine thought and purpose are adequately conveyed to the individual and the race.

The religious linguist of to-day must go to the original sources and compare his spiritual experiences with those of prophet and apostle, and above all with those of the Christ. Every man must open his eyes and see for himself. He must grasp the facts by his own power of apprehension and learn the nature of these spiritual realities. Men must become children in the kingdom of heaven and learn its life and its

Sweet Rest

language. How else can they expect to know the worth of its words or the sweetness of its music? The alphabet of this heavenly language is within the knowledge of every one of us, in the keeping of every Christian who should have an ear for the heavenly music and a heart for the sacred accomplishments of noble thought and speech and song, bringing him into real fellowship with apostle and prophet or even an angel from heaven coming announced or un-awares.

III.

Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him; things which eye saw not and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, God revealed to us through the Spirit, who becomes more than eyes, more than ears, more than the heart, however much these may be to us, and literally confers upon us spiritual powers corresponding with our spiritual needs. As the Bible is inspired so the Christian is inspired, for "it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." No wonder Christian hope reaches out confidently to the future and inspired men labor assiduously to tell us of the golden age of mankind, which they all with one voice place in the future.

Parables for the People

John's vision on the lonely isle of Patmos impresses us more perhaps than it instructs us. There is a superincumbent weight of glory that presses close to the narrow gateway of expression. He sees a city unlike those of earth, its length and height and breadth being equal, as the place of perfection, having twelve foundations, symbolizing security, and each being a precious stone, to prefigure supreme moral quality. A new social order appears without toil and strife, the river of life and the tree of life indicating the satisfaction of every need. Men rest without the darkness of night and worship without the aid of a temple. They belong to the company of the redeemed of all ages and mingle with angels in companionship and song. They know God as revealed in Christ; they see his face, and his name is in their foreheads. The divine image is restored in its beauty and perfection, and their life rises to the level of heaven, where the will of God is the undisputed law and the presence of Christ an everlasting gospel.

The book of Revelation naturally stands at the end of the New Testament as the sequel of the gospel. In its descriptions of heaven and the heavenly life there is symbolism and there is truth, and the truth is not less than the symbol used to represent it, as heaven is

Sweet Rest

not less than earth, but unspeakably greater. Faith always attends school where the Spirit of God is the teacher, learning the lesson of the life that now is and in germ and essence of that which is to come, and clinging to the Bible because it

Lifts the veil that hides the day
That shall never pass away.

Nor should we ever carelessly confuse faith and fancy or imagination, though we love our imagination as we love our eyes, since it enables us to conceive, combine, and picture. But imagination is one faculty of the mind, while faith is the whole man relying upon God. Imagination has first place in the mind of the reader and writer of fiction, and no man can reasonably expect to be lifted above its source by reading this kind of literature. Fiction signally fails as a teacher of conscience and reason and will, and yet only as these elements enter into it does fiction rise to the level of real life. In its lighter movements, imagination is called fancy, and who would mistake fancy for faith? Faith removes mountains. Faith overcomes the world that tempts and allures and deludes; that holds men and women in slavery till liberated by its victory. Fancy has no such power and can point to no such

Parables for the People

victory. It cannot rise to God like faith, which is the assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. Imagination resembles the long feelers of the grandfather-long-legs, which are longer than his legs and always in motion, while faith is like his legs, bearing him along with his knees above his head and his body swinging securely below as in a hammock. Faith has the sense of God and the future like a prophet, wings to rise and soar like an eagle, arms to grasp the truth like a giant, and courage like a soldier to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

A man without eyes might be expected to question God's ability to create an organ in the human body capable of observing an oak half a mile away, a mountain ten miles distant, the moon 240,000 miles, or the sun and stars separated many millions of miles from the observer; but after using a pair of eyes of divine construction, any man should have faith in God's ability easily rising to the point of a settled belief. In all candor we should accord to Christian faith this same certainty after as many years of use and testing of its power of spiritual vision and victory over evil. The eyes and ears of fancy report the sounds and symbolism of Revelation, while faith per-

Sweet Rest

ceives there as everywhere the mind of the Spirit and sees through the little imagery of earth the greater life of heaven.

IV.

Solomon complains in Ecclesiastes of the emptiness of things, while John in Revelation finds language too poor to express his meaning. He calls to his aid bold figures of speech, impressive imagery, and symbolic descriptions in his effort to record in human language what he saw in heavenly vision, and expected to see again in all its bold and beautiful reality. Right action leads on to settled rest—not the rest of inaction, but the rest of harmony, when life answers to environment and environment to life, when man is at one with himself and with all who have a place in the kingdom of God. The rest of heaven is the rest of faith, the rest of the soul supported at its center of gravity. With this great central fact established, a hundred others follow easily, and John is scientific as well as prophetic, logical as well as theological. The language of God's kingdom grows in meaning, while that of the world wanes and withers. The man who loves the world feels the force of Solomon's complaint, while the man who loves the Father appreci-

Parables for the People

ates the heroic effort of John to express thoughts almost beyond the power of human language to represent or the human mind to comprehend.

As men advance in years they perceive a growing sense of the shortness of time. What does it mean? The clock ticks no faster. Because men are occupied does time seem short as measured by the demands of business? Or does the approach of eternity cause men to lose the sense of time, or rather their approach to that state where time gives place to eternity? There are no clocks in heaven and no mileposts, and no man need misread this lesson of his life, that space and time become less to him and may even disappear altogether as conditions of his life.

Death is a great awakener. Some men get ready for the cemetery before they prepare for heaven. Their development is one-sided. They are harvested by death while they are still sinful and sour. When his body and spirit dissolve their present partnership, a man pays the last installment and closes the account with this world, whether his years have been many or few, and whether his life has been a profitable or an unprofitable venture.

In the three-cornered game of life, every man should often ask himself, Is it my next

Sweet Rest

move? Satan has moved early and often, and half unknown to many a player God has moved. He has sent his Son and his Holy Spirit, and while men ought to wait on God, God actually waits on men, lest the game should end and man be the loser. If now any man has no lurking fear that some day he may find something better than the gospel, some other and better Savior than the Christ, he can at once commit himself to the Christ for time and for eternity. He can consecrate himself from the center of his being to the circumference and be at rest.

How reassuring it is to know that every good resolution, every act of faith by which a man commits himself to Christ remains vital and operative like the promises by which God commits himself to man. Behind such a man lies an accumulation of character and purpose like the water in a mill-dam, while before him opens a future safe in the keeping of Him who said, "I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut." The words of this man must grow greater in meaning as his life deepens and widens and as its current is concentrated in its proper channel and continually moves onward, never returning upon itself in the inevitable eddies of egotism. He cannot be pessimistic, but must be optimistic in the very nature of the case, nor is his optimism of the

Parables for the People

bulletin-board variety. He develops under the law of life and not under the law of necessity, his inner impulse being sufficient to resist every outer force that threatens to crush it and sufficient also to realize the ends of its own existence. If the Christian of the Johannine type be accepted as a fact, then the heaven described by John is a foregone conclusion. If the gospel is received as true, then reason unites with faith in asserting its proper sequel in the vision of Patmos.

V.

We have here no abiding city. Cities last longer than their occupants, and men reluctantly relinquish their palaces and possessions, their rights and titles. They are defendants in a suit in ejectment in which the case is sure to go against them and be followed by an unconditional ouster. Precedents for a thousand years, personal observation in as many instances, and the Word of God which endures forever speak in concert and also in order as independent witnesses establishing beyond a peradventure this fact which has a disquieting effect on the minds of men who are irreligious and also candid and thoughtful.

Perhaps every soul has at some time doubted whether the Bible is indeed God's Word, but

Sweet Rest

that time was not when a dear friend lay speechless in death, and no word of comfort soothed its sorrow till some word from that Book brought real relief. The truth was calm and consoling and its sweetness conquered bitter grief and lifted hope to her feet again. There that soul became sure that the Bible is the Word of God. It was true then, more than literature, more than history, more than poetry, more than philosophy. It spoke like a voice to the troubled spirit, and one listener at least heard and knew that it was the voice of God.

The Bible shows us the Christ passing up through human life from infancy to mature manhood and filling it with his own ideal and measure of worth. He teaches us how to dwell in society and also that there is no solitude for a good man. He redeems us in our individual and social life, saving us from the narrowness of bigotry on the one hand and on the other from degenerating into the careless crowd who drift like fragments in a river. He saves our individualism and our socialism, which go to seed separately if left alone, or go to hell together, which is the place without God and without hope. Christian individualism and Christian socialism belong to one ideal, and the Christian is the only citizen, if not the

Parables for the People

only candidate for a place in the new social order called the kingdom of God.

Men must be sorted like apples and potatoes, since one bad man, like one bad apple, may spoil a dozen good ones. The David of old said, "Deal gently with my son," but the David of to-day says, "Deal gently with my sin." Julia Ward Howe says:

God is sifting out the hearts of men before his
judgment-seat.
Be swift my soul to answer him; be jubilant my
feet;
Our God is marching on.

His machinery is in motion and a hundred sieves shake down their products in separate heaps. Tested by one and another all the way through the list, pleasure and place, honor and wealth, each man passes on and every one finds his own place. The worldly man adjusts himself to *his* world and the Christian man to *his* world. There the one remains and there the other rests when the word is spoken, "He that is unrighteous let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy let him be made holy still."

The Christian is learning the language of heaven, and if by chance he heard the song

Sweet Rest

of the redeemed in glory he would cry out, "That is my song." His is the language of obedience and divine life, and why should he not claim citizenship in heaven? There he will be at home and at rest, the rest of perfect adjustment of his mind to the object of life as conceived by the Divine Mind, of perfect harmony in himself as created in the image of God and renewed by the atonement of Christ, of complete correspondence with his environment as divinely appointed, so that wherever God manifests his personal presence there is rest for him, there is heaven.

Why should any man miss the meaning of life? He might miss his calling, but not his call, which comes as a voice from heaven. A world furnished to his hand is given to him in which to live and choose and work out his destiny. Another and another opens to his knock and his request to enter. Many paths invite him, but he makes choice of the one he prefers to follow. An ideal rises before him to be deciphered by his own mind and realized by his own efforts aided by other agencies seen and unseen. His method of labor becomes his method of life, and even of being itself, guiding his steps and keeping him true to himself. In his heart he carries his governing principle, like the testimony kept in the Ark of the Cov-

Parables for the People

enant, and his impelling motive, which may and should be the same that moves and guides the divine will. As long as love abides in him he has heart and courage for life and labor and all things. Love never fails and never ceases. Sweet rest is his present possession and is sure to be his future inheritance, the rest of faith, the faith that sustains the center of the man now and points forward and leads onward to a permanent relation to God and, as a necessary consequence, to perpetual rest.

To such a man the camel cannot come into comparison with the Christ, who is easily supreme, who plainly proves his right to rule, who is never less but always greater in life and leadership. To such a man Christianity cannot come into comparison with other religions, thus forming a basis for a higher generalization and even a new religion, but is itself the one true religion that vindicates man as a creature and God as his creator at the bar of reason, that undertakes single-handed and alone to make men worthy in fact, that sets forth human nature and human life in all its parts, body, soul, and spirit; past, present, and future; visible and invisible. To such a man, life means much now and much more hereafter. It cannot mean less in itself, in its relation to a greater world, and in its relation to God. Like the Christ, the

Sweet Rest

Christian increases and the line of his development is determined by Christ, who is his ideal and his motive. Philip's dullness of perception must be overcome by the Christian of to-day till he sees God in Christ, and the doubt of Thomas changed into living faith, so that he knows God in the Holy Spirit and addresses him in the memorable words, "My Lord and my God"; the words of faith and reason, of duty and devotion; the words of sweet spiritual childhood which assure us of three important things—the Christian's capacity for spiritual life, his adaptation to its conditions, and his ability to realize the great end of his existence.

Afterglow.

THE CAPITAL OF THE UNIVERSE.

With foundations, twelve foundations,
Stands the city, fair and bright;
Life and beauty, God's creations,
Glow with wisdom, love, and might.

Nations gathered with the angels,
Hosts of earth and hosts of sky;
Loud hosannas, sweet evangels,
Whis'pring low and rising high.

River flowing, ever flowing,
Where the shadows never fall;
Light a-glowing, ever glowing,
Where our God is all in all.

Tree of life and temple holy,
God in Christ the saint shall see.
Spirits great that once were lowly;
Happy place for man to be.

Waiting crowns and coronations,
Promised now and given then;
When we reach the twelve foundations,
Happy souls of ransomed men.



BX9878.5 .K275
Parables for the people.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00044 8722