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THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE:

DISCOURSES UPON HOLY SCRIPTURE.

[v. 24]



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BY

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APOSTOLIC LIFE,

AS REVEALED IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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APOSTOLIC LIFE ;

AS DELINEATED IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

XXXIX.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, upon our hearts do thou write the word of wisdom, and in our memory do thou put the word of instruction. We forget thy commandments, and thy statutes flee away from our recollection. Oh that we might have an inspired memory, so that no word of thine might ever be lost ! How rich we might have been in wise words ! Our heart might have been as a store-house laden with treasure from heaven. We would that our memory were written all over with thine own hand—with laws of light, with words of truth, with doctrines from heaven. Then surely the Enemy would have no place in us, nor could we admit him to the hospitality spread by thine own hand. Bring us daily closer to the Saviour of men. May we enter into his spirit, having tasted of his grace ; having been reconciled unto God by him, may our reconciliation become the beginning of a new ministry of our own ! May men take knowledge of us that we are no longer in rebellion against God, but are at one with his righteousness and purity ! This is the miracle of God ! This is the triumph of Almightyness ! This is the sweet conquest of the Cross ! We are brought nigh by thy Son ; even we that were afar off now stand at thy right hand clothed with the garments of holiness and of praise. We are therefore living miracles ! We are wonders unto ourselves, and unto many, and we would that astonishment of a saving kind might strike every one who beholds the wonders of God.

Thou dost not smite to destroy, but to heal. Thy rod is not a weapon of destruction ; it is, in reality, though hidden from our poor sight, a sceptre of mercy. May we believe this, and rest in this persuasion, and be strong in this infinite comfort ; then our tears shall be precious to us ; in shedding of them we should lose something of thy grace ; for whilst they are yet in our eyes we see thy providence in its largest and noblest form. Many are thy mercies ; and they are all treasured in Christ for us. No good thing wilt thou withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Thou delightest to give grace on grace, more grace, a continual increase and accumulation of grace, until grace itself is turned into glory. We would live in God as revealed to us through his Son. We did not make ourselves. We are the work of thine hands. As such we would live in thy presence, and seek to know thy will, and try to do it with both hands earnestly. May ours be a fervent love, a great and noble passion of the soul, an enthusiasm full of the Spirit of the Cross; seeking to redeem men, and bring wanderers back from the wilderness in which there is no way. Thou knowest the way that we take; when thou hast tried us, thou wilt bring us forth as gold. One day we shall emerge from the darkness, and when we stand in the light, we shall see that even in the night-time thou hast been clothing us with garments of beauty. Few and evil are our days at the most; they are dwindling fast; some now in thy presence see the very last milestone on the road, and they know it to be the last; but they are not broken-hearted. They make that stone an altar; they write upon it, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us;" and in the strength and majesty of that Divine faith they walk the few remaining yards, knowing that they are walking towards victory and home. We bless thee for the inspiration of hope. We thank thee that at night-time we can sing even in the prison. We rejoice that there is no place, however far off and desolate, that may not be turned into a sanctuary because of thy presence. Heal the heart thou hast smitten! Find the link in the chain which thou hast broken! Bring back memories that shall be as presences in the night where thou hast desolated the house, and put out its fire! The Lord send comfort to all our hearts! Where sin abounds, may grace much more abound, and where the presence and sense of sin are intolerable, may there be the shining of the Cross, which shall make the contrite glad with a renewed hope. The Lord hear us, and be mindful of us, and kind to the least thankful of us, and pitiful to the feeblest and weakest, and at the last may we be gathered from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, in the name of Jesus, and in the blood of the everlasting Covenant, may we stand before thee a mighty host, free men, loyal in heart, because washed in the blood of the Lamb! Amen.

Acts xiii. 1-13.

1. Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers [the two not necessarily identical, though the higher gift of prophecy commonly included the lower gift of teaching], Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger [nothing more is known of him], and Lucius [probably one of the first evangelists of Antioch] of Cyrene, and Manaen, the foster-brother of Herod the tetrarch [Antipas], and Saul [copied from a list made before Saul became famous].

2. And as they ministered [a word commonly used of the service of the priests and Levites in the Temple] to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy

Ghost said, Separate me [from the construction of the Greek it would appear as if the command had been given in answer to prayer] Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3. Then when they had fasted and prayed [the fasting and prayer were continued until the laying on of hands had been completed] and laid their hands on them [the formal act by which the Church testified its acceptance], they sent them away.

4. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, went down to Seleucia [a town about sixteen miles from Antioch], and from thence they sailed to Cyprus [where the population was largely Greek].

5. And when they were at Salamis [at the east end of Cyprus], they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews ; and they had also John as their attendant [not deacon or preacher : he personally served in baptisms : he was the apostolic courier].

6. And when they had gone through the island unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer [same word in Matt. ii. 1], a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus ;

7. Which was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of understanding [intelligent and discerning]. The same called unto him Barnabas and Saul, and sought to hear the word of God.

8. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith [“ the charlatan feared the loss of the influence which he had previously exercised over the mind of the proconsul”].

9. Then Saul, who is also *called* Paul, filled [the tense implies a sudden access of spiritual power] with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10. and said, O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord ?

11. And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness ; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

12. Then the proconsul, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

13. Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga [the capital of Pamphylia, about seven miles from the mouth of the river Cestra] in Pamphylia : and John departed from them [for what appeared to Paul as an insufficient reason] and returned to Jerusalem.

Notes.—Saul’s change of name. “ It is impossible not to connect the mention, and probably the assumption, of the new name with the conversion of the proconsul. It presented many advantages.”—*Plumptre*. “ The name was one familiar to the Gentiles, of whom he was presently after the apostle, and agreeable on them rather than to the Hebrew name

Saul. It answered also to his stature. PAULUS = *little*. Barnabas gives place to him from this point."—*Bengel*. "Satisfactory reasons are sought for this sudden change of name. There were probably more reasons than one. As a Roman citizen, it would be perfectly likely and natural that he should own a Roman as well as a Jewish name. He was now going forth to the Gentiles, and of the two names the Latin would be much more acceptable to his heathen hearers than the Hebrew . . . Paulus, though originally meaning small, was a famous name of great dignity, and associated with high rank."—*Malleison*.

THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

“IN the Church,”—how much is implied in these three words !
 How much they *assume* ! From some points of view the whole Christian idea may seem to be involved in the brief expression—“in the Church.” What *is* the Church ? Is it not part of common human society ? Why this separateness of indication ? Why treat it as a world within a world ? Why not refer to the human family as a whole, on the principle that the greater includes the less ? There must be some meaning in this society within society. Are not men continually engaging their invention in such arrangements ? Whoever speaks of society as a whole, as a grand sum total of human life ? The integer is broken up into innumerable fractions of all values and denominations, but there is ONE fraction, alas !—only a fraction just now,—which says that it will, and must, by the force of a sweet and Divine compulsion, become itself the *whole number*,—that fraction is the *Church*. Are they *ordinary* men who compose the Church ? Certainly not. How many men does it take to make a Church ? *Two* ! In what name do they meet ? In the name of *Jesus Christ* ! Where do they meet ? Where they please. What pomp and circumstance are requisite to constitute them into a Church ? How much money must they have ? *None* ! How much learning of a merely technical and mechanical kind to constitute them into a Church ? *None* ! Then they must be very *weak* ? That is *impossible*. The side on which *Omnipotence* fights cannot be weak. Then they may be very *poor* ? No ! The side that banks in *heaven* can never be short of treasure. But they must have some *place* to meet in ? Not necessarily. Under a tree will do, or in the middle of a meadow—or within some fold of the night’s darkness,—in the dens

and caves of the earth, a Church not made with hands ! Why if that idea in all its simplicity, but unfathomable depth of meaning, could seize the Christian mind of to day, a sublime *revolution* would be the immediate and permanent consequence. But the moment two men come together to constitute a Church they forget that nothing further is requisite but the presence of Christ. They must *build* ! Peter wanted to build on the mountain top. They must create an *institution* ; they must establish an intricate and expensive *organization*. Kind two godly souls in the poorest village in the land, and they do not ask for our help. Help ! What to *do* ? A Church is as complete as a family ; a Church is self-bounded, self-contained, self-complete, self-sustaining, so far as all human resources are concerned. It has an open highway to the all-supplying heavens, and when it goes abroad on the earth, it is in the spirit of brotherhood and sympathy and common desire, and neither as a beggar nor a patron. The Church is composed of redeemed and regenerated men. They are one in Christ : diverse in stature, in figure, in colour, in speech ; diverse in everything that enters into the composition of humanity ; yet they are one in him who breaks down all middle walls of partition, and in *him* they have their indissoluble and indivisible unity. Why do they not, then, "cleave unto the Lord" ? When we *pray* we are one ; when we *speak to each other* we are divided : in *worship* one, in *opinion* countless thousands ! Then why do we not *pray*, and let opinion alone ? "What doth the Lord thy God require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God ?" But men *will* have opinions, and opinions *divide* men. The whole Christian Church this day throughout the world says to God : "Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever. Amen." And the moment the Christian Church begins to *preach* it speaks ten thousand differing and irreconcilable dialects. "Pray without ceasing." Meet for *worship*, not for the propagation of opinions. One man has as much authority for his opinion as another ; opinions are *growths*, opinions belong to processes of education. There is only one thing true in all the possibilities of its bearing, and that is *worship*. Could these two ideas recover their place in the Church, I repeat, a most beneficent and profound *revolution* would be the instant consequence. We have torn the seamless robe of Christ

into innumerable rags ! Christianity has now become a tissue of *opinions* ; once it was a world-shaking *faith* ; now it is a cage filled with opinions and dogmas and controversies that can never be reconciled. *Pray* on ! *Worship* is the union of the Church !

“ Certain prophets and teachers,”—different *gifts*, you observe, but the same *subject*. Take care that we do not exclude the PROPHET from the Church ; we are inclined to do so. The prophet had a higher gift than the teacher ; the teacher read a book that was written with pen and ink, but the prophet read a book *not yet written*, but that was going to be written. He forecast the ages, and read the scroll of the future traced by an invisible hand with invisible ink. Have we reached the final point ? Do we stop at a flat black line and say—*Finis* ? We have excluded the *prophet* from the Church ; we call him “ heterodox,” fanatical, unsafe, peculiar, not always to be relied upon ; men write cautiously to him ; men are afraid of him ; they speak of him with many parenthetic qualifications ; they write about him with so many footnotes that the substantial text is reduced to a minimum. It is the *prophet* that must lead us ; there must always be amongst us some man who has the *next* word. I cannot see those who are on the mountain top, but I can see the *next* man on the mountain ridge ; that is enough in the meantime, for he, turning to me below, says, “ Come up higher,—higher still.” Where is the *prophet* to-day ? He is a dead man, and his grave cannot be found !

“ The Holy Ghost said.” How much is implied in that expression also ! The Holy Spirit *dwells* in the Church. “ Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost ?” The Spirit finds his *abode* in the Church ; there he can whisper ; there he can touch gently the minds which he seeks to affect ; there he can tell “ the secret things of God.” Had we *listened* more, we should have known more ; had we invited fuller *confidences* from heaven, we should have known the meaning of this sublime word,—“ The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.” The Holy Spirit must be our genius, our ability, our inspiration, our wealth, and our whole strength. Pray that the Holy Dove may return, “ sweet Messenger of rest.” He will take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. He will not testify of himself, but whatsoever he

shall hear the Son say he will whisper to our hearts, and will "show us things to come." Alas, we have no *future*, because we have no Holy Ghost! It is the function of the Holy Spirit to elect his own ministers: do not let us meddle with God in this matter. God will find his own ministers. A minister is not a *manufacture*—he is an *inspiration*! "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." *There* our interest may well cease, for a great prayer will answer itself, and you will be found doing the earthly share of the work with a glad heart and a willing hand. Ministers are not to be *made* by us. Young men are not to be *driven* into the ministry—they are to be "called" to it. Put all the emphasis you can upon the word which the Holy Ghost himself used: "The work whereunto I have CALLED them." The ministry is a *calling*; men are called to *particular* work; they are called to particular countries, places, and surroundings; the Lord hath a candlestick for every candle; the Lord allots the place as well as calls the man.

A singular combination of the human and the Divine you will find in the third and fourth verses. Barnabas and Saul were chosen and separated, and we read in the third verse that when the Church "had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." That is the *human* side. Now read the beginning of the fourth verse and see the Divine aspect. "So they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost." We are "fellow-workers with God." Who sent forth Barnabas and Saul?—The Church did. The Church *alone*?—No, the Holy Ghost sent them forth. Then this was a joint work?—It was, certainly. The united work of the Spirit and of the Church. This is the solution of the whole controversy about the Divineness of our salvation and our share in it. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you." So then we are fellow-workers with God. We are called into this high partnership—it has pleased God so to address us as to give us the comfort of having done somewhat in our own case, for said Jesus to those who believed on him and received his healing: "Thy *faith* hath made thee whole." The two men then were sent forth both by the Holy Ghost and by the Church, and we find that their way was marked out and made clear for them.

God will take care of his own ministers. No minister of Christ in all this world but has friends: opponents he may have, but they will, as the clouds in the air, set out in sharper accent and more glorified expression the light that is above. Do not tell me that you can go forth at God's bidding without having friends, and men's respect and confidence and love. You may meet an *Elymas*, but you will first meet a *Sergius Paulus*. God himself will open a man's way, and the wonder of the man will be, not that *Elymas* should have *opposed* him, but that *Sergius Paulus*, the proconsul, should have taken any notice of him. We are surprised by *love*, not by *hate*: the marvel is that we should have *bread*, not that we should sometimes be an *hungered*. But the true ministry develops the *evil-spirit* of the times. *Elymas*, the Sorcerer, withstood Barnabas and Saul, seeking to turn away the viceroy from the faith. So we sometimes hear timid people saying that whether this or that movement be good or not they will not say, but certainly since it took place there has been a great deal of *rioting and tumult* in the neighborhood; and such poor philosophers are allowed to be counted as one each in a vote by hand! How pitiable, how heart-discouraging! Do let us have to do with men who see that wherever the good is the evil will be developed. Wherever Barnabas and Saul are, *Elymas* will put in his claim, and there will be *controversy* in any town whose possession by the sorcerer is disputed by those who claim it in the name of Christ. Wherever there is a movement in the direction of *sobriety* on a larger scale, there will be corresponding *opposition* to it. Wherever there is *Gospel preaching* of a right sort, not tepid, uncertain, half-hearted, but the mighty yearning preaching of the *heart* in the tongue and accent of the people, the devil will leap up from his darkness and dispute the field. We are disabled by timidity. Did Barnabas and Saul write home to Antioch that opposition having arisen, they would return by the next boat? They were not given to returning except with victory, or to equip themselves for further Christian assault!

It is beautiful to mark how Saul takes his right position by a most natural process. They went out Barnabas and Saul, but when we hear of them again they will be Saul and Barnabas. This inversion took place providentially. Men are tested by their work. Nothing can keep down a man whom God has ap-

pointed to the throne. There will be no controversy between Barnabas and Saul, for Barnabas was a good man, and he instantly knew where the power was, and he stood aside with the graceful courtesy which is taught and acquired only in the school of heaven.

“Then Saul” wrought his *first miracle*. In many chapters in the Bible you find *beginnings*. In this chapter Paul worked his first miracle. He fixed his eyes on the Sorcerer, and said: “O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” Truly his speech was then not “contemptible”! Stung by fire, he turned into a mighty and thrilling speaker. Never could he have prepared those words in any mechanical sense: they are the words which follow the touch of fire! That fire we have lost. We talk to Elymas in syllables of ice; we look at him with vacant eyes, he returns our unmeaning stare. This first miracle seemed to bring back Saul’s own experience on the way to Damascus. It seems as though he knew only *one kind* of miracles, and that was making opponents *blind*. He began with Elymas where the Lord began with *himself*. He had not yet seen the *range* of the Divine movement. Many a time he had thought of the *blind days*, and mayhap he said to his soul, *This is how Christ afflicts men who oppose him!*—so when he comes to work his own first miracle he begins with the Sorcerer where Christ began with himself; he struck the Sorcerer blind! Yet he remembered the *mercy* as well as the wrath, adding—“not seeing the sun for a season.” Just his own experience! His was not a lifelong blindness, but a temporary suspension of the visual power. How we repeat our experience in others! How the father lives again his own childhood in his son! How the instructor takes his pupils just as he himself was taken some thirty years before!

In this chapter we shall presently hear Paul’s first speech. Truly he *begins* in this chapter! He has been at home waiting, wondering, reading, thinking much and praying ever day, and now his turn has come, and in this chapter we shall see his first miracle, and hear his first thunder, and shall know that the king of men has arisen in the Church!

“ Would I describe a preacher such as Paul
Were he on earth, and could hear, approve, and own—
Paul should himself direct me. I would trace
His master strokes, and draw from his design.
I would express him simple, grave, sincere !
In doctrine, uncorrupt ; in language, plain ;
And plain in manner ; decorous, solemn, chaste,
And natural in gesture ; much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,
And anxious mainly that the flock he feeds
May feel it too ; affectionate in look
And tender in address, as well becomes
A messenger of grace to guilty men.”

That great preacher is now about to begin ! Let us look and
listen well !

XL.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, there are sounds of joy in thy house to-day. Surely the marriage feast of the Lamb is ready! Thou hast taken us up to the top of a mountain, and has shown unto us in the vision of faith the cloudless land. Thou dost surprise us oftentimes with a sight of the beautiful country. Suddenly the night shineth as the day, and the day is made sevenfold in brightness. Sometimes thou dost make us tread upon the grave with holy scorn, taunting it because its victory is lost. These things thou causest to pass before us in Christ Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem, the Man of the Cross. In him we see all things; he is the open door into heaven. He is the revelation of thy person, and brightness and glory. In him is the fulness of the Godhead. His look is light. If we may but touch the hem of his garment, we shall be made whole. If he will but breathe upon us, this breathing shall be the gift of peace. Lord Jesus, make thy Church glad! Come to her in any form she can bear to look upon, either in great degradation, or in might and glory; in mortal agony, or in great strength and pomp. Come as thou wilt, and as we are able to bear the sight, and make thy Church this day glad with infinite joy. Thou knowest how long we have trembled in the dark cloud. Thou hast numbered the days of the bitter wind that has blown around our shrinking life. Thou knowest how often we have found the garden to be a wilderness; now come with the angels, and with the heavens of light, and let thy Church this day sit down at her Lord's banquet and feel that his banner over her is love. We are weary of the world, we have drunk its cup, and found it shallow and bitter; we are now stirred by new inspirations which would lay hold of the heavens, and apply to the wounds of time the balm of immortality. Still we would be patient, though the road is full of sharp stones and turns that make us dizzy by their suddenness and violence. Still we would say—now at the cradle, now at the grave—The Lord's will be done, for it alone is good. Give us such a hold of thyself in Christ, such a grip of essential truth and everlasting reality as shall make us strong, solid, noble in character, beneficent and redeeming in spirit and in action. May we separate ourselves from the world by distances that shall amaze ourselves. May we know the meaning of the contradictions which we find in Christ, who, though on earth, was in heaven; who, having no food, had bread enough and to spare; who, being a root out of a dry ground, was the flower of Jesse and the plant of renown. Lead us away from the narrow and the

small and the contemptible, and may we count as our riches the gold of heaven, and our inheritance the very breadth of thine own infinity. We come in the name of Jesus, the name to sinners dear! He makes our life a beginning, our death a transient shadow, our heaven sympathy with God. Into this heaven we would now pass by the sacred way of the Cross. We will say, "Not our will, but thine be done." Lord, do we say it well, with the lips of the heart, and with the accent of all-believing love? or, is it some letter we have learned, and which we utter with the mouth only? Write it in our hearts; make it part of our very life; may it be to our thirst the wine of heaven, and to our hunger the bread of life. Give us triumph as well as peace, joy that sings and shouts, and calls the organ and trumpet and mighty power of utterance to give it expression. We could not live *always* in this high rapture, but if now we could but feel its inspiration, in one moment we should forget the sorrow of a lifetime, and anticipate the heaven beyond the river. The Lord give us bread to eat. Lead us to living fountains of water, wipe away all tears from our eyes. Make us wise to redeem the time and do the work of life, and at the last may we meet those who have gone before, and those who are coming after, and the whole host of the Lamb in the Chamber where the feast is spread and where the gladness never ends. Amen.

Acts xiii. 14-41.

14. But they, passing through from Perga, came to Antioch of Pisidia [one of the many cities built by Seleucus Nicanor, and named after his father Antiochus], and they went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. [The act implied that they were not listeners only, but teachers. They sat in the seat of the Rabbi, and thus showed that they asked for permission to address the congregation.]

15. And after the reading of the law and the prophets [the order of the lessons was fixed by a kind of calendar] the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them [it was part of the duty of the elders to offer persons in such a position the opportunity of addressing the assembly], saying, Brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

16. And Paul stood up, and beckoning with the hand [a gesture of *waving* rather than of *beckoning*, as if requesting silence], said [almost certainly in Greek], Men of Israel, and ye that fear God [the latter being those who, though in the synagogue, were of heathen origin], hearken.

17. The God of this people Israel [a speech, as we formerly hinted, modelled upon the plan of Stephen's great apology] chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they sojourned in the land of Egypt [they were exalted in the sense of being innumerably multiplied], and with a high arm led them forth out of it.

18. And for about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness [the Greek word translated "suffered" differs by a single

letter only from one which signifies to *carry* as a father carries his child, and that word is used in many of the better MSS. versions.]

19. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land for an inheritance,

20. for about four hundred and fifty years : and after these things he gave *them* judges until Samuel the prophet.

21. And afterward they asked for a king : and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin [the very tribe to which Paul himself belonged], for the space of forty years [the duration of the reign is not given in the Old Testament].

22. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king ; to whom also he bare witness, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse [the words that follow are a composite quotation, after the manner of the Rabbis, made up of Psalm lxxxix. 20, and 1 Sam. xiii. 14], a man after my heart, who shall do all my will.

23. Of this man's seed hath God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus [even in those remote regions of Pisidia there was some vague knowledge of the life and death of Christ] ;

24. When John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25. And as John was fulfilling his course [the tense implies continuous action], he said, What suppose ye that I am [the question is inferred from the substance of the answer, Matt. iii. 10 ; John i. 20, 21] ? I am not he. But behold, there cometh one after me, the shoes of whose feet I am not worthy to unloose.

26. Brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and those among you that fear God [the two classes, as before, are pointedly contrasted], to us is the word of this salvation sent forth [the demonstrative pronoun connects the *salvation* with the *Jesus* just named : the expression "this salvation" recalls the corresponding terms, "this life," Acts v. 20].

27. For they that dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath [the Apostle appeals to the synagogue ritual itself, which had just been read, in proof of what he was stating], fulfilled them by condemning him.

28. And though they found no cause of death in him [he had been technically condemned on the charge of blasphemy], yet asked they of Pilate that he should be slain [seeking to terrify him by the suggestion that acquittal would mean treason to Cæsar].

29. And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of him [unconsciously to themselves], they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb.

30. But God raised him from the dead :

31. And he was seen for many days [he speaks as one who had personally conversed with the eye-witnesses] of them that came up with him

from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are [NOW] his witnesses unto the people [literally, *the* people of God].

32. And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers,

33. how that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that he raised up Jesus ; as also it is written in the second psalm [in some copies of the Old Testament what is now the first psalm was treated as a kind of prelude to the whole book, the enumeration beginning with what is now the *second*], Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee [the first fulfilment was in a victorious king—the final and complete fulfilment in Christ].

34. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption [Psalm xvi. 10], he has spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure *blessings* of David.

35. Because he saith also in another psalm, Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see corruption.

36. For David, after he had in his own generation served [ministered to] the counsel of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption :

37. But he whom God raised up saw no corruption.

38. Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins :

39. And by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40. Beware therefore, lest that come upon *you* which is spoken in the prophets ;

41. Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you.

PAUL'S FIRST RECORDED SPEECH.

“ PAUL and Barnabas went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.” They did not violently separate themselves from old traditions and religious companionships. Christianity has no battle with Judaism. Surely the Christian is not the enemy of the Jew ; he owes everything precious in his civilization, and precious in his hope, to the Jew, and therefore to hold angry controversy with him would be to display an unappreciative and an unjust disposition of spirit. There was a custom in the synagogue which we have not in the Christian Church. The rulers of the synagogue, noticing distinguished persons in the audience, would almost invariably send to them or speak to them, saying—If you wish to address the assembly, we shall be glad

to hear you. The lessons of the day were read, the grand lessons from the Old Testament,—for then there was no other covenant,—and then the rulers of the synagogue would say to distinguished-looking men in the assembly—If you have anything to say to the people, say on. There is singular dignity and nobleness in that arrangement; a *fearlessness* which does not seem to characterize the spirit of the Church in which we live. Who dares now throw the meeting open to any stranger who may have come within its four corners? In the olden time they seemed to believe that the Word was its own defence, that the fire of the Lord would disinfect whatever it touched, and that to be in the synagogue was to be reverent, deeply religious, and loyal to the spirit of the house. These things have all changed. Men can be in the Christian *Church* in an un-Christian *spirit*. The mere verbalist; yes, and even the mocker, may find his way into the church, and might be only too glad to have an opportunity impertinently and rudely to contradict what he did not understand. The usual challenge having been given, PAUL stood up. That was an event in history. No *other* standing up was equal to it. In that brief sentence you have the beginning of a battle which was concluded with these words—“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness!” Paul did not stand up by *himself*. Men are *lifted* up. Every action of the loyal life is an action of *inspiration*. The good man lays no plans, and makes no arrangements which can exclude the sudden and incalculable inspiration of God. Having written his outline of purpose and thought, he says—“I hold this merely as a trustee, it is not mine, it is God’s, I may never look at it more. I will cry mightily and lovingly to Heaven and ask for direction, and according to the word of the Lord I will do.” You cannot plan an outline that will exactly hold God’s inspiration. You cannot outline what you will finally do. Let the publicans, the pagans, forecast and determine and draw the geometrical figures within which their movements may be described, but the *Christian* always goes out without knowing whither he is going, except that he is going with God! To that high faith not many souls have come; we are still in the infant school of prudence and calculation; not in the high school of inspiration and madness.

This is Paul's *first* recorded speech. He has been talking before ; yes, and he has been mightily persuading the Jews that the Man whom he preaches is Christ, but this is his first recorded statement of Jewish history and Christian faith. I like to be present at *beginnings*. There is a subtle, tender, mysterious joy about *planting* roots and sowing seed, covering it up and leaving it in the darkness ; then what a surprise it is to come back in due time and find the green lancet puncturing the soil and coming up to look at the light it has been groping for all the while ! Sometimes our first speeches were very poor because they were *our own*. We made them, we wrote them out, graved them upon the unwilling memory, and they were like something *put on*, not *growing* out ; and so we begged our friends who were unhappy enough to be able to quote some portions of them to forget them if they could ! But the first speeches of the Christian defender were *incapable of improvement*. They were as *complete* as the fiat of God which said—"Let there be light : and there was light." There was no *emendation*, no correction of words, no reconstruction of phrases, no mechanical tinkering of the grand utterance. When Stephen opened his mouth and spoke to the wondering assembly, he *himself* was more surprised by the eloquence than any man that heard it. Surely Paul will *grow* in speaking power ? *No !* Surely he will at *first* be timid and stumbling and incorrect, and people will say—It is a maiden effort, but by-and-by he may become a tolerable speaker ? *No !* How do you account for *that* ?

Paul based his apology on the model of Stephen. When he performed his first miracle, which we saw in our last reading, it was a miracle modelled on *Christ's* transaction with himself on the way to Damascus. As we said before, he probably thought that there was only *one* miracle that could be done, and that was to smite the offending man with temporary blindness. And now perhaps he thinks there is but one *speech* to be made ! Is not this speech modelled on the lines of Stephen's, which great speech Saul heard ? We cannot tell of what elements our life is made up. It is no one shower of rain that makes the summer green. We are gathering from every point all day long ; we are daily at school, and every providence that passes before us leaves some impress on our life. Paul was no student of rhetoric when he listened to Stephen ; but Stephen's speech, like all vital speech,

got *into* the man, and became part of his intellectual and spiritual life. He never forgot that speech ! When he wanted to put his fingers in his ears and shut out the thundering eloquence, he could not exclude the resounding tone ! Paul began as Stephen did, with a narrative of Jewish history. To their credit be it spoken, the Jews were *never tired* of hearing their own history. Whenever a speaker arose in Jewish society determined to carry a specific point, he came with all the background of Jewish history, and under the influence of recollections heroic and thrilling, he endeavored to carry the immediate point of the occasion. One might have expected that the Jews would have become *wearry* of hearing their history time after time, but historians record it to their credit that they were always ready to hear the living story again. Are *we* patient under the citation of the facts which make up *our* history ? We cannot live in *sentiment*. You cannot build a castle in the air that you can live in ; it must be founded upon rock, however high up into the air you may carry it. This was the great law of Jewish eloquence and Jewish appeal ; basing the whole argument upon the rock of undisputed *history*. Do not some of us occasionally say, “ Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love ” ?—therein we are partly Jewish—that is *our* story ! As the *Jews* began from the formation of themselves as a people, we begin at *Bethlehem*, and in proportion as we are in the right spirit and temper, we are never tired of hearing the old, old story ; it brings its own dew with it, like every morning in the year. When we are tired of hearing that story the kingdom of heaven amongst men will come to a standstill in its halting progress.

Notice in this speech what we may call Paul's grip of GOD. I know not any speech of the same length in which the sacred word occurs so frequently. Gather the phrases together, and see if this be not so :—*God* chose our fathers ; *God* destroyed seven nations ; *God* gave them judges ; *God* gave them Saul ; *God* raised unto Israel a Saviour ; *God* raised him from the dead ; *God*, *God*, *GOD* ! That man can never be put down ! When he dies he will die a victor, and in his last speech will he make mention of a crown of glory. The factor we have omitted from our sermons is only—*GOD* ! We are afraid or ashamed

of his name ; we pronounce it hesitatingly, mincingly, timidly. Paul did not use it so ; he hurled it like a thunderbolt ; he measured everything by that grand standard. All through history he saw a Figure after the similitude of *God*. You can dislodge a man from any position but *that*, but once in the munitions of rocks, once really hidden in the very centre of the sanctuary of the Divine presence and providence, a man treats so-called " *great questions* " as a drop of a bucket, he takes up the isles as a very little thing, he sits with God on the circle of the earth and all things pompous and great, and in figure dominating and forceful, he stands back in the shadow of a sublime contempt ! We lose hold of *history* when we lose hold of *God*.

As we find Stephen's *character* in Stephen's apology, so we may find *Paul's* character in Paul's exposition. Mark his *courtesy*—" Paul stood up, and, beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." He was no rough intruder ; no rude annotator had found his way to the synagogue that day, but a gentleman born, and indestructible, all through and through, polite, refined, courteous, gentlemanly. His tact is most wonderful ; he notices how the assembly is made up—he is a poor speaker who takes no note of his *hearers* ; he must, without staring, take in the whole company ; he must take the census, intellectual and moral, and know who is before him. Paul saw not only the Jews, but the Greeks and proselytes, who, wearied with the absurdities of polytheism, had come to believe there was *One* God, a spiritual, invisible, eternal God ! So Paul accosted both classes, " Men of Israel "—always distinguishable, never to be confounded with others—" and ye that fear God "—converted from mythology to true spirituality of thought—" give audience." How delicately he puts the case in the twenty-seventh verse ; speaking of the dwellers at Jerusalem and their rulers, he said, " Because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him." They knew not the voice of the prophets ; they heard the *letter*, they did not know the inner and spiritual meaning. We do not read a book when we peruse its pages as to its mere lines and letters. Sometimes we read a book by reading only one page of it ; we know

we have the *soul* of it in our soul, and all the gamut of its music repeats itself in our sympathetic ear. Sometimes we read a book right through and know nothing about it. Pre-eminently is this so with the Bible. It is possible to read the Bible through from Genesis to Revelation and to know nothing about its secret soul, for it is a book of analogue and parable and suggestion, and not literal meaning, having about it a mystery greater than itself; not a *fact*, but a *truth*; not a *point*, but a *circle*.

How wondrously Paul introduced the right way of *quoting Scripture*. There is hardly a quotation which he makes here which is not a double or treble quotation turned into one. For example, in referring to David, Paul says that God gave testimony and said, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." That passage cannot be found in the Old Testament; it is at least three passages made into one. It is all in the Bible, but is in no *one* place in the Scripture. He does not quote the Bible who quotes mere *texts*. Those texts in their isolation may or may not be in the Bible; the *Bible* is larger than any one *text* that is in it. There is a *spirit* of collocation and a spirit of quotation, a *Bible-spirit* that can bring from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south lines that shall focalize in one intense and dazzling glory. Away, literalists and word-mongers, and text-quoters, unless they have in them the spirit which sees how lines converge and focalize, and how scattered parts sum themselves up into one massive doctrine. Paul's voice surely had a quiver in it which no reporter could catch—for in reports we do not get the *tonic* colour and force of speech—when he said "God gave unto them SAUL, a man of the tribe of BENJAMIN." There he repeated his own name; his name was Saul, and his tribe was Benjamin, and as he himself had changed the Saul into Paul, and gone over to the Christian host, he would call others to a new name and a new fellowship,—the name of Christ and the fellowship of the whole world. Now, at the very beginning Paul is himself—"Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses." That is a *new voice* in the Church; that is a *doctrinal* teacher;

justified, justified by the law : this is a new intellect, no other man has ever fought with these weapons. From this moment Christian speech acquires a new accent ; new words are minted, new values are attached to old expressions. Here we have the logician, the philosopher, the theologian. This man will one day write an epistle "hard to be understood."

XLI.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we are spared by thy mercy, and to thy mercy we now come as to a river that is full of water ; for thy compassions fail not : to thy love there is no end. Thou dost give unto us bread every day, and every day thou dost draw for us water from the well. Thou art round about us as the light that is everywhere—like a healing breath from Heaven, renewing our youth and making our life strong. Thou dost set in the clouds lights of hope, yea, thou dost make the storm supply a rainbow, that we may be reminded of thy goodness and thine oath, and that we may be established in faith that cannot decline. We have seen thee in all the way of our life, and thy touch has been a touch of kindness. Thy presence has been unto us as a daily redemption ; thy breath has been a blessing, and all thy care has been assured by the measure of thine almightiness. Thou art as a shepherd amongst us, as a father, as a nurse, as a hen that gathereth her brood under her wings, yea, by many and strange and beautiful figures hast thou revealed thyself unto us, all showing thee to be full of tenderness and solicitude and love, anxious for our life and for our happiness, as if we were the only creatures in thy great creation.

Thou dost come to us night and day ; thou hast made the sun to give us day and the moon to rule over our night, and thou hast brought us through all the blackness and through all the mystery of night into returning morning, which has rekindled hope, and with new strength hast thou called us to new duties. We love to think of thee ; the thought of God makes us more Divine. We are lifted up when we think of God making all and ruling all, and of his tender mercies being over all his works. Then do we escape the littleness of our self-hood and rise into the largeness and the liberty of thine immeasurable being. Save us from the distress of those who see themselves alone. Help us to see God. Looking upon God, we shall be affrighted indeed, but when thou dost speak unto us from the flaming bush, thou wilt quiet our fear and thou wilt cause us to enjoy a new and tender hope. Enable us to regard all life as under thy rule. Save us from the imagination that we can do anything of our own wit or strength that is good, stable, and worthy. Teach us that in God alone is there strength, in Christ only is there peace, and in the Holy Spirit of God alone is there regeneration and wisdom and holiness. Deliver us from all the terror of unbelief, from all the crime of disbelief. May we rest in the Lord, and wait patiently

for him, and give up unto him our heart's desire, to be accomplished by his omnipotence.

We now put ourselves into thine hands—they are well kept whom thou dost keep. We give up keeping ourselves any more ; we would be cared for, watched, led, guided, and in all things directed and established by the Lord of Hosts. Thou dost stoop far to stoop to us ; we ask thee now in Christ's name and at Christ's cross to renew thy condescension and lift us up, even us, from the deep pit of our folly and crime. We look upon the world, and our heart is sad. How great must be the grief of thy spirit ! We are impatient because of the triumphs of vice—we call them triumphs, not knowing that they are the utterest and completest failures. Yet our piety exclaims, " Lord, how long ? " We would see thee reigning over human hearts ; we would see the heavens gather blackness as of a great storm, yet all the clouds should prove themselves to be laden, not with tempests, but with blessings, so that there may be a great baptism of the earth, even the baptism of the Holy Ghost, refreshing, fertilizing, and blessing the whole human family.

Yet if thou canst wait, why should we be impatient ? Our impatience comes out of our littleness : with less ignorance, we should have less fear. Teach us that thou are doing all things right and well ; that we cannot see the whole circuit of thy movement or understand the entire purpose thou hast in view. We are of yesterday, and know nothing ; we are struggling, praying, triumphing, and failing to-day in one little hurried tumult, and to-morrow we are laid in the grave. Pardon our blasphemy in asking thee to move more quickly in the reclamation of thy prodigals and in the establishment of thy Holy Kingdom. Thou knowest our littleness, the meanness to which we have brought ourselves by long-continued sin ; and it is this which makes itself felt as a stain and a taint even in our prayers. God be merciful unto us, and therein show still more the fulness of his pardoning grace.

We bless thee for this Whittide memory, this Pentecostal recollection, when thou didst come in sounds from heaven, with fire from the upper altar, with baptism from the secret sanctuary. Renew the baptism of fire to-day—teach us that religion is enthusiasm, or it is not religion—show us that if piety be not passion, it is what thou canst not accept. Oh, reveal unto us the true nature of thy kingdom ; show us that it moves men to great ecstasies and solemn raptures, and fills them with ineffable joys, and that if it make them not burn, as did the bush near Horeb, and yet not be consumed, they know not the true nature of thy kingdom and service. We are dull, we are slow, the fire is not in our hearts ; we use great words and dwarf them into small meanings ; we do not rise to the passion of utter, joyous, self-crucifixion ; we say Christ's name, but hell trembles not at our poor utterance. To-day, then, on this Pentecostal festival, this time of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, we ask that we may enter into new moods, into higher feelings, into nobler conceptions of thy truth and thy demands, and from this day we would live more

nobly, constantly, tenderly, usefully, in the house of our blessed Father, God.

Thou wilt surely come and make all things thine own. We know this, and it is our deepest joy. Thou wilt make all things new—the lame shall leap as a hart, the blind shall see, the leper shall no more be found in city or wilderness, graves shall be depopulated, death shall be dismissed, and time shall be no more. Oh, sweet, tender word—promise of music and light and rest. It is the word of the Lord, and it abideth; may it be realized quickly. Oh, that thou wouldst put on the breastplate that never was smitten, and take the sword that never was turned back, and that thou wouldst go forth, thou Prince of Kingdoms, and Lord of Mighties and Dominions, and conquer all things for thyself. Behold, this we say whilst the blood of the Cross falls upon us, the eternal revelation of the eternal love. Amen.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

“Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.”—ACTS xiii. 38.

HOW can it be true that through Jesus Christ is preached the forgiveness of sins, when, as a matter of fact, the forgiveness of sins is an Old Testament doctrine? If nothing had been known about forgiveness until the appearance of Jesus Christ, he would have been justly entitled to identify his name with the doctrine; but seeing that it is historically earlier than his birth, how is it that the act of forgiveness is now inseparably associated with his priesthood?

The solution of the apparent difficulty turns wholly upon the right principle of interpretation, which I can conceive to be that the Old Testament—Jewish or Pagan—written or unwritten—is as full of Christ as the New; that, in fact, the Old Testament is an anonymous book until Christ attaches his signature to it. “Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me.” In my opinion we not only lose nothing, we gain much by tracing the best elements and aspirations of every paganism to a Divine source and treating them as an Old Testament full of types and shadows, yearnings and symbols, which find their meaning and their abrogation in the truth and love of Jesus Christ. Hence the wise missionary (Paul at Athens, for example) has ever found it best fully to acknowledge all that is good in heathenism and to

carry it forward to its highest meaning. The application of this principle to the Old Testament of Judaism puts an end to the historical difficulty respecting the forgiveness of sins, by showing that what was once anonymous has been at length identified as the anticipatory action of Christ—the more clearly so because nowhere in the New Testament is the basis of forgiveness changed ; it is still, as ever, a basis of mediation, sacrifice, priesthood.

But there is another difficulty less easy of solution by the mere intellect, the difficulty that the sinner should be forgiven for the sake of Christ and not for his own sake. It is clearly for Christ's sake that sin is forgiven ; thus : " Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." This difficulty has expressed itself in various sophisms, some of them obviously puerile, some of them disingenuous, but most of them likely to arrest and captivate the popular mind. For example : If sin is a debt, why should Christ have paid it ? If Christ has paid it, why should men be called upon, in suffering and sorrow here, and in perdition hereafter, to pay it over again ? How could Christ's Cross pay debts that were not contracted ; that is to say, pay in advance the debts of men who were not born and who would not be born until many centuries after the transaction ? Puerile and uncandid as these questions, and the group to which they belong, undoubtedly are, perhaps they only imperfectly express the agony of many honest minds in wrestling with this stupendous difficulty of forgiveness for the sake of another. In offering some suggestions upon this difficulty, let us, if possible, lay hold of some principles that will carry with them all outposts and casualties, otherwise we shall be fretted by merely formal variations of one and the same difficulty. Let the question stand thus : Why should a man be divinely forgiven not for his own sake but for Christ's ? And let that inquiry support itself by the further question, If one man can forgive another without the intervention of a third party, why cannot the Almighty do the same thing as between himself and the sinner ?

These questions, simple as they seem, touch nearly every point of the whole argument of this book ; it might be permitted for that reason to refer the inquirer to all that has gone before, but we will summarize for him that he may the more easily come

to a right conclusion. First of all, he must say distinctly where he learned that word "forgive," which he now uses without apparently suspecting his claim to it. He evidently thinks that he coined the word, that he fixed its proper meaning and scope, and that therefore it is his own property. This is, exactly what is utterly denied. We hold as Christian teachers, that *forgiveness* is an idea which never occurred to the uninspired mind; that it is a *revelation*; and that to the man who exercises it may be said, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed that unto thee, but the Father who is in heaven." Even if it could be shown that men who never heard of Christ forgave one another, we should require to know precisely what they *meant* by forgiveness. Was it a compromise? Was it a purchase? Was it a snare? Was it a fear? Possibly if we knew the exact answer, it might be found that the so-called forgiveness was itself an offence against morals, and needed itself to be forgiven. Where, then, did the inquirer learn the word "forgiveness," and now that he has learned it, does he know its vital and complete meaning? That resentment is natural or spontaneous is known to every man; but that forgiveness is natural has never yet been proved: something else has, however, been proved which makes this argument invincible, and that is, that to forgive from the heart has never been done even by the best men without the influence of the most forcible considerations that can move the human will. Resentment comes easily; forgiveness has to be explained, inculcated, and commended by the most pathetic reasons. In a sense, easily-apprehended forgiveness is unnatural, that is to say, it does not spontaneously occur to the mind; and even when it is suggested it is instantly encountered by a resentment which the sufferer vindicates as reasonable and just. You may see, then, that even as between man and man, when forgiveness is really exercised, it may explain itself by the very words "for the *sake* of——;" and the offended man may be entitled to say, "This offence ought to be punished; it is cruel; it is horrible; and justice itself demands vengeance; *but*——," and then may be added reasons which if not immoral must be sublime with the sublimity of the Gospel itself. Was there not a creditor who having two debtors who had nothing to pay frankly forgave them both? There was, but where? *In the conception of Christ*, and yet the fact has been feloniously appropriated as quite

a common human idea ! Thus men do steal the stars, and show them as fires of their own kindling.

Having thus demanded of the inquirer where he learned the word "forgiveness," we must in the next place call upon him for a distinct explanation of its meaning. Is it something done *in* himself, or merely something done *for* another ? Does it arise from moral indifference, a temper so easy as to let moral distinctions pass without criticism ? Is it an act affected by time, as, for example, by decline of mere memory, the resentment being determined by the vividness or incertitude of the recollection ? Does he make forgiveness turn in any sense or degree upon mere *time*, saying, "It is yet too soon to forgive ; I may forgive in a year or two, but not now that the wound is so new" ? If so, it may not be magnanimity that is rising, it may be only recollection that is fading. But with God there is no change of memory ; there is no succession called time ; he lives in a perpetual present ; if he forgives, he forgives when the wound is new ; he receives no alleviation from the lapse of days ; whilst the dagger is yet in the wound he proclaims the conditions and opportunities of pardon. Not only so, when we have forgiven our enemies they have still to be forgiven by God ; this must be so, if we consider that we can do no more than forgive offences or crimes (and even these under limited conditions), we cannot enter the inner region of spiritual transgression. We forgive the blow, but we cannot forgive the motive which dealt it ; as between two men the offence and the release may have been completed, but there remains a farther settlement in which the offended party may have no voice : that settlement may be social ; as, for example, in the case of felony, the man who has been robbed may forgive the thief, but society takes the case from individual judgment, and determines it by an impartial and general law ; and even society can only kill the body, and after that it has no more that it can do ; the offender has still to answer the law of which other laws were but broken and ill-assorted parts. So, in view of these considerations, it would appear that forgiveness is not the easy, simple, superficial act that long familiarity with its name would seem to suggest. It is an agony. It is a cross. It is a shedding of blood !

If the inquirer has been proceeding upon the idea that forgiveness is merely a courteous answer to a personal apology, there

need be no wonder as to his embarrassment on reading an account of what is required to secure the Divine pardon of human sin. But it is his conception or definition that is at fault, and not the New Testament law. It would indeed be only modest on the part of the inquirer to say, that seeing God requires such and such conditions before he can pardon the sinner, it is evident that the whole question of sin is larger than man is able fully to comprehend, having relationships and effects which transcend the circle of human intelligence. But if the inquirer is yet unprepared for this admission, we must bind him to a severe scrutiny of the things which he does suppose himself to know. Unfortunately he already knows the word "forgive," and it is hard for him to believe that it is one of the words which have been revealed—plucked for him from the tree of life—but in the face of this misfortune we must ply him with this question: Why should there be such an act as the forgiveness of offence as between man and man, and of sin as between God and man? Take the former branch of the inquiry first. *Why* should man forgive man? Will you thereby gain the man? But is any man *worth* gaining who can offend, annoy, and injure another? If you say, First punish the man and then forgive him, you must remember that if the punishment is just, he has by the very fact of its endurance so far paid off his obligation; if the punishment was not sufficient to cover the whole ground of the offence, that is your blame, not his, for you yourself, without any interference on his part, fixed the measure of the punishment, and finally, if by the endurance of punishment a man can honourably though painfully discharge his obligations, why should you torment him with a needless charity (a form, indeed, of malignity), for whose exercise you may be tempted to glorify yourself, when the man was able and willing to meet you upon independent terms? If he did so meet you, there would be no act of forgiveness; it would be simply the case of a man paying his debts to the uttermost farthing. But there is another question deeper still, which the inquirer is bound to consider: Is it possible for forgiveness to be a one-sided act? This is an answer to the suggestion that God should forgive the sinner without terms and without mediation. If it turn out that the most magnanimous man cannot by any act of his own complete all that is meant by forgiveness, that fact may change the scope of

the whole argument. He may have the disposition to forgive ; he may declare his willingness to forgive ; he may go so far as actually to say that he has forgiven ; and yet nothing farther than a one-sided act has taken place. There must be a corresponding movement on the other side, or nothing effectual can be done. And this is exactly what God requires. He proclaims himself a God delighting in forgiveness and mercy, but beyond that he cannot go ; but if we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ; the penitent thief he will save ; the impenitent thief damns himself. If a man sins against you and expresses sorrow, you can forgive and restore the offender ; but if he deny his offence, or glory in it, any forgiveness you may exercise can be one-sided only, and may even tend towards self-demoralization and social disorder. Thus God represents himself as jealous, severe, by no means pardoning the guilty, or allowing the sinner to go free ; and this rigour is the security and defence of the universe. Even God, then, cannot forgive without confession on the part of man ; and whether a sinner can confess *without Christ* is a question which the inquirer should deeply consider.

Let us include that question in one still larger : Is forgiveness *possible* ? If by forgiveness we are to understand that a thing once *done* can be *undone*, then we are confronted with something like a miracle, and we are entitled to ask, Is it *possible* ? Let us grant that a thing done may be treated *as if* it had never been done ; that it may be relegated to oblivion and silence by a determination of the will on both sides ; but something more than this is meant by forgiveness, or if it mean this only, we may well say of the Atonement, Why was this waste made ? The Christian idea of forgiveness includes *cleansing*, purification, justification, the utter destruction of the sin or sins to which it is extended ; it means birth, sonship, inheritance. “ How can these things be ? ” We nowhere find the solution of a miracle in the miracle itself ; we look beyond, we look *above* : so we must do in this case ; intellectually, as we understand the term, this thing—viz., the obliteration of moral history—is *impossible* ; but in many things we have to take our idea of possibility not from ourselves but from God, saying, “ With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. ” So we return to the point from which there

is no escape, the doctrine that all vital truth is *revealed* to the mind of man, and consequently that we walk by faith and not by sight.

Now as to the difficulty supposed to inhere in the words "for Christ's sake." If man can forgive man, why cannot God forgive the sinner, without the intervention of a third person? But it has already been pointed out that man *cannot* forgive man in the sense implied in the objection, and therefore the inquiry based upon it loses its application and point. Man can forgive offences, he cannot forgive the sin which they represent; herein the old inquiry is for ever pertinent, Who can forgive sins but God only? But it is not enough to destroy the validity of the objection; we must, if possible, get at the positive truth, and I believe you will find it in the direction of the suggestion, perhaps in the suggestion itself, that there is no forgiveness between man and man except *in Christ* or for *Christ's sake*; overlooking there may be, and palliation, and acceptance of apologies, but it can only be in Christ that deep, true, cordial, everlasting forgiveness can transpire between man and man. It is far from certain, however, that the name of Christ may be present in the consciousness of the man who exercises this forgiveness; he may not be able to give a name or a definition to the motive by which he is impelled; and yet not the less certainly may he be acting in the Christly spirit. We do not always know what we do or why we do it, but Christ himself will surprise us with unexpected and gracious interpretations when he "comes in his glory." The righteous will be told to their amazement that they have ministered to Christ in ministering to the least of his brethren; and to them also will be revealed the fact that in making their most strenuous advances in the direction of cordial and absolute forgiveness, they were moving in his strength, and more or less unconsciously accepting and honouring his inspiration. So true is it that our consciousness has actually to be interpreted to itself, and that Christ will reveal his presence and power in the least suspected circumstances. Now in so far as the doctrine is true that the exercise of forgiveness, whether between man and man, or God and the sinner, is really and necessarily, however imperfectly recognized in the former case, something done for the sake of Christ, it would seem to follow that the basis

of true forgiveness is not a matter for metaphysical investigation and debate, but is *revealed* to us, and therefore is ours not as a mere spoil won by force of intellect, but a holy and gracious truth which we hold in childlike and grateful faith. This is the only satisfactory answer we can return to the difficulty supposed to be found in the necessary presence of Christ in the act of forgiveness as between God and the sinner ; an answer which may be thus summed up : (1) Forgiveness is not the easy and simple act which it is supposed to be ; (2) analogies founded upon human forgiveness are incomplete, because they relate only to offences and not to spiritual corruption ; (3) forgiveness itself is not the spontaneous outgrowth of human feeling, it comes from Divine inspiration ; (4) human forgiveness, in the sense in which it approaches Divine pardon, is really, though perhaps unconsciously, done in Christ's name or for Christ's sake ; and (5) forgiveness is not a question within the province of intellectual speculation ; it is revealed to us as a possibility ; the questions upon which its possibility is founded are also revealed to us ; and those conditions are, primarily, the priesthood of Christ, and secondarily, the penitent and utterly unreserved confession of sin by the transgressor.

XLII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou knowest what is best for us, and we want nothing that thou thyself wilt not supply. We come to thee for everything. No good thing wilt thou withhold from them that walk uprightly. By thy Holy Spirit alone can we who have found out many inventions return to the uprightness of our creation. But thy Spirit is freely and largely promised ; he is not given to us in small measure, but in double portions ; yea, thou hast said thou wilt open the windows of heaven, and pour out a blessing, until there shall not be room to contain it. Where sin abounds, grace shall much more abound. The blackness of our guilt shall be driven away by the light of the grace of Christ. There is no guilt which thy grace cannot conquer ; there is no darkness which thou canst not dissolve and dispel, and in its place set the infinite glory of thy presence. This is our joy in Christ ; we are no more afraid ; even we who have lived long in bondage are now in Christ Jesu, the risen One, singing songs of liberty. The bitterness of death is past. The victory has been plucked from the grave, so that there is no more boasting in its cold, dumb mouth. We are now on the immortal side where there is no winter, no pain, no death ; we walk in green pastures, and by still waters, and at noon we lie down in the shadow, comforted by the Shepherd's care. We are, in our highest and purest moods, even now in heaven. This is heaven to love thee as thou art revealed in thy Son ; no higher heaven is possible to our imagination. We are at rest in Christ ; we are at peace with God ; we inherit the whole estate of the promises, and there is nothing held back from us that can make our souls strong. We do indeed in our sinfulness fall back from these heights ; the animal triumphs over the angel for a moment ; the man is sunk in the beast, than which there is no deeper fall ; but thou dost recover us with daily redemption, and at night, enfolded within the arms of thine almightiness, we feel and know that the darkness cannot put out the stars, that the cloud is not near the sun, and that thy love towards us abideth for ever.

Help us to read thy Word wisely ; not for our gratification only, but for our instruction, and even for our reproof. May we come to thy Word with unbiassed mind ; may our one question be, What saith the testimony ? Enlightened by thy Holy Spirit, softened and ennobled in every thought and affection by thy grace, may we hear the Word, and know it and answer it in an obedient life. May nothing stand between our conviction and our obedience. Though it be a cross, may we carry it boldly

and hopefully in strength Divine ; yea, though we have to pass through hell itself in all its agony and shame, may we not fear the fire because of the One who is with us like unto the Son of man ! Enable us also to read the larger book of thy providence, the leaves of which thou dost turn every day in our very sight and hearing. If we read the daily event, the continual occurrence, may we have understanding oftentimes, and know what the Christian Church ought to do. Lift up the level of our thinking ; inspire and attune all our feeling ; destroy the altar of self-idolatry, and bring us without vanity, or self-trust, or false hope, to renew by the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost our noblest vows at the altar of the Cross. Feed us with bread sent down from heaven ; find water for us in the wilderness, and honey in the barest rocks ; in our dreams may we see ladders connecting the worlds, and making the universe one temple of God.

Heal our sicknesses, and through them may we pass to youth and life and immortality. Let the life-day—now declining, now rising, now in old age, now in childhood—be a day full of the presence of the Lord's light ; then, whether it be morning, or midday, or eventide, the heart shall know that in Christ its strength is assured, and its peace can never be destroyed. Amen.

Acts xiii. 42-52.

42. And as they went out [the participle implies that they stopped as they went out], they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next Sabbath.

43. Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas : who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

44. And the next Sabbath [probably in the interval Paul and Barnabas worked at their trade as tent-makers] almost the whole city was gathered together [thronging the portals and windows, or gathered in some open piazza] to hear the word of God.

45. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.

46. And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy [probably a touch of irony in the tone] of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, That thou shouldst be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth [the germ of the argument, afterwards more fully developed in Rom. ix. 25 ; x. 12].

48. And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God : and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49. And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region [the border district of the provinces of Cappadocia and Galatia].

50. But the Jews urged on the devout women of honourable estate, and the chief men of the city [they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte], and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and cast them out of their borders.

51. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Iconium.

52. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.

GROWTH OF APOSTOLIC POWER.

THERE are always *unexpected* hearers arising to give encouragement to the doubting and often disheartened preacher. He thinks he foreknows who will be delighted with his testimony and thankful for his service ; but in most of his forecasts he is wrong, yet is he not left without encouragement : *strangers* are there who spring up, and say, " This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." The Gentiles hailed the Word as strangers might hail tidings of home. We know some things not by direct intellectual instruction, but by subtle and inexpressible *sympathy*. We *feel* that certain words are true. Were we invited to hold controversy about them on general grounds, we might decline the discussion, saying, " Whatever may be stated on the other side, there is something in this doctrine that touches my *necessity*, and offers a balm to my wound and pain." We may not know music *technically*, but surely the dullest man knows it *sympathetically*, and feels when the right tune is being sung. He has no explanation in *words* ; he cannot conduct a *controversy* upon the matter, but his soul says, " This wind cometh from heaven ; this sound is an inspired utterance ; these are the tones that will find their way back again to the heaven whence they came." So we sometimes sing, not with the voice—we sing with the understanding, with sympathy of the heart, with appreciation, with answering *love*. Some persons imagine they are not singing unless they are uttering tones with their own voice, whereas sometimes the best singing is that which is done silently in the heart, the heart giving out in great *Amens* as the thunder rolls, or the tender whisper expresses the inmost desire and rapture of the hidden life. The Gentiles heard a strange speech that day, yet

they *knew* it. Sometimes we say, "Where did I see that man *before* ? You tell me I have never seen him, but I feel that I have seen him somewhere." No, you never did in the flesh ; but you know him ; he is a revelation to you—his presence, his voice, the touch of his hand ; all things conspire to confirm the impression that you must surely have seen that man somewhere *before*. So when we hear great gospels, sweet promises, and tender invitations, we say, "When did these things come under our attention *before* ?" From before the foundations of the world ! This is the meaning of the compass and the pomp of God's eternity ! The tiny little dewdrop moments shall throw back the sun that fills infinity. Surely we have an identifying faculty ; most truly there is something within us which says, "This is none other than the house of God ; surely this is music fit for angels. Where did we hear this *before* ? All this is like a *dream*." So it is ; because the universe is the expression of an eternal thought. The Lamb was slain before the universe was built ; the Atonement was completed before black Sin struck God in the face. It is *we* who are late ; *we* are behind the ages ; eternity has breathed its infinite speech across our little time-planet, and we think in our delirious imagining that we were first, and that all things came after us ! Know of a very truth, time is younger than eternity ; that time is, so to say, part of eternity, and that the Gospel, wherever it comes, comes to a measure of preparation—not of a technical kind, but somehow in the most barbaric and savage breast there rises up an answering voice, saying, "This is what I have been waiting for ; this is the piece, one of ten, that I had lost." Herein is the whole mystery of preordination, election, predestination—namely, the heart throwing itself back upon the Eternities, and finding that things are not broken up into little fragments, but that "one increasing purpose runs through all the process of the suns" ; the purpose of God, the thought of heaven, the election of omniscient love.

But preachers have to *find out* their hearers. Paul and Barnabas were no doubt amazed that "the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." The invitation would have come naturally from the Jews. It would be a pleasant thing if our neighbors, friends, comrades, would invite us to this or that renewal of service, but they go

away and leave us. But we are not alone ; for God, who is able to raise up out of the stones children unto Abraham, raises up strange hearers, unknown hearts, and from them comes the cry which we cannot refuse to answer. Every preacher has his own set of hearers, and they who hear him can hear nobody else with the same breadth of advantage, and with the same conscious masonry of love and sympathy. " My sheep know my voice " is a doctrine which has its human applications as well as its Divine meanings. There are some men without whom, speaking in human ignorance, we could not live happily ; there are some voices which if we do not hear we are conscious of a great vacancy ; yet the same words may be pronounced, but not with the same tone. It is the *heart* that accentuates the speech, and carries the eloquence, however broken and swift, straight home.

We think we have expressed the very last formula of science when we say the same causes produce the same effects. There is something of the conciseness of Euclid himself in that neat sentence ; it reads like one of the old geometrician's axioms ; yet it is not true. If I may so put it, the so-called axiom is a *fact*, but not a *truth*. The truth is larger than any fact. In mathematics, or in physical science, the same causes may produce the same effects, but in all *moral* questions the axiom is not only doubtful, out untrue. The Jews and the Gentiles represented this solemn doctrine in the various ways in which they received the Divine communication. The Jews were " filled with envy," the Jews contradicted and blasphemed ; the Gentiles were " filled with joy." How do you account for that ? It was the same Sabbath, the same climate, the same preacher, the same doctrine, the same congregation, but the Jews were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming ; but the Gentiles were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord. There the same cause did not produce the same effect. You are not dealing with cause and effect only in a case of this kind ; you are dealing with the middle quantity, human nature. Like goes to like. " Like priest like people " ; the preacher incarnates himself in his audience in the degree in which that audience is sympathetic and appreciative ; the pulpit and the pew in such circumstances are occupied by the

same man. Find a congregation knit together in the bonds of sympathy in reference to the Paul, or the Barnabas, or the preacher of their choice, and you find a marked intellectual and moral likeness between the preacher and the people. Like to like ; hatred may be as sincere as love. The same preacher cannot minister to *all* people. A man may dislike this ministry or that ministry solely because he may not understand it or be in sympathy with it, but to another man it is the very breath of heaven. So, then, let us have the larger outlook, the nobler charity, that says God's chariots are twenty thousand in number, and you cannot tell in which one of them the king will ride forth ;—it is the King ; never mind the particular chariot in which he goes abroad. The Gentiles understood Paul and Barnabas : the Gentiles said, " This is a true word ; oh, that there were seven Sabbaths in the week, and that we could stay and hear this wondrous sound, this music of the heavens." Thanks be unto God, every true Paul, every true Barnabas, has at least some few Gentiles who understand and love him.

The forty-third verse reads, " Now when the congregation was broken up." Was it then all over ? Congregations should *never* break up in the sense of terminating the spiritual ministry which they were organized to foster and sustain. There were after-meetings. Beza says that herein is a justification for mid-week meetings and lectures. " Now when the congregation was broken up the people dispersed, and referred no more to the matter." Does the text read so ? It would read so if it had been written *to-day*. I never hear any one make a moment's reference to the solemn engagements of the sanctuary after they are over. Who would not be positively astounded to hear one of his fellow-hearers refer to the service ? It is nothing, it is a decency observed, a ceremony passed through, a fact accomplished. In the olden time Christian service used to be the be-all and the end-all of the life of those who engaged in it. They were never late, they were never reluctant ; what was said was meant to be done in the obedience of a noble life. This was the ancient Christianity. We have gone down in these latter ages. Were Paul amongst us now, he would be the first man who would be turned out of the Church, unless indeed *Christ* himself were to

come, and he would not be allowed to live one day. We use a name without knowing any tittle of its meaning! Here is life in the olden time. There is a savour of antiquity about it; it is like something very old—"And the next Sabbath came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against these things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." That was life! A man could preach *then*! Sermons were thunderbolts! Religious services were religious battles; they were not opportunities for sanctified slumber; they were calls, as with the blast of a thousand trumpets, to the standard and to the sword of the Lord. Nothing now is so easily forgotten as a sermon—simply because nobody ever listens to one; they endure it, they sit it out, but as to *listening* to it, in the sense of opening the heart and letting every word go right in as a guest from heaven, who listens? We could not be so *dumb* if we did it. This is the old familiar scene which has passed before us so often in the Scriptures. The preacher preaching, the hearer contradicting, the Apostle declaring the counsel of God, the angry Jew blaspheming. What a medley it made! What a tumult! What vexation of mind and distraction of thought! *That* was living! We have fallen on cold times. Christianity has had its heroic time even in Western lands, but the heroic days are dead.

In the forty-sixth verse the ministers spring to their feet. They have felt, as it were, the sting of fire. In this verse they become, so to say, new men. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold." There is *history* in these words; it was a critical moment; it was one of two things—the Jews by their blasphemy prevailing, or the Apostles of Christ starting up and saying, "The day shall be ours." Some men are so easily put down; if they think there is going to be an extra crowd, they remain at home and sigh; if they see a man a little rougher than another coming to church, they go out by the back door lest something should happen. Paul and Barnabas were not made of such material; history is not made of such stuff! Herein do I approve of the badges which some men wear, proclaiming thereby that they belong to this or that party, and are not ashamed of their colours; there are others whose boldness is in their spoken testimony. Somewhere, in

symbol or in speech, you must find the *heroic* element in every true man. I know nothing of that marvellous love of Christ that never mentions his name, that never touches his memorial bread or memorial wine ; that ineffable love of Christ that never gives him a cup of cold water. Be ours the Christianity that is bold, open, candid, and, if need be, heroic and self-sacrificing. Let the world know that we are followers of the Cross. When I read that *Paul* "waxed bold," I am not surprised ; but when I read that *Barnabas* waxed bold, I wonder if he would have done so if Paul had not been there. We cannot decide that interesting question, but Barnabas ought to take care that Paul is *always* there ! Paul will lead, Barnabas will follow. Barnabas ! take care that your strong brother is always nigh at hand when you go out to do Christian work, for in his strength you may be strong.

"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." How many poor souls have stumbled there, as if a door had been shut in their faces, whereas there is no door but an open one to the heart of God ! Never found what you call good theology upon bad *grammar*. Always, first and foremost, be right in your *grammar*, and then build your theology, because if you build a theological system upon a sandy foundation, the rains will fall, and the floods come, and beat upon it, and your theological house will fall down because it is founded upon the sand of bad grammar. Happily these words, which have frightened so many, need not frighten any more, for the most learned men tell us that they might be read "and so many as set themselves in order" were saved ; as many as took up this matter ; as many as accepted the Word ; as many as disposed themselves in soldierly order and array went on to victory and honour. There can be no more terrible blasphemy than for any man to think that God has a spite against him, and will not let him be saved. Beware what you say ! It is a fearful thing to stand up and say—magnifying yourselves so as to be of importance to the universe—"God has a feeling against us which prevents us accepting the Gospel of Salvation." From end to end, from top to bottom, in every point of it, that is a lie ! God would have ALL men to come unto him and be saved. Jesus Christ came "to seek and to save that which was lost." If you are "lost," he came for you ; if you

are *not* lost, he did not come for you ; for “ the Son of man is not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Notice one extraordinary expression. In the forty-sixth verse “ the Jews were filled with envy” ; in the fifty-second verse we read “ the disciples were filled with joy.” It is always so with the Gospel ; it is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death ; it makes a man a worse man, or a better man. The Gospel will not let a man remain just as he is ; coming to a man, pleading with the man, asking for his confidence and love, and the man saying NO—from that moment the man is a worse man than he ever was before. Or the man saying “ YES ; come in, thou blessed of the Lord, and take every inch of my heart” —then the man is what the Lord would have him be—noble, pure, upright, a creature in the image and likeness of the Creator. But “ my Spirit shall not always strive with man.” The Apostles said “ It was necessary that the Word of God should first be spoken to you” ; but after that comes the withdrawal of the opportunity, the taking away of the light, the shutting of the hospitable door. This may be our last chance ! We cannot tell what a day may bring forth. “ He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” As a matter of fact—solemn, interesting, and thrilling—the great Gospel of Christ is now amongst us in this synagogue or congregation ; it is offering itself to every heart, and it is for us to say whether this Sabbath shall be the most memorable in our history by our acceptance of the Divine Guest, or whether it shall be the most memorable in our history in that we said, “ We will not have this man to reign over us.” But know that whether we accept or reject, God’s house shall be full. He is able of these stones to raise up children unto Israel ! Out of the dust of the earth he will make himself an exceeding great army. What say you ? Unto us the opportunity is now given. Christ will not be disappointed ; in the long run he shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied, and at his great banquet board there shall not be one vacant seat. “ Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.” “ Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” “ The Spirit and the bride say, Come ; let him that heareth say, Come. Whosoever will, let him come.” Shall so fair a chance be answered with a mean reply ?

XLIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, do thou come to us as the light ; make morning in our hearts ; let the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and flood our souls with the dawn of heaven. Thou knowest how our eyes are filled with darkness, and how our feet stumble like those who walk in the night ; but if thou wilt come to us, the gloom shall flee away, the whole sky shall burn with glory, and our life shall be a joyous advance amid the increasing splendours of day. Thy Son our Saviour is the Light of the world. In him is light, and there is no darkness at all. May he be amidst his saved ones, walking in their midst as their light, their salvation, and their defence. Recall by his presence all his ministry ; then shall we hasten to Bethlehem to see the Child Jesus, and to the temple, and to all the way of the cities and the villages which he visited, and we shall find Golgotha, Calvary, the Cross, and see the blood and know its meaning, and watch by the grave until death is swallowed up in victory. Thus in the presence of his life on earth shall we see the meaning of his ministry in heaven, and great and elevating comfort shall lift up our souls to a new level of existence, and sacred joys shall drive away all earthly sorrows, until our hearts shall be as temples of God. If we breathe great prayers in thy hearing, it is because thou hast first breathed them into our hearts. Lord, thou dost teach us how to pray ; thou dost not inspire the prayer and then deny it ; thine answer is as large as thine inspiration. So are we comforted by replies from the throne of grace. We will not be downcast into despair by reason of our sin ; we will rather be driven by it to penitence, to broken-heartedness, and to the contrition which brings sweet hope and tender grace ; thus our sin shall open wider the door of thy love ; where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound, and out of a bitter root shall there arise a tree the fruit of which shall be good. Thou art our Lord and God, the source of our being and the source of our regeneration ; and because of this faith, we are strong to-day, looking upon all the incidents of time with a calm and patient contemplation, knowing that thou art sitting on the circle of the earth, that all things are in thy right hand, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without thee ; and comforted and strengthened by this deep and sacred trust, we wait and watch and sing in the night time, and above the morning glory we see a still brighter light. We come always to thee as thou wilt, and as our sin necessitates. By no golden stair of our own making do we climb—we come by the way of the Cross ;

we have not found any other way into the court of thy righteousness, or into the presence of thy mercy ; in our right hand is blood, in our left hand is blood, upon our head is blood—the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son, which cleanseth from all sin, answering every charge of the law, repelling every suggestion of despair, and drawing us into deeper and tenderer trust in the living God, the Saviour of all mankind. If all our days are few and evil, thou canst make them many and good. The disappointments of time thou canst sanctify, the losses of earth thou canst make up to us until we forget their distress—yea, the grave itself is the field on which thy greatest miracles can be seen. Thou who dost bring creation out of the void, thou who dost find order and beauty in the midst of tumult and shapelessness, wilt also bid death, cold and dumb, arise and stand up and forget itself in the glow of immortality. This is thy sweet Gospel, thou who once wast crowned with thorns and pierced with spears, Man of the Cross, Creator of the world ; and we receive it and answer it, and will live in its spirit, and die in its light, by the mighty energy and tender and continual comfort of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Acts xiv. 1-7.

1. And it came to pass in Iconium [fifty miles from Antioch] that they entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that [cf. "so that" in John iii. 16] a great multitude both of Jews and of Greeks [*i.e.*, uncircumcised proselytes of the gate, xiii. 43] believed.

2. But the Jews that were disobedient [to this word] stirred up the souls of the [heathen] Gentiles, and made them evil affected against the brethren [literally : "stirred up and exasperated the souls," etc., Psalm cvi. 32. Jews excited all the persecutions of the Acts except two].

3. Long time therefore [because of the faith of some, and of the disobedience of others to the Gospel] they tarried *there* speaking boldly in the Lord, which bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

4. But [the second, *unfavourable*, consequence of the faith and disobedience] the multitude of the city was divided : and part held with the Jews, and part with the Apostles.

5. And when there was made an onset [a "movement," not an actual onslaught] both of the Gentiles [v. 2] and of the Jews with their rulers [the conspiracy was Jewish in its organization, cf. Phil. i. 1] to entreat them shamefully, and to stone them,

6. They became aware of it, and fled unto the [minor] cities of Lycaonia [Pliny states that Iconium was still the capital of the "Lycaonian tetrarchy." The Gauls or Galatians who had dispossessed the former *Phrygian* owners of Central Asia Minor, in the third century before Christ, had divided themselves into 12 tetrarchies. Amyntas "fed his 300 flocks" in Lycaonia, before becoming king of all Galatia. After his death Galatia was organized as a Roman province. This Lycaonian

“region of Galatia” was revisited by Paul (as related in xvi. 6, and xviii. 23). To *these* Galatians Paul wrote his epistle], Lystra and Derbe, and the region [of Galatia] round about.

7. And there they preached the Gospel.

PERSECUTION TURNED INTO INSPIRATION.

THE Apostles had finished their work in the Antioch of Pisidia in a great storm. Can that be true, a sweet word of God, which so violently impassions men and divides quiet cities into hostile camps? It would seem as if the heavenly word would surely bring heavenly peace along with it, and seal its divinity by composing into enduring rest all controversy and discord. That is our narrow and sophistical reasoning. The Son of man came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. Do not think that I have come to send peace on the earth; I have come to send fire. That is the idea which we have lost. Now that the Apostles have come to Iconium, they will act in a different manner. We correct ourselves by our mistakes, and thus we make to-day nobler than yesterday; but we find that such was not the case. There, in little beautiful Iconium, we have angry division, spiteful usage, and stoning! How is this? There must be an explanation beneath it all, otherwise we had better let Christianity alone. These histories throw some light upon what is called *unanimity*. We find that unanimity is now regarded as a virtue by some people. There is no more virtue in unanimity than there is in sincerity. If we have been thinking that sincerity is a virtue, we have been thinking on wrong lines. Unanimity is no virtue, sincerity is no virtue, earnestness is no virtue; we must ascertain what the unanimity is *about*, and what men are sincere in doing, and earnest in carrying out, because good fire may be used for the forging of bad instruments. Surely it was a pity for two wandering tent-makers to go from town to town, disturbing the unanimity of families and of townships! Why not let families and corporations alone? They are living peaceably, quietly, without controversy, without the spirit of hostility. Why not say, “Sleep on; yea in deeper slumber still take your rest”? Why this propagation of a fighting faith? Why this inauguration of controversy which brings with it stoning, imprisonment, fire and

blood? This is the way of Christianity. It will not let people alone. Hence we find these histories throwing some light upon *Christian doctrine*, as well as upon unanimity. It was not a little puzzle to please the fancy, nor a pyrotechnic display around which the children gathered, and which they hailed with child-like pleasure and gratification. It was something very different. Christianity is not a *suggestion*; there is no "If you please" in the lips of Christianity; it saves, or slays. It builds high heaven, sunlighted and eternal, or it digs deep hell, and plunges into it all wickedness and unrighteousness, all rebellion and perverse disbelief. We are always open to suggestions if men will timidly whisper them and mealyly refer to them circuitously, and in language which will admit of any number of modified interpretations; we are not the men to disdain them; but Christianity comes in and puts its foot down soundingly on the Church floor, and lifts itself up, and says, "What is this?" and then unfolds, in royal tone and noble speech, its *revelation*; and though smitten in the face, it lifts up a countenance, marred and broken, of indestructible beauty, and repeats the revelation which has thus been brutally received. What wonder if it came upon sleepy towns like the rushing of a thunderstorm, unparalleled, at midnight? Christianity is not a *compromise*; it does not come saying, "I can complete the line which you have drawn"; it does not propose to give a little and take a little, and make a quiet pacific arrangement with anybody; it comes with instruments that mean digging up and pulling down, and blowing all to pieces the proudest and strongest fortresses of man's trust. We are always open to a compromise; we are willing to meet difficulties, and to adjust them by apparently fair and equitable concessions, but Christianity concedes nothing, admits nothing; Christianity insists upon having everything; it receives no suggestions, makes room for nothing else; it fills the whole space of the mind and heart. What wonder, then, that everywhere it broke up families, and set the father against the son, the mother against the daughter, and friend against friend? Seeing your hand locked in evil friendship, it does not hesitate to rend your hearts asunder; when all your papers are kept together in the same archives, and your secrets are whispered to one another in tender confidence, Christianity does not hesitate to set

fire to the archives and the papers, and to blow the secrets away by a furious wind which cannot be stilled. Christianity says, "Behold, I make all things new." It will not say to a man, "Hand me your work, and I will complete it; I will give the last touch of beauty to what you yourselves have been labouring upon successfully";—it comes with a mighty iron hammer, which it wields with an arm of omnipotence, and it shatters our brazen idols and all our best performances, smiting them in vital parts, and denouncing them with fierce righteousness. Then it must be a long time since we have seen anything of Christianity! So it is; we know nothing about it in these social aspects now—it is a name we sometimes conjure by. It is not the power of God—it is a theology, it is a controversy in words, it is a map of orthodoxy; if you will buy it, accept it, fold it up, and put it away—that is all that is often asked of you!

These histories throw some light upon *Christian service*. The ministry used to mean something—it means nothing heroic now. It is a profession. It is one of the *learned* professions! The ministry a profession! It was not much of a profession in the days of Paul and Barnabas, and their missionary visits and propagations of the faith. Christian service is the supreme passion: it puts out everything else, it has no partnerships, it has no relations except those which it can press into its own purpose and sacrifice. We must love the Sabbath more than the day that went before, or the day that comes after, if we are truly in the Lord's work, and bound to the altar hand and foot, head and heart. To us, then, there is only one day in the week, a seven-day-long Sunday,—Christ's day, the Cross day, preaching day! It is not so sufficiently now. We mark off Sunday; we lock up the church; we attend to its business after all other business is done; we give our weariness where we ought to give our enthusiasm, and put out a stiff hand, cold and bloodless, where we ought to send forth a whole heart burning with the very heat of God's own love. Christian service exposes to daily danger. If we have escaped the *danger*, it is because we have escaped the *service*. When did we ever rebuke a wrong-doer? We have talked about him when he was not there—that I admit; and that has proved our *un-Christianity*: about the latter there can be no doubt. When did we ever say to a man face to face—"You *lie*"?

That would now be called discourtesy ; but when were we ever licensed to be courteous to falsehood? Produce the charter which entitles you to treat a liar as a gentleman. Christianity is not a book of etiquette—it is a book of commandments, statutes, precepts, a gospel of righteousness as well as a gospel of compassion. When did we ever stand before a house, and say, “ This house must come down if the price be fivefold what it will fetch in the market ; it must come down, it is a trapdoor into hell, and it must fall ”? Let a man say that, and he will soon see that England is like Antioch and Iconium, and all the other scenes of apostolic labour and sacrifice. But if we come into the church, pass through the services, hasten away home again, and lose ourselves in controversy that has no heavenly accent and no heavenly savour, I wonder not that we pass our days and nights very composedly, and that we are going to heaven, as we imagine, lulled by some theological narcotic. It is no heaven we are going to ! It may have written heaven above its portals, but that inscription is a lie ! You cannot speak the truth and be quiet ; you cannot be true and have no trouble. “ If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he shall suffer persecution ”; the persecution itself may change in form and method and tone, but righteousness can never confront unrighteousness without a battle.

Christian service divides public opinion. “ A great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed, but the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.” “ The multitude of the city was divided : and part held with the Jews, and part with the Apostles.” That is how it ought to be always. It is pitiful to hear sundry self-indulgent persons talking against what they term religious sensationalism. They do not know what they speak about ; Christianity is nothing if it is not the supreme sensation. It is not one of many. It takes its numerical order, as first, midst, last ; and so is passed by if it be not fire, sword, uproar, tumult of a vital kind. There are those who say they do not believe in sensationalism. What do they believe in? Have they read the New Testament? Are they in sympathy with the ministry of their own professed Lord and Master? They cannot be ! If Christianity were amongst the churches to-day, men, instead of criticising sermons which they hear, would go out and preach

sermons themselves, would borrow any chair, or stand on any stone at the street corner, and if they could not preach the Gospel, they could at least *read* it. Fifty thousand men at the street corners to-day reading, with one voice, the third chapter of John!—why, Apostolic times would have come back again! That chapter needs no comment; it says, “Read me, and let me do my own work.” Do not be frightened by the long word “sensationalism”; people who use it do not know its meaning, and they only seek to terrify you out of your newborn earnestness in the Christian cause. Nothing divides society like Christianity: its voice is, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate: the good to the right; the bad to the left.” It is a tremendous righteousness; it does not sit in silken slippers, and in downy chairs, indulging itself with philosophical musings about nothing; it goes to roots and cores, to hearts and inmost lives, and there its law pierces like a sting, there its righteousness burns like an oven, there its Gospel sings like an angel.

Christian service survives all ill-treatment. The time had come when the Jews, with their rulers, began to use the Apostles despitefully; that is, with wanton malice and cruelty, and to stone them. And as soon as the Apostles became aware of this determination, they “fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lieth round about”; and then in one line in the seventh verse we read as if nothing had happened before, “and there they preached the Gospel.” They preached better for their persecution. We should have wonderful preaching if we had more burning and stoning; marvellous preaching, great bursts of vital eloquence, cries that would pierce, and welcomes that would warm the heart. We should, too, have wonderful hearing as well as wonderful preaching! If we had to steal into the church by some backway, and had to listen in fear and trembling lest the oppressor should lay his iron grip upon us,—oh, how we should listen! How every word would become a jewel set in heavenly gold; how every promise would be a door straight opening upon the glory unseen; how the Bible would be like a sheet let down from heaven, fastened at the four corners, and containing all sweet messages from the skies! The loss of persecution is the loss of spiritual energy. So-called “peace” may be but mere indifference or cowardice. Do not say that Antioch was at *peace*

until the Apostles visited it ; peace is a composite term ; it is not a simple sound. Peace means intelligence, purity, righteousness, trust in all good ; then it cannot be broken. There is a so-called peace that is only a false name for death. How then can we enter into tumult and difficulty now the times of persecution have gone ? No ; as we have advanced from darkness, go from light to light. You will, pursuing that course, soon find out persecution !

We must in our Christian system make room for so-called *heretics*. The heretics may be Paul and Barnabas with modern names. If men come amongst us denying the Bible, flatly contradicting what we believe to be revelation, then have no part or lot with them ; but if men come amongst us, saying, “ This is the right interpretation—hear it,” then let us listen. If men of spotless character and sacred devotedness of spirit should arise in the Church, and say, “ Men and brethren, we have found the interpretation of this Scripture, or of that,” hear them, though many an old notion may be displaced, and many an old interpretation may have to give way before truer grammar and deeper exposition. We use heretics of that kind most basely ! Who can tell where truth begins and where truth ends, or how much is involved in the word orthodoxy, or the word heterodoxy ?—two words the history of which is a history of mischief. There be men in Christian cities to-day who have no dinner because they are supposed to be heretics. They may be the angels of God ; they may be the Paul and Barnabas of their day ; they love the Bible—they come to it as men come to fountains for water, to the sun for light ; they think the Spirit has revealed to them some new interpretation, or entrusted them with some new light, but when they speak they are counted as evil persons, and when they write their writings are left unread. Let us make room for every man who, reverently accepting God’s Word, thinks a new interpretation has been entrusted to him. What was the fault of Paul ? This : that he said a prophecy had been fulfilled—nothing more. Whilst men were looking for the fulfilment and realization of ancient prophecy, he said, “ Men and brethren, the Word you expect to be fulfilled is fulfilled ” : that is all he said. The Jew said, “ The prophecy is there—we are expecting its fulfilment,

we are praying for its fulfilment"; and when the Apostles arose, and said, "The prophecy is fulfilled—it is a living fact," they were stoned, they were driven from house and home, they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy! And Christianity has its prophecies, Christian doctrine has yet its issues brighter than our fancy has measured; and if any man, coming with Moses and the Prophets, and the Psalms and Christ, and the Apostles, shall say, "Men and brethren, let us sit down together, and read the Holy Word, and hear what I believe to be its true meaning," let us not take up stones to stone him, but listen, knowing, in the words of the Pilgrim Father, "that God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Holy Word."

XLIV.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou wilt not mock our hunger. Surely it is not in all the purpose of thy love to cause our hearts disappointment and grief in thine own house. Thou wilt not appoint the time, and the feast, and the place, and not be there thyself. Thou art thyself the feast : without thee we can hold no banquet ; thou art the living One in whom our little lives are hidden. Thou art here, and thou art here to bless. This is thine own house, this is thine own day, this thine own Book, and we are thine own creatures, for thou didst make us, and not we ourselves. We have come up to offer common worship, that what is wanting in one way may be made up by another ; and so by the blending of our voices, and the intermingling of our praise and of our prayer, there may arise from this altar sacrifice acceptable unto God. We know what thou dost require of us—to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thyself, but who can stretch himself around this infinite commandment ? Not our energy only, but our love, fails in this tremendous task. But with the commandment thou hast also given strength and hope and grace that is infinite. Through Jesus Christ thy Son our Saviour—he is Lord of all—we can keep all thy commandments in the entirety of their breadth and claim ; we can do all things through Christ strengthening us : he is our strength, he is our peace, he is our all in all. “ Other refuge have we none.” We are all before thee with broken life and threatened purpose, and grievous affliction because of sin. See thy providence in our history ; read thyself in the story of our short life. Thou hast taken away the child where there was only one ; thou hast made the survivor old by one stroke of thine hand ; thou hast made the young man into an old traveller by one night of heart grief. Thou hast made our hearts very sore because of thy chastisement falling quickly and justly upon our sin. We can do nothing and say that of a certainty it will abide ; we draw straight lines, and thou dost tie them into knots ; we plant roots that are to bear fruits of pleasure, and, behold, they bear fruits of death ; we say, We will do this, and complete in a triumph ; we go out to accomplish it, and return no more. All things are verily in thine hands ; we would deny it if we could, but thou dost silence us by the pressure of facts which cannot be gainsaid. Thou dost keep us from madness by drawing lines around our ambition ; thou wilt not let us build above a certain line : if we do so, thou dost touch the tower at the base, and fling it upon the common earth. We are thine, we are but for a moment,

but in this moment is a concentrated eternity, it is a moment of life, wondrous, measureless, boundless life ! Regard us, then, with thy compassion, take us up into thine arms ; yea, through thy love do thou be familiar and kind with us, pressing us to thy heart, giving us to feel that between us and ruin are the arms of Almightyness. Come back to us ; return, O Holy Dove ; bring our best memories before us so vividly that we shall take heart again, and with louder, bolder psalm than ever, praise thy holy name. Forgive us every day's transgression by the blood of Christ ; cleanse every moment from the defilement with which we have spoiled it. Our very breath is corruption ; our walking is profanity, and our down-sitting is blasphemy ; our whole life is empoisoned in fountain and in stream. We pour out our hearts' complaints at the foot of the Cross, and, seeing the flowing blood, the dying but everlasting Priest, we say, God, be merciful unto us sinners. May we abound in the fruits of the Spirit. May our life be a tree bearing heavenly blossoms and heavenly fruits. By our conversation may men take knowledge of us that we have been with Christ ; by our faith, our simplicity, our love, our self-denial, may we show that we have been born again. Give us the grace which results in joy. We would glory in tribulation, not accepting it meekly, but triumphing over it, and making wrath a root of praise and gladness. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. "Lord, increase our faith." "Lord, we believe ; help thou our unbelief." Amen.

Acts xiv. 8-18.

8. And at Lystra there sat a certain man, impotent in his feet, a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked.

9. The same heard [G., "was listening to"] Paul speaking : who, fastening his eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole [G., "saved." Paul had done no miracle here before to give the lame man the idea of obtaining physical healing ; but as the man listened believingly to the Word he felt within the "power of God unto salvation," and Paul saw that he possessed in this faith the subjective *condition* necessary for the accomplishment of the miracle. For the two objective conditions of salvation, see verses 1, 3],

10. said, with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped up and walked [G., "was walking"].

11. And when the multitudes saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voice, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia [which the Apostles did *not* understand. But all these Galatian tribes would understand Greek as the Welsh do English], The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter ; and Paul, Mercury, because he was the chief speaker [see Ovid, Met. 8, for the legend of a previous appearance of these divinities in this neighbourhood. Barnabas was

probably of more venerable aspect than Paul, but there is no ground here for the tradition about Paul's mean physique].

13. And the priest of Jupiter, whose *temple* was before the city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates [of the town; for these supposed divinities were there in the city], and would have done sacrifice with the multitudes.

14. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul [*Barnabas* takes the lead], heard of it, they rent their garments [Matt. xxvi. 65. Ritualists put *on* garments at such times, that they may exploit the superstition of the masses], and sprang forth [out of the city] among the multitude, crying out,

15. and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions [lit., "sympathetic"] with you, and bring you good tidings [the evangel *versus* ritual], that ye should turn from these vain things ["vanities": the *imagined* presence of these gods] unto the living God, who made [ch. 17] the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is :

16. who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways.

17. And yet [how mildly—Chrysostom says "secretly"—the charge is laid against them! See Rom. i. 22, iii. 10, etc., for the way Paul writes of the same things to *converted people*. The model missionary is here!] he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.

18. And with these sayings scarce restrained they the multitudes from doing sacrifice unto them.

APOSTOLIC SERVICE AND TEMPTATION.

THIS [v. 8] is the kind of man who is always looking out for religious excitement or entertainment. He would not be admitted into a drawing-room; he would be a spot on any feast of high conviviality; he could not join in the whirling dance; he must find his dissipation in listening to speakers who have something novel to say. You find this man everywhere—he is the padding of every congregation; he seems to have a kind of hereditary right to be in the Church, and to take an interest in speakers of all kinds; we could not well do without him; he is a good make-up, and gives a base to the assembly. We begin with him everywhere. If we can advance to a higher social grade, well and good; but Christianity always begins with the cripples, with the poor, with the outcast, with the friendless. Christianity

will begin anywhere. The one cry of Christianity is, "Give me a man," and in reply to this man, the cripple has always been given. The rule seems to have been to say to the cripple, "You go in first, and we will see what effect it has upon you." There are those who have no comfort but in the house of God. Bless their old withered hearts, that house is always open! The lovers of excitement will not have you because you cannot walk, or run, or keep up the race: you would be in the way, but the Church, dear queenly mother, the great Heart, the sweet redeeming loving spirit, she will say, "I have come down to wait for the weak, to gather up those that are lame, and to speak a word in season to him that is weary." This is the defence of the Church of God properly understood, that it shuts out no man, but finds a seat even for the cripple who cannot stand.

Paul, "steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed." — That man is also everywhere. He is here in great force this morning—the man who has not faith to use his faith; he is a believer, but he cannot say so. He does believe, he does love, he does pray, he is a very Simeon in expectation, but he needs some apostolic man to say to him, "Use your faith: be what you are." That is my speech to you. Don't tell me that you are not a Christian—you are; your being here means a whole heartful of meaning. Do not let some notions, and theories, and words without shape, and ideas without authority, keep you out of your inheritance. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. What you want is the faith to use faith, the courage of your belief. You have wings, and you know that when you are in private—yea, in solitude; you do sometimes lift them; not for the world would you be seen doing so, but you do it. In solitude you fall down on your knees, and look up to heaven dumbly; not for the world would you have it known. Why? You want faith to use faith; you want confidence to use the power you have. The great, kind sea waits for you. It is not wrathful, destroying; it is a great easy nurse, a great giant mother, and says, "Come, throw yourselves right upon me, and you shall not sink." Who can tell but that some poor soul now hearing these words may say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief"? If so, this will be the day of cure, of miracle,

of resurrection, the day of the Son of man upon the earth, when the blue heaven comes down to our green sward, and the angels set foot upon the earth.

I wish we could be as sure that Paul is here as that the cripple is. You have here an illustration of Paul's insight into character. "Perceiving that he had faith." Not long since we noticed that Barnabas "saw the grace of God." What eyes those men had : eyes that "wandered through eternity," that knew the Divine grace when they saw it ! They knew faith when it was only a light in the face, a gleam in the eye, a new movement of the body. There is more faith in the world than the preachers have yet conceived. Preachers must be perceiving men ; they must know one character from another ; they must see without looking. There is no stare in the eye of true penetration. You have faith. Without faith you could not live. Why not call things by their right names ? Your life is faith, your breath is belief, your action is doctrine. Why not eat and drink abundantly at your Father's table, on your Father's express invitation ? We make great mistakes in confounding one character with another, and in mistaking the symptoms that are offered to view, in order to deceive the very elect. Many a man laughs who has no joy—he laughs to keep you off the scent ; he is not laughing with his heart ; he is gay with his father and mother, and they (dear unsuspecting souls !) think he is glad, and they rejoice in his gladness, whilst all the time his laugh has been a lie, and, under his assumed gaiety, his heart has been suffering from the bite of an adder. The wise preacher, whether in the pulpit or in the house, must perceive this : he must have the critical eye which is not deceived by mere symptoms, which pierces the reality and core of the case. Many a man is addicted to bantering who is not frivolous. We have known a man banter the preacher, and the professor, and the Church, whilst all the time he has been seeking by banter to elicit sympathy ; he has thought that by this light raillery he would bring from you some further word, some other utterance, some deeper expression. If you had been gifted with apostolic insight, you would have seen under the banter a seriousness almost pathetic. Many a man is silent who wants to speak. All silence is not the same. There are men who have distressed themselves by their own silence, because all the while they have

been endeavouring to frame the very first sentence, and it would not be framed. You have thought them cold, distant, indifferent, self-involved ; you have complained of want of sympathy, want of speech, want of communion ; and many a man has been misjudged in this way : in his heart he has been saying, " Would God I knew how to begin ; if I got out one sentence, I could get out another ; I want to speak, but my lips cannot be opened even by a two-edged instrument." Beware of rough and hard judgment upon men. No one man knows any other man through and through as that man knows himself. Let us, however, pray for the spirit of discerning, the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of penetration, and let us so use that spirit as to bring men who have taken one step on the right road forward on their journey.

Why did Paul speak " with a loud voice" ? Some people object to loud voices—they say they could hear quite well if the preacher did not exert himself so. It is not enough to hear—you must overhear. An utterance must not deliver its own syllables only, but take with it heart, blood, fire, music, life. If you had spoken with a sublimer audacity, you would have elicited a nobler reply. People knew that Christ spoke with authority, and not as the Scribes, and Paul spoke with a loud voice ; not in the sense of mere vocal loudness, but in the sense that his heart went with his voice, and every syllable that he uttered was thus transfigured and glorified into a power.

Not only had Paul keen insight into the character of others, he had also keen insight into his own spirit. That kept him right. Here, as in the case of John the Baptist, is the hour of temptation. Two men are in a heathen country, two men are associated with a miracle which excites the wonder of the pagan mind—enough has been done to excite faith in the deity of the men—the very high-priest of Jupiter was prepared to offer sacrifices unto the visitors. The oxen are in the streets, the garlands are at the gates, the knife is waiting that shall draw the blood from the oxen, and Paul and Barnabas, you shall be the gods of Lycaonia, and have what you ask for. Every life has its temptation, its forty days in the wilderness, its hand-to-hand fight with hell. Why did not Paul and Barnabas settle down upon this eulogium ? They need not perform any other miracle ; they have performed one, and on that one they may rest as long as they live : they

could become the tyrants of the place, ordering and commanding what they please, and drawing to themselves the superstitious homage of minds wonder-struck and all-trusting. It was the devil's hour—if they get over that bridge, the Apostles will be safe! They were over it! When Barnabas and Paul heard of what was going on, “they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you.” Their self-knowledge was, humanly speaking, their salvation. If we knew ourselves, we could not be puffed up by any vanity, or so inhale the incense of adulation as to lose our balance and our reason. Let all men know themselves to be but men, let us be one in the common persuasion of our common origin; and then praise will not be flattery, eulogium will bring with it honest encouragement, and instead of offering sacrifices, we shall offer the nobler homage of confidence and love. Paul said, “We are men of like passions.” Like, yet unlike. Preachers are examples as well as expositors: that is to say, they are to show in themselves what Christianity can do, as well as speak out of their spirit what Christianity really is.

This narrative throws some light upon Christianity itself. Christianity makes people do what they never did before. The man is described as one who had never walked. This is the peculiar prerogative and function of Christianity—it always makes us do what we never dreamed of doing before. What sacrifices we make, what devotion we offer, what journeys we accomplish, what insults we endure, what persecution we accept, even with joyfulness—we who once resented injury now pray for the offender! Christianity does not make us do things a little better than we did them before; it makes us do things we had never done, and which the world thought it impossible for us ever to do. The attention paid to Paul and Barnabas was natural, it was only exaggerated; its root is right. But the preacher must never become the priest. Paul must never separate himself from the current of human sympathy. This is the danger of all class education, of all monastic withdrawal from all human activities, with a view to becoming *prepared* for the ministry. The temptation to the young man's mind is this: I am not what I used to be; I now belong to a class. I have become separated from the com-

mon herd. I am different—I am a priest. That is the sophism that must be burned out of the Church. The preacher is only an upper pew-holder ; the preacher is one of us, or he cannot preach to us. Christ could not preach from Heaven ; he must needs come down and be made like us, that he might save us. It is right that Paul should be recognized and honoured and blessed as a servant of God ; but he must remember that he is a servant only. The effect of Christianity is to confound all rivals. Christianity will not live in the house with any other religion. Christianity will never allow itself to be stitched to some old rag of paganism. Christianity is a seamless robe woven throughout that cannot be improved and must not be rent. When the priest of Jupiter saw what was done, he said, “ We have never beheld anything like this before ! ” Why the man was prepared to put the knife to Jupiter’s own throat. Said he, “ This is unrivalled. This man has been coming backward and forward to these rites and ceremonies of ours a long while, and we could do nothing with him ; here is a religion that comes and makes a man of him : this is the true faith. ” Christianity must vindicate itself by the men it makes—not by learning, not by eloquence, but by the men it makes. Convince the priests of Jupiter, not by metaphysical reasoning, but by noble manhood.

The man “ leaped and walked. ” You cannot leap long—the law of gravitation is against that—but you can walk all your lifetime. A man leaping always is beside himself ; a man walking has serious business, and he is going to do it. We cannot live in leaping, we cannot live in raptures and in tumult of soul, but we must leap at first. Those who have seen God, and have received of His strength, mount up as on the wings of eagles : then they run, then they walk. It would be pleasant to see some of us leaping a little, running a little ; it would do the preacher’s heart good to see some people trying to fly a little. Without enthusiasm, what is the Church ? It is Vesuvius without fire ; it is Niagara without water ; it is the firmament without the sun.

XLV.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou hast made the gate of tribulation the way into thy kingdom. It is a hard and narrow way, but the end thereof is everlasting life. Where we fear, thou dost cause us to hope. Where we expected to die, thou dost enable us to pray. Thou hast overruled all difficulty and battle and sorrow, and shown us how, through fields of severest controversy, we may pass into the land where there is no sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain. The gates of hell shall not prevail against thy Church, thou crucified and risen Christ. Tribulation shall work patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and, thus, cut of a black root thou wilt bring blossoming infinite in the tenderness of its beauty. All things work together for good to them that love God. Perfect love casteth out fear. We have no more cloud or doubt resting upon our life when it is hidden with Christ in God. Then the way is upward, and the light increases as we ascend, and heaven comes down to meet us on our upward pilgrimage. Put within us thine own Spirit, thou living Christ, thou mighty Priest, whose prayer carries its own conclusion and is its own beneficent reply. Then shall we know nothing of fear, or unrest, or trouble, but our heart shall be as water undisturbed in its depths of sacred and holy peace. Thou dost teach us by the events of time. Thou dost send messages to us from the houses of our neighbours. The dead man delivers thy letter to the living. We see by those who are falling around us that our turn may suddenly—and must surely—come. May we be among those who are wise servants—waiting, having their hearts stirred by a secret expectation that the Bridegroom may come at any moment, and complete his love. Show us thy way, O Lord, and enable us to walk therein steadfastly and lovingly. May thy way be our delight, and may thy statutes be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. Thou dost take away one and another. Thou dost dig up the cedar, and the fir-tree howls because of the mighty fall. Thou dost also pluck off the blossom ere it is yet formed, or set in promise of fruit. The old thou dost call home, and the young thou dost take up in thine arms and suddenly transfer to the upper kingdom. It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth good in his sight. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. Our loved ones, who have died in Christ, are not lost, they have gone before, they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night

in his temple. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ; but they shall dwell in thy presence, and be led by the Lamb to living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. We will not, therefore, bow down in trouble and sorrow, but rather stand erect in the consciousness of an infinite triumph, and say, O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? We will not look to the grave of the body, but to the heaven of the spirit. We will comfort ourselves with the holy words, the Resurrection and the Life.

The Lord destroy everything in us that is evil, set up his kingdom in our heart, and perfect us in the grace and virtue of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Acts xiv. 19-28.

19. But there came Jews thither [to this foolish, fickle Galatian mob] from Antioch and Iconium ; and, having persuaded the multitudes [that if the Apostles were not gods, they were God's foes], they stoned Paul [2 Cor. xi. 25], and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

20. But [again], as the disciples stood round about him [so we learn he had not preached here in vain ; Lois, Eunice, and *Timothy* probably were about him. Cf. xvi. 1 ; 2 Tim. i. 5 ; and Gal. iii., iv., v.], he rose up [miraculously restored], and entered into the city : and on the morrow he went forth with Barnabas to Derbe.

21. And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch [in Pisidia].

22. confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must [it is necessary, for God so *wills* it] enter into the kingdom of God.

23. And when they had appointed for them [gross Roman Catholic mistranslation. The Greek verb means to *elect* by *holding up the hand* in the ecclesia or church-meeting ; rarely, as here, used of the president, in the sense of causing the assembly so to elect. When they had caused each church to elect its elders. Note the plurality of elders in these the first small-town churches], and had prayed with fasting [G. fastings], they commended them to the Lord [G. has no comma, *i. e.*, they are referred to the Lord as the true Shepherd of each of these separate churches], in whom they had believed.

24. And they passed [from Antioch] through Pisidia, and came to Pamphylia.

25. And when they had spoken the word in Perga [xiii. 13], they went down to Attalia ;

26. And thence they sailed to Antioch [in Syria], from whence they had been committed to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled [four or five years were thus occupied between 44 and 51 A. D.

The Apostles went not as Xavier or Livingstone, sustained by wealth and political influence, but like Socialist workmen go earning their bread as they pursue their propaganda from-town to town].

27. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them [*i.e.*, as their Helper], and how he had opened a [G. the] door of faith unto the Gentiles [hitherto only Gentile proselytes had passed on to Christianity from Judaism; *now* it was proved possible to found Christian churches, at once, among the pure heathen. Jew and Gentile henceforth entered abreast into the fold of Christ].

28. And they tarried no little time with the disciples [here, probably Titus was converted—2 Cor. viii. 23].

TRIBULATION ACCEPTED.

THE Apostles Barnabas and Paul had wrought a great miracle at Lystra, and so astounded were the people that they wished to offer sacrifices unto the Apostles, and were hardly restrained from doing so by the stern and severe expostulation of the Apostles themselves. The *enemy* can be as active as the friend. Sometimes we are inclined to think that the enemy can outdo the friend in energy. Enemies seem to be more determined than friends. As a general rule friends are timid, and reluctant to move. They wish to live quietly, whereas enemies are not so restrained, they are fearless, desperate, resolute—nothing will stand in the way of the accomplishment of their base designs. Still one would rather lean toward the thought that love can outlive hate; but, truly, hate has a long life! We find that Paul and Barnabas were not allowed to go upon their journey without knowing that the enemy had them in full view. There came to Lystra “certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people” and turned their hearts against the very men whom but yesterday the Lystrenians would have deified! The Jews from the Pisidian Antioch and Iconium brought reports from these places concerning Paul and Barnabas, and turned the homage of the people into hatred. So Paul was stoned. The Jews had no easy work to get to Lystra. They also had to travel the hundred and thirty miles which separated the towns. But what is a distance of a hundred and thirty miles, even in an age so ancient as the time indicated in the text, when the heart is burning with hatred, and the life is aflame with sectarian indigna-

tion? The Jews did not travel the hundred and thirty miles under such disadvantageous circumstances merely as a luxury. They hated the new faith, they abominated the detestable democracy which would throw down sonship in Abraham, and make the Gentiles equal to the Jews, and so they, too, were missionaries, though animated by a different spirit. Paul was but *once* stoned, and he never forgot it! Writing an account of his experiences, he puts into the summary of them this line—"Once I was stoned." No man can forget that experience. In former years those who were engaged in stoning Stephen lay down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was *Saul*. The wheel of Providence turns round! There is no *resentment* in God, but there is *justice* at the very heart of things. When Paul himself is stoned it will not be to gratify a *grudge*, but to express the spirit of the eternal righteousness, without which the whole heaven of stars itself might fall in night. *Justice* keeps things together. *Righteousness* must hold the reins. Once let wickedness hold them and drive the steed of the universe, and in one night they will plunge into abysses out of which there is no extrication. "The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice," for the security of goodness is not in *strength* but in *righteousness*. They left Paul, "supposing he had been dead." That is a common mistake about Christianity itself. Many a time has Christianity been stoned and drawn out of the city, and thrown into the ditch "supposed to be dead." Paul recovered his consciousness. He was blinded and stunned, but not killed. So, to the joy of the little circle of weeping disciples, he got up, and stood upon his feet—a kind of resurrection before the time! Take it as a typical instance, and regard it as teaching the impossibility of killing *truth*. You may "suppose it to be dead," but the error is in the *supposition*. Whatever is true rises again. It may be thrown down; it may be kept upon bread and water; it may be spat upon; it may be thrust through with a dart; over it all hell may have a moment's laugh,—but it finds its feet again! "Truth is great, and must prevail." These incidents, which we call personal and transitory, are in reality *typical*, and because of their interior meaning and suggestion, they are the strongest and broadest lines in history.

The next day Paul travelled twenty miles—he departed with

Barnabas to Derbe ; and the thought came to the two men that, instead of making a detour, and getting back to Antioch by any short cut that might be open, they would go, step for step, along the road they had come. They would have a return missionary journey. It is not enough to go once over a track. People do not know you on one visit. Life is a revelation. We see sections of one another, but we must live with one another—the year in and the year out, all the four seasons—to see really the depths that slumber in any genuine life. Paul and Barnabas, therefore, went back, “confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith”—with this line added : “and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” We cannot copy pathos. We must learn it by life. We may not write our sermons with ink, for then they would be but rhetorical emptiness. We must *live* them, gather fruit from trees that have grown around us, and return to the people week by week with some new blessing in the language, some deeper tone in the voice, some nobler appeal in the exhortation. How simply, and yet subtly, comes this line into the preaching!—namely, “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” Paul was *suffering* when he said those words. His head had not recovered the stunning blows of the stoning at Lystra. There was a subdued sob in the man’s emphasis as he said this. Strangers might not detect it, but the speaker himself was conscious that a new thread—a golden one—was being run through the web of his eloquence as he exhorted the Christians at Derbe and Lystra and Antioch and Iconium to continue in the faith, and to accept tribulation, not as a discredit, but as an endorsement.

Paul and his colleague came back to Antioch after, some say, more than a year’s absence, and others calculate an interval of nearly two years, and the twenty-seventh verse would seem to contain the summary of all that was done, but it does not. “And when they were come, and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.” Into no speech with which I am acquainted is so much meaning condensed. It is the penalty of speakers who have a condensed style that they do not get credit for all they say. There are minds

that must have bulk as well as quality ; minds that must have everything beaten out to the thinnest and widest possible surface before they can begin to think. They do not fly on the wind, or take two mountains at a time in their gigantic stride ; they, therefore, say they cannot follow the writers who have written such a verse as the twenty-seventh, which is now before us. Look at it. " And when they had gathered the Church together." How easily we say these words ! How much they may possibly involve ! The Church did not live on the open street, or in the fine houses. The Church was a scattered people, a hidden little band, talking in whispers—perhaps often communicating secretly—despised amid the pomp and splendor of the Syrian Antioch. The Church had to be " gathered together." But why not tell the little missionary story on the open thoroughfare to the passers-by ? Simply because it is useless to speak to men in an unknown tongue. Only the Church can understand the speech of the Church. Even those who can catch the English sentences do not catch the Christian sentiment, unless they be in the secret which unites and inspires Christian hearts. Having gathered the Church together, they " rehearsed ALL." But we want to hear the *detail*. The little word " ALL " is really the greatest word in human speech. In its three letters the whole universe is included. We want to take it to pieces, to go into analysis, into the separation and classification of events, to understand the entire case. But we are put off with an allusion instead of being gratified by a detailed rehearsal. " They rehearsed all "—and yet, perhaps, they did not. Who can tell *all* ? You cannot write all you want to write. Having written what you think is a complete statement, you find that it is only a table of contents, and not a statement at all ! After having elaborated the rehearsal until you think not one line can be added, you read the whole, and are appalled to find that you have referred to everything but the subject ! Whatever is deep requires long time for its evolution. Whatever is spiritual requires all language for its expression. Not in a handful of words can you set forth the details of a lifetime. " They rehearsed all that God had done with them." They connected the whole story with God. What—the stoning ? Yes ! The statement does not read that, having called the Church together, Paul put his hand upon his head, and said,

“Oh, what I have suffered for you!” Not a word of the kind is said. Stoning and hunger and peril and persecution—these things *God* has done! It is because we do not recognize that fact that we suppose ourselves to be the victims of circumstances and the butt of enemies. Get rid of that sophism. *God* sent the hunger to bite you. *God* spread the cloud in the face of the sun to shut you out in darkness. *God* allows your enemy to smite you on the head, and on the face, and to malign you, and misrepresent you—it is *God's* doing! It is part of the Divine education. “Can there be evil in the city, and the Lord not have done it?” Done it!—not in the little narrow technical sense of hand-working, but in the larger sense of working up together in one complete massiveness—hells and devils, dangers and sorrows, into one sublime issue. “He maketh the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof will he restrain.” The Lord reigneth. The wet days are his, as well as the days that are full of summer light and summer music. And the graves are his, as well as the flowers which grow upon their green sward. And hell is his, and the key of it is on his girdle, and he will know what to do with it in the upgathering and total issue of his providence. They left one impression upon the Church—what was it? How *God* “had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.” There is no whine in that tone! The Apostles, returning to the Syrian capital, said, “Brethren, the door is opened, the Gentiles are accessible. Arise: shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” They were very heroes of men! Instead of saying, “The way is very difficult,” they said, “The door is open.” Instead of saying, “If you go to the Gentiles, you may expect to be stoned by the Jews,” they said, “Who are these that flock as doves to the windows?” These were the men that rocked the world in the storms of their sacred enthusiasm! All personal suffering was forgotten in the opened door. The stoning was a very little thing when the Apostles thought that the Gentile provinces were to be added to the empire of their Lord.

Nor was this all. There was an incident that happened which is not recorded in this verse. Twenty years afterward Paul wrote a letter to a man whom he called “my own son in the faith,” and “my dearly beloved son,” and “my fellow-worker”; and in that letter he said, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine,

manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions ; afflictions which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured : but out of them all the Lord delivered me." How did Timothy come to know about the stoning at Lystra, and the persecution at Antioch and Iconium ? Paul, writing to Timothy, said he greatly desired to see the youth, being mindful of his tears. "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also." Where did he make the acquaintance of the little family—grandmother and mother and Timothy ? Why, at Derbe probably, on this very missionary journey. That was the proof that the Lord was with him. He brought up from the Lycaonian wilds—the dreary wolf-land—memories of Lois and Eunice and Timothy, which cheered him in his old age ; and in the loving Timothy, who would carry on his own noble work, he found a compensation for the stoning at Lystra. We cannot tell what we are doing. Some men may be won to Christ by a discourse who will afterward vindicate the propriety of the argument which that discourse contained. Twenty years after we may hear of some young man who, being here this morning, was touched with a live coal from off the altar, and has gone out to declare that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Christ will find his own ministers. Christ will not let the Christian pulpit go down for want of capacity, ability, eloquence, learning, pathos, or sympathy. We do not always know what we are doing, but the Master knows, and that is enough.

XLVI.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, because thou art full of compassion our lives are spared until now. We are wicked, and deserve not to live, but thy grace is greater than our sin, and thy love enables us to live even amidst the corruption of sin. We have read of thy lovingkindness and thy tender mercies in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament of thy Son we see thy grace and truth and love. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He is thy Son. In him shone the fullness of thy glory. He was the express image of thy Person. So we do not only read of thy love : we see it, and touch it, and rest upon it, in the Person of Immanuel. He is all our salvation, and all our desire. In heaven he is the light ; of the cities of the earth he is the One Saviour. By his grace he has redeemed all time from contempt, and saved the earth from being swallowed up. The Cross of Christ is our hope, and light, and infinite strength ; hidden within its purpose, we know no pain, or shame, or fear : we have peace with God. Enable us continually to realize this sacred truth, and to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Keep us to vital principles. Root us and ground us in the unchangeable truth. Deliver our mind from all influences that are local and temporary, and fix our hearts upon eternal realities. Then shall we be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ; not living in our own opinions, but in the broad and full and holy revelation of thy truth. May thy grace glow in our hearts like a hidden fire, which burns but not consumes. In that fire may we find thyself—the God of history and the God of prophecy, the Beginning and the Ending, the First and the Last—filling the one circle which includes infinity. Reveal thyself to us day by day in new aspects, and speak to us with tones that shall surprise even the hearts that are most familiar with that sweet music. Thus shall we have the old and the new, eternity and time, the holy heaven touching with benediction the unholy and transient earth. Thou knowest us altogether. That is our terror and that is our joy ! Give unto us according to our sin, necessity, and pain, and enable us in all thy gifts to trace the Image of thy Person. So shall we be consciously near thee, and every occurrence in life shall come to us, not as an accident that shall alarm, but as part of thy purpose which thou art carrying out with all the breadth of infinity, and all the duration and calmness of eternity itself.

We pray for one another : for the heart that is enduring the anguish of its first great sorrow ; for the eyes that are looking upon death as they never looked upon it before ; for the heart that feels the intolerable coldness of death. Thou dost make us acquainted with the enemy. Some of us thou hast made familiar with his presence, and some of us are now looking upon him for the first time, and the sight affrights us by its infinite ghastliness. Come, thou Spoiler of Death, and bless us with one glance of thine eye, with one smile of love, and all the darkness shall flee away, and the valley of the shadow of death shall be as the sanctuary of thy presence.

Regard those of us also who are in high glee of heart, full of prosperity, and abounding in strength, lest in the rioting of our power we forget that our breath is in our nostrils, and our roots are covered by a very shallow soil. Help us to make prosperity an altar, and success a place of sacred worship. Send messages of comfort to those who are in the sanctuary of home—prisoners for a time, but prisoners of hope ; from thy banqueting table send some gift which shall make them glad also, yea, lengthen the table till it reaches from the church to the house, and makes the banqueting chamber as large as human necessity. Kiss all the children, and give them to feel that thine arms are about them. Find flowers for them in the darkness, and sing songs to them when their little hearts are afraid. Send messages to the despairing ; to the men who have broken all the commandments, and torn down the cross, and trampled under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant. We do not know their speech : it is not in our power to say one word to them ; but thou dost make speech. Language is but an instrument in thine hand ; make new words that shall touch this intolerable desperation. The Lord comfort us, enlarge our inheritance, show us that our estates and riches are in eternity, and away in the fair land where there is no sin, no night, no death. Amen.

Acts xv. 1-2.

1. And certain men came [were not *sent*; for the kind of men they were, see v. 5. Peter *may* have preceded them ; *in that case* we have Paul's opinion of them in Gal. ii. 4] down from Judæa and taught the brethren, saying, Except ye be circumcised [Gal. v. 3] after the custom of Moses, ye cannot be saved [liberal Jews, like Hillel, especially Grecian Jews, accounted devout Gentiles to be true proselytes, although uncircumcised : Pharisees, such as Shammai, would not eat with them ; such persons worshipped Jehovah and kept the seven precepts of Noah and were *afterwards* called proselytes of the gate]. And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and questioning with them, the brethren [vers. 1 and 3] appointed that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them [Titus, Gal. ii. 1] should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question [Gal. ii. 2].

THE CHRISTIAN MAGNA CHARTA.

THIS is one of the most important chapters in ecclesiastical history. This chapter is the Magna Charta of the Christian Church. I make bold to say that if we could fully master the reasoning of this chapter, and fearlessly reduce it to practice, we should give the Church of Christ a new standing-place in the mind and heart of our age. This is the chapter which the Church either cannot or will not learn. The key to universal confidence and progress is here, and we are afraid to use it. There arose a certain number of men who said to Gentile Christians, "Except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." What has that to do with this age? I reply fearlessly that with this age, and every age, this matter has to do vitally. The voice of the Judæan teachers was clear, and their doctrine was short. Behind it there was an undoubtedly sacred history, and in the spirit of the men there was what would be regarded, without questioning, as a loyal and filial obedience to law and tradition. Just at this moment the Church needed a kind of man it had not yet fully known. From this point Paul becomes the man that God meant him to be when he elected him as a chosen vessel unto the Gentiles. Paul made history at this moment. Just this type of man was wanted. Barnabas was no debater when he was alone. Peter could make a short, distinct, and emphatic speech; but even Peter had not escaped the period of education in which even noble spirits may momentarily dissemble. A new type of man was needed. Paul was a minister without whose presence the Church, humanly speaking, would not have been complete. He was intellectually and spiritually gifted with piercing insight; a man who could lay hold of the essential realities of things and distinguish between the accidental and the permanent. That man is needed in every age. So Paul, having had much dissension and disputation, said, "This matter must go further, and must be settled." The Judaizing teachers said to the Gentiles: "We are quite willing for you to come into the Church: you may believe in Christ as we have done; but you must do more; you must obey Moses as well as Christ; therefore, unless you be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved; add circumcision to faith, and then all will be

right." That seemed to be a reasonable case. The most difficult positions to assail are those which seem to be supported by most obvious reasons. How will Paul address himself to this occasion? Compare his speech with others, and see how it rises immeasurably above them in spiritual majesty and moral massiveness. Peter will make a good speech, but his speech will relate to an incident that occurred in his own life. Peter will relate an anecdote, and found upon it a gracious judgment. Paul will develop a philosophy. That is the difference between the men. This question must be settled upon *principle*. Any anecdote that can be quoted may be taken as helpful and elucidatory, but we cannot build a great temple of truth upon a personal incident; we must have principles, philosophies, and reasons time can neither change nor impair. At this moment Paul became his very self. "What," said he, "having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" "By the works of the law no flesh is justified." "If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." The men who want you to submit to the Jewish rite of circumcision know not what manner of spirit they are of; they are bondmen, not freemen; they are still in the beggarly elements, they have not advanced to spiritual principle. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Christianity is not a set of rites and ceremonies; it is spiritual; it is a condition of the heart. All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That was the grand speech which Paul made. He had no personal anecdotes to quote, beyond giving an account of his missionary journey; but he felt that this was the only right and unchangeable view. We know some things without having been formally instructed in them. The heart is often its own theologian. Deep communion with Christ brings away from the sacred and glowing fellowship a power of insight and exposition which no formal teaching can ever give. But what has this to do with the century in which we live? No man wants us now to be circumcised; all references to circumcision are out of date; we live under new conditions, and the sooner circumcision is forgotten the better. In that view you are mistaken. The Pharisees still live, so do the Judaizers, so does every man who in any age

ever sought to add anything to the simplicity and dignity of faith. Probably there are no men who say in so many words, "You must be circumcised, or ye cannot be saved"; but there are men who say, "Except ye be baptized your Christian position is at least doubtful." There are Christian men in this country, but still more in the United States of America, who would not allow us as infant Baptists to sit down with them at the table of the Lord! That is true of a comparatively small community in this country, but it is very broadly true of Christian communions in Transatlantic lands. This is the answer, this is the reply, to which there is no possible answer that can stand, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" The question of baptism does not turn upon Greek terminations and Greek conjugations, or pedantic references to Greek concordances—nothing vital can ever turn upon such mechanics. We need Paul here; the philosophic spirit, the prophet-mind, the piercing genius, the inspired teacher. Paul says, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect in the flesh?" You are inverting spiritual sequence; you are changing violently and without right the law of cause and effect! We must remember that beginnings are often *reversed* by processes, and that at the end they may be turned upside down. Advancing according to God's method of educating the world—namely, from the natural to the spiritual, from the vulgar to the refined, from the broad to the typical, take this very matter of circumcision. The rite was intended for children eight days old, but it did not *begin* with them; circumcision began upon a man who was ninety-nine years old! Nothing, therefore, can be argued from the mere point of origin. You must begin somewhere, and it has pleased God often to begin with a man when he meant, in the working out of the process, to get hold of the child. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, but the rite was not meant for adults. Christ said, "And be baptized" to adults, following exactly the analogy of Jewish history. But who dare say, with that analogy fully in view, that he—the very God who ordered the circumcision of Abraham—did not mean in this second instance also to begin with the children? The suggestion is supported by analogy and is vindicated by history; it therefore ought to be answered with something better than contempt.

Unquestionably, Christian baptism began with adults ; there is no doubt whatever about that. But the Apostle would say to any man who wished to add baptism to faith, as a necessity of salvation, " Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh ?" God moves by the contrary method ; first the natural, then the spiritual ; first the water, then the Holy Ghost. This is the line along which we, as pædo-Baptists, proceed. Speaking for myself, when the little child is brought to me it is something more than a little child ; it is human life. than which there is no greater term but one—it is human immortality. I do not baptize the child a few weeks old ; I baptize the child that may never die ! I begin thus in the flesh ; the perfection is in the spirit. I begin in the typical, knowing that the fulfilment of the thought will come in God's due time. We can add nothing to faith without insulting Christ. It is not enough to say that at the beginning the relations were such and such ; so they were in the case of circumcision, but, apart either from the one view or the other, this is the principle that settles everything—having " begun in the Spirit," we are not to be " made perfect in the flesh." This view of the case, if limited to any one set of Christians, however small, would not be worth discussing if the principle which is involved did not touch every point in the whole circumference of Christian liberty and education. How glorious is this principle ! It drives off all door-keepers ; it kills the *priest*, thank God ! There are those who would love to keep the door of the Church, and to say, " *You* may go in, but not *you*." There are some who like to sit in guard-boxes, and watch-towers, and confessionals, and who like to be able to say, " You may pass into the Church, but that other man must on no account go in." This principle of Paul's kills the damnable priest, whether he be dissenter, or episcopalian, or baptist, or congregationalist, or presbyterian, for the Pope is in every man, and this principle kills the universal Pope, and therefore to my mind it is true and Divine. The Pope may be in a Nonconformist pulpit ! We must never allow that a minister is officially needed to admit people into Christ's heart. I will not have anything to do with a religion that only a *minister* can explain. My minister must be my other self—a great-hearted, royal-souled man, who calls me brother, and says, " The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with US." I

will not have the Benediction that is pronounced upon me as somebody *out* of the ministry ; the minister must say "US," and then the communion will be complete. My fear is—and it makes me cold with a deadly chill sometimes—that young men should imagine that by going through certain processes of so-called, or rightly called "education," they become qualified in some magical sense to explain the heart, the love, the grace of Christ ; then they will be pedants, tricksters, priests, self-appointed gate-keepers, and against the whole progeny of them, if making such official claims, I launch a protest of fire. It is not the minister who has any priestly rights in this matter ; you are *all* God's clergy ; the Church is a sublime democracy. Certainly there are men amongst us greater than their brethren—"chief men among the brethren" is a phrase in this very chapter—but their greatness is not a question of priestly quality, or magical qualification, or official authority ; it is personal : a question of capacity, sympathy, devotedness ; a spiritual heroism, not an official elevation. Let us drive the priest away from the Cross ! No priest can be saved until he renounces his sacerdotalism. We should drive off all ceremonialists. It pleases us to be a little ceremonial. It suits human nature to go to heaven through one set of antics rather than another. It looks very pretty in the eyes of idiotic infancy of mind to go to heaven down one aisle of the church in preference to another. This is Paul's answer to ritualism, ceremonialism, formalism, and all the other "isms." Some men are born *priests* ; they are born ecclesiastics ; they seem, by some unaccountable mystery of Providence, to have been so shaped as to wear clerical clothes. In any other clothes their nearest and dearest friends would not know them ! These are the men who tell us that if we belong to this Church, we are all right, but if we belong to some other Church, in the spirit of charity, they would merely doubt whether we are right or not ! Away with their notions !—not themselves. The Lord burn their sophisms, but spare their souls ! With the immortal Robertson, of Brighton, I would say with my whole heart, "If any man, or any body of men, stand between us and the living God, saying, 'Only through us—the Church—can you approach God ; only through my consecrated touch can you receive grace ; only through my ordained teaching can you hear God's voice ; and the voice which speaks

in your soul in the still moments of existence is no revelation from God, but a delusion and a fanaticism, that man is a false priest. To bring the soul face to face with God, and supersede ourselves, that is the work of the Christian ministry."

In Scotland there were, long ago, two sects—one called the "Lifters," and the other the "Anti-Lifters." The "Lifters" were those who *took up* the bread on the Lord's table—who "lifted" it, and brake it. The "Anti-Lifters" were those who let the bread *lie* on the Lord's table, and allowed people to come and take it for themselves. These are the people who would have torn up the seamless robe of Christ and sold it at so much a square inch! That Christ's dear Cross and sacred blood should have been dragged down to so infamous uses is incredible. Let us then "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." We need no baptism after faith. What can come after faith but love? I wonder not that Paul should have said, "I thank God that I baptized none of you but about as many as I can count on my fingers; for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." I speak not about those who do not make baptism *essential* to salvation; they entirely escape the purpose of my criticism. My remonstrance is addressed in other directions, in which you will find that there are persons unscrupulous and anti-Christian enough to tell you that "except ye be circumcised [or, in modern language, 'baptized'], ye cannot be saved." Paul's answer is complete. It does not turn upon little points of learning and exegesis, of declining Greek nouns and conjugating Greek verbs, but this heaven-wide principle—Having begun in the *Spirit*, we are not to be made perfect in the *flesh*.

SELECTED NOTE.

"It is to this period that we assign the contest of Paul with Peter, which is mentioned in the Epistle to the Galatians. Peter, it would appear, went down from Jerusalem on a visit to the church of Antioch. He had heard so much of its flourishing condition, that he wished to have the pleasure of seeing it himself. He associated freely with the Gentile converts, and his visit was hailed by all as a cause of joy. Some Judaistic teachers, however, came down from Jerusalem. They were strict in their notions of Jewish purity, and held it unlawful to eat with the Gentiles, as

by doing so they might be defiled. Peter, carried away for the time being by the same feeling of timidity which induced him to deny his Lord, withdrew from the Gentiles and manifested a sinful compliance with the prejudices of the Jews. His example was contagious. Other Jewish Christians followed, and even Barnabas, one of the apostles of the uncircumcision, was carried away by the current. Again the peace of the church of Antioch was disturbed, and here, unfortunately, by the pernicious example of those who were regarded as the leaders of Christianity. Then it was that Paul came boldly forward and rebuked Peter for his inconsistency; and no doubt the rebuke was well taken, and the fault corrected. Peter, like most impulsive men, was ready to acknowledge the error which he had committed. It is to be observed that no change of opinion is attributed to Peter, but merely an inconsistency of conduct. It was an inconsistency, however, which, if unchecked, might have led to the gravest consequences. Nor is there any trace of a disagreement between these great apostles. Their writings show that they taught the same Gospel, viewing it in the light of their individual peculiarities; and in his last Epistle Peter speaks of the writings of his beloved brother Paul."

XLVII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, as thou hast called us unto love, may we not stop short of the mark to which we are summoned. All the law is fulfilled in one word, "Thou shalt love." Enable us by the grace that is in Christ Jesus to grow up to that great obedience and enjoyment. Deliver us from the littleness of the letter, and draw us, day by day, into the vastness and comfort and liberty of the Spirit. Thou hast sent a message to our hearts; may our hearts be open to receive it, and may they have understanding to know the meaning of every word and every tone, and also grace to answer thy message with thankfulness and obedience. Give us the hearing ear and the understanding heart whilst we tarry in thine house. May the Spirit of Christ be in us, ruling us by its gracious authority, and bringing us into subjection to the truth, that being no longer self-satisfied, we may find our one contentment in the revelation of thy kingdom. Prepare us to hear what God the Lord will say, and, without questioning or disputing, may we receive the same with loving hearts, and make the answer of an obedient life. The kingdom of Christ is not a kingdom of the letter, the hard rule, and the righteous law; it is a kingdom of spirit and feeling, of intelligence and sympathy, of glowing love and all-surrendering sacrifice. May those of us who bear the great name of Christ, and take our conduct from the spirit of the Cross, show what his religion is by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit; not by high controversy in the letter, but by such pureness, meekness, simplicity, truthfulness, and charitableness which can only be wrought in the human heart, and expressed in the human life, by the mighty energy and the tender grace of God the Holy Ghost. Show us that it is devolved upon us to prove the reality and the heavenliness of the Christian religion. Having the evangelical word, may we have also the evangelical spirit; acknowledging the truth in terms, may we live it in obedience; and what is mysterious in our utterance, may it be made simple by the eloquence of a beneficent life.

Send comfort, thou Holy One, to hearts that need it most. Make up the vacancy at the fireside, fill the empty place at the table, supply the necessity which is also an agony in the bewildered and desolate heart. Let death be swallowed up in victory; whatever that death may be, whether loss of friend, or child, or money, or health, may the victory of faith swallow up all the little death of this little time. Guide us during the rest of the road. Sometimes it looks high and difficult, and great

rocks frown at the top of it ; sometimes it looks long and deep, with abysses yawning at the foot ; but whatsoever the way may be, high or low, over rocky heights or through rocky valleys, guide us, and our feet shall get good hold, and, at last, our eyes shall see the city which our hearts have long desired. We hope for the enlightenment of thy Spirit, for the comfort of thy grace, for the sureness of thy pardon, and for the confidence which comes of close communion with thy heart. We ask for the pardon of our sin ; day by day the black cloud comes, day by day the violating hand is put forth into the very Holy of Holies, but the Cross of Christ is greater than all the sin of man, the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin, so we will find that the death of our sin is swallowed up in the victory of thy grace. Speak comfortably to us. Say from heaven's high height, " Thy sins are pardoned ; thine iniquities are forgotten." Make every good man stronger in his toil, make every bad man weaker in his purpose ; make every trustful man enlarge his faith ; and thus bring us, in thine own good time, the old and the young, with every distinction of human personality and human relationship, into one great family, marked with the blood of the Lamb, clothed with the fine linen of the saints, whose being established in thy presence is figured by harping upon harps, and singing eternal anthems, and standing in eternal day. Amen.

Acts xv. 3-6.

3. They therefore, being brought on their way [sent, and accompanied part of the way] by the church, passed through both Phœnicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles : and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received [formally, as messengers from the church at Antioch] of the church and the apostles and the elders, and they rehearsed all things that God had done with [xiv. 27] them.

5. But there rose up [in the church meeting] certain of the sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, It is needful to circumcise them [ver. 1], and to charge them to keep the law of Moses [this had been to subordinate Christ to Moses].

6. And the apostles and the elders were gathered together [vers. 22 and 25 show that this consultation took place *in* the church meeting. Gal. ii. 2 refers to other private visits to them paid by Paul] to consider of this matter.

WORKING ON THE ROAD.

FOR a little time the noise of controversy ceases ; the disputants determined to refer the question to a council to be held in the metropolis. Paul and Barnabas might have taken a

much shorter way to Jerusalem than the one which they adopted ; but Paul was a man who, like the Master, always wished to do some work on the way. When Jesus Christ was apparently hastening to a particular locality where His interposition was requested, He would often on the road stop a while to do some intermediate miracle. Paul was not a man to waste time in traveling. He said, " We will preach as we go ; we will make this journey to Jerusalem a missionary journey ; no doubt the question which is agitating us is an important one, but we will do some work on the road, so that we may gather fresh evidence of our calling, and add somewhat to the certitude of our faith" ; so, instead of taking the shortest course to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas passed through Phœnicia and Samaria. That was the district where Philip had done his wonderful works. We do not meet Philip often by name, but we do meet him very frequently in his actions. He founded churches, he prepared the way for greater ambassadors than himself ; he was the pioneer of the Apostles in Phœnicia and in Samaria (Gentile regions). Paul and Barnabas would find many a trace of the man who had been driven forth from quiet and comfortable quarters by pitiless persecution. We should all leave footprints behind us ; people that come afterward should know that we were there first. By instruction given, by stimulus imparted, by comfort breathed upon withered and desolate hearts, they should know that we have passed on before, and have left, it may be, an inadequate but a most sincerely-intentioned testimony to the truth and reality of the Christian kingdom.

Follow the Apostles imaginatively. They find a line of Churches all the way, generally speaking, from Antioch to Jerusalem. There were houses of call on the road. The pioneer had—not in words, but by sacred influence—said, " Other and stronger men will be coming this road some day—be prepared for them." So Paul and Barnabas find a road clear-cut through deserts of heathenism to the great metropolis of Christianity. We, too, walk on roads that have been well-trodden for us ; we do not make our own paths. We take the roads of a country as a matter of course, forgetting that without roads a country is a prison, and the civilization of it is little better than a swamp.

Who ever thinks of roads, or could suppose that a poet could wax eloquent upon road-making? Yet even so common a thing as a road is essential to commerce, to progress, to the interchange of opinion and good offices. Our roads have all been made for us; and Paul and Barnabas had not to take their spade and mattock, and cut their own way from Antioch to Jerusalem—it had been cut by other hands; so the Apostles found it comparatively easy to move from one metropolis to another. Brethren, we, too, are debtors to the past. We forget the road-makers—we think it easy enough to make, yet in reality there is nothing much more difficult to make than a path—wide, solid, and pleasant to go upon; not a path of a few yards long, but a road that runs through cities and capitals, and makes the whole land but a network of populous and thriving streets.

Surely as they passed along, Paul and Barnabas would often think of Philip, and would often hear of him in the homes where they lodged. It is pleasant to see, in little wayside houses, the pictures of Wesley and Whitefield, and pastors of humbler name, who have lived in the locality, and done what lay within the compass of their power for its culture and progress. These pictures are texts; they are the starting-points of the most interesting conversations; to have such a picture is to have a sort of centre round which a whole Church may gather, and about which the heart of that little Church may beat with thankfulness. Despise not your forerunners; they may not have been Pauls or Peters, men of greatest force of character, but they had a work to do, and they did it with diligence, so their names must not be held otherwise than with reverence and thankfulness. ♦

What peeps we get into the domestic life of the time! The two men coming into a house turned it at once into an historical temple; the house could never be the same afterward. There are some visits that transfigure the localities in which they are paid. There are some visitors that give a new sanctity to any house in which they eat, or sleep, or pray. What a sensation along all the land through Phœnicia and Samaria! What wonderment about the two travellers! What special interest in one of them! How bright his conversation, how spiritual his remarks!—every look a picture, every speech a revelation, every prayer an opening of

heaven. And the breaking of bread, and the little common feast, and the sort of talk which passes between men and unites men's hearts! Forget not the little idyls that help to make up the massive poetry of great histories. There were little occasions, as well as great ones, in the development of the Christian story. There were meetings, as we should say, at firesides, at little tables, not spread with dainty feasts, but blessed with heavenly approbation. Hand-grips, and special prayers, and peeps in the sick-chamber, where the weak one lay, and where the tenderest of all supplications were breathed, and still the men passed on, having to argue a great question at Jerusalem, and to maintain a valiant and historical testimony in the face of the first council of the Christian Church.

As they went along the land, what did they talk about?—"Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles." There ought to be great joy when soldiers come from the field of war with the latest news. It is true we care nothing for that news now! We soon rough down, by dumb applause, the stumbling missionary who tries to tell us that the blood-red banner is floating higher than ever in the wind! It is true that he is nothing to us with our horses and carts, and tradings, and progress, and capitals, and balances! In the old time it was something to see the soldiers come home, and to say to them, "What news, comrades?" and to see the soldiers stand up, and say, "The Gentiles are converted!" and that is meat, drink, rest, reward. To have lived in those heroic days would have been almost heroic! The early Christians were full of their subject; we easily slip out of ours. They had but one theme, only it included all other themes, as the firmament holds all the stars. They took pleasure in their work; they liked Sunday better than Monday—nay, they made Sunday seven days long. They kept no black chalk, or white, or red, to mark off the days into ones and twos; there was but one day in the week for the old soldiers; they realized the whole typology of the sun standing still, and the moon, and all the diurnal distinctions were lost because the fight never ceased.

Look at the fourth verse. "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the Church, and of the apostles and

elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them." Note here that the Church is spoken of in its unity. The Church was in those days a well-defined body, the very Body of Christ, the visible shrine of the invisible Spirit. The Apostles were received of the Church. Did the Church stand up to look at them? It may have done so. Did the Church put out its arms in token of welcome and hospitality, fellowship and unity? It may have done so. The Church is one. We have made it into a thousand, and therein may have grieved the heart of its Redeemer and Founder, but we must endeavor, at least in the spirit, to get back to the apostolic days when the Church was one. I do not object to denominations any more than I object to different regiments in the same army; but as I expect all the regiments to bow to one throne, and to honour one law, so I would expect all denominations, whilst preserving their individual distinctions, to have common ground upon which they can meet in common prayer, and to have a common altar, and a hymnology in which there is no discordant note. Is it not even so to a large extent now? When we talk to *God*, we talk the common language of Christianity; it is only when we talk to one another that we begin to dispute and to dissent. The moral of that fact is, that we ought to talk less to one another, and more to our common Father. Being received by the Church, the two new speakers stood up to tell their tale. Have we no tale to tell? If not, that is the reason why we are dumb! If a thief broke into your house, you would tell everybody about it whom you met, and with whom you were acquainted. If your house was on fire, all the neighbourhood would know it. A man who has a tale to tell tells it; and he is right in doing so. The reason why we are dumb dogs is that we have forgotten the story; that we have no personal story of conversion, inspiration, and enthusiasm. We are not unwilling to speak, but we have no story to relate. We cannot turn blankness into eloquence; having no history, we dare not awaken imagination, and so the Church, in many of her sections, is dumb. "Paul and Barnabas declared all things that God had done with them." How marvellous the eloquence; how realistic every sentence; what home-thrusts they gave! Keep to what you *know*, not to what somebody told you about it, and you will speak with clearness, simplicity, and emphasis.

Look at the fifth verse. "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses." Observe the nature of this contention. First: It was *Pharisaic*. Not many of the Pharisees believed, and those who did believe caused some trouble. It was difficult to say whether they were not greater opponents as believers than as unbelievers. There are hinderers *in* the Church as well as outside the Church. This position was not only Pharisaic, it was *literary*; that is to say, it was founded upon a narrow reading of the letter. There are persons who cannot get out of the four corners of any subject; and if the subject itself has not four corners, they will make four. If Christianity is a square with well-defined walls, there are men who could stand in the middle of the square and defend it bravely; but if Christianity is a horizon which recedes as we advance, and which has room enough within it for other universes tenfold larger than our own, they become bewildered, the letter is of little use to them, and there is a demand made upon religious imagination and religious sympathy which they cannot meet, and so they make four corners for themselves, and subside within the prison of a creed. It is difficult for some men to see the bud in the seed. It is impossible for some men to believe that the bud is the same thing as the seed. They say you insult their reason by the suggestion, and you throw suspicion upon their very sight by telling them that the one is the other in a new form. Christianity has its blossom as well as its root, its fruit as well as its blossom. The fruit is the root, the root means the fruit; the type only lives by its little self until the fulfilment comes, and then it passes away—not because of contempt, but because of fulfilment and fruition. Who were they who upheld the Law of Moses? They were Pharisees. How marvellous the providence that a Pharisee of the Pharisees was sent to answer them! The pompous, cultured, refined Pharisees would have made short work of other men, but there arose in the providence of God a man who was a very prince of the blood, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, of the tribe of Benjamin, circumcised the eighth day, concerning zeal persecuting the Church, and in his presence they met an unexpected and successful check. A man who knows a smattering of a language may astound the untravelled villagers who never heard of it; but

let a man arise who knows the language perfectly, and then the blatant pretender will fall away in shame from his temporary pre-eminence. It is thus that God grows his own men, so to say. It is in such circumstances that we have an annotation upon the words, "He is a chosen vessel unto me." God will always find his own champions and his own preachers. He knows where the men are ; he will bring them up from Asiatic capitals to the Judæan metropolis. He who found water in the rock and honey in the desert will find a minister for every post, a commander for every army, a victory for every contest. Let us rest in the God of truth ; he will find its best teachers and expositors ; and the truth shall never be in want of a man of adequate capacity and needful eloquence to show its grandeur and enforce its claims.

XLVIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, may Christ thy Son be born in our hearts to-day, the hope of glory! We remember his birth-time upon the earth, and our prayer is that he may be born in our spirits the Child of our love and our delight, the beginning and the end, the seal and glory of our life. Thou didst make our hearts for him; thou didst intend us to receive him day by day, and to live in him, and thou didst mean him to live in us. As the branch abideth in the vine, so may our hearts abide in Christ; he is the root of all things, in him we have light and growth and hope; without him we can do nothing; may he therefore be our Christ, and may we be his saved ones! He shed his blood for us; may we in return live our life for him. Oh, thou that sittest at the right hand of God, come to us, for we, too, are God's children, made in his image and likeness, made upright; but we have sought out many inventions. We are children who have run away from the Father's house; in our hearts there is a longing to return; and this longing is the inspiration of God, and the proof that it will be answered as God answers holy prayers. We would now all return like wanderers to our home. We know we have been far away, and have plucked the fruit from forbidden trees, and have hewed out unto ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water; but our yearning to return is greater than our shame at having left the house, and this yearning is not of our creation, but of thine, thou who dost afflict the heart with hunger which thou dost mean to satisfy. The years are flying away from us, they are taking with them the delight of our eyes; the staff on which our right hand leaned with trust; the life that made our life twice itself. May we improve the years as they come and go! Thou dost send them to us as new opportunities; may we not return them to thee void of industry and faith and sacrifice! May we grow wiser with the years; may they leave behind them influences that shall give us greater liberty, truer joy, and brighter hope! Thou art making some of us old; thou art causing others of us to see the first point of decline in the setting of the sun. Thou art bringing forward others of us from youth to early manhood, with its passion, enthusiasm, and determination to win; and the little ones are always with us, keeping us from despair, showing us some new light of God, plucking for us some new flower from gardens which we thought had withered; and the rich are here, and the poor, touching one another, yet living at points immeasurably separated. The strong man sits near the man who will die to-night. Thus are we

related and mixed for the time being ; yet in thy love we find community ; in thy Cross we are bound together in noble fellowship ; at the Cross we forget all distinctions in the infinity of its love. May the spirit of the Cross rule us ! Whilst we are near it, may we know the enlargement of soul which expresses itself in readiness to forgive ; and whilst we tarry at the place called Calvary, may we see not only the cross, but the crown ; not the Crucified only, but the angel of God, who shall liberate the dead who die in Christ from every tomb ! Thus may great sights make us great, thus may tender scenes melt our hearts, and may our lives be great answers of obedience to all the will of thy love ! Make our homes happy ; make the smallest of them bright as a palace ; pour a blessing upon the humblest dinner that shall make it a king's banquet. May we all eat honest bread, and enjoy the sleep of those who do good ! Enable us to see in all the way of thy providence openings into heaven, opportunities of becoming more like thyself ; and as the similitude of Christ grows upon us, may men take knowledge of us, and at eventide, in our coming and in our going, may there be a heart-warmth above all the heat of the sun ! Now if we may but touch the hem of thy garment, we shall be made whole ! We dare not ask for visions that fill the sky, or for radiance that would smite us with momentary blindness, but we do ask that this day, if we may not touch the hem of the garment of the Man, we may at least touch the swaddling clothes of the Child. Amen.

Acts xv. 7-11.

7. And when there had been much questioning [general conversational debate], Peter rose up [in the meeting], and said unto them, Brethren, ye know how that a good while ago [G. "in the old days"—*i.e.*, in the old days of this new dispensation, see x. 11. For a similar reckoning of time, see Gal. ii. 1] God made choice [from] among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8. And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us ;

9. and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

10. Now, therefore, why tempt ye God [either to allow his witness to be thus despised, or to punish *you* his despisers], that ye should put a yoke [comp. its weight, Gal. v. 1, with Christ's easy yoke, Matt. xi. 29] upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ?

11. But we believe that we [though *we* also are unable to bear the yoke of the law] shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they [note the inversion of the terms—"we as they," not they as we. Peter has *turned the tables* upon the Pharisees. Here only Peter uses Paul's common phrase, "the grace of the Lord Jesus," Gal. ii. 11-16].

PETER'S SPEECH ON CIRCUMCISION.

LET us consider Peter's speech about the question of the circumcision of the Gentiles. We have considered the question itself apart from Peter; we have accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their journey from Antioch to Jerusalem; and in the latter city there has been much disputing. Now we read: "Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Mark the *time* when Peter spoke. "And when there had been much disputing." That was the critical moment. Speeches acquire force and value from the time at which they are delivered. Wise men keep back as long as possible from delivering their judgment upon hotly-contested questions. Thus their wisdom goes for twice the value which it would be appraised at did they speak earlier in the discussion. Many a man who is not of first-rate ability acquires at least local and temporary influence by watching his time; he allows all the ready tongues to talk first, to relieve their feelings, to show their weak ability, and to secure what noise, mistakenly called applause, they can. Then when the assembly has fatigued itself, and would be only too thankful for a deliverance from the wordy entanglement and confusion, he rises, puts together, so far as he can patch them, the different opinions which have been expressed, finds the middle line, and invites the controversialists to join along that line of compromise. They hail him as a Daniel, though Daniel he is none! He came in at the right time. Had he joined the fray earlier, he would have been but one amongst many, but, observing how things were going, he came forward at the critical moment, and therefore came with double force, and with a sapience so much the more valued because the people who listened to it were longing for a liberator.

This is the way in all great assemblies. The principal speakers will not deliver themselves between the hours ; they need not be present to hear the little speeches that will be made, because they knew them all by heart long before one of them was spoken ; they will return towards midnight, and then settle the whole controversy, because the people are waiting and willing to have it settled. Peter, then, is growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. There was a time when he would have been heard *first*. We have not been accustomed to see Peter waiting ; we have been accustomed to see him rising instantaneously and putting things in order, as one who occupied a seat of unquestioned and unquestionable authority. Now that he has waited until there has been "much disputing," we begin to feel that Peter has grown in grace, and that perhaps he will make the noblest speech he ever did utter. Presently we shall see.

Peter kept to facts which were known to himself. Over some ground we walk very daintily, because we are not quite sure of it ; at any moment a foot may go down so that it cannot be taken up again ; but Peter walks upon solid rock. "Men and brethren, ye know," said he, "this is not a matter in discussion, nor is it a question of a speculative kind ; I will ask you to walk with me over a road macadamized with facts." As Christian men, we might have gone farther upon our journey if we had not tried to cut it short by crossing bogs and swamps. The longest way about is often the shortest way home, according to the old proverb. And so it is in spiritual thinking and in moral education. When you go, step from rock to rock ; and though your progress may not seem to be rapid, it will prove itself to be sure. How does Peter come to speak this new language ? There are tones in this speech we have not detected before—subtle tones, resonant tones. Where has Peter been ? He has been in conference with Paul. Privately Paul has had interviews with them "which were of reputation" among the Apostles. There are private processes of education going on in every life and in every house. We feel that Peter has touched somebody. He seems higher in stature ; there is a purer light in his eye ; his very voice has new expression in it ; and as for his talk, it is not the babble of his earlier discipleship, but a broad philosophy. How is this ? He has touched the man to whom we owe doctrinal Christianity ! He has been in

company with the founder of the theological Church ; he has known the energy of the mightiest man that ever considered the problems of Deity, Sin, and Redemption. He was an apt scholar. Peter was always impressible ; you always knew where he had just been because of the tone of his voice. We feel here that he has been with a man greater than himself. Keep company with the wise if you would grow in wisdom. Always seek to be in the *clientèle* of a man who has yet more to do in life, and who tells you from every mountain-top he climbs that he has not yet begun to ascend. There is no finality in God.

In this little speech you have a whole system of divinity. I know not that there is anything outside this deliverance—if we may avail ourselves not of the letter only, but of the spirit, and of its million-fold inference and suggestion. Here you have the Trinity—God, his Son, and the Holy Ghost. A greater Trinity than if it had been named in numbers. The Trinity must assert itself ; it does not ask to be *proved*. Jesus Christ did not attempt to *prove* ; he accepted the facts of life, of being, and of thought. Jesus Christ did not attempt to prove the necessity of prayer. He said, “When ye pray.” Who attempts to show that we must, as a matter of obligation, *breathe* ? The physiologist, the teacher of the laws of life, says just what Jesus Christ said—“When ye breathe.” So with this great doctrine of the Godhead. The Trinity comes upon us from apostolic eloquence at every gleaming point—God—his Son—the Holy Ghost. And again, “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” and so on. In apostolic speech there is a Trinity *declared* ; there is no attempt to set up a Trinity that can be argued and *proved*.

And here is also Divine sovereignty. “God made choice.” And again, “God gave them the Holy Ghost.” And again, “God put no difference between us and them.” It was thus with bold and generous emphasis the Apostles used the name of God, not apologetically, but as indicating sovereignty, dominion, authority, final because complete Will. And here not only have we the Trinity and Divine sovereignty, we have the whole scheme of Judaism—“A yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which

neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." The last and completest definition of Judaism ; a *yoke* which could not be borne, but a yoke which was needful at the time. We must have chafing before we can have rest. God must show us what the law really is in all its details and tyrannous demand, before we cry out for mercy, pity, and grace. And here we have salvation by grace. " But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." We need not systematize these points, and make a formal creed of them ; they are better left as necessary parts of our thinking, to come into our speech by inspiration. We had better not cut out the branches in order to carve them into pillars and posts and standards. Do not cut down the tree ! I can worship better under its shadow than I can kneel before its polished and carven wood.

Observe, then, how Peter surpasses himself in the breadth of his Christian philosophy. He must have in all his thinking as its vital point Divine action. He calls us back to first principles. He will not have GOD excluded from this reasoning. In fact, he says, " Men and brethren, this is a question that involves the Divine sovereignty, and the Divine mind in all its outgoing and influence ; that being so, I start with this fact, that I went to the Gentiles ; I went against my convictions—certainly against my prejudice, and, more certainly still, against all my inclinations. I did not want to go—I protested against going—but the law of gravitation drew me ; it was GOD that inspired and directed me." The reason why we have so many superficial theories of life is that men exclude Divine action. A philosopher proposes to you what he calls the theory of evolution, but in proposing it he says we take for granted nature and life ! That is to say, he takes the whole thing for granted. It is not *evolution* that perplexes me, but *creation* ; and I find no fuller answer—simpler, deeper, grander—than " God created the heavens and the earth" ; an answer I cannot *explain*. And so in the evolution of circumstances, the development of spiritual and moral history, I cannot consent to begin at some point indicated by a creature as limited as myself. Here, as in the former case, I say, " My difficulty is not with *evolution*, but with *creation* ; and to that difficulty I find no answer so commanding, so gracious, as, ' Men and brethren, ye know that a good while ago—GOD.' " This is the echo of

the first verse in the Bible. From the first verse in the Bible I cannot get away ; all the chapters of the Bible are hewed out of the quarry of its first verse !

Then Peter gives us a doctrine which has become commonplace to us ; as uttered from his mouth it was a miracle. These are the words that ought to astound us if we were inspired by the historical genius : " And put no difference between, or distinction between, us and them." We ourselves being the Gentiles received into the Great Abrahamic circle, do not feel the value of the inclusion as we ought to do ; but the men who were inside that enclosure, and thought they completed its circumference, when they saw a rent made in the circle of the covenant, and hordes of uncircumcised Gentiles coming in, were affrighted, appalled, and disgusted. What could you say to such men ? Could you propose a theory of social evolution to them ? They would have burned you with their angry glances ! How will you approach excitement of the Jewish kind ? Just as Peter approached it. He went right into the broken circle, and said, " Ye know that a good while ago—GOD !" There are times when we must gather up our whole enthusiasm and reasoning and hope into the Divine name, and hurl it, like an infinite thunderbolt, against all the petty action and all the affronted conceit of a narrow-minded age. Think of a Jew acknowledging that God put no distinction between himself and a barbarian ! You do not wonder that Peter should afterward write : " Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." When he wrote that sentence he did not inscribe upon his paper a passing sentiment ; he drew at full length the portrait of his own development. And what expressions the man uses ! He says, " Purify their hearts by faith." That is a result of faith which some of us do not fully realize ! Faith refines the heart ; faith chains up the passions like so many dogs that may be excellent servants but bad masters ; and says, " Walk behind ; I lead." The man of great faith cannot be vulgar ; he who has sublime faith has sublime refinement. I say not that he is dressed in purple and fine linen, and that he fares sumptuously every day ; I say not that his hands are white, and that his appointments are technically correct. I speak of another kind of refinement—inward, spiritual, always seeking expression worthy of its own dignity.

And then how broad again his philosophy becomes when he says, "Why tempt ye God?" This is not a little question of personality—this urging of the law beyond its intended province and compass is a temptation of *God*. This is not obedience ; it is temptation. This is not homage ; it is temptation. This is not righteousness ; it is temptation. Even Divine ordinances are not to be thrust beyond Divine boundaries. Let us take care lest our pretended homage be but a veiled blasphemy. Paul himself never made a grander speech. Peter in this eloquence is almost Paul. How singularly and wondrously God trains one man until he is almost another ! So that when the other and greater man comes he does not bring with him a sense of violence ; he rather comes in by a line so graduated that we are scarcely aware of the new sovereignty and the broader influence, because the other man was so nearly of the same spiritual calibre and force. It is in these directions I see the working of Divine providence. Men are always being sent to school to learn the *next* lesson. In one school we get through all our mistakes. What blunders we committed in that first little dame's school ! The days were mistakes ! Every lesson was a new miracle in blundering ! Then we passed on, and became a little better ; and we went to another school, and became almost noted for a species of wisdom. Now when we look back upon the whole process, we wonder that we were allowed to live one day in any civilized community ! So we are, little by little, and day by day, educated, qualified, and refined ; so that when this mortal shall put on immortality it shall be as in the twinkling of an eye. So long has been the preparation, so long the discipline, so complete the purifying and the enlargement, that when this corruptible shall put on incorruption it will seem as though we had but just awaked out of a sleep to see the Majesty Divine !

XLIX.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, to-day we bury the year on which we entered with Christian hope. The year has run its course. As coming from thee, and giving unto us opportunities of service and growth and sacrifice, we may say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" The year was thine, thou didst give it unto us; we have written across its face our daily record. To-night the year goes back again to thee a blighted thing. The judgment is thine; we would the year might, in many a day, be utterly forgotten, but thou dost claim the days; thou dost turn over the leaves of our time, and peruse the record, line by line, and thou dost write upon our work the judgment that is righteousness. We will not hold up the year to thee in a spirit of defiance; we will point to it with a trembling finger because of a misgiving heart; and over every page of the writing we will say—so far as our tears will permit us—"God, be merciful to us sinners!" We are a year nearer to thee; mayhap we are a year farther from thee. Thou dost make us old before we know it; thou dost silently scatter the snow of old age upon our head, and we awake to behold the winter's white. Thou art carrying out thy purposes throughout all the ages. Thou dost not live in days and moments, in years and centuries—thou breathest eternity, thou dwellest in one perpetual *now*, thou stretchest thy hand from everlasting to everlasting, and our duration is but as a dying cloud in thy sight. We will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. Through Christ Jesus our living Lord, we will ask to find rest in the pavilion of God's eternity. Spare us yet a little while, that we may recover strength to say some better prayer, and sing some sweeter hymn, before we are gathered to our fathers. Thou dost not take away the race of men as with a flood; but man by man, one by one—here one, there one—so that the individual taken does not seem to be so much; yet when the year's death tale is told, behold how many empty places there are, and how many answer not when the life-roll is called over. Thus thou dost work silently in the night-time, and in unexpected hours, so that we know not when the Lord will come: at the cock-crowing, at the fuller dawn, in the shining mid-day, in the deep night. Thou dost keep us in this ignorance, that we may be also kept in keen watchfulness, so that when the Lord cometh we may be ready to enter with him into his house. As for the year, the Lord pity it. The work has been clumsily done; our prayers have not all gone to heaven, because they did not all come from the heart. Some deep

graves have been dug, and the stone work and the cunning masonry cannot prevent the certain corruption of the flesh. Plant thou Gospel flowers upon human graves, and they will delight and soothe us in the time of impatience and passion. Thou hast made some widows and some fatherless, and some thou hast bereaved of all ; so that the year shall never be mentioned but with it there will come the moan of a hollow wind. " Oh, dreary year, worst of all, blackest of all," some will say. Others bless thee for it ; they never saw such flowers as it has grown. They never knew the mountains were so high before ; they never saw the sea and the river throb with so many millions of silvery spangles ; the whole year has been a breath from heaven—business has been success, health has become consolidated strength, and sleep has been as a renewal of life. They will remember the year, and bless it. Now, Lord, if we may see the dawn of another year, may we this time try as we never tried before to know thy will, and to do it all. We would enter upon it in the name of Christ, Lord of all the years, Saviour of all the ages, Priest of all sinners, Alpha, Omega, first, last—in him all things are gathered up in their infinite total. We lay our hand on him, by him we are saved, through him we pray, in him we live, for his sake we forgive as we would be forgiven. Amen.

Acts xv. 12.

And all the multitude kept silence ; and they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.

THAT is an unsatisfactory verse. When Paul speaks we want to know what Paul says. But some men must be their own reporters, for so unusual is their method and tone that it baffles every scribe to catch the one and reproduce the other. That Paul should have made a speech, and that it should be referred to in one brief sentence such as this, considering the gravity and dignity of the subject, cannot be satisfactory. Paul himself goes into the matter ; we see, therefore, under Paul's own sign manual, what he said and what he did. So we turn for the moment from the Acts of the Apostles to the opening verses of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. Where Luke contents himself with a summary, Paul passes into minute and instructive detail. Some verses are too condensed ; some reports are simple variations of injustice. We do not care for our life to be huddled up

in one sentence. By-and-by the master of criticism and detail will take our life to pieces by a just analysis, and will award to every one according to his deeds. We briefly said, "He called and prayed." It seems from that report as if the man did little or nothing. We do not say that he walked miles, and that when he prayed his heart wept. We deal too roughly with one another, and too summarily. We dismiss life too briefly. Thanks be unto Heaven that judgment will be a criticism of detail, and not an off-hand pronouncement upon the tragedy of human life.

Paul says he went up to Jerusalem "by revelation." Then he went up in high temper—he was greater than the Jerusalem to which he went. If he had gone up to Jerusalem awed by its metropolitan position and fame, he would have hesitated in his speech, and would have picked out right dainty words that could offend no one, but, by subtle flattery, might win the ear of many. In reality Paul went from heaven to Jerusalem, and, descending upon it, it withered into contemptibleness under the majesty of the visions from which he had just turned his eyes. Paul lived in a large world. It was no mere handful of dust upon which he set his foot, and within which he performed the little miracles of his power. In Paul's view the worlds all belonged to one another. The Lord had not made a countless number of links; the Lord had made a chain of planets, a chain of worlds. Touching one link, he sent a thrill through all the band of the constellations. We have dropped the word "revelation" except on the Sabbath day, when we venture to say it sometimes. We have meaner words—such as impression, conviction, feeling, unaccountable desire. These are inoffensive terms; an atheist might use such mock jewelry. The Apostle had no impression, conviction, transient feeling. He said: "I went up by revelation." God said to him, "Go." The angels said, "We will go with thee." It was a great day! "I went up with angel convoys, with banners unfurled by invisible hands, for I knew that the truth was with me, and I was anxious only that Christ's Cross should be lifted up above cloud and fog and dust, and be seen everywhere as the one way of salvation." Was Paul then afraid of Jerusalem, and "pillars," and "men of reputation," and who spoke *ex cathedra*? He was twice anointed, yea, with a double unction of the Spirit, so that Jerusalem became but a village to him, and men of

illustrious name became brethren and equals. Paul says he was anxious to state the Gospel he had been preaching, so that the leaders of the Church might know exactly what he had been doing. Paul preached privately to them that were of reputation. Could we have heard him then! Speaking to a sympathetic audience, to men who had seen the Lord! They must have thought they were almost looking upon Him again; they had never heard such a voice before. Paul was never so great in any other instance. Speaking from the shrine of revelations, even the mightiest men in the Church but "*seemed* to be pillars." Paul had no fear about his Gospel. He said, "I have been preaching to the Gentiles this and that, and I learned my lesson through the Spirit. My one object has been to represent and incarnate our common Master, and to show that he alone can justify the unjust. I have seen that the Gospel is greater than the law, that by superseding it the Gospel abrogates the law, that rites and ceremonies are no longer of any account, but the one thing needful is *faith in Christ*. I have been preaching salvation by Christ; now, brethren, what say you?"

Coming to the point which was in controversy, Paul's attitude is one which presents many aspects. In the first place he was not ashamed of his Gentile converts. He took Titus with him. The scene that comes before our imagination is that of a man with a bright eye, a glowing face, a tongue eloquent—if not in fluency, yet in passion—and pointing to a young man (Titus), Paul said, "This is a Gentile convert. He has begun in the Spirit; is he to be made perfect in the flesh?" What does he want with your cuttings and ablutions and ceremonies? Always vindicate your arguments by your converts. If you can produce converts, so that we can see them, they will do more for the Christian cause than can be done upon many minds by the most elaborate and cogent Christian reasoning. Some of us might have our unexpressed wonder, amounting almost to an inexpressible doubt, as to the needfulness and usefulness of Christian missions; but when the other evening I saw in this church—and conversed with—the gentlemen known as the Malagasy Envoys; when I saw them, considered their history, knew that their ancestry were a degraded and debased people; when I heard their gentle voices, and listened to one of them speaking purely and pathetically our mother tongue;

when I heard them say in their own speech that they could follow the preacher whenever he mentioned the words Jesus Christ ; when they knew nothing that I said but those two words, and when their hearts throbbed under that music, I wanted no man to argue with me about sending the Gospel to the Gentiles, to the uncircumcised, and to the heathen away out on the sea. The missionary cause said, in effect, " This is the kind of work I want to do the whole world over." The response to that appeal could only be of one kind—instantaneous in its spontaneity, and generous in its self-sacrifice. Upon this rock we stand ! We always have our Titus with us ! There is he who has been converted. Behold the breadth ! behold the length ! behold, there is in his heart a spirit of confidence, forgiveness, and Christian hope ! Does that man need to be circumcised, baptized ; to have any Christian magic performed over him ? No ! Having begun in the Spirit, he is not to be made perfect in the flesh. Let him stand there not as a proof of the antiquity and necessity of circumcision, but as an illustration of the new creating and justifying power of Christian faith. There were men who wished to have Titus circumcised. Paul, in giving an account of the matter, becomes almost incoherent in his speech ; the very ripest scholars are at a loss to put together, in a manner absolutely satisfactory, the almost broken sentences which Paul writes in the second chapter of the Galatians regarding this matter of Titus ; in fact, there are not wanting men who have suggested that Titus was actually circumcised. I do not base my opinion upon the mere grammar of the text, which is so indistinct as to be disputed, but I base my conclusion upon Paul,—what we have seen of his spirit, character, his whole tone of mind,—and it would seem to me to contradict the man and the very purpose of his mission to acknowledge that Titus was circumcised. Who wanted to have the young man circumcised ? Paul answers that they were false brethren. How did such men come to have any voice in the matter ? Paul answers—they crept in privily, unawares. What particular object could they have in insisting upon the young man's circumcision ? Paul answers—their object was to spy out our Christian liberty, and to shut us up within the cold iron of the letter. How were such men treated ? Paul says, " To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour."

He never paltered with the enemy ; the spirit of compromise was not in him when such questions were under consideration. He could be pliant, accommodating, courteous ; he could speak other people's language when they could not speak his. Such was the inspiration that fell upon his spirit that he could eat with the Jew as a Jew, and with the Gentile as a Gentile, plainly declaring that his object was a concession to their want of Christian education. But when this was the question, namely, Shall the Cross of Christ have anything added to it by man's hands ? Shall anything follow the chrism of blood ? his answer was the " NO " of all the thunders that ever shook the firmament. He did not refer this case. He did not say " Let the elders and superiors of the nation consider it, and decide for me." He said, " This is not a question of expediency, but of essential life ; and if the Cross of Christ requires the cutting of a knife, or a drop of water, Christ is dead in vain ! " Such a man had a Gospel to preach. No wonder that he preached it so as sometimes to be accounted mad.

In this instance Paul illustrates by anticipation a phrase which has become a commonplace to us. We insist upon what we describe as the right of private judgment. That was exactly the doctrine which Paul asserted on this occasion. He speaks of men " who were of reputation " ; he also speaks of men " who seemed to be pillars " ; he mentions by name men who were in Christ whilst he himself was a persecutor and a blasphemer ; he refers to persons in the Church who " seemed to be somewhat." Was he awed by their authority ? Did he say, " Hear the Church " ? Did he wait for some other man, or number of men, to give him the doctrine of Christ ? Speaking to the false brethren, he says, " To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour." And speaking of those " who seemed to be somewhat," he said, " Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me : God accepteth no man's person." They " added nothing to me." That was a brusque way of adding up and estimating the value of men ! Paul said, " You have taught me nothing ; you have given me no new light ; I see no unfamiliar aspect of the truth in your speech ; I do not know that you are more than others ! " Where, then, was obedience ? Where was submission to the papal authority ? Where was the rebuke of individual conscience ; and where was the setting aside of private

judgment? Here is one man who stands up in the Church, and says, "This is the Gospel which I have received, which I will preach, for which I will live, for which, and in which, I will die," "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." That was the true assertion of private judgment: not the expression of an individual will, but the expression of a personal loyalty to a living Christ.

Paul showed the true nature of real and enduring unity. In effect, he said: We may be one without seeming to be united. Union is a question of sympathy, and not of form. I will tell you what can be done. There are in the world two distinct classes of men, Jews and Gentiles, called the circumcision and the uncircumcision. There are men to whom circumcision is a king of hereditary rite and observance. There are others to whom it would be an intolerable yoke. Now, let us go, the one to the circumcision, and the other to the uncircumcision; for I know that as this Gospel spreads it will be seen at the last that neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision. Do not let a man boast of his uncircumcision any more than the Jew should boast of his circumcision. Do not boast that you have not been baptized, no more than any man should boast that he has been plunged into the stream. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, neither baptism nor non-baptism, availeth anything, but a new creature. In that sublime faith the Apostles went to their death. So would I say, If your fathers are men who have been baptized, or unbaptized, or who have been accustomed to attend to this ceremony or to that, you may go on with your ministry to the circumcision—only be true to the spirit of Christ; and if I have been called to the people of many languages, to odd men, eccentric thinkers, independent personalities, men who repudiate circumcision, and look upon rite and ceremony with contempt, I will also carry out my ministry. The truth will prosper in the long run in proportion as we are faithful to its statement and exposition.

But the counsel could not break up so. We must have something to do that is visible, and that can be assumed by all minds. "Well, then," said the council unanimously, "one thing shall

unite us—that we remember the poor.” The poor have ye always with you. So they all—the circumcision—remembered the poor, and they of the uncircumcision also remembered the poor, and in philanthropy they showed their union in the Lord, who live to redeem the human race! This has been my doctrine, for which I have suffered not a little. I have said to contending theologians and controversialists: “Gentlemen, you will never speculatively agree—the more talk the more division. But I will tell you what you can do. You can unite in practical service; you can remember the poor; you can join in carrying out moral and social reformation amongst the people.” Speculative theology divides men; practical philanthropy unites them. Let us unite where we can. A union upon these matters may prepare the way for a better understanding, for ultimate conciliation, and for enduring fellowship. Never inquire into the creed of a needy man. The man is hungry; the creed must be *bread*. When he has eaten his bread you may ask him questions. Again and again I would say to Christian teachers and workers: Begin where you can; do not stand upon technicalities, or insist upon pedantic concessions; but wherever the heart-door is ajar, go in; wherever opportunity is offered, speak the living word or do the helpful deed. Always seek for the centre of union, and always avoid the cause of division or distrust. You would like theological or doctrinal union, and so should I; but where that is simply impossible, we must go in other directions for an *initial* union; and that we may find in being a tongue for the dumb, eyes for the blind, and a tower of refuge for those who have no friend. When the Church is animated by this spirit, she will be surprised to find how many hitherto unknown friends she has, and how many there are who will respond to her philanthropy who cannot pronounce her Shibboleth. Let us be wise in our times, and set high above all party flags bearing mean names the blood-red banner of Calvary, the symbol of reconciliation and security.

L

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we thank thee that thou hast called us to stand still awhile and talk with thee. This is thy day—oh that it might have no night! We would make it a day of elevation of soul, enlargement of faith, and drawing out of our best affections. This is no common time. In the morning of this day we see the Resurrection and the Life. We come to a grave, and find it emptied of the dead. The angels meet us, kind Heaven bows down its arch of light, and, behold, the earth is touched with the subtle glory of the skies. This is the Lord's day—thou didst make it; upon it are the marks of thy fingers; this is the day of the opening of the gates of righteousness, and of high fellowship, of liberty, and of hope. To-day we begin the year of Sabbaths; may all the year be one long summer day. Give us the Morning Star. Shine upon us from between the Cherubim. Let the light of the sun be a dim splendour compared with the infinite glory that shall shine upon our inmost life. If thou dost inspire great prayers, it is because thou hast prepared great replies. Our prayer can never be equal to thine answer; where our prayer abounds, thy response doth much more abound—so that we forget our little words in the infiniteness of thy benefactions. But have we not all things in Christ? Have we not in him unsearchable riches of wisdom, truth, grace, consolation, and hope? The Sun of Righteousness never sets; there is no night in his love, there is no slumber-time in all his watchfulness. The God of Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth; and as for Christ, he ever liveth to make intercession for us. We are rich, and yet know it not. We have all things, and yet is there a tone of reproach and discontent in our voices. Lord, increase our faith. Carry it onward to assurance, and from assurance to triumph—yea, to victory upon victory, until we know not which is earth and which is heaven, because of the gracious transport which excites and thrills the soul. Grant us seasons of singular joy—yea, of great uplifting and broadening of life—so that we shall look down from high and sacred heights upon the day's duties and the day's mean trials and burdens. To every work may we go up by revelation, and it shall be done ere we touch it; to every suffering may we advance in the spirit of the Cross; then shall we glory in tribulation also. The Lord's great comfort fill our hearts as the summer light fills the whole sky; may there be in us no darkness at all; may our hope be bright as the morning, and our gladness high as the noontide. We would forget the past except as an inspiration;

we would not lay again foundations, but arise and build ; we would be better men. We would have deeper holiness, tenderer sympathy, wiser realization of truth and doctrine. Thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust, and thou art always fashioning us out of the dust that we may become men in Christ Jesus. He is the Son of man ; he is the Saviour of man ; he shed his blood for man ; may we live through him, in him, and for him, and then, death's cold shadow past, we shall live with him. Grant to all the old men here a renewal of youth ; may they forget their three-score years and more in the warmth of a New Year's Sabbath morning. Take up all the little children that are here, and kiss them into beauty. Speak to all the men of business who are here, and show them that the bread unleavened with dishonesty makes the best sustenance. Comfort the weak ; speak a word to him that is ill at ease ; be the counsel of those who are entering upon new schemes, undertaking strange adventures, or entering into unfamiliar enterprises. Go with our loved ones on long journeys by land and sea ; keep them, give them gladness of heart by the way, and a safe return to the love that awaits them. Succor those who are so sick that we cannot help them. Come thyself—Maker, Healer, Redeemer of Life—and let thy blessing make up the lack of our ability. Amen.

Acts xv. 13-29.

13. And after they had held their peace [G. became silent] James answered [xii. 17, James, the brother of the Lord—not the son of Alpheus—answers the messengers of Antioch as the president of the meeting. Note how fatally conclusive this whole narrative is against the primacy of Peter], saying, Brethren, hearken unto me :

14. Symeon [Luke xxiv. 34—Hebrew form of Simon] hath rehearsed how first God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written :

16. After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen ; and I will build again the ruins thereof.

17. and I will set it up : that the residue of men [Luke translates freely from the lxx. The Hebrew text has "residue of Edom," *i.e.*, those whom Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 7) had left unsubdued. But the idea on which James's argument rests is supplied by the next clause] may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord,

18. who maketh these things known from the beginning of the world ["saith the Lord who doeth," *i.e.*, accomplishes "these things," is the Hebrew close of Amos ix. 11, 12. Either the Hebrew text James quoted from memory, or the lxx. text Luke translated from may have had the addition "*things* known from the beginning of the world." Or, this

may be a remark of James or Luke. The idea is, that God is doing nothing *new* or *strange* to him when he thus brings in the Gentiles].

19. Wherefore my judgment is, that we trouble [G. "burden"] not them which from among the Gentiles turn to God ;

20. but that we write unto them, that they abstain from the pollutions of idols [Ex. xxxiv. 15], and from fornication [*so* common among Gentile idolaters, that the abstaining therefrom would appear rather a *ritual* than an *ethical* change], and from what is strangled, and from blood [(Gen. ix. 6). These regulations were *not* equivalent to the "seven precepts of Noah," observed by "devout" Gentiles, but simply *avoidances of heathen ritual* rendered necessary by the heathen of that time].

21. For Moses from generations of old hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath [and so the Jews and devout persons attending these synagogues would be *scandalized* if these four points were not strictly observed].

22. Then it seemed good to [v. 25 and 28. This commonest of Greek phrases has been made into an ecclesiastical formula by the hierarchists] the apostles and the elders [G. has no comma], with the whole church, to choose men [v. 25] out of their company [out of the church meeting], and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas : *namely*, Judas called Barsabbas [mentioned only in this passage], and Silas [Silvanus, 1 Peter v. 12], chief men [Luke xxii. 26 ; lit. : leaders] among the brethren :

23. and they [those who chose, *i.e.*, the meeting] wrote thus by them [G. "by their hand," *i.e.*, sent this letter with and by means of them]. The apostles and the elder [hierarchist copiers have omitted the following words "and the" in many MSS. Sahidic 34 omits also "brethren"; *Tischendorf* retains "and the brethren"; but our Revisers have followed the hierarchists. Were this unprecedented Greek phrase possible at all, the adjective would be very emphatic. "The ELDER brethren."—Or, as the Americans suggest, it may be imagined to mean, "the Elders : brethren," *i.e.*, the Apostles and the Elders in their capacity of brethren (church members)—greet the Gentile brethren (the churches at Antioch, etc.). The meaning given by the Revisers' reading (comp. v. 24) is that the "subverters" having falsely alleged the authority of the Apostles and the ELDER brethren, the Antiochian Church sent the deputation to sift this allegation, and now the Jerusalem Church sends back two of its own members, sending with and by them a letter, in which the Apostles and the ELDER brethren explicitly deny the "subverters'" report concerning themselves. *Tischendorf* is, however, right. Read harmoniously with v. 22, "the Apostles and the Elders and the brethren," *i.e.*, the church] unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting [G. "Rejoice !"].

24. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us [Gal. ii. 4, Paul styles them "false brethren." Incontestably they were not either apostles or elders, as the hierarchical gloss of the Revisers implies, but Jerusalem Church members. "From us" is equivalent to

“their company” of v. 22] have troubled you with words, subverting your souls ; to whom we gave no commandment ;

25. it seemed good unto us [the event of v. 22 is being related here] having come to one accord [vers. 7, 12], to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26. men that hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27. We [v. 22] have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves also shall tell you the same things by word of mouth.

28. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost [G. no comma], and to us [note how similarly Paul, being sent on this errand by the Antiochian Church, says he “went up by revelation.” For the question who were the “us,” see also v. 20, “that we write,” etc., and the “brethren” of v. 13], to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary [*i.e.*, of present necessity ; things rendered indispensable by the circumstances of the heathen cities] things ;

29. that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols [“concerning” which see 1 Cor. viii., and, for the general principle of these four temperance pledges, the last verse], and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication [put here separately last, with sense of the graver ethical point involved]; from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well.

THE DECISION OF THE COUNCIL.

WE now come to the conclusion of the whole matter. Some decision must be pronounced upon the vexed question which we have been considering, and that decision cannot but be of vital historical importance. This was a crisis in the history of the Church. The very greatest disasters might have befallen the Christian cause at this critical time. The man who, humanly speaking, saved the Church was Paul. From a human standpoint I have no doubt whatever that the Christian cause would have been lost in that furious debate but for this chosen vessel of the Lord. There was in him a fine spirit of conciliation as to manners and methods and usages ; but when it came to the liberty of Christ, and the independence of the Church, he stiffened into inflexibility, and he “gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour.” He was no circumciser, no baptist, no ritualist ; he would let nothing stand between the soul and Christ, or between Christ and the soul ; and the soul having begun in the faith, was not allowed to conclude in the letter—having begun in the

Spirit, it must not conclude in the flesh. The maxim of Paul was Upward, higher still from one attainment to another, without coming back to do anything that could minister to the desire of the flesh or the vanity of the eye.

The little picture that is before us enables us to look a little into the detail of early Church life. We have seen how high the controversy ran ; there was no small dissension and disputing ; every man thought he saw the truth and knew it, and sometimes the dust was so vast and thick that we could scarcely tell how the fight was going. In the fact that there was full discussion of the question, let us recognize the place of human thought and human independence in the consideration of Christian problems. We may all speak ; no man is to be put down who speaks upon a question sincerely : every man who is not speaking intelligently or sincerely will put himself down. I know of nothing in the record which would justify us in supposing that men were hooted down on whatever side they were speaking. In modern Christian controversy we have all seen lamentable spectacles in relation to this very matter of putting men down. I have never been ashamed of the Christian cause more deeply and insufferably than when I have heard an orthodox man employ a heterodox tone for the purpose of putting down an opponent. I have listened to the opponent and disagreed with nearly every sentence he uttered, and if the man who interrupted him had spoken, I might probably have agreed with every proposition he was seeking to establish ; but, in my soul, having heard the tone of the one man and the tone of the other, I have said the heretic may have the heterodox *doctrine*, but he has the orthodox *soul*, and this man has called "time" in a tone which proves him to be a heretic in his heart. Take care *how* you maintain a good cause. I have seen an infidel display a nobler spirit than has been shown by his nominally Christian antagonist. We stand not in the word only, but in the spirit : the Gospel must be preached in its own key. We may spoil the music of heaven by the harshness of a poor and selfish tone. So far as I can gather from the narrative, then, the discussion was full, impartial, and thorough. In the midst of all this due deference was paid to the apostles and elders, and the decision was pronounced by the President or Bishop. All things were done decently and in order. Decency and order are not ac-

cidents in chronology—they belong to the fixed calendar of progress, and are always in date, and when they are wanting the sanctuary is turned into a common place of assembly. Throughout all this intellectual and spiritual tumult there was a line of order, a spirit of decency ; every man was heard, and when every man had expressed himself, the proceedings were summed up, and sentence was delivered—not in the terms of the Bishop's own choosing, but in words which seemed to gather up into themselves the common sentiment of the excited and earnest assembly. That is our notion of the Christian Church.

This little picture marks the beginning of Christian *liberty*. A wrong step here, and Christian liberty would have been lost. Paul was raised up at the very moment of time. He who made havoc of the Church kept it together ; it was an arm terrific,—whether to strike or to build its energy was superhuman. Paul enlightened the whole Church—even James himself became almost a poet under the inspiration of this new voice. James quoted prophecies with a new tone and emphasis ; under the teaching and illumination of Paul's ministry the horizon of James widened, until he dwelt no longer in the ecclesiastical cage, but ranged the whole liberty of God's boundless firmament ! Sometimes the Church needs inspiration more than information. When the grate is full of fuel, what is wanting is not more fuel, but a light. James began to see that Christian liberty was founded on prophecy, “and to this,” said he, “agree the words of the prophets.” How did James become so great a man all of a sudden ? Because he had touched the Pauline spirit. Great men make great men. He who walketh with the wise becomes wise. No man could become less who held fellowship with Paul. The Apostle always saw some higher height, and always urged the soul on to some nobler liberty. Whilst many wanted to remain behind, cutting themselves with circumcision, washing and plunging and sprinkling themselves in baptism, he seemed to take hold of them, and say, “*Halt !*” “Why, yes,” said he, parenthetically, “there were one, or two, or three whom I baptized, but the circumstance was so transient that I paid no attention to it, for I have been sent to preach the Gospel.” When our leading men become entangled in alphabets, conjugations, tenses, and

declinings ; when they begin to betake themselves to “ standing orders ” and “ by-laws,” I know not in what terms to describe the disaster. Christian liberty was also attested by facts, as well as founded on prophecy. There was no novelty in it ; what we think is novelty has been in the Bible all the time. As we have often said, we do not need a new Bible ; we need new readers. Inspired books prove their inspiration by always revealing some new aspect of truth, some new phase of beauty. It was actually found that in the Old Testament this very question had been settled. In every synagogue Moses was read, and nobody understood him. Paul did not add one single line to the revelation ; he only said, “ Brethren read it so.” And after he read it, the Bishop of Jerusalem said, “ Why, the question has been settled from immemorial time—I see it now.” This man has caused the Bishop of the letter to burn with the fire and presence of the spirit. There are no new liberties. Even your Acts of Parliament, in so far as they are good, are only transcripts of the Bible. We may have references in the readings, and marginal notes, but here in God’s Volume is the great stream of thought, doctrine, liberty, out of which all that is good in collateral directions flows.

This little picture not only shows us early Church life, and not only shows us the beginning of Christian liberty, it also shows us *the right way of treating new converts*. Here we do need instruction. The Apostles taught new converts the doctrine of abstinence ; according to the teaching of the Apostles, new converts were to begin by not doing things. The trouble with our new converts in some instances is, that they are converted on Monday, and that on Tuesday they are promoted to eminences compared with which the elevation of Paul was a very small advancement. The Apostle said, “ Brethren Gentiles, you will do well to begin by not doing certain things.” For example, in every Gentile’s house, other things being equal, there were figures of idols, figures of gods, castings of deities. When the Gentile entered into his house, and passed in, he uncovered his head, or he made obeisance—in some way he acknowledged the stone god that was in his house ; he may have held his food before the god prior to eating it himself. The apostles and elders, and the whole Church at Jerusalem, said to the Gentiles, “ We do not want you to grind your stone idols to powder, but we want you to abstain

from paying any religious attention to them. Regard them as works of art ; but let there be no *religious* distance between them and you—except the distance that ought to intervene between an immortal man and a stony figure." The Gentiles were accustomed to have many wives ; the Apostles laid their interdict upon polygamy. The Gentiles were accustomed to follow certain savage rites and customs ; the Apostles desired that these arrangements might be abandoned. Therefore, I say, they began with the new converts by imposing a discipline of abstention. That is where we ought to begin. I do not say to a young heart, "Are you perfect?" I should thereby discourage the modest, self-distrustful soul. Rather would I say, "Do you want to be better?" And if the answer is a healthy "Yes ; please God, I should like to be better," that will do to begin with. Let no man vex you with words, seeking to subvert your souls by making metaphysical problems of the redeeming blood of Christ and love of God. The Apostles were content if men began by doing that which is well ; that is all they said in their letter, which concludes with these words : "from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well." We might have lived in the *apostolic* days, say some of us ; we would have felt warmer in soul if we had lived under apostolic rays than under modern criticism. The Apostles would have said to some of us, "You shall abstain from strong drink"; to others of us, "You shall keep away from exciting—we will not say demoralizing—amusements." The Apostles would have said to others of us, "You shall go regularly to church." If this were called legalism, the Apostles were accustomed to be stoned, and they thought nothing of it. If this were called morality, legality, the doctrine of merits, and of self-righteousness, the Apostles would not have been afraid to go to their duty, even though they had to go to it through the dangers of a hail-storm. The men who were accustomed to walk out under tempests of thunderbolts made but small account of hailstones of unintelligent and narrow criticism.

Thus would I speak this New Year Sabbath morning, to some who feel as if they needed a word of encouragement, because they could not go to the inner places of the sanctuary. Will you make me your teacher and drill-master in the sanctuary for one little day ? Then I accept the appointment, and I begin in your case

by telling you what you are *not* to do. Come now ; I am not a hard task-master, am I? You said you wanted to be better ; you supplied the initial ground. I only stand upon it, and instead of burdening you with great weights, and chafing you with unfamiliar yokes, and perplexing you by high intellectual exercises, I begin by saying to you, "Thou shalt not." Come to me at the end of a month, and tell me that you have kept the law, and I shall say, "You have done well." Next month I may appoint you something to do. We must grow ; we cannot shoot up into men in one short Sabbath day. Some of us must be fed with milk as babes, because we are children and not men. Do not expect too much of new-born souls. I would rather suspect the new-born souls that are precocious—especially if they turn their precocity into the criticism of their seniors. Men who are newly born into Christ's kingdom must be treated as little children are ; and the first lesson to the child is—"Thou shalt not."

This little picture shows some of *the happier aspects of controversy*. But for this controversy, who knows when Paul and James might have been brought together? And after the controversy was over, the Bishop writes these words : "Our beloved Barnabas and Paul." That was a happy ending of controversy. James wrote more than that. James looked at the question partly from the characters of the men who had sustained one side of it, and he called them "men that have hazarded their lives for our Lord Jesus Christ." So judge in every controversy. I have never known an infidel who was worthy to be spoken of in the same moment with the Apostle Paul. Against him were men sincere but uninformed, and also false brethren who crept in privily unawares. From them he separates himself by the infinite diameter of self-sacrifice and a heroic devotion to a cause so much greater than himself.

In all such cases ask who the men are? What have they done? What have they suffered? On the other side you will find "men who have hazarded their lives." This proof of devotion must go for something in the exciting controversy. It is not enough to be clever ; we must be true. It is not sufficient to imagine speculative difficulties ; we must live a life of unselfish devotion. The man who does most to enlighten human darkness, mitigate human distress, and comfort human hearts, is more

likely to be true and sound in spiritual philosophy and doctrine than the man who is only critical and not self-sacrificing. The Bible heroes of this kind claim the confidence beyond all other men that have lived—their doctrine, their testimony, brought them martyrdom ; they shrank not from the fire which sealed their sincerity and proved their conscientiousness. What have we done for the Lord Jesus? Come now, we will put it down on paper and look at it. I will be scribe, you dictate. I am waiting—what, not one line? Have we not begrudged every penny we ever gave him? Have we not begun our economies by pinching the bread of Christ? Have we not kept Him waiting at the door past midnight when the dews were falling thickly upon him? Have we not neglected his house on the smallest pretexts? We who have stood for hours in the rain to see a man perform a trick and deliver the poetry of another man—have we not neglected Christ's house because of the weather? We in whose cellars are dozens of choice wine—have we not neglected Christ's poor? Could we choose an epitaph, what would be so sublime as this: "A man who hazarded his life for the Lord Jesus"? Heaven might be condemned as too short of beauty and light for such a tenant. Methinks God's omnipotence would be moved to make some nobler heaven for heroism so sublime!

LI.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we are thine in Christ Jesus by an everlasting covenant. The law is dead, and has no charge against us in Christ Jesus thy Son. We do not live under the law, for all the law is fulfilled in one word—the sacred word love. Show us how great is thy mercy in Christ. We do not bear burdens, or carry heavy yokes ; we are not dragged back as by bit and bridle ; nor hast thou set over us a watch, as if we were hirelings in thy field ; we are saved by grace ; we are redeemed by blood ; we live no longer in the letter only, but in the life and breadth and liberty of the spirit. We are crucified with Christ, nevertheless we live ; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us. Lo, now we walk before God as children of his love, called by his grace, sanctified by his Spirit ; bearing upon our hearts the circumcision of adoption, we are free men, made free by the truth, and therefore made free indeed. May we not use our liberty as a cloak of licentiousness. May we know the meaning of liberty in Christ, that it is the liberty for the branch to abide in the Vine, and for all the lesser lights to revolve around the central Flame. May we know that we are the slaves of Christ, bondmen to him, having a joyous sense of bondage, a realization of captivity of mind, which amounts to thankfulness and rapture. Show us the wonders of the Gospel. We have tarried too long outside, beholding the wondrous provision as related in letters and books. In it we would, by the right of a common life, crowd all thyself, and in tender, loving sympathy with Christ would enter into the sanctuary of the Gospel, into the very Holy of Holies, and by the spirit of a new man would see and realize in happy consciousness and experience the infinite grace and tender love of God. Call us every day to some higher heights, where the dew is fresher, where the light is purer, where the air is healthier, and may our life be a continual ascension, so that, in the last moment, there may be no sense of violent separation, but a passing, as one hour melts into another, until the meridian shine in cloudless light. Few and evil are our days, full of sin and tumult, troubled with strange wonders, vexed by a thousand plans and schemes. We torture ourselves by day, and by night we spoil the sleep that should call back our youth, because of anxiety and fear. And our breath is in our nostrils, we hold everything but for the one moment. Lord, our prayer is, that we might count our days, one by one, with thoughtful economy, knowing the number and the measure, and wondering even to religiousness what the end can be, and what will happen

when we open our eyes after the sleep of death. Comfort us every one with sweet words, bring back all that is tenderest and brightest in the summers of the past, and make us feel to-day as if walking in the garden of the Lord. Enlighten our minds with a great light, and before our eyes unveil the vision which we know by the tender name of heaven. The Lord enter our houses by right of proprietorship ; the Lord make our bed in our affliction, and save our health in decay ; the Lord find for us bread when we can find none for ourselves ; when the wells are dry and the fields are bare, create for us pools in the desert, and find for us bread that is hidden away. The Lord go with those who must leave us for a time, and bring them back in safety and thankfulness ; the presence of the Lord make glad those who remain. The Lord speak comfortably to the old and inspiringly to the young, and may all heaven be so near us to-day, in Christ Jesus our Lord, that we shall forget the gray, cold, troubled earth ; and may we, waiting at the Cross, feeling the warm blood of Christ's own heart falling upon our shattered lives, be filled with peace and thankfulness and joy ; and may our spirits long for the City where the light of the moon is as the sun, and the sun is sevenfold in brightness. Amen.

Acts xv. 30-35.

30. So they, when they were dismissed, came down to Antioch ; and having gathered the multitude [the church, v. 22] together, they delivered the epistle.

31. And when they had read it, they rejoiced for the consolation [G., "comfort": contrast with the "trouble" of vers. 2 and 19].

32. And Judas and Silas, being themselves also [G., "also themselves"] prophets [*i.e.*, speakers as well as letter carriers], exhorted [G., "comforted" by speech, as the letter had] the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.

33. And after they had spent some time *there*, they were dismissed in peace [16, 36, usual formula of farewell] from the brethren unto those [*sci.*, those brethren ; back again from the one church to the other. The A. V. has here the hierarchist gloss "apostles"] that had sent them forth.

35. But Paul and Barnabas tarried in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also [Peter's visit, Gal. ii. 11, being subsumed *here*, has led many critics to dispute the authenticity of this whole narrative, see v. 1].

THE TRUE LAW OF ABOLITION.

I DO not wonder that when the letter, sent from Jerusalem, was read at Antioch, the people "rejoiced for the consolation." It was an historical day. Never brighter had shone

upon the young Church than when the Gentiles were told that, without any cutting of the flesh or any ceremonial processes, they were by faith in Christ Jesus sons of God and free men of heaven. We can hardly understand their ecstasy ; but if we do not make some attempt in that direction, we shall lose one of the broadest opportunities we ever had of understanding the philosophy of the Divine education of the human race, and we shall fall out of the rhythm of Christian progress and advancement. The question was one of circumcision. It is a term which we can only know historically ; but there is history enough before us to enable the intelligent mind to grasp the question in all its clearest and most particular bearings. We must think ourselves back a while : let us do so in a body. We must remember that circumcision was not a human invention, and therefore was not to be set aside by human authority. If you miss that point, all that may be said will be without coherence and pith. Circumcision was established by the Almighty himself, as is explained in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis ; the doctrinal verse is the tenth, and reads thus : “ This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee ; every man child among you shall be circumcised.” Language cannot be clearer ; no exception was made for infirmity, mishap, or peculiarity of any kind. The language is inclusive, authoritative, final. We wonder how such an institution can ever be set aside, especially as the word “ *everlasting* ” occurs in its establishment once and again. That word *everlasting* needs to be explained. It is not a mere question of time ; “ *eternal*,” “ *everlasting*,” are no arithmetical terms, or numeral quantities ; they are expressive of *quality*. The words are clear : “ My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant ” ; but what of the poor child that had not been circumcised for some reason ? “ That soul shall be cut off from his people ; he hath broken my covenant.” We cannot but become extremely excited as to how such an institution can be not only modified but abolished. The sanctity of the Sabbath was not violated by the performance of this rite. Christ Jesus himself founds an argument upon that point. In the seventh chapter of John the Jews are told by Jesus Christ, “ Ye on the Sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision . . . are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every

whit whole on the Sabbath day?" You have branded him with a token of the covenant, and I have completed in his flesh God's purpose of health and strength and typical immortality. The eating of the Passover was a great institution in Israel; no man might eat it except he had been circumcised. The law is laid down in Exodus, the twelfth chapter and forty-eighth verse: "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land; for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof." So even strangers were to be circumcised. This was the very argument of the Judaizing teachers in the Christian Church. They said: "In the olden time strangers were not admitted to the Passover except they were circumcised; so these Gentile converts cannot be admitted to the liberties and privileges of the Church, unless they have been circumcised too." And the men who reasoned thus seemed to have history and right on their side. Circumcision was not observed during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness. God was pitiful to his people then, for he knew their circumstances and allowed for them; but after the wilderness was past, Joshua was commanded to "make him sharp knives." The people that had been born in the wilderness were not circumcised, but now that process was to be undergone; and when it was accomplished the Lord said unto Joshua, "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." And in the evening, as the sun was slowly westering, dying like a king upon a couch of gold, on the fourteenth day of the month, the whole circumcised host of Israel kept the Passover in the plains of Jericho.

We wonder how such an institution, so solemnly organized and so repeatedly introduced, can be possibly set aside. We turn a page in the New Testament, and find John the Baptist was circumcised on the eighth day. We go on a few lines further, and we find that Jesus Christ himself was on the eighth day circumcised. There can therefore be no doubt about the Divine authority of the institution. You will see why I am so importunate about this presently. The mind must fasten itself with intelligent tenacity upon this initial point,—that circumcision was not a human invention, but a Divine institution. Stephen recognized

it as such in his great apology. In his Epistle to the Romans Paul also recognized it: "What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." How to escape from this I know not. It is not in us to invent a plan of liberation; there is nothing for it but the knife! How can deliverance arise? The first streak of light is in the second chapter of the Romans and the twenty-fifth verse: "For what profit is there in keeping the law? for if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." So there is a moral meaning, there is a spiritual suggestion in this. If my flesh is cut, is it not cut once for all? and will not the brand admit me to heaven? Paul says, No; what is done in the flesh is only a sign of what is expected in the spirit—obedience, keeping the law, doing it every whit, and if you fail in obedience, you might as well never have been circumcised at all.

We begin now to see light. In the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, to which we have come, we have what amounts to a formal abolition of circumcision as a condition of entrance into Christian communion and fellowship. The tone of the New Testament is infinitely different from the tone of the Old Testament. A few passages will show this. Take Paul in first Corinthians and seventh chapter: "Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." How different from what is written in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Genesis, where circumcision is called "my covenant," "an everlasting covenant"! And now Paul rises and says "circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing"! If one man is not to boast that he has been circumcised, neither is another to boast that he has not been circumcised. If you say you have been baptized, and begin to rejoice in it, you do wrong; and he also does wrong who boasts that he has not been baptized. Circumcision (baptism) is nothing, and uncircumcision (unbaptism) is nothing; the real thing, vital and unchangeable, is keeping the commandments of God. In his Epistle to the Galatians Paul says, "If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing . . . in Christ Jesus neither cir-

cumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ; but faith which worketh by love." And rebuking a certain sect of mistaken teachers, he said, " As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised."

We now begin to see that circumcision, like every typical rite, had a spiritual signification, and that the moment the spiritual purpose was realized, the mere type or symbol was done away ; not done away in the sense of violent abolition, but abolished as the noontide abolishes the dawn, or as summer abolishes spring, or as your manhood has abolished your infancy. There is nothing violent in the dispensations of God. The ages, like the planets, move calmly onward, melting into one another. The days do not contradict the ages that are gone, but ripen them and present them to us in noble maturity.

Here, then, is the law. Now I have the key, I can do many things. If I had not studied the subject of circumcision so closely and so long, I should have been lost at many other points. We have not studied this one question of circumcision for its own sake, but because here we have the key to many a door, and the solution of many a mystery. Take the question of the Sabbath. There can be no doubt of the Divine institution of the Sabbath day. In the Christian Church there can be no debate about this. " The Lord rested on the seventh day and blessed it," and afterward he embodied his purpose concerning it in a formal commandment. The hand of God has been upon the Sabbath day as certainly as it was upon the ordinance of circumcision. But circumcision is abolished, and so is the Sabbath day. But why is circumcision abolished? Because we have entered into the consecration which it implied. Now we do not cut the flesh, we give the life ; and now we do not keep the Sabbath day in the Judaic sense of the term, we keep it in the spirit. There are not now twenty-four hours in the Sabbath day ; the Sabbath day is seven days long. We do not give up the Sabbath day in the sense of not observing it, but in the sense of enjoying, in happy realization, the Sabbatic spirit all the week long. If circumcision had been violently disannulled as an inconvenience, or an inexpedient thing, the question would have been different, but it was kept long enough before the ages within whose compass it operated to show that God's meaning was circumcision of the

heart—obedience, love, sympathy, identification with the Divine purpose. So the Sabbath day is not a square piece, cut out of the week, but a spirit animating the whole time ; not discarding the day, but glorifying every hour of human life. The man who enters into this spirit will not have *one* Sunday in the week, but *seven*. He will not honour the day itself, as a mere fraction of time, with less honour, but with the more, that he does it, not according to the narrowness and bondage of the letter, but according to the liberty, the joyousness, and the resurrectional triumph of the spirit.

Take the matter of giving. There can be no doubt that God himself recognized this great institution of giving to himself. There are those who tell us that we ought to give one-tenth of our income to the Church, to charity, or to Christ (put the phrase as you please). There are those amongst ourselves who do this, or I see not how the Church could be maintained, amid the crowd of those who sneer at the Jewish practice. There are others of a still more advanced class who say the very least we ought to give one-tenth of our income. For myself, I believe that no arithmetical proportion is mentioned in the New Testament ; but how to set aside tithes was at all events endorsed by the Almighty under the old covenant.

Here we come back to our lesson. We do not give less if we be in Christ, we give more. We are not circumcised in the fore-skin, we are circumcised in the heart. We do not keep the Sabbath day because we are compelled to keep it, but because we love to keep it, and could not live without it. And we do not give a tenth as an arithmetical calculation, but as an oblation of love and an expression of sacrifice. Thus you have the upward way marked out most clearly. Show me where Christianity asks us to do less than circumcision ; to keep less than one day in the week ; to give less than one-tenth of our income. Christianity has not abolished the old law in any violent sense of befooling it and contradicting it, but in the sense of maturing it, carrying it up to its highest significations, so that those who once served in the bondage of the letter now serve in the liberty of the spirit. "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ." We needed all the discipline of formal submission and obedience to break down our rebellious hearts. Having been broken down

and saturated by the grace of God, and instructed in principles of the Divine kingdom, we now do not need to read the regulation-bill to see what we have to do next ; the Spirit is in us ; we are in sympathy with God ; we know it without being told. The law of Christ is written, not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly tablets of the heart. The Holy Ghost dwelleth in us, and to be circumcised makes us impatient ; we want to give the *whole life*. To be bound down to keep one day holy—we would give all the days in one grand offering to the Master's service. And to give a tenth would make us feel that we had fallen below the royalty of our calling, for we have nothing that we have not received, and all we have is God's.

So, you see, our study of the matter of circumcision was not a narrow study ; it led us up to a principle which explains all things. Shall I dare to apply this principle to the literal revelation itself which we call the Bible ? I can imagine the time coming when we shall not need a book, a Church, a ministry ! I have but to be faithful to the philosophy we have now traced in the Biblical history to see how the time may come when we shall have no need of candle, or moon, or sun, or written book, or preaching voice ! Yea, the time will come when he who is our Mediator shall rise, and God shall be All in All ! We shall not need them to read a book, for the Spirit will be within us ; then our Christianity will not be a question of "chapter and verse," but of inward conviction, spiritual sympathy, or actual life ; we shall be swallowed up of love.

So far we have gotten away from circumcision and baptism and the bondage of a merely literal Sabbath which begins at a certain hour, and ends at another ascertained and declared point of time. We are going forward, and the time will come when we ourselves will be revelations, and when we shall not need the dear old Book itself any more ; when in us will be the Word, which is as a well of water springing up into everlasting life, and we shall have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. But that time has not yet come ; that time is far off in the experience and consciousness of many of us. The age itself will close before that end is accomplished. Meanwhile, I need the sacramental bread and wine to help my poor reluctant memory. Meanwhile, I need the dear old church to fix my thoughts, and give a centre around

which my best affections may revolve. Meanwhile, I need the friendly preacher, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh, who has wrestled with the same temptations, and flung in mighty conflict the same great devils ! I need his human voice to say something to me in God's name, in the darkness and in a strange land. Meanwhile, I need all the Book, every page of it, from Genesis to Revelation, to comfort me, warn me, reprove me, and build me up in sacred doctrine and in noble wisdom. The time will come when there shall be no need of the sun, nor of the moon, nor of the stars. I saw the heavenly Jerusalem, and in it was no temple, no sun, nor light of the moon, for the Lamb is the light thereof.

Let God himself say when we shall do away with the lamps we now need, with the helps which are now essential to our progress ; it is not for us to put out a violent hand, and say, " This is the end." Let us obey. Law is never abolished by license. We go forward by the power of the Spirit, until hand-washing becomes heart-cleansing, until obedience becomes grateful acquiescence, until slavery becomes sonship, and until all the law is fulfilled in one word—love ; for God is Love. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, He who is our Intercessor shall close his mediatorial priesthood, shall rise from his seat and deliver up the Kingdom to God and his Father, and God shall be All in All ! But we can only understand and enjoy the end by patient submission to every point of the process.

LII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thy river is full of water ; we are consumed with thirst. If we drink of thy living water, we shall never thirst again. It shall be in us a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Lord, give us this water. We have tried all wells and streams, and, behold, they cannot quench the thirst of the soul. They mock our thirst ; they do but make the fire burn the more intensely. We turn away with disappointment and sorrow and bitter self-reproach, and ask that we may drink of the river which flows fast by the throne of God. There is a river of life, clear as crystal, holding in its depths all beauteous things, and throwing them back in splendid reflection, and so doubling the very heaven of God. The world is full of sin and sorrow, the earth is ripped up with graves, and the green things that live upon it wither whilst they grow. The air is full of death. Our friendship is broken by sad good-byes. Our joys will not bear drinking to the dregs. Our life is a sharp and fatal pain ; but when we turn to thyself, behold, all things are new. Even death is swallowed up in victory. The winter is preparing for the spring, and all the pain of this mortal life is turned into stimulus towards a nobler existence. In Christ we see things as they really are ; in Christ we triumph daily. He is the key which opens every door ; he is the answer to every question that troubles the soul ; he is the Saviour of the world. In his Cross we trust, to his Cross we look, for his blood we wait—there is cleansing in that fountain and in none other.

Help us to grow in knowledge, in love of truth, in devotion to the interests of thy kingdom, and may our latter end be more fruitful than our beginning, and as the years add themselves may they take away nothing from the youthfulness of our souls.

We give thee humble and hearty thanks for all the blessings of this life. We have bread for ourselves, and a portion for him that is hungry. We have houses that are homes, warm with love, and filled with the riches of mutual trust. Upon our business thy sun has shone so that our one talent has become two, and we have ten at the end where we had five at the beginning. Our basket and our store thou hast blessed, as if they were living things, and could love thee for thy smile. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? We will render our whole unbroken daily love, and always urge ourselves to do some better thing than we have yet attempted. Show us what we may see profitably of the future, and keep back from our eyes sights that would make them blind.

Let the future come to us a day at a time, and with it send daily force equal to the stress of the occasion. Comfort us when none other may speak to our dejected souls. Open gates for which we have no key ; and when the hill is high and bleak, rising far above the summer line, and setting up a testimony of winter all the year long, help us over the rugged summit, and help us on the very top to build an altar unto God.

Remember our dear ones who are not here. Some are on the sea ; some are far away in other lands ; some are preaching the Gospel to the heathen ; some are on beds of pain ; some are wandering into a land where there is nothing to eat but stones, where there is nothing but a great wilderness. We call them prodigals, straying ones. Our short prayer cannot reach them, but thy grace is greater than their sin, and may become a Gospel to them without the help of the words of man.

God save the Queen ; establish her throne in righteousness, and prolong her reign in personal and imperial comfort. Upon all her house send a plentiful rain of blessing. Guide our legislators, our highest thinkers, our noblest spirits, and baptize all who need a daily baptism and a double portion of thy Spirit, so that the land may prosper and become a blessing to other empires.

We now wait for the touch we cannot mistake, for the warm breath of heaven, for the outlooking from behind the cloud of the eye of Christ. If we might have one glance of that eye, fixed upon our waiting hearts, we would forget time and space, earth and death, sin and fear, and be lost in an infinite joy. Amen.

Acts xv. 36-41.

36. And after some [G. "certain"] days, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us return now and visit the brethren in every city wherein we proclaimed the word of the Lord, *and see* how they fare [Paul's *second* missionary journey thus began as a simple visitation of the new churches].

37. And Barnabas was minded [wished] to take with them John also, who was called Mark.

38. But Paul thought not good [G. "right"] to take with them him who withdrew from [G. "apostatized for them"] them [xiii. 13] from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work [Mark *may* have vacillated in doctrine also at this juncture, as did Peter].

39. And there arose a sharp contention ["an embittered feeling," Jer. xxxii. 37], so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark [Col. iv. 10] with him, and sailed away unto Cyprus ;

40. but Paul chose Silas [who had again returned when he had fulfilled his commission of v. 33], and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord [see also Philem. 26 and 2 Tim. iv. 11].

41. And he went through Syria and Cilicia [each went towards his native *home*. I Cor. ix. 9] confirming the churches.

THE SEPARATION OF PAUL AND BARNABAS.

WE are now out in the open air again. For some days we have been in a stifling atmosphere, listening to great men debating and determining the vexed question of circumcision. Now we come into another and quieter region. Surely we now feel more at home than in the council of the Apostles listening to contradictory and irreconcilable voices. We feel our need of rest, after the passionate excitement through which we have gone. We will now live amongst friends, and be quiet and trustful, and will grow silently but surely in our apprehension of Divine mysteries and purposes. Yet this is not to be. We come out of one contention into another. This is life all through and through—namely, a series of conflicts. The ground changes, the combatants change their personnel, but the undertone of life is a tone of controversy, disputation, conflict; and a superficial view of life would seem to confirm the suspicion that we do not advance in righteousness, but in mutual distrust and social alienation.

Now, Paul and Barnabas come before us in an undesirable light. Observe Paul's love of work—"Let us go again." Into that "again" what quiet and throbbing earnestness he threw! It has been well said that Paul was bitten again with mission hunger. He was no stay-at-home; he could hardly be kept within doors; he must go out, either to fight or to build. They only are in the Apostolic succession who are in the Apostolic spirit. Hereditary descent is not to be reckoned with Apostolic succession, in the sense of entering into the very spirit and purpose of Apostolic heroes. He will not have any one with him who has broken down. He says he will take a staff, but it will be a staff that is sound at the core. Paul could not trust a staff that had once snapped in his hands. He himself was earnest; therefore he could not tolerate insincerity. There was no breach in his all but infinite integrity, and therefore a flaw to him was not an accident but a crime in other men.

In his criticism of Mark, Paul gave a criticism of himself. His judgments of other men were revelations of his own spirit. Paul meant his work to be solid and enduring. This was the very purpose he had in view—namely, to consolidate young believers and immature thinkers and students; and to take with him, on

such a mission, a man who himself had turned back from the plough, was an irony which vexed his soul. If he had been going out to make experiments, he might have taken with him such instruments as lay ready to his hands ; but his purpose was to " confirm the Churches," to make them stronger and stronger ; and to be working with an instrument which had already broken down in his hands was not only a contradiction in terms, but a moral irony, from which his very spirit recoiled. Everything depends upon the kind of work you are going to do. For some kinds of work fickle men may serve a useful end. There is a place in the Church for every one, and that is the problem which many Christian communions have not solved. The Papacy has solved it ; but the Papacy is, from a statesman's point of view, the grandest and mightiest organization on the face of the earth. The Papacy can use all sorts of men ; Protestantism can use only one or two kinds. We must learn to employ men in proper departments who do not come up to the Pauline standard of excellence. We may be good men, and yet broken here and there. Do not throw away any man for the sake of one fault, or even two. There may be a great deal of soundness in the apple that has upon it one patch of rottenness. We may be working for Christ without being counted worthy to rank with the " first three."

Barnabas comes out in a new light ; he is willing to give a man another chance in life. By so much he was a great man. I love this aspect of his nature. In this respect I love Barnabas more than Paul. From the point of righteous discipline, Spartan sternness, there can be no doubt of the grandeur of Paul ; but a man who would give a youth another chance seems to me to have in him the true spirit of the Cross, and to represent the charity of Christ. Some of you are too stern ; the sternness may not be righteousness, but selfishness. Take heed how you administer discipline. You turn off your young men because they may injure your business, or jeopardize some of your commercial relations, or hinder you in some purpose in life. Commercially, that is right ; but we are not all commercial travellers. We profess to use the balances of the sanctuary, and to imbibe daily the spirit of Christ, and reflect constantly the lovingness of the Gospel. Barnabas may have said in effect, " What you say about

my nephew is literally correct, but give him another chance." Thank God for the few men here and there who are willing to try us again! We owe them our lives: we ought to live for them. Could any man say a word against them, we ought to spring instantly with the weight of our whole energy to their protection and vindication. They are, in the truest sense of the word, our helpers and friends and best philosophers. Barnabas was invincible. We have hitherto considered him only a kind, well-disposed, loving man, who would sit down anywhere, or stand up, or go or come, just as some superior nature might suggest or require. Such are often amongst the sternest men. Barnabas said to Paul, "No!" and even Paul could not change that No into a Yes. Afterwards the judgment of Barnabas was vindicated. Barnabas was in this respect a farther-sighted man than Paul. Thank God, Paul was not infallible! We must not preach an infallible Paul. There is only one infallible person in the Church, and he is its Lord; and it is well to find out the failings of even Pauline heroes, that they may sit down in the presence of the One Immaculate Righteousness and Infallible Wisdom. Paul was but a man at the best; he himself said so. "Who then is Paul and who is Apollos," said he, "but ministers, servants, and slaves of Christ?" In this respect Barnabas was a greater man than Paul. He is the great man who penetrates character, and he is not necessarily a great man at all who only judges by facts which he cannot dispute. He is the true intellectual reader who says about a young man, before the young man does one stroke of work, "He has the Spirit of God in him, and the indestructible seed of the kingdom." And he who, twenty years after, simply gives in to facts is not a man of penetration at all. He simply affirms what he cannot deny. "He was my friend" (the old man may say) "who spoke kindly and hopefully to me before I began my work. Looking at me altogether—for a man is not all head, or hand, or foot—but taking in stature, colors, shape, force, unction, look, voice, he said, 'This man will do wonders for Christ.'" Another observer says: "We must wait and look and carefully adapt such evidence as the passing days may contribute towards the formation of a judgment." Twenty years after, the second man said, "After all this long service, I am bound to say that he

is a better man than I first supposed." That is not a judge of character, nor is that a eulogium, nor is that praise worth having. The man that read the soul was the man of prescience, and the man to whom intellectual honour and moral homage must be paid. Young man, live in the warm sunshine of those who hope the best about you. You owe nothing to the men who affirm your excellence when they cannot deny it. Some men found their judgments on what they call proofs. Barnabas founded his estimate of his nephew upon what he believed to be the inner quality and character of the young man's soul. I am thus at some pains to strip the Apostle Paul of his imagined infallibility. I repeat, there is only One who judgeth righteous judgment, and that is Christ; and the highest archbishop amongst us, if he know himself, will acknowledge that he is a fallible, sinful, erring creature.

There are mitigating circumstances in this controversy—both men were honest. It is something to have to deal with honest men, even when they oppose you. I respect an honest opponent infinitely more than an insincere friend—nay, he cannot be a friend who is capable of insincerity. Another mitigating circumstance is, that the contention was not about the Master. Paul and Barnabas did not take two different views of Christ. They are not going to found separate theological sects. Another mitigating circumstance is, that the work was not abandoned, but was doubled. Instead of one missionary excursion, there were two. Barnabas went to his native land, and the leonine Paul struck out for regions at once unfamiliar and unknown. The destinations they selected were revelations of the spirit of the men. Barnabas goes into obscurity, Paul rises like a sun into a broader firmament. We have already said good-bye to Peter, so far as the acts of the Apostles are concerned, except incidentally; so now we must say good-bye to Barnabas and Mark. At this point they both retire from the Acts of the Apostles. The withdrawal is in a kind of thunderstorm. Surely this cannot be all; surely the night does not settle so suddenly on Christian friendship and Apostolic brotherhood. Barnabas and Saul played together in the streets of Tarsus as boys: Barnabas was a friend, when Christian friends Saul had none. Barnabas took him by the hand when every one entertained concerning him the most inveterate suspi-

cion. They cannot part in this way ! The paroxysm was intense ; but men like Barnabas and Paul, lifelong friends, must not be rent asunder, the one from the other, by a comparatively trivial incident like this. Is it so that our choicest friendships may die ? May love be lost in anger ? May comrades part as foes, hot with mutual displeasure ? We must know more about this. In first Corinthians, ninth chapter and sixth verse, Paul says, " Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working ? " There Paul acknowledges that Barnabas, with himself, had acted a noble part in reference to the Churches, because, whilst they had the right to all the Churches could do for them, in the way of temporal support, they declined to accept the legitimate patronage, and resolved to work for their bread with their own hands. And Mark—what became of him ? After he had worked with Barnabas in Cyprus, he returned to Peter, his spiritual father ; and in his first Epistle, the fifth chapter and thirteenth verse, Peter writes these words : " The Church that is at Babylon . . . saluteth you ; and so doth Marcus my son. " He was not lost, then. But did Paul know about his restoration ? Read Colossians, the fourth chapter and tenth verse, where Paul says, " Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, saluteth you. If he come unto you, receive him. " This is a touch of love Divine. In writing his short letter to Philemon, Paul says, in what we have marked as the twenty-fourth verse, " Marcus, my fellow-laborer. " They had come together again in service. Now Paul becomes an old man, a grand old warrior ; and, writing his second letter to Timothy, he says, in the fourth chapter and the eleventh verse, " Take Mark, and bring him with thee ; for he is profitable to me for the ministry. " Well done, Mark ! Well done, Paul ! The position of the Apostle was not an easy one ; for he confessed that in the first instance he had at least acted impulsively, though honestly. Few men have moral courage to correct themselves openly, to acknowledge that they were wrong in judgment and to repair wrongs which, however unconsciously, they once inflicted. Now Paul becomes almost infallible ; our whole love goes back to him without stint or grudge. Truly, he is now a great man. Once he said to Mark, in effect, " You shall not go, because you are a bruised reed, or a broken staff ; having put your hand to the plough, you turned back and showed your-

self to be not fit for the kingdom of God." But Mark worked on under gentle auspices, recovered himself, and became, for him, quite a little hero in his own way. Paul said, "This is brave, this is good, this is noble"; and he called Mark his "fellow-labourer," told the Colossians to receive him, and bade Timothy bring Mark with him, because he was profitable to Paul in the ministry.

Acknowledge your faults. If you have done wrong to any young man, or if you were right at the time, and that young man has lived to contradict your judgment, say so frankly to him. Do not take refuge in the mean vanity, the petty and detestable fraud, which will not acknowledge a fault. A young man, then, may redeem his character. I speak to many young men now, and in Christ's spirit as well as in Christ's name, I offer them, where they need it, a new chance in life. You did act basely once, but that is no reason why you should continue to act basely to the end of your days. Why not stand up, and frankly acknowledge the baseness, and ask to be forgiven? There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. You once spoke a harsh word, and said you would do no more work for the Church, and give no more money or help to it in any way. Even Apostles have before this spoken in paroxysms and excitement, and then, when they came to their true selves, they did their best to obliterate the unworthy past. What say you? You once told a lie; you need not therefore always be a liar. Here is a new day—the Lord's day—full of sunlight, and this is God's house, built within the shadow of Christ's cross; and here is the Son of God, and he says to each of us, "Try again, do not despair; in my strength pluck up courage and do better next time." Why, I hope that all young men will spring to the noble challenge, and say, "By the help of God, we will rub out the past and live in Christ's grace and strength; so that at last we will be called his fellow-labourers, and be received, not by Apostles into a temporary home, but by the 'general assembly and the Church of the first-born' into our Father's house."

LIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our heart is full of praise, and our tongues would bless thee in thine own house, in the morning light of thine own day. This is our joy in Christ thy Son ; in him alone have we liberty, because in him alone we have pardon and purity. We would that our liberty might grow into our highest joy, so that, though standing in the decrees of God, we might feel upon us the warm sunshine of infinite love. We would be thine, and therefore truly our own. We would derive our proprietorship from God, and hold ourselves at thy gracious bidding ; thou art Sovereign, but thou art also Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he revealed and represented, and to whom he called us by the words of his teaching and by the pathos of his death. By thy good Spirit we have accepted and obeyed the call, and now we are all here before God to acknowledge our sin, to mention our mercies by name, and to praise the Lord with a loud and unanimous hymn for all his tender compassions. Thou hast kept our house about us, our table has been spread, the birds have sung in our roof-tree, and the fire has gone up to heaven whence it came, as if consciously obedient ; in our bed we have found sleep, and our tired eyes have been brightened again by rest ; the staff is not broken, there is still meal in the barrel, and oil in the cruse ; thou hast blessed us, and we will bless thee, yea, our whole life shall be a doxology never ceasing, always increasing. We are the guests of God, we eat at his table, we sleep in his arms, we awake within the circle of his love, and we go in and out because of his almightiness. Break our hearts where they are hard ! Destroy our will where it is not thine own ; put thy sword through every evil desire, and cut in two every purpose that is not rooted in wisdom and in love. May the weak man or woman become strong ; to the perplexed give an unexpected answer of grace ; to the heavy-laden give strength that shall carry the burden as a plaything ; to those who are out of the way, burdened with darkness that has no limits, cold with winter wind blowing from all points of inclement heaven, send warmth from thine own hidden fire ; to those who cannot pray in words send the spirit of supplication. Thou knowest us altogether, and in that fact we find our rest. We are here but for a little time. To-morrow we shall be gone, and the place that knoweth us now shall know us no more for ever ; the air is full of farewells ; the earth opens itself to offer the hospitality of death, and we are hastening like a post, flying like a shuttle, vanishing like a cloud ; there

is no figure in all thy universe to represent the instability of our present life! We now take hold of hands, and take hold of hearts, and as one man, standing at the Cross, invoking the name that is above every name, we give ourselves to thee! Seal us, give us the spirit of adoption, help us to say with the heart, Father! let the last cruel link of Satan's iron chain fall away from our life, and give us liberty! Amen.

Acts xvi. 1-5.

1. And he came also to Derbe [reversing his former progress along the same road, which he now entered upon through the "Cilician Gates," a huge fissure in Taurus, 80 miles long] and to Lystra: and behold, a certain disciple was there [at Lystra, see xiv. 19], named Timothy, the son of a Jewess [Eunice, 2 Tim. i. 5], which believed [G. a "female Jewish believer"], but his father was a Greek [G. "Greek"].

2. The same was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.

3. Him would Paul have to go forth with him [Silas for Barnabas and Timothy for young John Mark]; and he took and circumcised him [did it *himself*, as every Jew might, Luke i. 59], because of the Jews [the illiberal party among the Jews forbad Jewesses as well as Jews to marry Gentiles, and accounted the offspring of such as did illegitimate. *They* had therefore *not* circumcised Timothy, while those of their party who had joined the Jerusalem Church *insisted upon* the circumcision of the Gentile Titus. The liberal Jews, on the contrary, allowed Jewesses to marry Gentile husbands, and circumcised their male offspring on the principle "*partus sequitur ventrem.*" These would be the kind of persons Paul hoped to convert. So far from being inconsistent, Paul was AS EMPHATICALLY *opposed to Judaistic bigotry* when he circumcised the Jewish youth Timothy as he was when he refused to circumcise the Gentile youth Titus (Gal. ii. 3)] that were in those parts [see xv. 21]: for they all [both parties of the Jews] knew that his father was a Greek.

4. And as they went on their way through the cities, they delivered them the decrees [Luke ii. 1] for to keep, which had been ordained of the apostles and elders [cf. xv. 1 and 2, with xv. 24] that were at Jerusalem.

5. So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

INCIDENTAL ASPECTS OF APOSTOLIC LIFE.

PAUL took Silas with him, but still there was a sense in which he must have been alone. He could not give up a man like Barnabas and think no more about him; we cannot shake off our old associations and pay no heed to the sweet and

tender memories of the time that is gone. He who can forget old friends is no Apostle of Jesus Christ. Besides, Paul was going, as he himself phrased it, "*again*" unto churches where he had ministered, and into churches which he himself had founded. The people would ask questions whatever he himself might resolve to do ; they would wonder who the stranger was ; they would ask about Barnabas. Here is a side of life that we may but indicate, and dare not attempt to reveal or exhaust. Awkward questions are asked about old friends, old service, and old associations. A man suddenly asks you how you like your church life now, and you have to say, perhaps, that you have given it up. The man is then sorry that he asked the question, nevertheless it cut you in your very soul like a sword with two edges, so that the drawing out of it was as cruel as the putting of it in. We ask questions that open graves and heart-wounds and memories we wish to seal up and leave until the fuller light shall come which shall bring warmth and comfort as well as revelation. The man who has not seen you for years asks you how that sweet little boy of yours is, and it seems to you incredible that a grief that filled your house with darkness had not made itself known to him who was your friend. You say he has passed through the gate into the city. Your friend is sorry that he touched your wound almost ruthlessly, but he meant it in love, and you excuse him. Paul could not go over the old ground without the Churches saying—"And Barnabas?" What must Paul's answer have been? He was a faithful man, true as steel, pure as gold refined : he knew not the genius of equivocation and the fine art of telling lies. In such questions and such answers he might find the chastening and correction needed by his fervid temper. We have to account for old associations being ruptured, we have to explain new faces and new relationships. Happy would Paul have been if he had said : "We have agreed to part, we thought it better for the interests of our common cause. Barnabas has gone in one way, and I have gone in another, and when we meet, will not the day be Sabbath day, and our conversation warm as the love of heaven?"

Paul came to Derbe and Lystra. "And behold, a certain disciple was there named Timotheus." Long ago we read in these pages that the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet

of a young man whose name was Saul. Thus we begin. We begin in obscurity, we are pointed at as hardly to be identified, to be seen rather as men in the shape of clouds, than really living figures. A tree does not show its roots. If the foolish tree could be taking itself up in order to show its antecedents, it would soon be killed. Our root life must be hidden, and all that we have to do is so to lift ourselves up in God's light and rain, as to bring forth leaf and bud and blossom and luscious strengthening fruit. "Herein is my father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit." We may be now nothing more than "certain disciples" named without a name, revealing an unknown name to show that it was a name unknown. But we may still be disciples, scholars, learners, students, inquirers, eagerly waiting for more light, and sometimes almost irrationally impatient with the sun for not shining more brightly upon the page we are anxiously perusing. We can never be more than "disciples"; the saints are disciples, so are the angels, yea, the archangels that by Divine sovereignty were permitted to break up Divine solitude are still disciples! The point can never stretch itself across the whole line, the finite must ever be position without magnitude, sustaining no appreciable relation as to magnitude to the Infinite! We shall always be obscure in the universe. Timotheus attains to great fame in the little place that gave him birth, and becomes quite a well-known man in larger spaces; but in relation to the universe, the empire of stars and planets, the kingdom of constellations and of sky upon sky full of radiant cities of God, why, Paul himself is an unknown name! We find our joy in discipleship. It is enough for us to have the Book, to be reading it; and whenever we turn over a page we celebrate a birthday. Read on, poor old pilgrim; trim thy glasses, dull with the dew of tears, and look again; thou shalt have young eyes by-and-by, and begin to read quite freshly; there is no old age in heaven!

"The son of a certain woman which was a Jewess . . . but his father was a Greek." Happy man, to stand between two civilizations! This was an honour which in his early years Timotheus could not appreciate; but could any relationship be sublimer? Greek for a father, and Jewess for a mother! What must the boy have been? Two such fires meeting in his blood;

two such histories recounting themselves in articulate eloquence in his memory! What his inward ear must have heard! What stirrings there must have been in his soul! How able to look well round him and to understand, distantly and somewhat indistinctly, it may be, the mystery of Law and the mystery of Beauty! His religion might go up into superstition, his philosophy might develop into scepticism and sneering; if he touched Christ, he touched One who to the Jew was a stumbling-block and to the Greek foolishness, but to the believing Timothy the power of God and the wisdom of God. We ourselves know somewhat of this double relationship in life. Your mother prayed—your father never prayed; or your father was a believer and your mother had no faith. You are a child of the night and of the day, and you feel it, and sometimes you are plunged in the darkness of the one parentage, and sometimes you are away on the bright broad wings of the other into the light. To the world, not understanding that your mother was Jewish and your father Greek, you are a contradiction and a mystery. But is it possible that a Jewess could marry a Greek? I should have said, No, but for what *you* have done; you make it possible to believe that a Jewess may have married a Greek. I have know a religious man marry a woman who never prayed; that is a greater miracle than a Jewess marrying a Greek. I have known a Christian woman marry an alien who had sung her hymns in hypocrisy that he might impose upon her credulity. There is, therefore, no difficulty whatever, after English experience, in believing that long centuries since a woman who was a Jewess married a man who was a Greek.

Timothy "was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium." Character is very subtle. Timothy never asked any man to speak well of him, and yet no man could speak ill of the youth. We must not ask for characters, we must so live as to be indisputably trusted and honoured. Do not appeal to one another's charitable judgment for a character, but so live that character will come. Character grows; character has its own seed in itself; character is not put on; it develops, increases, shows itself without ostentation, and throws a subtle claim upon confidence without ever pandering for patronage. Young man, you who are as young as Timothy was at the time of the text,

your character is known. Do not suppose you are living in darkness ; men say of you, " We cannot account for it, but that young man excites suspicion ; we cannot lay our finger upon one thing he ever did, to our knowledge, that is wrong, but——" and then come the indications which cannot easily be put into words, but which are so expressive as to leave no doubt of the speaker's deepest meaning. On the other hand, thank God, every hill has a sunny side. Men are regarding other youths one by one, saying, " He is true," " He is honest," " He is to be trusted," " He is energetic," " He is persevering"; " We cannot give you dates and facts, but our whole feeling about him is that he is sound as an oak." Live your character ; do not be painted as good men, but paint your own character in your own blood. The true man cannot be hidden though he be in a bush ; he will burn through it and attract the notice of wandering men and speak to them the Divine mysteries.

" Him would Paul have to go forth with him." Paul could not do without youth. Had not Paul Silas along with him ? Yes ; but he said, I must have a young voice near me ; I like the ring of young speech. I wanted to bring Mark, who was young enough, but I could not bring myself to accept his association, any more than I could persuade myself to bring a staff that was broken in the middle ; but I love youth. A young man can run, a young man is not burdened with a sense of his own respectability ; a young man is here, and there, and yonder, and back again before we know well what instructions we have given to him. God bless the young life ! Paul must have a boy with him, a disciple, one who was spelling out letters and words of one syllable, but whose young blood was aflame with sacred and sacrificial enthusiasm. He proved himself to be an Apostle by his love of the young. There are those who would snub the youthful soul, who would not permit him to be seen or to be heard. Paul loved the young, took them with him, and would never give them up so long as they were true ; but if ever they began to shake in his hands and prove themselves fickle, he would give them up and their uncle Barnabas with them. He must have steadfastness, faithfulness, resoluteness ; a soldier could not do with a coward ; only be true, and Paul would be your lifelong friend.

He took and circumcised Timothy. This from Paul, who would not circumcise Titus ! But the reason is given : " because of the Jews which were in those quarters : for they knew all that his father was a Greek." Timotheus was partially of Jewish descent ; it was therefore no breach of the Apostle's stern policy that, under circumstances so peculiar, he should respect a temporary prejudice. Now they start, Paul, and Silas, and Timotheus. " And as they went through the cities they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." Do not be afraid of the word " Decrees" in this connection. We have seen what those decrees were ; they were decrees of liberty. What they signed was the Magna Charta of the Church ; not a set of opinions, dogmas, superstitions, and decrees which were to bind down the human mind and fetter and overweight men's aspirations, but they were decisions pointing in the direction of ever-widening liberty and light. It was freedom centred in God and in the Cross of Christ. Christ's followers are not lawless ; they have decrees to keep. The spirit of authority is the spirit of rest when it brings with it the assurance that the authority is not arbitrary but rational, not local but universal, not imperfect but Divine.

" So were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." These are the true results which must accompany every true mission. The results are two, in number—edification first, and evangelization second. The word was established, the numbers increased. That is a true report of true work. Men must go from church saying, That is right ; this Gospel is better than was at first imagined ; this truth is larger, warmer, fuller than our awakened fancy had conceived it possible. Every Sabbath day must find us at its close a Sabbath day's journey nearer home. " The number was increased." In every Christian discourse there should be some word of welcome to outsiders. The guest table is not yet filled ; David's place is empty. There is a chair for you ; why do you not come to the King's table ? Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Why spend your strength for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not ? Why try to feed upon the wind ? Why sow seed upon the wide sea as if

you could turn the troubled waters into a harvest-bearing field? Why attempt to do the impossible? Hear Christ's great and sweet word, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thus when the sun sets to day and stars come trooping out one by one—an assembly of light—we shall be able to say, speaking to our reigning Lord in the high heavens, Thy saints are established, and their number is increased!

LIV.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, for the Sabbath day we bless thee. It is quiet, solemn ; always lifting itself towards the heaven whence it came. May our spirits be lifted up and see the Lord with the vision of their love. This is the day the Lord hath made ; thy finger-prints are upon it ; thy smile is its light, thy love its seal and warranty of peace. This is the day of resurrection ; to-day we think of death despoiled, of opened graves, of life and immortality, incorruption and heavenly triumph. To-day all mean thought is out of place. In such a light as this our souls would put on their beauty, and with the holiness given by Christ would shine out with a radiance above the brightness of the sun. Show us that this is Christ's day, Gospel day, triumph day ; time that might be envied of all other time. May we enter into the spirit of the golden day, and be ourselves full of light and grace and truth and love. Standing before God, near the Cross, by which alone we are saved, worshipping the Three-in-One, the One-in-Three, not to be understood, but to be loved with all the passion of the heart, sanctify the day again, and sanctify us to be worthy of its memories, and fill us with the Holy Spirit. May this house be unlike all others. May the speech we hear in this place have nothing in it of the accent of earth, or time or measurable things. May the music of the Spirit steal upon the listening soul, that we may be glad with seven-fold Sabbath—the deepest peace of God himself. If we have brought with us any of the stain of the week, if we are travel-worn, if even upon our sandals or our staff there be signs of earth, take away such debasement and make our feet clean as our head and our heart are pure. Read thy book to us, Father of all thought and spirit ; we cannot read it except as we read common books ; come thou and read it, even thou who didst write the eternal page, and let our souls hear thy reading and they shall never be grief-stricken any more. Regard us as burden-bearers, travellers, hard workers, suffering many things every day, to whom life is often only a pain, sometimes a weight we cannot carry, and occasionally a very ecstasy of Christian joy. Command thy blessing to rest upon us in every relation which we sustain. May the house be happy, yea, quite a home, sacred because of thy triune presence. Send light into every window, wherever it may look. Keep thou every door of the house, and let no enemy enter therein, and no friend go away. Make our bed in our affliction, and when human voices grate and jar upon our wounded hearing speak with thine own voice, thine own tender speech. Let the hus-

land work harder than ever. Let the wife be filled with a new gladness. Let the little child sing song upon song, as if its very life were music, and may all the household, from the eldest to the youngest, from the highest to the lowest, be as a gathered Church singing doxologies and receiving benedictions. Go out with us when we go to business—hard, mocking, weary trade, full of lies and hypocrisy so often, sometimes nearly honest, rarely a thing that may be spoken of without shame. Help us to win what bread we want with an honest hand, and to eat it with the appetite of thankfulness, and enjoy it because it has passed through thy hands. Heal our sick ones; the poor child that is withering away, and to whom the parents tell lies of love every morning. The Lord give the physician wisdom and tenderness, that he may treat the case wisely and sympathetically. The Lord turn the mourning of the bereaved into the joy of the expectant; may they look across the little river which separates the spaces of thy universe, and see what is to be the Sabbath of immortality. Bless our friends every one, here and there, with us to-day, or not with us because of sickness, or travel, or divers arrangements of thine own providence. Bless the stranger within our gates. Look upon our friends from Madagascar who are worshipping with us. We thank thee for their Christian character and Christian steadfastness, and though they may not follow us in the unknown language of this prayer, behold their lifting up of heart, and let the turning of their eyes unto heaven be unto thee as a prayer. Prosper their good cause. In due time take them home again; and may England often be enabled to point to Madagascar as a miracle of the Cross of Christ. Regard all who are missionaries abroad—men who have hazarded their lives for the Lord Jesus. Make every land their home, and in every man may they find a Christian brother. God save the Queen, the *best* of her race and line! Establish her throne, and make her life begin again to-morrow, and continue it long and happily. Disappoint all her enemies; prosper all her counsellors that are inspired of God, and bring to naught the machinations and selfishness of corrupt and miserable men.

The Lord be with us this holy day, and at night may we be filled with a strange wonder, a singular joy, a gladdening of heart which will make us think of heaven more than of earth. Amen.

Acts xvi. 6-12.

6. And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia [although Paul travels *in the same direction*, these names are introverted in xviii. 23. Hence Galatia is the *political*, Phrygia an *ethnographical* term. The *local* name of *this* part of the region was Lycaonia (ch. xiv.); of the *next*, Pisidia (Antioch): the common people still spoke a Phrygian dialect (xiv. 11). Paul called these people Galatians when he wrote to them from a distance, Galatia being their province], having been forbidden of the Holy Ghost to speak the word in Asia [ii. 9, vi. 9, and xx. 16. The *west coast*

of Asia Minor. At Antioch the road branched off leading to Ephesus and South-western Asia. Farther on another road branched off to North-western Asia (Mysia). *All Asia* being forbidden, Paul and Silas were for keeping on to Bithynia];

7. and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; and the Spirit of Jesus [ver. 6, Rom. viii. 9] suffered them not;

8. And passing by [G. "along the side of"] Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9. And a vision [ix. 10, x. 3, xviii. 9; *not* a dream] appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.

10. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we [Luke joined Paul here at Troas, probably a circumstance of which Theophilus was well aware] sought to go forth into [looked out a vessel sailing for] Macedonia, concluding that God had called us for to preach the Gospel unto them [and *so* "help"].

11. Setting sail, therefore, from Troas, we made a straight course [xxi. 1] to Samothrace [xxvii. 4, 7], and the day following to Neapolis [then a *Thracian* town];

12. And from thence to Philippi, which [was their destination, as it] is a city of Macedonia, the first [in rank] of the district [Æmilius Paulus had divided Macedonia into four districts], a Roman colony; and we were in this city tarrying certain days.

THE SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN LABOUR.

HERE is the direct action of the Holy Ghost. In early Christian times men spoke with reverent familiarity of the ministry of the Spirit. There is nothing roundabout in their speech. The Spirit is mentioned by name, his action is described, responsibility is charged upon him, his inspiration and direction are familiarly and continually invoked. The Apostles and early Christians realized that they were living in the age of the Holy Spirit. Why should there be any difficulty in believing that spirit may affect spirit? We believe that matter affects matter. Is there no higher law, or no higher application of the same law, or no religious use of actual affairs, or parabolic suggestions? Let a child understand me here, for the theme is great, and the charm of it upon my own mind has for years amounted to a fascination and a spell—namely, this wondrous action of the

Holy Ghost upon the individual mind. Here is a piece of metal lying quite at rest. I would ask the child who is following me to fix his eyes upon that metal. Is it stirring? "No." You are sure of that? "Perfectly sure." Now watch the action of my right hand. I will bring the piece of metal which I am holding nearer to the metal you are looking at as lying quite still. See! I think the metal that you said was lying quite still is now moving? "Yes." Am I touching it? "No." Are you touching it? "No." See how it trembles, palpitates—it will presently leap up and be, as it were, part of the magnet I am holding over it. I am told that it is quite a matter of science to believe that; yet to believe that mind can affect mind, that spirit can touch spirit, is fanaticism! I have not so learned life. Shutting out all merely technical theologies, with their various definitions, it is easy for me, having seen the action of metal upon metal, to believe that there may be a kindred action of soul upon soul, mind upon mind, God upon man. There is a spiritual magnetism. Let all scientific and mechanical operations be so many ladders, whose foot is on the earth, whose head is in the clouds. "If men, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto their children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit unto them that ask him?" Ask, and ye shall receive. Discoveries of material relations and operations are themselves a kind of outside Bible, which helps me to read the inner book inscribed by invisible fingers.

The action of the Spirit is as morally mysterious as it is personally direct. Why should the Holy Ghost forbid the Apostles to preach the word anywhere? That we cannot explain; but then you cannot explain yourself, your own nature, mind, thought, force, purpose. When you have settled the mysteries of selfhood, you may begin to consider the enigmas of Providence and grace. We are forbidden to do certain things. The things themselves are good, but the time is wrong, or the place is ill-chosen, or another opportunity is greater and ought to be absorbent. It is not enough that you are in a good place, doing a good work; your object should be to live and move and have your being in the very Spirit of God, so that wherever he may point, your very heart may outrun your feet in attaining the appointed and sacred destination. The Holy Spirit is always to be

consulted. Pray without ceasing ; walk with God. Be so near him that a whisper will reach his heart. Be the friend of God ; have no self ; be sanctified wholly—body, soul, and spirit. Be quick all over, answering instantaneously with eagerest love every commandment of the Divine will. Do not be your own idol. Have no judgment, preference, prejudice, that you cannot take up and cut in two with a double-edged knife, if God should so will it. “Not my will, but Thine, be done.” I will work here or there, on this side the sea or yonder side—both sides are thine. “Lead, kindly Light.” Where that is the spirit, the life can never go wrong. Where life is bounded by programmes and outlines and purposes merely human, life will be a succession of mistakes and stinging disappointments. “O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him, and he will give thee thine heart’s desire.” The Apostles thus lived in the Holy Spirit ; they walked in the very company of God ; they knew no will but his ; therefore their very breathing was a religion, their unuttered word was a conquest, and the lifting of their hand was a battle half won. It is, to our degenerate piety, quite difficult to believe that the early Apostles — yea, the prophets ages before them—could live so familiarly in the presence of the supernatural. They were not afraid when a door opened at midnight — they expected it ! When a white figure dawned upon the darkness of night they did not cringe and shiver in great fear, as if God had forsaken them —they expected messages. We run to meet the letter-carrier now. In the olden time they seemed to expect letters, messages, from heaven to be brought by angels ; yea, to be fetched by God ! We cannot understand this ; we muse about it, and find fault with it, and point out flaws in the crude philosophy which asserts it. Everything depends upon the level of your life. It is possible to live so high up in intellectual and spiritual companionship as to receive with grateful ease and friendly recognition appearances and communications which at one time would have afflicted us with the surprise of a miracle. We must ourselves be miracles ; then every opening of Providence, how bright soever or startling, will be accepted as one of the assured blessings of daily life. Shall we so live ? The stupendous rocks, ten thousand feet high, look infinite to the man who gazes at them from a low level. Could we be lifted up as on the wings of eagles, the rock so

towering, so sublime, would be but a speck of dust in the dim distance ! If we eat and drink until our very souls are buried within us, then the miracles of nature, the gracious surprises of the sky, will be lost upon us ; there will be no apocalypse in the clouds and no special writing or message in the summer. But if we keep down the lower and exalt the higher, we shall come to know what is meant by Divine companionship, walking with God, having friendly intercourse with the Divine heart, and having only to ask that we may receive. To the blind, dumb, dead soul, to ask and receive is impossible ; to the man almost in heaven it is the glad commonplace of a lofty experience.

What did Paul see, then, in his vision ? It was quite a typical vision. He saw a *man*. Was that a common sight ? Only to those who look upon it with a common eye. We do not always see one another ; sometimes we see the man within the man—the *inner* man with marks of God upon him ; the fallen king, the uncrowned, dethroned prince, in one flash of the eye we saw him, and he went back into depths we cannot penetrate ! We should pray that we may see one another as we really are. He who truly sees a *man* must ever be moved by the pathetic sight. We do not see one another whilst we are in the crowd, jostling in the great multitude, passing from side to side, doing the day's business, performing the day's jugglery. We do not see the man, but having once seen him under favouring lights, we must feel that man is a name high up in the register of life. Paul saw a man in earnest prayer, praying to a fellow-man. It was all, perhaps, the Macedonian suppliant could then do. We are allowed to pray at such altars as we can find. God does not say, " Build the altar seventy feet high and then begin to pray." If you fell down before the least flower, it would be altar enough. If you could bend before your mother's old arm-chair, it would be shrine enough. And by-and-by you will want a whole heaven for a church and altar because of the unutterableness of your ecstatic joy ! Begin where you can. Paul saw a man in earnest, and a man seeking *help*. The man said, " Come over into Macedonia and help us." There are cowards that run away when poor, ill-used people call for " help." There are men, women, and children calling all over the land to-day for " help," and we put our fingers in our ears, and go home and say, " Behold, we knew it not." " If thou

forbear to deliver him that is drawn unto death, and say, Behold, I knew it not, doth not he that knoweth the heart understand, and will not he make inquisition for blood?" Christianity is "help" or it is nothing—active service, co-operation, sympathy, a common sacrifice for a common good. This is a typical instance. If the Church could have its eyes opened to-day, it would see every unevangelized country and every land in sore strait or difficulty typified in this Macedonian man. From every land "they call us to deliver their souls from error's chain." The Macedonian man represents a large population. Let us regard him as a man who has heard of Christianity, or who is dissatisfied with Pagan teaching, or who feels the pain of a great void which the fitment itself could not fill with all its wealth of light—he cries for something more; that man is not far from the kingdom of God. Do not believe that Pagans who are struggling after virtue and calling for "Light, more light! Light, more light!" are far from the kingdom of heaven. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I bring." "In every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." But that is a reason why those who believe they have the true light should hasten with it, that they may scatter the shadows and establish the day.

"And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured——" Luke here joins the company. Up to this time the narrative has been written in the third person; it will now be written in the first. Luke himself has joined the missionary band, and he will speak of things which he personally saw. We hasten to say that the missionaries came "to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia," and a colonial or military station. There is a city plan of evangelization; the Apostles followed that plan. They did not hide themselves in obscure places; we find great names in their record. What is the justification of these metropolitan names? This—and higher there is none—"Beginning at Jerusalem." So we shall find in these missionary records Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Philippi, Athens, Ephesus, name upon name of local eminence and dignity, yet all the names put together are not equal to *London!* Give us London, and we have the key of the world. Converted London

would seem to mean converted England ; and converted England —empress of nations !—converted England !—lady of the seas, majestic, all but omnipotent, with millions and hundreds of millions under her proud banner !—converted England : it would be almost equal to a converted *world* ! Far be it from any of us to say a word that would be even apparently contemptuous of villages and hamlets and rural spots ; they all belong to the great house. London is not our city, speaking as residents in the capital ; it is the Imperial city ; it belongs to every shepherd on the mountain-side, to every ploughman ripping up his fields for the seed, to every one on the sea ; it is the Mother City—the metropolis. Give us London Christianized — London praying — four millions of souls concurring in one appeal to Heaven, and surely there would dawn upon the whole world the day of jubilee and Christian festival.

LV.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, wilt thou fill us with thy Spirit? We would not be filled with wine, wherein is excess, but with the Spirit of the Living God. We seek not to be exhilarated, but to be inspired. In thy Spirit is life, and in thy Spirit is rest. Baptize us, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, with the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Show us that we are indeed not our own, but that being bought with a price, we are thine—body, soul, and spirit; and may we glorify thee at every point of our life, shedding light and fire along the whole course through which we move. May the Spirit of our Master, Christ, be in us, chastening and softening our whole nature, lifting it up to the level of his own, and causing it to bring forth all heavenly fruit, and to enrich itself with all heavenly beauty. Thou didst make us out of the dust, but the breath that is in us came from thyself; a special gift, a pledge that we are not wholly of the earth, but have in us desires after God and capacities which time cannot fill. Being thine, we would live for thee. With the coming light of every day we would ask to know thy will, and with the growing day we would grow in strength to do it all cheerfully, lovingly, with patient industry, with tender and immortal hope. Show us the littleness of all things that are under our feet, and all things that can be measured by our hand and skill. Lead our inner nature forward from day to day, to that noble issue which finds its rest in God. May we, by the power of an endless life, triumph over the dying day. When we speak, or think, or act, may our immortality assume its rightful dominion. Then shall we not listen to the utterances of time, to the policies of the earth, or yield to the cunning of selfishness; but with noble faith and triumphing love we will weigh the world and find it wanting, and will seek a city out of sight.

For all these religious aspirations we bless thee. They bring gracious tears to our eyes; they soften the natural stubbornness of the heart; they lift us up into new regions; they fill us with unutterable gladness; under their gracious dominion we see new heavens and a new earth, and great golden doors opening into infinite opportunities. May we encourage such aspirations, and do thou sustain them by the inspiring ministry in which they originated. Then shall thy Book be a new Book every day; thy Word shall be the word of all time—the first and the last—bringing with it all history and all prophecy, the Word of the Lord which abideth for ever; speaking every language; taking upon itself every colour; going into every land, claiming every heart; under its gracious

and infinite sovereignty the whole world from age to age shall find light, and progress, and peace. Give us more light. Deepen our confidence in things not seen. May we cultivate the inner and imperishable man. Grant unto us the very spirit of the Cross of Christ, world-redeeming, self-sacrificing, rising eternally to God with uplifting and love not to be uttered, of soul, and thought, and force of purpose.

We bless thee for the Sabbath day ; for the place where prayer is wont to be made ; for every opportunity of Christian fellowship and deepest communion. These are thy gifts in Christ, the Priest and Sacrifice. We would now take them with both hands and with warm, loving hearts, and find in them new pledges of heaven and higher service. Destroy our sin ; take away, by mighty blood of atonement, infinite in purity and grace, all our guilt. Bring forth the best robe and put it upon us ; put a ring on our fingers and shoes on our feet ; and make thy heavens glad and all thine angels joyful, because thy prodigals have returned. Amen.

Acts xvi. 13-15.

13. And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river-side [some *affluent* of the Strymon which is distant a day's journey], where we supposed there was a place of prayer [the *proseuchæ* were sometimes mere open-air meeting-places, near water, where the hands could be washed before prayer]; and we sat down and spake unto the women [ver. 1, *Jewesses*, who had married Greeks, were found in such cities much more frequently than Jews] which were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia [a common female name ; she was also a Lydian], a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshipped God [proselyte, xiii. 16, 43], heard us : whose heart the Lord [the *exalted* Christ extending his kingdom] opened, to give heed unto the things which were spoken by Paul [“ God's opening her heart is one thing ; Lydia's attending another ; so her salvation had both its Divine and its human side.”—*Chrys.*].

15. And when she was baptized, and her household [ver. 33, xviii. 8, and I Cor. i. 16 ; also the facts that Jews circumcised infants and Gentiles baptized them render it improbable the Apostles forbade infant baptism], she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house [ver. 34] and abide there. And she constrained us [Luke xxiv. 29. This word denotes Lydia's vehement urgency, not the Apostles' unwillingness].

THE MANY AND THE ONE.

IN verse 12 we read of “ certain days.” They were days which needed not to be named ; they could be huddled together and spoken of in general terms. A rough and summary

reference was all that was needed, for they were but days coming and going unmarked, without specialty of tone or colour—the ordinary process of time. In verse 13 we read of “the Sabbath.” The day that has a name; the one day into which all other days flow as streamlets and rivers flow into the sea. The Sabbath is never referred to as one of a number of days. It creates a space for itself. It builds its tent amid all the camp-field; there is none like it. Its banner is higher and redder, its lettering is more golden and distinct, and the silver trumpet which sounds from it makes all other music rough and earth-born. You need not bolster up the Sabbath by argument and theological preference or prejudice. You need not seek for proofs of the Divine authority and sanction and purity of the Sabbath day. All that is written in the heart, in the indestructible book of human consciousness and human love, and we shall see it to be so when once awakened and inspired by the Holy Ghost. Any institution that requires to be kept up by skilful argument is a bad institution. Institutions must rest on the original logic of human necessity, human appreciation, and human sympathy. This is true also of Christian doctrine. If it needs to be supported by evidences, and defined and defended by cunning words of skilful tongues, it is not of God, whose name is Love, and whose heaven is as infinite as His own being. Christianity must be its own defence. The Sabbath must be its own argument. The benediction is higher than logic, and no controversial tumult can flutter or disturb its infinite calm.

“And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by the riverside.” Church-hunting! A journey that was allowed. A walk that was constrained. To leave home thus on Sunday is to seek the greater home. You cannot stop at home on the Sabbath day. That were insult to the very home you profess to love. You do not know what home is if you think you are “staying at home” on the Sabbath day. To leave it is to seek it; to go from it is to get at it. Your house is the letter; the public sanctuary, a great, broad, common, warm home, is the spirit—the ideal meaning, the poetic completion of that which at the local fireside we have in mere typology. We must go out on the Sabbath day, if the Spirit of Christ be in us, in order to help to complete the family-

gathering. Who would eat his festival alone? Who would have his little piece of bread cut out of the loaf, and hasten to some sequestered corner that he might eat his crumbs in the fellowship of himself? Festival means eagerness of spirit, hastening of feet, communion of heart, marching together with common unanimous consent to a common centre and a common table. Let us not be led away by the foolish fantasy which seeks to teach that a man can read the Bible at home, or have a Church at home, in some sense which dispenses with the festival-reading and the festival-music, and the common joy of kindred sympathy and soul. Christianity is a fellowship because Christianity is a feeling of common humanity. Christianity does not isolate men and set them up one by one as if they had no relationships. Christianity brings men together in sacred, sympathetic brotherhood, and carries up the feeling, passion, and rapture of the soul to "dancing, and music," and tumult of joy! "On such a theme 'twere impious to be calm. Passion is reason; transport, temper here." We know what it is in strange places to seek the particular Church we know and love on the Sabbath day. We rise a little earlier; we inquire of passers-by. We know our own home when we see it, by its position, or form, or surroundings. We seek the well-trodden way. When we find it, a sense of homelike familiarity makes us quiet and glad. We know sympathetically the hymn, the tune, the whole way; escaping from local vexations and disappointments, we hold communion one with another, and the whole life becomes an organ of love.

"Where prayer was wont to be made." How singular is the cause of reputation or fame! There are famous battle-fields to which men make pilgrimages. How can a man be in Belgium's capital without feeling some constraint towards famed Waterloo? He knows there is not much to see. He has heard of the flatness of the land. He knows, too, that kind, all-healing Nature has grown her greensward over the blood-pools, and over all the marks of hurrying and battling soldiers. Still, he says he would like to see the place. That is natural. That desire can be Christianized. There are men who would make long pilgrimages to see where John Bunyan was born. He is not there measurably, yet he is spiritually there for ever. There are those who love to see famous churches, and to walk stealthily and lovingly up the

steps of famous pulpits, which have been towers of the Lord in the day of evil doings and corrupt counsels. The land through which the Apostles passed was not destitute of historic interest, but they cared but little for the histories which have beginnings and endings ; they lived in the nobler history which began in eternity and which continues through the everlasting duration. They sought the place "where prayer was wont to be made"; where soul-battles had been fought ; where the very wine of the heart of God's love had been drunk ; where angels came to take swift prayers swiftly up to heaven. A sacred place, with the invisible altar, with the Shechinah which shone only upon the vision of the pure heart, with the ever-present God. You might have known whither the men were moving ; they were praying as they were going ; wherever they were was a place "where prayer was wont to be made"; for they lived in it and had their being in it.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air ;
His watchword at the gate of death,
He enters heaven by prayer."

We must keep up the spiritual fame. Hirelings enough will sound the brazen trumpet, that can proclaim but momentary notoriety. It is for blood-redeemed and spiritually-enlightened men to keep for ever "a place called Calvary," and the mount of triumph, called by the sweet name of Olivet.

"The women which resorted thither." Were they all women ? Probably so. Have *men* forsaken religion and left the women to keep it up ? To some extent. Is it not the mocker's taunt that "women keep up the Church" ? It may be ; but it is a fool's gibe ! The woman does keep up the Church—God bless her ! But she keeps up *more*. Oh, thou blatant, mocking fool, to taunt the very saviour of society ! Sweet, beauteous, noble woman ! Thou unclean tongue ! She *does* keep up the Church, but she also keeps up the love of the world ; the patience of the world ; the home that covers your unworthy head, mocker, fool, hard of heart ! Yes, she keeps it *all* up. There be those who, with self-inflation that would be damnable if it were not contemptible, say that *women* fill our churches now ;

the *men* have given them all up. Yes, but only in the same proportion in which they have given up *love, purity, patience, home!* I hardly forgive myself for the momentary anger which I spent on the contemptible mocker. If I gave way to vehement scorning of the evil giber, I had forgotten that I was defending the pureness and the self-sacrifice of womanhood, which need no apology. They are not my friends who despise world-saving women. I would hate them if I had time to think about them. Woman keeps the roof over your head, you late-comer, you truant wanderer, you world-worshipper. Woman keeps the fire alight for you ; she touches with tender hand your wound and pain ; she cries bitter tears, long after your shallow waters of grief are exhausted ; she denies slumber to her eyelids, long after your tired eyes have taken upon them the sleep of oblivion. She *does* keep up the Church, and God will in turn keep up her dear, great heart.

“ And a certain woman named Lydia——” This is like the reading we have just perused about the “ days.” The days were spoken of, in verse 12, in general terms ; and in the thirteenth verse the Sabbath was particularized as the one day. Now we read of the women generally, and of a certain and particular woman named Lydia. What subtle little harmonies there are in this inspired Book ! How part balances part ! As there are days that may be mentioned in the plural number, so there are men and women who may be mentioned in their plurality ; but as there is one day which is always named alone, so there are individuals who do not, so to say, mix with the common list, but which head, gleamingly and significantly, every catalogue ; names which have whole lines to themselves. Look at the case of Lydia. She was first of all a business woman—“ a seller of purple.” So, then, women of business may be women of prayer. Women who sell purple one day may go to church to pray the next. We ought to have more women of business. It is a foolish conceit which forbids, in any degree, women to engage in honourable business. Such business enlarges and educates the mind, gives happy distraction to thought which would often turn to vexation if fixed upon unworthy centres. It is one thing for a woman to be a slave, and another for a woman to work and to love her

work. The reason why your work appears to you to be slavery is that you do not like it. He, or she, who loves work, makes all the week a kind of introductory Sabbath to the great religious rest. I would that all women were Lydias in this respect of having something definite to do every day and doing it, and finding in industry a balance to piety. A piety that sells no purple will come to live upon itself, and eating its own vitals, it may end in religious melancholy and madness. Lydia was also a religious woman ; she " worshipped God." There are many religious persons who are not *Christians*. It is one thing to be religious and another to be Christianized. Some people are born, so to say, with religious veneration. They *must* worship. They will turn a stone into a god ; or they will imagine a god folded within the garments of the sun's blazing light ; it is easy for them to pray. Other people seem to be born destitute of the religious instinct ; they are earthly, servants of time, grubbers, heapers together of dust that has no binding in itself, and must eventually be dried by the sun and fall away into the meanest particles, that have in them no self-cohesion and no abiding masonry. The fear is that the religious man may allow himself to be cooled by those natural atheists. It is so easy to cool a fire. It is so easy to discourage souls, that sometimes the hereditary atheist—born with a hollow place in his head where there ought to have been a mountain of veneration—it is so easy, I say, for such people to chill and discourage the ardent piety of others.

Lydia was not only industrious and religious, she became Christianized. Religion is a general term ; Christianity is a specific form of religion. Beginning in sacrifice, in self-crucifixion, in suffering for Christ, in pardon through the mystery of sacrificial blood, it grows up into absolute sympathy with the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is not enough for you and me to be religious, we must take upon us by the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost a particular form, and that particular form is Christianity. The Spirit of Christ makes us Christians, as the blood of Christ makes us saints or holy ones. In this respect Christianity is a heart-opening ; a heart enlargement ; a fire set to love ; a marvellous transformation of being. When Lydia became thus the subject of Christian influence, what course

did her thought take? At once she would have a Church in the house—"If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." In that suggestion there is a whole philosophy. That was impulse Divine. When the two travellers felt their hearts burn within them, by reason of the converse of the third Man, they said, "Abide with us." These are the impulses that are underlaid by whole rocks of logic and philosophy. Lydia would have a fellowship at once. Souls that are kindred must never leave one another. If any have gone out from us, it is because they were not of us. They were using us for their own convenience; it suited them for a while to play the false part, and to assume a kind of interest in our society and actions. But when they go out from us we know that they were never of us, in the true and deep sense of the term. Christians must abide together. In the olden time they that feared God met often one with another, and spake soul to soul, and the music entranced the attention of God, and the listening Father wrote their names in his book, and called them "Jewels."

LVI.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou hast shown us that there is an open way from earth to heaven, from darkness to light, from death to life. We find all this liberty and advancement in Christ Jesus, Son of God, God the Son. Once our foundations were in the dust, but now we see heavenly places and heavenly liberties beyond, so that all things are ours, and all spaces, and our souls have come into a great inheritance, and are rich with an infinite estate. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Thou hast touched our souls with the pain of a deep discontentment. We are now dissatisfied with time, and earth, and sense, and all things that can be held in the hand ; and we yearn for an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, bright with thine own glory and imperishable as thine own duration. This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working. " These are thy glorious works, Parent of good." These are thy new creations, thy continual resurrections, thy triumphings over death and night, and thy setting up of life and light and glory infinite. So, then, we stand in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; and we stand as on a rock that cannot be broken or overthrown, and that will never crumble away. This is our Father's house. This is the strong foundation. This is a place found for souls that scorn the temptations of time, and long with wordless, painful, joyous yearning for whole heavens of liberty and service. We know that we have passed from death unto life by these new impulses of the soul. These are not the inspirations of earth, for thorns cannot bring forth grapes, neither can the dust grow the fruits of heaven. So, then, we know that we have an unction from the Holy One, and are free men, and are standing upon the right of a new charter, written and signed with blood. We are the sons of God—astounding love ! amazing grace ! condescension Divine ! that we who once wandered from God are brought back again amid the welcomings of angels and the trumpets of heaven ! This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. We have left the ground of the dead ; we are no longer in the churchyard, but in the living sanctuary of the living God, and our mouth is opened every day with new hymn and psalm and shout of joy. The Lord continue his daily favor according to our daily need and pain, until the last little grey day of time shall vanish, and our souls shall pass, in the purity of infinite whiteness, into the inner places. Bless our daily bread, and it will do us good. Breathe upon us when we

lie down to sleep, and we shall forget our sorrow for a while—and our weariness shall become young strength. Pity us when we think we see and yet are blind of soul. Save us from the embarrassments which vex and entangle every life. May ours be the spirit of righteousness, lofty honour, and noble fidelity and constancy to things commanded of God. Then shall we have no perplexing questions vexing the conscience with many a doubt, and clouding the life with many a fear; but ours shall be the path of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Remember our dear ones at home, so sick, so weak; longing to go, yet willing to stay; filled with wonder about the future, and pained with distress about the past. The Lord send comforting angels into chambers where human voices are lowered into whispers. The Lord himself be the Physician of those who need him most, and give them hope of soul where there cannot be recovery of body. Sit down beside the weary one and talk a while, and in listening to the voice Divine may human weariness be forgotten. Guide the young along the perilous road, where the tempters lie, where the mockers laugh, where the pits are deeply dug and well concealed. The Lord guide them, protect them, save them, and in old age give them a pure song. Be with us at home and abroad, in privacy, in public, everywhere a conscious, living, loving presence. So then our sins shall be forgiven in thy grace, and at the Cross of pain and blood and death we shall seal the covenant that saved us, and our hearts shall enter into a new joy. Hear thy people when they say from their hearts and with their voices, Amen and Amen.

Acts xvi. 16-24.

16. And it came to pass, as we were going to the place of prayer, that a certain maid having a spirit of divination [G. a spirit, a Python. Python denotes (1) the Delphic dragon; (2) as here, any such soothsaying demon; (3) any ventriloquist. See LXX., Lev. xix. 31; Isa. viii. 19, etc.] met us, which brought her masters [the Philippian Divination Company; a common and most lucrative speculation in that sceptical and superstitious age, viii. 9; xiii. 6; xix. 19] much gain by soothsaying.

17. The same following after Paul and us cried out, saying, These men are servants [slaves] of the Most High God [Luke iv. 41 and Mark v. 7], which proclaim unto you [the spurious "us" of the A.V. included the demon] the [G. "a"] way of salvation.

18. And this she did for many days. But Paul, being sore troubled [G. "worn out"], turned and said to the spirit, I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her [I Cor. x. 20]. And it came out that very hour.

19. But when her masters saw that the hope of their gain was gone [note the motive of this the first Gentile persecution, 1 Thess. ii. 2. The Greek has "come out" for "gone." The "hope of their gain" and the demon parted together], they laid hold on Paul and Silas, and dragged

them into the market-place [where were the civil courts and the city (civil judges] before the rulers,

20. and when they had brought them unto the magistrates [G. "prætors." Those having Roman military authority, as Pilate, would be more properly styled "rulers," and the Greek city judges the "magistrates"], they said, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city [G. "OUR city, though they are Jews." The one subject race despises the other, and then is basely proud to call itself Roman],

21. and set forth customs which it is not lawful for us to receive, or to observe, being Romans.

22. And the multitude rose up together [with the masters and the city judges] against them : and the magistrates [the prætors, seeing this] rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods [2 Cor. xi. 25].

23. And when they [*i.e.*, the lictors at their command] had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely [the use of the imperfect tense in the Greek not only indicates Luke's presence, but also the designed *publicity* of these proceedings, whereby the angry mob was appeased. See ver. 35]:

24. who, having received such a charge, cast them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks [his zeal exceeded his orders].

VIOLENT TRANSITIONS OF EXPERIENCE.

NONE can bear such testimony to the real nature of goodness as bad spirits. How the fallen angels could preach ! How eloquent upon goodness and purity could Satan himself be ! I speak not now of those who have never been in the sanctuary and have never known what a vision of purity really is ; I am speaking of fallen souls ; spirits that have left their communion with God and taken up with other fellowships. Such souls could tell much of the real nature of goodness. They see it from another standpoint. They did not know how bright the light was until they felt the burden of the darkness. They could speak with all the vividness which comes of conscious contrast. Could not *he* say much of friendship who has lost it and gone over to the ranks of the alien ? Could not *he* speak tenderly of home who has abandoned it and wandered in the wilderness where there is no way ? Memory would become a source of inspiration. Reflection would open whole heavens for a moment, and show their concealed but wondrous light. So with the spirit that has

known God and wandered away from him ; it could speak with a barren and mocking eloquence — not without soul-touching pathos — of salvation, redemption, pardon, and coming heaven. But Christianity will not have such service. The poor damsel cried truly and rightly, “ These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation ” ; but her co-operation was declined. The devil can have no part or lot in Christian service. He is not in it ! Though his word be true, his tone is wrong : yea, though he reads God’s own Bible word by word, his spirit stains whatever it touches ; and the very pureness of the Divine truth might run risks of attainment if touched by diabolic powers. What Paul could have done with this aid ! How he could have been master of the situation ! How he could have turned upon all those who held in captivity the infatuated girl, and said to them, “ She is our ally ; she knows the truth, and is not afraid to proclaim it, nor is she ashamed of its representatives and servants ; she is our co-minister, and we are thankful for her aid ” ! These temptations are not without force ; they operate upon human attention and confidence to-day. We say : “ The thing spoken is true, therefore the men speaking it may also be true.” The logic is bad ; all history condemns it. That is one of the instances of reasoning that ought to be true ; but such is the subtlety of the human heart, and such its inconceivable depravity, that it is possible for the devil to speak truly regarding God and Christ, but the truth being devil-spoken, is not to be received upon such authority. Why not ?—Because the authority would not stop there. Take one draught at the devil’s well, and you shall have another ; and he is so cunning of wrist and finger, he can twist the vessel so as to be deceiving your eye and be drawing bitterness when you thought he was drawing sweetness—poison in vessels thought to be full of life. Have nothing to do with him. “ Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Apostolic character was beautifully developed under such temptations as these. We see from such incidents better than we could do from merely doctrinal statement the pureness and nobility of the apostolic mind and the magnificent independence of truth. In the hands of the Apostles the truth did not go a-begging for patronage. When the Apostles handled this mighty theme, they did not ask any one to bear a part of the

burden whose hands were not as clean as the new-fallen and untrodden snow. When will the Church refuse the bad man's money? When will God's Church say, No! to patronage that is not inspired by prayer? The Church is craven. She will take money from men who are damning the world six days out of seven to the utmost of their ability. She will lay the foundations of her tabernacles and temples upon money which is devil-won and devil-rusted. She is not grand. She is afraid of being poor. The Apostles many a time might have received aid, such as that which is described in the text. The very same kind of aid was offered to Jesus Christ himself; but he would never accept it. What could be more helpful than to have a spirit as from another world saying day after day, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation"? It would then seem as if the world had joined in chorus to attest the identity and authority of the men. But in apostolic days the Church was heroic in poverty and invincible in weakness. We have come to totally false ideas about the Church, its station and influence, and its relation to worldly helps and props, and such co-operation as comes from questionable quarters. No Church can be poor, nor can any Church be weak. If it is a Church, it has Christ's presence; therefore poverty and weakness are impossible in its history. Now, what whining we have about our "poor" churches and our "weak" churches! There are no such things! You must get rid of that sophism, or you will be mere church-mongers and church-mechanicians, having lost the spirit of Divine pride, the heavenly, lofty haughtiness that disdains ill-gotten and ill-offered wealth or patronage.

"And when her masters saw——" They made a profit out of her. They were "her masters." One wonders that deluded people do not learn good lessons from the very language which is employed in describing them. One wonders that the poor drunkard does not learn wisdom from the mocking laugh that follows him when he totters out of the den where he lost his manhood. It is possible that some of ourselves may be under the influence of evil "masters." There are many kinds of intoxication; there is an intoxication of vanity, as well as of blood; there is a titillation of selfishness, as well as a gratification of the palate. We

may be profitably used by crafty "masters"; we may be made a convenience of only, and we must protest against this. The selfish man would make slaves of us all. It is in the nature of selfishness to make slaves. Why do we not see these things and stand upon eternal principles? Sometimes this young man, or that, may be put forward to ask questions or make impertinent statements, or, as it is called, "break the ice." Older and craftier men may be making experiments upon your green youthfulness. What is your position in society? Are you dupes or are you dupers? Tyrants in the sense of the text, or slaves, as was this poor soothsaying damsel? Christ would have us all free. "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Christ offers liberty. He has a yoke, but it is easy; He has a burden, but it is light. He is Master, but by the right of purity and by the claim of redeeming grace. Christ's is not the mastery of strength that cannot be resisted, but of almightiness so complete that it can be gracious. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The appeal of Christ is an appeal to reason; to the highest thought; to the noblest confidence; to the most unselfish impulses. Yes, a mastery; but by its completeness a benediction; a sovereignty Divine; not in strength only, but in tenderness.

"And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone——" The bad man has a larger sphere in which to make money than the good man has. The good man is limited; the bad man is unlimited. Think what they were doing! Living upon this brain-bewildered damsel; making merchandise of her; always there to take the money she made. These men would sell the altar! Such men would sell the very Church of God. Such men would defile the dead for money; yea, they would sell their fathers' bones for gold. Do not imagine that this is an ancient instance with a haze of romance about it, belonging to immemorial time; it is the work of to-day; the damnation of the present hour. There is no stopping-place in selfishness short of the very destruction of the universe. For selfish interests you cannot stop and say, "Enough." This horse-leech was ever satiated with blood. Begin, therefore, early to resist the devil. "It is not all gold that glitters." There are some sovereigns that

cannot be changed, and that burn the holder's hand. There are some coins that honest fingers dare not touch. You may not have great wealth, but every penny is honest copper, and every sovereign honest gold, and it goes quite a long way in buying and selling. It has a peculiar power of multiplying itself under the touch of honest hands. Do not call yourself *poor* if you have to-day's honestly gotten dinner waiting for you. That is a proof that you shall also dine to-morrow. No good thing shall be withheld from them that walk uprightly. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." Crafty masters, dealers in superstition and quackery, may have their gain-bringing damsels taken away from them, but they who bank in heaven have effects inexhaustible.

Look at the spirit of the damsel's masters. When Paul and Silas were brought into the market-place unto the rulers, the masters said, "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans." What liars they were! Not a word did they say about the "gains." They were concerned for the "city"; they were honestly excited about the morals of the community! Not for the world would they have old traditions touched or old harmonies thrown into discord. What liars they were! Here is the crime of to-day, the miserable crime of working from one motive and trying to get credit for another. That is a contemporaneous offence. It is not a gray, historic, antiquated trick, but part and parcel of our own individual experience. It was practised yesterday; it is being practised to-day, and to-morrow the practice will be continued. The real motive of the masters was—they were angry with the Apostles who had taken away their "gains." The pretended motive of the masters was—"customs" were being taught which it was not lawful for Romans to observe. Do we not sometimes hate in our hearts a man, and oppose him, and do all manner of evil to him, and then say that we have no personal envy or jealousy, but are concerned about some great question or public good? How professing Christians can tell lies! They can hunt a man to death, and over his cold bones can say they never had any personal ill-

will to him, but they were concerned for customs and manners and traditions quite apart from all personal bearing and colour. This is human nature ; and yet there are persons who quite disdain the idea of the doctrine of original sin or original depravity ! They clasp their little babes in their arms and hug them and kiss them with the kisses of love and say, " No ! No ! Original depravity ! Bless thee, no ! No ! " " The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." We must not judge by action, as the magistrates in this case judged ; but by motive, by inner thought, by spiritual intent—may we so judge *ourselves*. A man wants to leave your service, or a particular neighbourhood, or a particular church, or a particular club, society, or fellowship. He will not tell the real reason, but he scourges his ingenuity to find some plausible reason for his action. Being so minded, he will find one ; and he will speak it so loudly as to drown the inner voice, which is saying to him all the time, " Liar ! liar ! " The Gospel will have truth in the inward parts. The Gospel will have no pretence, mental reservation, or moral obliquity. It says, " Let your Yea be yea, and your Nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." This is a square Gospel ; it will have all things at right angles. It will insist upon trying all our work by the square and plummet of heaven. It would revolutionize the work. Why do not men receive it as the mightiest moral disinfectant, the only spiritual emancipation, because the only Divine redemption ? Search your hearts and see whether the tongue has not often been subpoenaed to tell many lies. See to it whether you have not been acting from one motive whilst trying to get credit for another. " Search me, O God, and try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." " Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." " Thy word is keen and sharp, keener than a two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow." I would live a life that asks to be tested and searched by the just criticism of Heaven. But this is impossible. So come to me, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, and take up thine abode with me, and make me more than conqueror in life's daily fight. Thou, Triune God, knowest that I can look a lie. Make me so true of heart that the face and the voice may also be

true. Why do not men receive this doctrine? It is because it is very hard ; because it, first of all, breaks down selfishness, corruptness of will, perversity of imagination ; because this doctrine will not only be our theologian, but our moralist ; will not only talk to us on Sunday, but keep our books on Monday ; will not only tempt the theological imagination to high metaphysical discussion, but test weights, scales, balances, measures ; and have truth at home, in the shop, in the Church—everywhere. What wonder that its founder was torn limb from limb, and left a blasted thing upon a Roman cross !

LVII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we are still in the land of the living because of thy great mercy and most tender lovingkindness towards us. There is no death in God. Thou wouldst that we should be like thee altogether, living in thine own endless Evermore. Breathe into our souls the breath of life. Keep us near thee in Christ thy Son, our Saviour, and let death have no more dominion over us. We know that our flesh is delivered up to the jailer ; we cannot release the body from his hard grip ; the condemnation of death is written upon every bone, and all our blood must be dried up in the dust. But for our souls we pray ; we would that they might be hidden with Christ in God ; that they might never die. Hast thou not cried unto us from thine home in heaven—"Why will ye die?" We would now, in the power of the Spirit, and by the grace of Christ, return unto the Lord, that he may have mercy upon us ; and to our God, that he may abundantly pardon. If we could hear that sweet word in our souls, uttered by thine own voice, we should now while on earth be in the very heaven of eternal light. Speak comfortably unto us. Let our bruised and wounded condition of heart be its own plea ; and let our hiding under the shadow of the Cross be its own argument, and cry unto us that our iniquity is pardoned, though our warfare is not yet accomplished. If thou wilt say this word "pardon," we shall spring up again, forgetting old age and gray hair ; we shall reclaim our youth, and with the energy of morning hope and strength will lift still higher our hymn of Sabbatic praise. Fill us with thy love, thou loving One. Make us know in our hearts the tender mystery of the Cross. May the Cross of Christ show itself in new forms and bearings every day. May it lie over the whole length and stretch across the whole breadth of our life ; and thus may we live in the Cross and rise from it to the crowns that are kept in heaven. We would speak of our sin, were not our memory flooded with the recollections of thy grace. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound ; and we forget our sin as we forget the darkness of the past night in the lustre of the present day. Few and evil are our days—a child's handful ; like in their swiftness to a post, yea, even to a weaver's shuttle—coming, shining, dying—yesterday, to-day, to-morrow—here now, gone whilst we are speaking. We are as grass that is cut down and that withereth in the noontide that was to have crowned our pride. Oh spare us, pity us, let us recover strength that we may pray some bolder prayer, and give us courage that we may weep some manlier tears. The

Lord have mercy upon us ; surround us with mercy ; crown us with mercy ; give us to feel the day and the night are filled with mercy. We can only live in mercy, we have no standing in the law ; we dare not appeal to righteousness. We come before the Lord, whom we have offended, crying for mercy—free, boundless, unmerited mercy. Show us that in Christ Jesus thy Son, thy mercy endureth for ever. Give unto us this day according to our need. Thou knowest the heart that is too sore to be touched ; thou knowest the ear that is pained by listening ; thou knowest the weakness that would feel the dew of the morning to be a burden. Thou knowest those who are crying in the spirit, and weeping bitter tears which the eyes conceal ; thou knowest the grave that is in the garden ; thou knowest the worm that is gnawing the root—yea, thou knowest us altogether. Wilt thou not pity us, and cause thy Spirit to dwell in us, ruling us wholly, until there be no disobedient thought, until our whole heart be a very temple seven times cleansed and beautified for the indwelling of God the Holy Ghost ? We put ourselves into thy keeping, and pray for one another. When the road is slippery, take hold of both our hands ; when the road is hard and long, find us a place where we may sit down a while, and when danger thickens, may Divine securities abound. The Lord take care of our friends—at home, abroad, on the great sea, in the far-away city ; the mother, the father, the aching heart, the repentant prodigal. The Lord's Sabbath day enclose as within arms of infinite love all, from the highest to the lowest, for whom it is our duty and our delight to pray. Amen.

Acts xvi. 25-32.

25. But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying [G. "worshipping"] and singing hymns unto God [Psalm cvii. 10-16. Although in evil case, they might *reasonably* be thankful for life preserved], and the prisoners were listening to them ;

26. and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken : and immediately all the doors were opened ; and every one's bands were loosed.

27. And the jailer being roused out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself [xii. 19, and xxvii. 42. Note also the suicides, here at Philippi, of Cassius, Titinius, and of Brutus, who "fled not with feet but with hands"].

28. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm : for we are all here [this word, so calm and kind, touched the jailer's heart. Renan entirely ignores it, and accounts for the jailer's changed behaviour by imagining that the Apostles "declared to him THEIR QUALITY" as Roman citizens !].

29. And he called for lights, and sprang in, and, trembling for fear [of God now, not of man. vers. 27 and 28],

30. fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said,

Sirs [G. "my lords"], what must I do to be [in order that I may be] saved (ver. 17)?

31. And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus [they are not lords, but Jesus is Lord : they are not the Way of Salvation, but the Lord Jesus is that Way. Cf. John i. 36, 37. The jailer's faith is turned away *from* their persons *to* the Person of the Lord Jesus. This Exalted One is the only object of faith. They added *not* his Jewish title Christ (Messiah), which would have been misleading here, would have suggested Judaistic error to this Gentile. The word "Christ" and the Judaistic idea (the historic Christ) have been added by ecclesiastics], and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house [viii. 25, an additional clause probably suggested by members of the household crowding around].

32. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house.

DISADVANTAGES MADE USEFUL.

THIS (ver. 25) is an instance of turning strange places into churches. If, in many cases, desecration has taken place, we are bound to admit as just critics and reviewers of history that many surprising instances of consecration have also occurred. Think of the prison at Philippi being turned into a church! Think of midnight being turned into mid-day! And think of an unexpected congregation gathering together at a moment's notice! We might turn every place into praying-ground. There ought to be no difficulty in praying in the market-place. It ought to be quite an easy Christian miracle to turn the thoroughfares of the city into aisles of the church, through which we pass with reverent step and with expectant and solicitous hearts. Thus we might build churches by the thousand, and inexpensively and immediately, so that we need not take long and weary pilgrimages to special places upon urgent need, but might turn the enemy's masonry into sacred fabrics and common places into consecrated sanctuaries. Every place should be holy unto the Lord. The outputting of a hand should be the finding of an altar; the uplifting of an eye should be the discovery of God. Pray without ceasing. Let your common meal in the house be a holy sacrament, and the drinking of your water be as the imbibing of the blood that vitalizes and saves. Paul and Silas could not be driven from church; they were, on the contrary, always taken to church. As unusual *places* can be turned into religious temples,

so unusual *circumstances* can be turned into Christian sanctuaries. In all probability we shall never be in the merely stone prison, but is there a man amongst us who is not in a still stronger and darker prison every day? The stone prison may be a palace; but what of the soul's despair, the heart's necessity, the life's keen hunger, the cold, so bitter that it chills our inmost life? Do not—let me say again and again—imagine that Holy Scripture records ancient instances of imprisonment, or necessity, or difficulty. By many a type, more or less historical and literal, it sets forth our own condition and experience. The teaching of this immediate lesson is, that as unfamiliar and unconsecrated places may be turned into sanctuaries, so may unique, distressing, harmful, and threatening circumstances be turned into ladders up to heaven. What are you doing in your unusual circumstances—moaning, groaning, complaining? Paul and Silas “sang praises.” Such men, therefore, never could be in prison. Prison it might be called, but prison it was none in reality. It was only a valley on a highland journey—a valley very deep, and yet not deep at all, because only relatively deep to the infinite heights up which their souls often climbed to hold Divine communion in the purer light. Christians ought never to be in prison; Christians ought never to be in any circumstances which they cannot turn into sacramental occasions. “This is my body, this is my blood.” I may take two views of the body and blood—the murderer's view or the Saviour's. The murderer says, “I have killed him”; the Saviour says, “I lay down my life; no man taketh it from me.” Do not let us take the enemy's view of our imprisonment, whatever that imprisonment may accidentally be; let us take God's view of it, and then the stones, seven feet thick and more, shall vibrate under the resonance of an unaccustomed and startling song.

Here is an instance in which Christian thinkers and workers and worshippers may have *unexpected observers and listeners*. The text says, “and the prisoners heard them”; the Revised Version says, “and the prisoners were listening.” It is always exactly so. You do not speak without being listened to; you do not go to church without being observed; you do not sing your hymn to yourself alone; the hymn has a beginning, but who can tell its

end? It warms your own soul as it passes up to the hearing ear of God; but who can tell what it is doing on the way? Sometimes the hymn of the church is overheard by the passers-by, and they who go out to spend the Sabbath in some unknown way carry the hymn with them, and it hums in their memory and calls up recollections of other days, and sometimes brings the wanderer to the evening service. You cannot tell what you are doing. The preacher speaks to his immediate congregation, but he knows not who is listening in the vestibule. "And the prisoners were listening." They never heard such music before! They had been accustomed to profane language; to cursing and denunciation; to violent and complaining exclamations and reproaches; but here is a new spirit in the house—hark how the music rises, falls, plashes like a gracious rain upon dry ground! It is so at home. Passing the room door, we pause a moment to hear some sweet voice in prayer or praise. We say nothing, but receive it in sweet confidence and think about it, and it works wonders in the soul; it follows the life like a pleading angel. We cannot tell all we do. What is true on the one side is true on the other. The fierce word you spoke was heard. The unjust judgment you passed was listened to by your children, and they will grow up to repeat with broader, darker emphasis your sneering and your cynicism. Did you think the children were not listening when you used harsh words and passed unjust—not to say ungenerous—judgments, and when you ridiculed things that ought to be held sacred? The children heard every word and responded to every tone, and when they grow up to curse the altar you neglected, their blood will be required at your hands. Study this matter of indirect and unconscious influence. Let us remember as those that must give account that whatever we do has an immediate effect upon self, and also a relative and immeasurable influence.

This incident shows us how possible it is quietly and even thankfully to accept all the circumstances of life. Nothing must interfere with the religious sacrifice. Are we in prison? We may have to alter the hour of worship, but not the worship itself. Are we in an uncongenial atmosphere? We may have to wait until the company has broken up before we have our little quiet psalm and our deep and earnest communion with the Father; but it is

only waiting ; it is a mere change of time ; there is no change in the substance, the reality, the sovereign purpose. That does not admit of change. You cannot injure the men who proceed as Paul and Silas proceeded. You cannot get in front of them. You cannot disappoint them. There is something about their whole spirit and force which rude hands cannot touch. If they do not pray in one place, they will pray in another ; and if they do not pray at mid-day, they will have their prayer at midnight, and be all the better heard by human listeners for the silence which they considered was concealing their worship. What a lesson is this to us ! Show me a Christian who does not complain. It would seem as if in some cases Christianity had done little for us but teach us the art of reproach. Where are the joyous Christians ? the midnight-singing Christians ? the Christians who turn night into day, who read the Bible by candle-light, and who wear out the paper by their eagerness of perusal of the Sacred Word ? In old times Christians used to be irrepressibly glad ; it was part of their very charter to be always joyous—not after a flippant and transient sort, but to have that deep joy which gathers to itself the tender shading of melancholy, that ineffable gladness which must of necessity be solemn. We are disputatious Christians ; combative believers ; great in argument, in hair-splitting, and in cunning use of words. Where is the ancient joy, the old delight, the Sabbath seven days long, the Church that spread its golden roof over all the hills and valleys of changing life ? May the old days come again ! When they come Christians will accept poverty or wealth, life or death, bleak March or warm June, with resignation, thankfulness, sweet and holy content, saying : “ This is the best for me ; here I stand in the midst of barns enlarged and harvests multiplied ;” or, “ Here I stand without a robe to cover my nakedness, without bread enough for the passing hunger, with nothing that I could lay my hands upon and turn to immediate use ; yet, though the fig-tree shall not blossom, though there be no fruit in the vines, no herd in the stalls, yet I must not forget my prayer, my hymn, my worship ; my circumstances must give accent and immediate expressiveness to my oblation of praise and dedication to God ; I live, not in circumstance but in faith.” This is a religious service of prayer and praise. “ But there was no preaching,” you say. Yes, there was, for we may

preach by singing. There would be no harm, but oftentimes great good, if there were no formal preaching; if the whole service were one of prayer and praise. Could we some morning sing twenty hymns straight off, connected only by brief invocation, we should most surely have preached the Word. "The prisoners were listening." So there was a congregation. But even in a more direct and literal sense preaching was added to prayer and praise. The earthquake took place, the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, every one's bands were loosed, and the keeper of the prison, awaking out of his sleep (which he ought not to have indulged, and the penalty for which was capital punishment), seeing the prison door open, drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled; and he, with his house, became a congregation to which Paul and Silas did, in the literal sense of the term, preach. So that night they had a full service—prayer, praise, preaching, and conversion. How did the jailer know this word "saved"? We must call to memory the speech of the divining damsel, who followed Paul and Silas. She cried, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." The soothsayer had made the sacred word salvation familiar in the speech of Philippi. "Salvation" was not an unknown term, but a term well known. As the hymn of the Apostles was heard by those whom they did not know were listening, so this word "salvation" rung out in the clear, silvery tones of the divining damsel was heard by others beside Paul and Silas and Luke. We cannot tell how we pick up our words; we do not always know so as to be able to explain the origin and authority of our information. There is a process of unconscious acquisition. Look at this conversion of the jailer. It took place under circumstances which may well be described as "exciting." Have we not been unjust to what is called "religious excitement"? Surely nothing could possibly have been more sensational than the circumstances we are now considering. They would shock us. But are the circumstances to blame or ourselves? We like quietness—deadness; we do not like to be "excited," disturbed, unsettled; because the devil has got both his arms around us and has chloroformed us into a state of insensibility. Jesus Christ did not rebuke the excitement which followed his ministry;

when others would have had him rebuke them he said, "I tell you that if these held their peace, the very stones would cry out." I do not object to religious excitement, but I do object to religious cynicism and religious death. Happily the incident does not end here. To excitement was added the necessary element of instruction. In the thirty-second verse we read: "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." Excitement must be followed by instruction, if it is to be turned to highest and most enduring usefulness. We must know what we believe; the Word of God must dwell in us richly. Religion is not an excitement only, but a conviction, as deep as life, as lasting as the duration of the being which it has transformed. Religious emotion not followed by religious instruction becomes a harmful agent in human life. Tears in the eyes that are not followed by activities in the hand harden the very heart which for the moment they softened. We shall be the worse for every revival that ends in itself. That is to say, times of revival must be followed by times of study, with Bible-reading, comparing spiritual things with spiritual and getting into our hearts the very pith and marrow of the Divine revelation. We might get up such services as these almost every day in the week. If we prayed and praised in every prison into which our life is thrust, we should be heard by strange listeners, we should be interrogated by strange inquirers, and doors of usefulness would be opened in the very granite which apparently shut us in. There is a *releasing* power in life. Do not ask yourselves puzzling questions about earthquakes, the shaking of stony foundations and the loosing of iron bands, or you will fritter away the opportunity in a useless inquest into accidents that belong but to a moment. The great truth—all-including, everlasting, all-comforting—is that in the providence of life there is a *releasing* power against which nothing of human machination or malignity can stand. God will bring you forth. The Lord will shake the foundations of every prison for your sake. You have seen great and bitter afflictions, yet the Lord has delivered you out of six troubles; will the seventh be too much for him? Can omnipotence be weary? Can almightiness need sleep? Doth the Lord slumber because his eyelids are heavy? The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice. You are shut up in the prison of ill-health; and you are enclosed in the

prison of poverty ; and you are bound round with chains of circumstances which you cannot overcome, and you are thrust into the innermost dungeon, and your feet are made fast in the stocks, and you say, It is midnight upon midnight, and in the darkness there is no star. Recalling all Divine history, and all Divine promises, recalling the covenant and the oath of God, I have to say to you and to myself, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper. For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercy will I gather thee. When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them ; I, the God of Jacob, will not forsake them." Let God be true and every man a liar. Against all transient accidents and all momentary appearances I set up the oath of the Triune God.

LVIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, our mouth is full of hymns and psalms and spiritual songs, for thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Thou hast done all these things in Christ Jesus thy Son. He is the Head over all, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, without whom there is nothing that is good and beautiful and strong. Bring us all into Christ as the branches are in the vine. May we know that we have no life in ourselves, but only in Christ the Living One ! He is come that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly ; yea, like wave upon wave of life, until we are no longer in the little stream of time, but in the infinite ocean of his own eternity. His grace is our hope. To Moses we dare not speak, for the law is in his right hand and in his left, in two tables of hard stone ; but to the Lamb we may come. He died for us : he tasted death for every man ; he came to take away the sin of the world ; Jesus Christ is the great burden-bearer ; he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. We repent and cry out aloud for mercy, and we flee away from justice and the flaming sword, to find in the compassion of God our forgiveness and our rest. We love to think of the cross, because of what it is and because of what it will be. It will be a tree more beautiful than any oak in Bashan, or any cedar in Lebanon ; the leaves of it shall be for the healing of the nations, and the fruit of it shall take away the world's hunger for ever. Hallelujah ! Glory and honour and majesty and dominion and all riches be unto the Lamb that was slain ! Enable us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. May we drink into his Spirit ; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. May we be filled with his Spirit, and show it by our love of purity, truth, nobleness, and charity ! May we be so filled with the love of Christ that night shall bring no darkness, winter no storm, and the Cross itself no hopeless death ! We would triumph in Christ. By the power of the Spirit of Christ we would set our foot upon the whole earth, and keep it there in sign of spiritual mastery over all its temptations. Wilt thou not come to us through the gate of our necessity, and leave great riches behind thee, so that we shall forget our poverty, and be glad as those who enter into the joy of Christian festival ? We are in great sorrow, but thou canst dry our tears, and make the grave the beginning of new joys, and find in our hearts new springs of sacred strength and joy. Hear thy servants who say, "The Lord's hand has been heavy upon us," and "The Lord hath passed by the house and left

a great cloud behind." Show them that thy mercy endureth for ever ; that all things work together for good to them that love God ; and may their sorrow but subdue their song and chasten it into a tenderer music. O thou who art the Resurrection and the Life, visit our bereaved ones this very day, and turn the hour of death into the hour of birth. If thy children havè joy, they found it in heaven. Where there is gladness of soul may there be brightness of wisdom, breadth of character, solidity of conviction, so that the joy may not be for a moment, but for the whole space of life. We pray every day for comfort because we need it. We have to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil. They never sleep, they never tire, they are always able ; and we, but for thyself, would be crushed before them with ease. Thank God ! with God we have omnipotence. We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us ; so that we, who are feeble in ourselves, are strong as angels in the force and comfort of truth Divine. Let thy ministry in this house be full of grace and truth—bright, tender, loving, human—touching life at every point, and bringing thy Gospel to bear upon the whole scope and pain and agony of this present existence. The Lord make our weakness strength, turn our ignorance into wisdom, and make the water of our feebleness into the wine of thine own almightiness ; and at the last, may the old man be as the young child, and the young child a radiant angel in the heaven-house. There, in the sinless heaven, may we work without weariness, expect and receive the fulness of thy wisdom and the riches of thy grace ; and through the long nightless day of eternity may we know one another better, and thyself more fully, and rejoice in widening spheres of activity. Then shall the sin and pain of earth be forgotten but for the Cross that made even them occasions of new light from heaven. Amen.

Acts xvi. 33-40.

33. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes ; and was baptized, he and all his, immediately.

34. And he brought them up into his house [the baptism being coupled with the washing before the meal is decisive against immersion. Nothing corresponding even to a modern bath in which persons can lie or sit was used by the Greeks, but always a round or oval basin, *by the side of which the persons washing stood*] and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God [in the Divine Lord Jesus, whose grace produced this love and joy].

35. But when it was day, the magistrates [prætors] sent the sergeants [lictors], saying, Let those men go.

36. And the jailer reported the words to Paul, saying, The magistrates have sent to let you go : now therefore, come forth, and go in peace [this "secret escape" with the night's imprisonment, and, under the circumstances, even the scourging, was the prætors' rough mode of saving the Apostles, and themselves also, from the excited mob. Paul acquiesced

to go. Matt. x. 23, but *not secretly*, Matt. x. 14, lest the Gospel be despised, and converts be scandalized].

37. But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us publicly uncondemned, men that are Romans [see v. 20, and ch. xxii. Tarsus, made by Augustus a "free city" (commercially), could *not*, however, confer upon Paul the Roman citizenship. The father or earlier ancestor of Paul must have acquired this as a reward of merit (magistracy) or by purchase], and have cast us into prison; and do they now cast us out privily? nay, verily, but let them come themselves and bring us out.

38. And the sergeants reported these words unto the [Roman] magistrates. And they feared when they heard that they were Romans ["It is a misdemeanour to bind a Roman citizen, a crime to beat him, almost parricide to kill him."—Cic. The *Lex Valeria* of B.C. 508, and the *Lex Porcia* of B.C. 300, had been violated by these prætors];

39. And they came and besought [G. "gave fair words to," 1 Cor. iv. 13] them; and when they had brought them out, they asked them to go away from the city.

40. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of [the Philippian church, fairest and strongest of all in Paul's memory, Phil. i. 3, etc., was only a weak "church in the house of"] Lydia. And when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed [Luke remained behind, and perhaps Timothy also].

CHRISTIANITY SELF-ILLUSTRATED.

THIS is another vivid and happy illustration of Christianity producing its inevitable and invariable results. The old cause produces the old effect. Analyze the instance, and see if this be not so. Here is a man converted, and he instantly seeks to do all that lies in his power to make up for the past. Wonderful industry touched with infinite pathos, this! "He took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, . . . and brought them unto his house and set meat before them." What did it all mean? Exactly what our own repentance and consequent desire of amendment must do. He tried to rub out yesterday's injury. It was yesterday that troubled him. Christianity always drives men back upon their yesterdays. The Christian can never do enough to show the reality and the inspiration of his repentance. He says, "I must pay the money that I am owing. I know that the Statute of Limitations would excuse me, but there is no statute of limitations in the regenerated and inspired heart." The penitent says, "I must find

out the life that I once bruised and crushed, and I must wash it with my tears, and caress it and help to lift it up by the almightiness of love. That life is in the forest, in the far-away backwood—nay, that life is no longer on the earth; but there must be some descendants, even some far-off relatives; I will find them, and for David's sake I will love Mephibosheth." The religion that does this proves its own inspiration. It does not need our eloquence, nor does it ask for the exercise of our intellectual patronage. It simply asks to be allowed to illustrate itself by itself, and its proud challenge is: The God that answereth by fire, let him be God! Why will not Christians write the evidence of Christianity, not in eloquent books, but in eloquent lives? Christianity always concerns itself with the past. As soon as Zacchæus felt the power of Christ in his heart, he said, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." That is the kind of man which Christianity makes. If any other kind of man has come under your notice professing to be a Christian, he is a false spirit; he is not of Christ, and therefore you are entitled to reject his testimony. Wherever you see a man wanting to pay up his arrears, washing the wounds he inflicted, drying the tears he caused to start, you find a man who has been with Christ. He may be a poor theologian, but he is a very angel of a saint, and character is better than acquisition. We must stand upon this to-day. Any argument in words may provoke a more or less felicitous retort in words; but a jailer washing stripes undeserved, feeding hunger unmerited, comforting hearts plunged into hopeless disconsolateness by the intention of man, and only saved from it by the grace of God, will carry the day. You cannot answer the argument of that man's noble service; he is fighting a battle which cannot be lost. Let us not ask ourselves what we now believe, and muddle our heads with arguments we can never master; but do let us wash the stripes we have cruelly inflicted; do let us get people into the house and feed them, and comfort them, and turn night into day, if we would prove that our theology is Divine. This must not be regarded merely as an incident in the story, but as a necessary effect of the operation of Christianity upon the human heart. You must not forget the men you have smitten, the lives you have injured, the robberies you have

committed, the lies you have told, the graves you have dug. If you cannot work resurrection of the dead, you can love and pity and help the living, and ask the injured man's poor son to take full half your loaf, and tell him it is given not of charity, but of right. When the Christian professor does this Judas will fall backward in any Gethsemane where he may seek the modern representative of Christ. Your argument will but amuse, or at best perplex, but your self-sacrifice will persuade and win and heal, and cause Christ great joy in heaven.

The second natural result of receiving Christ into the heart is the experience of unutterable joy. This you find in the thirty-fourth verse : the jailer "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Christianity never brings gloom ; it is a religion of light, morning, summer, fragrant flowers, singing birds, and ineffable delights of every noble name. There are three possible views of God. There is the view which afflicts the soul with a sense of terror. In that view we see God as holy, just, righteous, always judging the sons of men, seated upon a throne high and lifted up, and trying every act of human life by the essential light of his own holiness. Before that view criminal man must cower in abject shame and fear. There is another view, partaking of this nature but much modified—a view which elevates veneration without touching emotion. That is a view which shows God to be very great, illustrious, magnificent, grand ; a Being before whom the head is to be uncovered, a noble Deity, a transcendent Power. The third view of God is the Christian one, and that always brings with it joy ; the fruit of the Spirit is joy. "Rejoice in the Lord alway ; and again I say, rejoice." "The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice." Have we entered into this spirit of joy now, or are we only going to enter into it when we die ? Have we now to walk through a narrow and dark tunnel, cheering ourselves with the imperfect and uncertain comfort that we will at the end of the tunnel enter into green meadows and places of summer beauty ? We ought to enter into joy now ; if we have not joy, we have not the Spirit ; for where the Spirit of God is there is no bondage, there is no fear, and in the absence of bondage and of fear the soul must not be merely in a negative condition ; it must be full of rapture, gladness, and sacred enthusiasm. Do not let us chide ourselves too severely upon this point, because

of the diversity of temperament, and because of the complexity of physical circumstances, which operate in a subtle and often untraceable manner upon our intellectual and spiritual constitution. If we can acknowledge with the consent of reason and heart that Christianity does bring joy, that is the next thing to our having the experience of the joy itself. Some of us seem born to be gloomy. Were some of us caught in an enthusiastic state, our friends would be alarmed, for we are not born to rapture; we speak in a low tone, in a feeble and uncertain manner; our very speech is a kind of groping in the dark. We want fulness and emphasis of utterance; we have a genius for doubting; we have a kind of inspiration for objecting; we do not throw ourselves with unconstrained confidence into the very arms of Omnipotence. In estimating ourselves and one another, therefore, we must take into account all these subtle and unique circumstances, and we need not afflict our souls with a double judgment if we cannot get so high up into the blue morning as bird-like souls can fly who seem to have some right and title to sit and sing at heaven's gate.

These are not the only results of Christianity; for there are results on the other side; hence we find that the magistrates were afraid; they sent a message announcing their willingness that Paul and Silas should leave the city. The bad man has a ghost on the right hand and on the left, in front, behind, and many a spectral presence between. We know it to be true. There are "earthquakes" representing all kinds of physical difficulty; motions we cannot account for; lightning at unexpected times; rain when not wanted; storms howling down the black chimney in the blacker midnight; hands shaking the window frames; strange occurrences in the field—in withering roots or blighted blossoms, or harvests half-grown and damned in their youth. So the bad man has physical difficulties, material alarms and afflictions. Following these came the discovery that the Apostles claimed the protection of the Roman law. So the magistrates were frightened from the side of natural rights. The stars in their courses fought against the magistrates, and natural rights upon the earth fought against the same mean judges. The bad man has no peace. The very law which he attempted to lift like a rod turned to a serpent in his grip and stung his arm. The bad man is always getting

hold of the wrong end ; always mistaking the case ; always prosecuting the wrong party ; always flying past, saying, " I have touched fire ; O, forgive me if you can ! and say nothing about it, for I have burned every finger of the ten ! " Poor bad man ! The earth will give him no rest ; it shakes under his feet, and makes him totter as if he were drunk, but not with wine. He lays his hand, as it were, judicially upon a victim, and the victim turns out to be an accuser ! Then to earthquakes and to natural rights add all the fears which come from spiritual doctrine—deep, mysterious, far-reaching, all-involving doctrine—with the heavens above it, hell below it, an untouchable horizon round about it—flaming, shaking, glaring ; and the bad man has a poor time of it ! The earth was not made for bad men. " There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. " No line in all the universe was laid for the comfort of evil. Wherever you find the bad man you find him in controversy with the earth, with the heavens, with the laws of nature, with the laws of society, with the mystic elements and forces which are called Christian doctrine ; and the man is in hell already, and lifting up his eyes, being in torment, he would beg water of a beggar if he dare. " My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. " If they say, " Let us all have one purse, " cast not in thy lot with them. Their way is a darkening road into sevenfold midnight. " Resist the devil, and he will flee from thee. " There is no peace but in goodness ; there is no rest but in righteousness. If thou hast turned away from thy Father in heaven, " acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace. "

This incident throws some light upon the character of Paul. He did not tell at first that he was a Roman citizen ; why did he keep back that fact ? He kept it back until he could use it with the happiest effect. Paul was probably the only Roman citizen in the little band, and was Paul a man to get off and let the others go to prison ? Suppose Silas and Luke had been put in prison alone ; why, it would have been like putting a man's coat in jail and letting the man himself go free ! As long as Paul was out, what mattered it who was in prison ? So Paul said, " We are all together ; come weal, come woe, step for step, shoulder to shoulder, we go together " ; and then when a time came that he could smite the magistrates as with a fist of iron, he said, " They have beaten us

openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison." He knew how that message would bite all the soul such men had left. This is the way we should stand by one another; not running away upon the ground of individual exemption, but entering into the spirit of the unity of the kingdom of Christ, and the strong man making the weak man welcome to his power. Mark the dignity of his innocence. Paul said he would be "fetched out"; in effect he said, "Let the gentlemen themselves come down. As for you sergeants, we are much obliged to you for your message and civility, but let the gentlemen themselves put on their boots this cold morning and come down." Christianity can be haughty; O, but she can be very dainty! So the magistrates, what with earthquakes, and Roman citizenships, and converted jailers, and one thing added to another, came down and said in effect, "If you will be so kind, gentlemen, as to go, we shall be very deeply obliged to you." "The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth, but the righteous is bold as a lion." In former days they besought Christ himself to depart out of their coasts, did the bad people; and the bad world is always asking Christianity if it will be so kind as to leave the world. It will interfere with the world's scales and weights and measures; with life at home and life in the market-place; with dress and speech, and with honesty of heart. It will meddle with all these things; so the wicked world says to it, "If you would but be so kind as to go away." Sooner would the rising sun go at the bidding of some poor insect, or the rising tide retire before the waving hand of some impotent Canute.

Being liberated, the Apostles did not take the shortest way out of Philippi; they said, "We must go and see our friends now," so "they entered into the house of Lydia"; they called the brethren together and "comforted them." The sufferer comforting those who have not suffered! The dying man praying himself that his survivors may not feel his death too much, or be swallowed up of overmuch sorrow! So having entered into the house of Lydia and seen the brethren and comforted their drooping hearts, they departed with the ineffable dignity of Christian uprightness.

So the Church of Christ was first established in Europe at Philippi—see what a hold Christianity has of Europe to-day.

The beginning of that hold is in this very visit of Paul and Silas and their companions to the city of Philippi. I am aware of the perversions and corruptions of Christianity, but underneath all these will be found the truth, that the Christian idea has been the mightiest force in European civilization and progress. With the exception of one or two kingdoms, the nations of Europe are Christian nations. Take out of European cities the buildings which Christianity has put up, and those cities would in many instances lose their only fame. What is Cologne but the foreground of its infinite cathedral? Whose house is that? What would Milan be but for its august and overwhelming church—the very gate of a celestial empire? Take away St. Peter's from Rome and Notre Dame from Paris, take away the edifices which Christianity has erected in every Christian kingdom, and see how frightful a mutilation would be made in the map of European grandeur. If you tell me that the great galleries of art would still be left, I would ask you to take away every Christian picture and every Christian statue, and then call for your estimate of the boundless cavity. If you tell me that the great centres of music will still remain, I would ask you to take away the productions of the Christian poets and musicians; and after you have removed Beethoven and Handel, Mendelssohn and Haydn, and all the stars amid which they shone like central suns, I will ask you to state in figures the stupendous and irreparable loss. When you call these things to mind, and then remember that Paul planted the first Christian Church at Philippi, you will see how important are the incidents recorded in the chapter, which is little better than an amplified index. We cannot tell what we are doing. He who plants a tree cannot forecast the issue of his planting. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which is the least among all seeds; but when it is grown it is a tree in the branches of which the birds build—a great tree. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. So we cannot tell what we are doing. The penny you gave to the little poor boy may be the seed of great fortunes. The love grasp you gave the orphan's cold hand may be the beginning of an animation lasting as immortality. Let us—old men, business men, young men—be associated with the planting of Christian seed,

which shall be like a handful of corn on the top of the mountains to-day, but in due time the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon. Do not associate yourselves with decaying causes, with institutions that have the condemnation of death written upon them, but with a kingdom that must swallow up every other kingdom, and with a music which must gather all other music into its infinite Hallelujah !

LIX.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to thee in the name of Jesus Christ, and breathe our prayer through him who makes all prayer prevalent. We plead not our own case before thee ; we stand beside the Cross of the Crucified, and through Christ the Lord our prayer is clothed with might. There is one Intercessor between God and man ; there is a Days-Man who can lay his hand upon both and plead the human cause. All we can say is what he taught us—" God, be merciful unto me a sinner." So are we plunged in darkness by our own guilt, and lifted up into light by thy great grace. We are gathered at the Cross. Every hand is touching it ; every heart throbs with love towards it ; every eye is fixed upon it ; it is thy Cross ; Lord, meet us at this sacred place. We are here because of sin ; we are mourning because of self-accusation, and the only hope that is in us is a light lighted by thine own hand. Our hope is in the Saviour ; our confidence is in the Cross ; our expectation is from on high. Read Thy Word to us, O Spirit that wrote it. Let us hear, in the hearing of the soul, how it should be read, so that none of its music may be lost. May our ears be greedy to hear the melody of thy truth ; may our hearts clamour with vehement love to hear it more perfectly in all its infinite sweetness and tenderness and passion. Thy Word giveth light ; thy Word giveth life ; thine is the only Word that is true. May all the syllables of our speech be drawn from it and return again to it, to find their completeness and their glory. Help us to live well because wisely. May our life be hidden with God in Christ—a mystery to the world, so that time has no effect upon us but to make us young ; and all energy employed in thy service is but so much sleep that renews the strength. The Lord take us wholly into his care—we would not think for ourselves ; we would have no planning or scheming that taxes our poor blind ingenuity, we would rest in the Lord. We are confident of this one thing : that he doeth all things well. We are not waiting, so much as longing ; we are standing still, not as an effort, but we are standing still to catch the last phase of beauty, the lingering blessing of the light. Oh, that we might have no wish, or thought, or desire, or anxiety, but live in God and rest in the God of gods. This can be done only by the indwelling and continual ministry of God thy Spirit. Holy One, live in us. Thou knowest what we are, and what we need ; thou knowest the trouble at home, the difficulty in the market-place, the sickness we cannot heal, the infirmity that becomes a burden, the joy that makes us laugh, the prosperity that now is a blessing and now a tempta-

tion—thou knowest us altogether. The strong man ; the patient woman ; the long-suffering heart ; the dreamy spirit ; the active soul—behold, are not all these standing before thee like plain reading? Have mercy upon us through Christ Jesus, and give each a blessing and make each young again. Thou knowest our silent prayer, for which there are no words dainty and fit enough ; prayers that words would debase ; the cry of the heart ; the yearning of the spirit ; the groping of the soul in the dark, seeking for light, and yet almost afraid to find it. Lord, help us in all these passages from the known to the unknown, and from the youth to the maturity of the soul. The Lord look upon us, and we shall be well again. One glance of love, one smile of approbation, one touch of thine hand, and we shall be as the angels. If we may but touch the hem of thy garment, we shall be made whole. Amen.

Acts xvii. 1-9.

1. Now when they had passed through Amphipolis [capital of the first of the *four* districts of Macedonia. On the Strymon ; 33 miles S. W. of Philippi by the Egnatian road, which ran from Dyrhachium to the Hellespont] and Apollonia [a town of the second Macedonian district, 30 miles S. W. again] they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews [this was *why* they stopped there. Thessalonica, capital of the second district, afterwards of all Macedonia, lay 38 miles *W.* of Apollonia. Cassander, who rebuilt it, changed its name from Therma in honour of his wife, Alexander's sister. Was "the bulwark" of Greek Christendom in the Middle Ages, and the means of converting both Slaves and Bulgarians] :

2. And Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them, and for three Sabbath days reasoned with [G. held *dialogues* with ; the word Plato uses of Socrates] them from the Scriptures [O. T.] ,

3. Opening and alleging [Bengel paraphrases, "cracking the nut and bringing out the kernel"] that it behoved the Christ [Messiah] to suffer, and to rise again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim [G. announce], unto you, is the Christ.

4. And some of them were persuaded and consorted with Paul and Silas ; and of the devout [G. "worshipping," *i.e.*, in the synagogue] Greeks a great multitude [throng], and of the chief women not a few.

5. But the Jews, being moved with jealousy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble ["market loungers"], and gathering a crowd, set the city on uproar ; and assaulting the house of Jason [Rom. xvi. 21], they sought to bring them forth to the people [G. "*demos*"; Thessalonica was a "free city." The *demos* (commons) in its ecclesia, church, or duly summoned meeting *was* the head political power, and appointed the *politarchs*, here translated "rulers of the city"].

6. And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the

world upside down [G. "stirred up to sedition," as in 2J, 28] are come hither also ;

7. Whom Jason hath received [John xiii. 25] : and these all act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar [imperial *edicts*, Luke ii. 1, were binding upon the whole Roman world. But there is no mention in this "free city" of the Roman law and magistracy as at the "colony" Philippi], saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

8. And they troubled the multitude [G. *demos*, as we say, "The Commons"] and the rulers of the city [the *politarchs*], when they heard these things.

9. And when they had taken security [had satisfied themselves by examination that no sedition was meant] from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

PAUL'S MANNER.

LUKE was evidently left at Philippi, where he might have a good deal of doctor's work to do. Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus moved on from Philippi elsewhere. We wonder whether Paul will fight any more, or whether he will spend the remainder of his days in pious reflections? We have some little time for the consideration of that question, for a period is occupied in passing through Amphipolis, where nothing was done, and Apollonia, where nothing was attempted. Surely the fight is over, and the warriors are going home. The warriors travelled some thirty-three miles the first day, from Philippi to Amphipolis ; thirty miles a day seemed to be about an apostolic journey. The next day they went some thirty miles, from Amphipolis to Apollonia, but there was not any preaching. The fight seems to be over, and the smitten warriors are going home to anoint their wounds and wash their stripes in secret. But, when they had passed through the cities that had no synagogue, they came to lovely Thessalonica—a woman's name, so named because her great husband loved her. He took away the old name, and said he would call the city *Thessalonica*, the capital of all proud Macedonia. Then we read : "where was a synagogue of the Jews." Seeing the synagogue, Paul saw a battle-field, and instantly he stripped to the fight ! We see now what he was looking for. We were a little troubled when he passed through Amphipolis and said nothing ; and when, the next day, he went through Apollonia and never challenged public attention, we wondered what the

matter was. But now that he has come into the lady-city, the capital, now that he sees a synagogue of the Jews, he begins again. The war-horse will paw when he can no longer stand ; the war is in his blood. You cannot make war-horses of wood and paint ; they are God's fires ! Nor can you put fire into men when there is none. Their industry is but a strenuous idleness, and their walking about is only whirling around in a circle. Truly the Christian war spirit had entered the very soul of Paul ! When this Marmion came to die, " he shook the fragment of a blade," and said, " I have fought a good fight," and none could deny it. Surely he had been a brave fighter ! " I have finished my course," and finished it gloriously. When are we going to begin the fight—the good fight, the battle that means victory ? Let us assemble at the synagogue in Thessalonica, and watch events.

" And Paul, as his manner was, went in——" It is difficult to do away with a " manner." Paul was not an occasional attendant. Jesus Christ did not go now and then to the synagogue. The first Christians *lived* in the Church, and only existed elsewhere. It was a dull time to the early Christian when the church was closed. Outside he was always waiting for the opening of the gate. They were brave days of old.

Paul is here, as everywhere, the very model of a true Christian preacher. What conditions does he fulfil as such ? Here he stands, with a written revelation ; " he reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." The preacher stands in a great tower. If he were standing within a paper castle, which his own fingers had fashioned, it might be burned down or blown away by the tempestuous wind. But the true preacher, who preaches with every drop of his blood, and every spark of his life's fire, utters the words of Another. So the true preacher is never stale in matter or dull in manner. The sunlight is never other than a quiet miracle ; the common air is an uncommon blessing. Paul did not go up and down European or Palestinian cities talking something which he himself had invented ; he had a Book, an authority, a written order, and he at least believed that every word he said was written for him by the pen and ink of Heaven. Once let that thought go, and preaching becomes loose and vain, without a centre and without one dominating thought or note. A sermon

is nothing that is not a paraphrase of the Bible. It is great only in proportion as it begins, continues, and ends in the Scriptures. Paul is standing in the synagogue, or sitting there, as a man who constructs a historical and religious argument, "opening and alleging"—opening words to find their inner secret; alleging, contending, demonstrating, proving, bringing one thing to bear upon another; connecting the golden links and making a chain of them; constructing an argument which should be at once a tower of protection and a home for the soul's security. Then he crowns his ministry by enforcing a distinct personal appeal. Hear him: "This Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." This was a sword with a point. This is a sermon with an accent. The preacher must have an object in view; he should say to himself every time he stands up, "What do I want to do?" Paul always had his answer ready, "I want to preach Jesus and the resurrection, and to get every man to say to Christ, 'My Lord, my God.'" So whatever Paul did was contributory to this great end. The difficulty with the Christian preacher is that nobody wants to hear his doctrine. Do not imagine, my young brethren preparing for the ministry, that the people care much to hear your doctrine. They want to hear your particular way of putting it. They could hear the doctrine next door to their own houses; they would never travel miles for the purpose of hearing your doctrine. They know your doctrine, your theology, your thought, but they want to hear your way of putting it. Babies! they want to see your toys! They like your manner, your gentleness, or your force, your voice or eloquence, or rhetorical way; but the *doctrine*—they would listen to you with equal delight if you were uttering the other doctrine! This is the difficulty of the Christian preacher. There are those again who love the doctrine above all things, and they care not how it is spoken; but they are in the inner circle, and of them I am not speaking. My reference is to the great multitudes crowding around the Apostles, and crowding around all Christian ministers, and the question which I have to put is this: Do these people want to hear the thought, or only the happy words which for a moment endeavour to express it? I went the other day to hear the most illustrious judge in England. Every man who can afford the time ought to spend, I think, one hour a week in the law courts; it is an education and a stimulus. I sat

with reverence of no common kind before the foremost judge of his day. His voice was feeble and indistinct ; at times I had great difficulty, as had others, in hearing him ; but, oh, the strain, the anxiety not to miss one word ! It was dry, it was argumentative, there was not a single flower of speech in the whole, and yet no man coughed there ; every man was silent. Why this anxiety ? Because the people, *wanted to hear* what he said. He is interpreting law, or making law, or settling an expensive controversy, and bringing practical questions to an issue. As to his manner—no man cared for it ; no man went to hear eloquence or poetry ; every one was there to hear *what* the judge would say, not *how* he said it. You must not compare the judge and the Christian minister. Poor minister, he must please, persuade, pander to many a taste, for who wants to hear the truth ? This is the difficulty we all have to contend with, and it will be a growing difficulty with the ages. When a mumbling speaker reads a *will* to persons probably interested in the disposition of the property, does any one say anything about his manner ? Each wants to know what he in particular is to get. Oh, could I persuade my hearers that I am reading a WILL ! for that I am surely doing ; the will of God, the testament of Christ, the decree of heaven. Oh, that men were wise, that they understood these things !

Contrast with that scene the opposition which it awakens. Sometimes you cannot enter into the merits of a controversy, but you may form a tolerable judgment as to its quality by observing the way in which it is conducted. Let that thought rule our construction of these incidents. Opposition arose again, as it always arose ; however quiet the town when the Apostles entered it, they left it in a serious uproar. They came not to send peace on the earth, but a sword. They kindled a fire among the dry wood, and how it burned, how it flamed, how it went up as with a will ! Look at the opposition, “ moved with envy ” ; then it was a *little-minded* opposition. Where is majesty ? There is none. Where is the noble challenge to discuss a great question upon equal terms ? There is none. How is *Paul* moved ? By love. How is the opposition moved ? By envy. The Jews will not have it that a felon—so deemed by the law—shall be King. The Jew will never kiss

the Cross in homage ; he hates it ; it smites his pride ; it blows witheringly upon his national and personal vanity, and he will not accept it.

“ Moved with envy, they took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort’ ; then it was an *unscrupulous* opposition. Any stick will do with which to beat a dog. The Jews, who would not have spoken to those “ lewd fellows” on any account on common ground, will make use of them to put down this religion of the Cross. If they had not been “ lewd fellows,” and in very deed “ of the baser sort,” they would have seen that they were being made use of. On legal, political, social questions they never would have been consulted for a moment. How Envy can stoop to take up polluted weapons ! How Envy can search in the mud for stones to throw at Goodness ! Is there anything so lasting as *hatred* ? We are told that Love will outlive it, but it is hard to believe in that survival. We do believe it, or we could not live ; but Hate is long-lived ; unscrupulous ; will say anything, do anything ; pervert, twist, corrupt, and poison. There is nothing too despicable for it to use to express itself in denunciation and contempt and penalty.

“ Moved with envy, they took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar’ ; then it was a *lawless* opposition. Never mind the dignity of the city. Never mind the politarchs who reign over it ; they can easily be alarmed, and they will take part with the opposition. Magistrates are bound to be timid ; politarchs cannot stand against an uprising city ; they will either dismiss the case, or take bail, or do something to get out of it. So the opposition—little-minded, unscrupulous, lawless—prosecutes its mission to the end. This is true of *all* opposition to the Christian cause. Do not let us suppose that this was a Thessalonian incident with local beginnings and local endings. Wherever you find opposition to Christianity you find an opposition that is little-minded, unscrupulous, lawless, and dishonest. There can be no honest opposition to Christianity. There may be an honest opposition to some special ways of representing it, but to its purity, its self-sacrifice, its nobleness, its purpose, there can be no honest opposition. Yet how the Lord makes the wrath of man to praise him ! What said the enemy ? “ These that

have turned the world upside down." There! that is a tribute to their *power*. Even the Jews, "moved with envy," dare not make a little cause of this Christian mission. They did not dare to call it "a bubble on the water," "a flash in the pan," "a nine days' wonder." They saw in it a world-exciting force, and we who are Christians will become fearful and timid and self-protecting just in proportion as we lose our conception of the grandeur of the cause which we have to handle. This is a case that touches the world. It is not a parochial accident. This is not an affair you can confine within local boundaries; this is not an incident to be read off in a hurried line and then forgotten. It is a force that causes the whole world to thrill and vibrate with new life.

Then they become themselves again, "saying that there is another king." That is a lie! The Apostles never said so, in the sense now put upon that word by their accusers. You can use the right words with a wrong meaning. It is not enough to tell me the words a man employed; I must see the man himself; I must hear his own voice; I must get into the music of his utterance before I can tell you what the words really mean. When the Jews said to the Thessalonian politarchs, "These men say there is another king," they told a lie. But the Apostles did say there was another king. Yes, but not in that treasonable sense; not in the sense of opposing Cæsar, in the sense of sedition, in the sense of throwing down political constitutions. So you must know the *man* before you can tell the value of the *word*. You may report words correctly, so far as they are mere words; you may relate a conversation line for line and word for word, and yet make a lie of it. A conversation is not an affair of words; it is an affair of looks, tones, touches, accents, subtle undertones, and emphases that are full of colour. You are right when you say, "These are the very words he said," and yet by your telling of them you have created a false impression. We must not only speak the words of the Gospel, we must speak them in Gospel *tones*. True eloquence is true love; true preaching is true feeling. If you have sympathy with Christ and with his Gospel, you will speak it in words that are more than words; part of an atmosphere; syllables that must be measured in their native air, and must be viewed in relation to all the appointments of the universe.

Then the accusers proceeded to say, "one Jesus." There they were right. The Apostles, then, had left no false impression as to the Man they were preaching. The Apostles had not left a vague impression that they were preaching about some one who had come, or was coming, or might come. Amid all the tumult and uproar and opposition, they had got this word well into the public memory—"Jesus." They were skilled speakers. They did not lodge in the memory an indefinite article, or an auxiliary verb, or some part of speech that was of no consequence; but whenever there was a lull in the storm they said—"Jesus." Then came the uproar, then another lull, then—"Jesus." So that at the end, whatever word had been unheard or misheard, this word "Jesus" was instamped on the public recollection.

Is this the end? Why, this is not only not the end, it is hardly the beginning. The very first letter that Paul wrote to any of the churches was probably the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. What does he say to them? "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, for ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: but even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention." This is confirmatory evidence; this is a happy corroboration of Luke's narrative.

Paul spent at least three weeks in Thessalonica; how did he live during that time? He had no money; how did he live?

How we ought to live—by *working*! That is the only true way of living. Why ask so foolish a question? If you go into a village without any money, with only one coat for your back, and one staff for your hand, how are you to live? By breaking stones, by sweeping floors, by cleaning boots. How are you to live—by writing begging letters to London? This is how Paul lived: “For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail, for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God.” These were not the men to be put down; they did not live on patronage; they did not consider whether they would offend the “subscribers,” for there were none. We now live on “subscribers,” and therefore we do not live at all, and therefore we breed a small race of men, whose height is to be measured in inches and whose weight is to be announced in ounces. Paul, Silvanus, Timotheus fell to working—not eight hours a day and eight shillings for pay, but—why, if I read the time-bill aright, their hours were long: “For labouring night and day.” “Two hours longer, Silvanus,” said Paul, “and this tent will be done. If we sit up till three o’clock to-morrow morning, we shall just get bread enough to keep us going until the synagogue is open again.” These were not the men to be put down!

When they said good-bye to Thessalonica, was it a final adieu? Read Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians, second chapter, seventeenth verse: “But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.” They wanted to go back to the old battle-field; they were not afraid of the uproar. When anything occurs nowadays, we become suddenly “not very well, and must go down to the seaside over Sunday.” We think it better to be out of the way. How did Paul view the people whom he had won there? Said he: “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy.” They valued the prey which they took in fight; they saved the souls of men. These are the relations which Christianity would establish amongst us if we would allow it. Christianity would make a compact society of us—not living under formal

rules, but under gracious inspiration. If Christianity had its own way in the world, it would never rest until it had united all hearts, driven out all unforgiveness, expelled every evil spirit. It would unite heart to heart, life to life. It would take away every evil memory and every ungenerous thought, and make men, strong men, love one another, hope the best concerning one another. It would lift up the whole level of our life to the plane of Christ's own character.

LX.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, this is resurrection-day ; a time of upspringing and coming clear out into the light ; a widening of the sky ; a driving away of all rain-clouds from our joy ; and the banner is full out upon the wind, and all the heaven and the earth are glad. Jesus Christ is risen to-day ; he has consecrated the time ; it is the Lord's day ; day of light, day of victory, day of heaven ; the day of the Son of man upon the earth, which makes all other days sacred by its holy fire. We have come to see the place where the Lord lay. He is not there. He is risen ; but the place is dear to us ; we love it because he who is our Lord once lay there. He has made all graves sacred ; he has made every grave a door into heaven. So now we say to Death : " Where is thy sting ? " and to the grave : " Where is thy victory ? " and to all fear we address the challenge of almightiness. We are glad to-day. The church-gates are not wide enough for our entrance, and their opening is long delayed, for our hearts are in the haste of eager love to speak well of the name of the Lord, and to laud the Most High with noble psalm and anthem. We worship thee, O Son of God ! Thou art Alpha and Omega—the First and the Last. Thou didst die, but thou hast risen again, and thou wilt die no more. Jesus Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us. In thy death we die ; in thy life we live ; in thy prayer we pray. We are crucified with Christ : nevertheless we live ; yet not we, but Christ liveth in us : and the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us. Old things are passed away, all things have become new. No longer is there darkness or possibility of death. Life has sprung up and death is dead. These are thy great sweet words to us in Christ. They are words of strength and beauty ; they fall upon us like the dew, yet sometimes they ring in our ears like trumpets telling of triumph—wondrous words ! beautiful syllables ! messages from the hills of light ! May we receive them every one and answer them with love. May our faith prove itself by our obedience, and may the joy of our heart lighten the toil of our life. We are come together again for sweet, bright Eastertide. The flowers are around about us ; the earth is just forgetting winter and putting on its youth again for one more struggle, one more adorning, one more bright summer day. Help the earth, thou clement Heaven ! shine upon her. She is guilty in very deed, and she has given herself up to be dug into graves and pits of death. Shame be on her ! But thou dost love the earth, O Christ, and thou hast redeemed it ; the

earth is precious to thee amid the whole estate of the stars. May the families now before thee feel the joy of reunion ; with the boys at home and the girls back again ; with the old voices in the house and the old gladnesses all around about—the buzz of gladness, the excitement of gratitude, the uproar that is harmonious. The Lord look upon our houses and make them dwelling-places of light, homes, indeed, where love lights every room, and where security binds every door in fastness. As for those who are heavy-laden still, whose hearts are being eaten by hungry care, and whose lives are being driven by unsleeping anxiety, surely for them also there is comfort this resurrection-day. The bereaved have forgotten their bereavement in the conscious immortality of those whom they have loved and lost. The graves are gardens to-day ; there is a sound from heaven that tells of immortality, but the feast is waiting for the prodigal ; we are all delayed because he has not arrived. O bring him swiftly home ! The old man is here, and the white-haired mother, and all the children but one, and he is in a far country. Would God he might come home just now, quite suddenly, and break in upon us and take the vacant seat and make the circle of gladness whole. Lord, if thou canst not bring him, it is not in us to win a victory where thou dost sustain defeat. Be with the dear sick ones yonder in the great house and in the little cottage on the lonely hill-side and everywhere. Be with the widow and the orphan and the sad, with the sailor on the sea and the soldier, with the traveller, with our loved ones far away, and give us to feel that though separate in the body, we are one in the soul, bound together in the eternal union of common love to a common Saviour. Amen.

Acts xvii. 10–15.

10. And [G. “but,” or “now”] the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea [27 miles west again along the Egnatian road to *Pella*, capital of the *third* Macedonian district ; then south by branch route to Berea] : who, when they were come thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews.

11. Now [as ver. 10] these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the Scriptures [O. T., Isa. v. 39] daily, whether these things were so.

12. Many of them [Jews], therefore, believed : also of the Greek women of honourable estate, and of men [Greeks] not a few.

13. But [as ver. 10] when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed [announced] of Paul at Berea also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes [this the right word here. Berea was not a “free city,” having no *demos*].

14. And then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to go as far as to [G. “as (where he could embark) upon”] the sea ; and Silas and Timothy abode there still.

15. But they that conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens ; and

receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy that they should come to him with all speed [see xviii. 5 and 1 Thess. iii. 1. Luke seems not to have been aware of Paul's change of plan mentioned in this second text. Paul may have sent a second message from Athens, or *may* even now have instructed Timothy to revisit Thessalonica and then rejoin him "with all speed." *Or*, Paul may have sent Timothy back by sea to Thessalonica from Athens. For Luke's seven years at Philippi, see xviii. 1 and xx. 5], they departed.

FROM THESSALONICA TO BEREÆ.

PAUL and Silas were sent away "by night." That is the way to make the most of time. Travel by night and preach by day if you would live industriously and make the best of your opportunities. We sleep by night, and hardly get over the slumber all day. The Apostles found that there were four-and-twenty hours in a day, and he would have been a vigilant critic who noticed the neglect of any one of them by the zealous messengers of the Cross. It was a fifty miles' journey. Last week we saw the Apostles taking two journeys of about thirty miles each—to-day we see Paul taking a fifty-mile walk, to get out of the road of the fury which had been excited in the lady metropolis. The enemy would say they had driven Paul off the ground—Paul himself would say that he was going to make new ground, and that he would certainly come back again to the old place. There is a going away that means a coming back again with a stronger force than ever. Christ and his Apostles never left a place with the intention of visiting it no more. We have seen the tide go out, but we have seen it also return, and in the returning it seems to play at going back again; but the reflux wave increases in volume, and returns with enhanced force and grandeur. Paul will come back again—personally, or by letter—to Thessalonica, and we shall have, in connection with his personal or written ministry, some of the boldest of his speculations and some of the noblest and tenderest of his pastoral appeals. He is fifty miles away, and yet he is not one inch off. He has taken with him in his heart all that he won at Thessalonica. To the Philippians he wrote: "I have you in my heart." Paul kept his friends in that safe house. When they are there they are no burden; the

heart is omnipotent in strength. If our Christianity were in our heart, rather than in our head, we should be as bushes that burn and are not consumed.

When Paul came to Berea, he went into the synagogue of the Jews. How irrepressible he was! He seemed to look about eagerly for the synagogue. There are men who have a genius for closing their eyes when they come within visible distance of the church. If I rightly follow in my imagination the course of the Apostle Paul, I think I see him, weak-eyed, as he was, looking around anxiously for the synagogue. How was that? Surely he had suffered enough in connection with synagogues? Yet wherever he goes he looks out for the synagogue as a man might look out for home. It is one of two things with us all: either the inward conquers, or the outward—the soul or the body, love of God or love of ease. Which is the greater quantity in your nature, your faith or your self-indulgence, your love or your fear? Human life is a continual battle between two forces, which we may term the Inward and the Outward. Man holds a dialogue with himself. In every one of us there are two. So it is not a monologue, but a dialogue—converse between two speakers—running thus: “Shall I go to the synagogue to-day and risk my life amongst those vagabonds? I think I will not go to-day; I will rest a while and get my breath again.” Second speaker: “Go; time is short; this may be the last opportunity. Follow the Captain of thy salvation, O soul; he was made perfect through suffering, and if any man will not take up his cross and follow Christ, he is not worthy of him. Up, thou coward, and fear not!” First speaker: “I do not fear, I only rest; I will go to-morrow; I have no idea of abandoning the work. Give me forty-eight hours’ rest, and you will find me back again.” “No; in forty-eight hours you may be half-way across the universe. You cannot tell what will occur in two days’ time—NOW, instantly! ‘Faint, yet pursuing’—be that thy motto; start at once.” “Well, I—I will go!” The Inward has won; the soul has mastered the body. Had the dialogue gone otherwise, then the body would have been master; the soul would have been snubbed and humbled; the mind, which ought to be the regnant force in every nature, would have been ordered off; the body would have been at the front with its meanness, its self-seek-

ing, and its self-idolatry. That is a fight which every man must fight out for himself.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica.” The word “noble” means well-born in Paul’s Epistle to the Corinthians ; but in this verse it has a wider meaning. No reference is here made to mere birth or ancestry. The paraphrase might read: “These were nobler-natured people ; freer from prejudice ; more willing to receive new impressions ; much more prepared to hear what men have to say upon difficult and perplexing subjects.” How could they be more noble than those in Thessalonica ? Thessalonica was a capital, a metropolis—not of Macedonia *prima*, but of Macedonia *secunda* ; still it was a capital ; and Berea was an out-of-the-way place. It was not Pella, the beautiful city where was gaiety, where was well-dressed fashion, where was continual rioting and noise and self-glorying. Paul might have been taken to Pella, but they were wise men in apostolic days, so they took Paul to Berea, an out-of-the-way place ; and of the Bereans we read, that they were “more noble” than metropolitans. That often happens. London is the largest place in England ; it is not, therefore, the greatest. It is quite possible that there may be more reading of a solid and instructive kind in a little country town—a western Berea—than in the immeasurable Babylon. The metropolitan of course feels that he is entitled by some subtle and inexpressible authority to sneer at people who live in the “country.” He has a gift of small sneering. But the Bereans were “more noble” than the metropolitans. When men do give themselves to reading in the country they have more time for it ; their minds are not distracted and vexed by competing claims. They have not to get over the initial difficulty of being supremely proud of a city which is unaware of their existence. There can, however, be great ignorance even in Berea. Probably there is hardly a more ignorant man to be found on the face of the earth than an agricultural labourer who is determined not to read. You ought to turn your obscurity into an ally of your education. Coming from a little village or an obscure town where you say with a tone that has in it a good deal of dissatisfaction, “There is nothing to do”—why, you ought to make such a town a very school of the prophets ; no noise, no uproar, no

call-off from prolonged and arduous inquiry into profound and useful subjects ! Every locality has its advantage. In the metropolis we have friction, continual motion, man sharpening man by daily collision, and in the country we have the opportunity of profound cultivation, because of the time which is at our disposal. Let us not complain of our circumstances, but rule them, sanctify them ; and every sphere of life will afford an opportunity for intellectual and spiritual advancement.

What is the test of "nobleness" according to the eleventh verse ? Good listening is one trait of nobleness. The Bereans wanted to hear. The hearer makes the preacher. When congregations fasten their attention on the preacher he *must* preach. Expectation becomes inspiration. The Bereans drew out of the Apostle all that was in him, and thus gave him more. Such was the double action in continual process as between great Paul and the listening Bereans. They heard every word—who does that now ? They wanted to hear every syllable ; they were hushed in silence till the last cadence died upon the air. Paul calls that nobleness—loyalty to truth, freedom from prejudice, mental excellence, spiritual aristocracy.

To good listening was added patient examination. The Bereans "searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." What is the model congregation ? A congregation well provided with Bibles ; with large-print Bibles ; with Bibles with ample margins ; with Bibles that open easily ; a congregation that has the text before it, and that looks from the sermon to the text ; from the text to the sermon ; from the text to the context ; and that binds the speaking man to keep within the sacred brief which God has given to him. That would be a congregation that would compel sublime preaching ! The Bereans "searched the Scriptures." Paul was not talking about something which he had himself cunningly invented. Paul did not say : "I have had a dream, and I will relate it to you, and you can pass your opinion upon it." Paul only told the Bereans what God had told him. You must not look upon the preacher as a man who has found out something, made a wonderful discovery, or performed a juggler's trick with his mother tongue. The preacher preaches what he has been *told* to preach—"Go, stand and preach the

preaching that I bid thee." You have lost your status as hearers! Where are your Bibles? The preacher could quote fifty things that are not in the Bible, and if he quoted them in old English, he could make many people believe that they really were in the Bible. If he said "saith" instead of "says," there is hardly a man in the congregation that would be able to affirm that what he said was not in the Bible. There is a Bible-tone, an old-English way of uttering words, and if words so uttered are uttered as if they were in the Bible, the Bible is not at hand whereby either to confirm or contradict the amazing statement. How much Bible did you read last week? Some can answer that they read a great deal—to them I am not addressing my inquiry; but to others I think I may fairly say, How much Bible did you read? How much Bible can you quote? Do not shirk the question; do not suppose that you could quote a good deal if you had time to collect your wits. Do not let yourself easily off; always be terrifically hard upon yourself, and then you will be gentle to other people. I will therefore probe myself with the inquiry, "How much of Paul's writing could you replace if the Pauline Epistles were lost?" If we would be "noble" in the estimation of Heaven, we must acquaint ourselves deeply and accurately with Heaven's own Word. One thing would follow from the Biblical examination—we should destroy the *priest*. The priest is a curse wherever he is. The priest is a magician who lives upon the credulity of the simple. The priest is at the bottom of nearly all the unrest of nations. He can dry his lips and say, "Behold, I knew it not"; but the priest is a liar. How is his influence to be broken? By the Bible; by the people knowing the Bible; by the people committing it to memory—not the memory of the intellect, but the memory of the heart, and letting the word of Christ dwell in them richly. It is not by wit, by genius, by skill, or learning, but by deep and sympathetic acquaintance with the Word of God, that all priestism is to be put down and destroyed. The sermon ought only to be a paraphrase of the text. If it is not a collection of Bible phrases, it ought to be a poem instinct with the Bible spirit. Call for Bible preaching; value most the preaching that has most Bible in it, and you, as hearers, will revolutionize the whole scheme of human preaching.

There is a logical term in the twelfth verse—"Therefore." With that logical form comes the happy announcement, "Many of them believed." That is the true rationalism. Why did you believe? "Because the speaker fascinated me; because he laid a spell upon my imagination; because he charmed me with subtle music; because he got around about me in a completely overmastering manner." You will one day escape from those poor chains—they are not chains of iron, they are little bands of straw. Why did you believe? "Because it was shown to me by the Living Word that this is the only conclusion that can be established; because beginning at Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, I was shown in all the Scriptures the things concerning Christ, and I found that if I accepted any one page in the Bible, I must accept the whole volume. I wanted to be an eclectic, and to take a page here and a page there; but I was shown that the Book was one, and that if I accepted the first chapter of Genesis and the first verse, I was bound to accept the entire apocalypse—away to its last grand Amen!" *You* will stand like a rock amid troubled waves!

LXI.

PRAYER

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou hast set us in a dream of mystery, and we have no answer to the mocking voice ; nor can we tell how to follow the luring hand. Thou hast made us, and not we ourselves, for surely we would not have made ourselves as we are. Behold ! we know nothing as it really is ; whilst we are looking the meaning escapes us. Even in the act of saying " We live," behold we die. Eternity is nearer than time. Thou art nearer to us than we can ever be to ourselves. These are the mysteries which make us glad with morning light, and which sometimes burden us with all the darkness of midnight. We are in joy and yet in sorrow. We live and die in the same moment. We are slaves on the one side, and yet have the liberty of the skies on the other. So hast thou made us, and we are in great trouble. We do not touch things, or see them, or know them in their reality. We are mocked, and laughed at, and put down and scorned—yet are we applauded and hailed and crowned. This is the infinite mystery, and in our heart there is no answer. We come to thy Book, and read its large letters, and there the light shines. We see in thy Book that we are made in God's image and likeness ; charged with responsibilities of the sublimest range and quality ; called to high action and to heroic sacrifice and to patient suffering ; promised that the day will soon dawn, and the shadows flee away, and the great answer of love cover all the mystery of pain. It is a noble voice, it is music from heaven ; hearing it, the chains drop from our limbs, and sweet, glad liberty calls us into its noble companionship. We therefore will live in Christ ; we will study his heart and will ; we will watch his footprints and put our feet into them ; we will give ourselves up to his guidance, and go as he may lead. " Jesus, still lead on." We would escape the dark valley, and the deep river, and the thick wood, where the beast of prey lies in wait. We would like to walk on velvet grass, along summer paths, to watch the cloudless blue and hear the birds which are all song ; but be it as thou wilt, not as we will ; only be thou thyself there, and the valley shall be as the hill, and the great hill shall be part of heaven. Thy love in time past is our surety for the future. We have been girded by thee, even when we knew it not ; invisible hands have held us up ; kind ministries, not of earth, have nourished and sustained us. We have had bread in the wilderness, and flowers have been found for us among the rocks. So we will not fear, nor tremble, nor die ; but stand surely in the love of the Cross, and find our victory in the Son of God.

Come to us as we need thee, thou healing One. Breathe upon us the breath of sweet summer. Come with early flowers, and tell us that they are promises of fuller beauty. Speak to us some word of tender comfort, and our heart shall grow quite young again, and all our strength shall come back in full current, and we shall forget our trouble in our joy. Thou wilt not disappoint us ; thou delightest to satisfy the soul, and not to mock it. Feed us with the bread sent down from heaven. Comfort us with the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and fill us with the inspiration of his love and Cross. May we live as he lived, and being crucified with him, may we rise again in his glory.

Bless the strangers within our gates, and give them to feel a sense of home and rest and security. Regard the stranger who is not often in thy house, but who has looked in to-day to see what is here and what is being done. May he see great sights and hear voices not of earth. Heal those whom we cannot heal, and speak comfortably to such as lie beyond the reach of our poor voice. As for the dying, carry them straight through the deep, black river, and set their weary feet on the other side, and in heaven's light they will forget the gloom of earth. The Lord's light be our day ; the Lord's kind smile our heaven ; the Lord's great voice our continual inspiration. Amen.

Acts xvii. 16-23.

16. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked [1 Cor. xiii. 5. This argues *not* Paul's lack of charity, but the heinousness of idolatry, which can "provoke the Lord to jealousy," 1 Cor. x. 22] within him, as he beheld the city full of idols [ritual show ; covering Athens' moral and political *decay*].

17. So he reasoned [see note on v. 2] in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market-place every day with them that met with him.

18. And certain also of the Epicurean [Materialist] and Stoic [Pantheistic] philosophers encountered him. And some said, What would this babbler [Ar. Av. 232, used of the chattering crows who *pick* up seeds ; then of parasites and of *brain pilferers*] say ? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods : because he preached Jesus and the resurrection [A.D. 474 Justinian suppressed the chairs of the successors of these philosophers on the ground that Christianity had rendered them obsolete].

19. And they took hold of him and brought him unto the Areopagus [the council of the Areopagus, the *600*, and the *demos* were the three political powers in Athens, still left by Roman courtesy a "free city." The Areopagus had gained, as the others had lost, by the conquest ; it now concerned itself more with education and religion, and many inscriptions attest its jurisdiction in the matter of the erection of altars and statues],

saying, May we know what this new teaching is, which is spoken by thee?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears : we would know therefore what these things mean.

21. (Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new [G. "*newer*"—later than the previous news ; Luke's order of the words hints they sometimes "told" before they had "heard" this "*newer*" thing.]

22. And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus [not upon his trial, but invited, as a foreign savant is sometimes invited to address the French Institute], and said, Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are somewhat [are in character] superstitious [G. "God-fearing" or religious. To begin the speech with this gross blunder, "superstitious," was as impossible for the inspired orator as it has been easy for the Vulgate and its English transcribers].

23. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar, with this inscription, To an unknown God [Pausanias, i. 1, 4, and Philostratus, *Vit. Ap.* vi. 2, inform us that there were several altars "*of unknown gods*"; Diogenes Laertes, *Ep.* 3, that sheep were sacrificed on the occasion of a plague "*to the God concerned*," and that therefore "*anonymous altars*" are found in Athens]. What therefore ye worship in ignorance [*as agonistics*"], this set I forth unto you.

PAUL AT ATHENS.

THIS was Paul's method of "waiting"! The "waiting" of some men is infinitely more energetic than the toil of others. Paul might be said not to be doing anything just now. He was in Athens alone, "waiting" for Silas and Timotheus. He needs rest ; he will now sit down and be quiet, and recover himself after recent experiences. It is interesting to note that Paul was waiting. But how could *Paul* wait? The two words do not go happily together. Paul waiting! He cannot wait. Life is short ; the enemy is at hand ; the opportunity enlarges around him ; and he who was left by the brethren in an attitude of waiting begins to burn. A paroxysm (for that is the literal word) seizes his heart. His soul is stirred within him ; a paroxysm of agony seizes his whole nature when he sees such a sight as he had never beheld before—a city wholly given to idolatry. One historian tells us that in ancient Athens it was easier to find a god than a man—that is to say, the idols were so numerous as almost entirely to fill the whole city. Wherever a marble god could be put

up, there he was set. Paul was a Jew, and had not been trained in schools of images ; he was not an artist any more than he was a classical scholar. To him images were forbidden. "Thou shalt not make to thyself the likeness of anything that is in heaven, or that is on the earth," was ringing in Paul's ears ; and when he was made to understand that the people actually worshipped, or in some sense religiously revered, those idols, his spirit was thrown into a paroxysm. He was not simply moved, superficially agitated ; he was not the subject of a new and transient sensation : he was writhing in an unfeared and unknown agony. Religion does not destroy Art, but it destroys its superstitious uses. Christianity says to beauty, "Stand there ; I will look at thee, I love thee ; come to me with new suggestions of dawning light and broader glory than I have yet realized ; but do not expect me to pray to thee." In Athens the human form was worshipped. To be perfect in form was to be Divine. Paul never cared for form, for its own sake. He saw the religious intent of everything, and if the religious intent was not healthy, holy, and real, he broke the image. He was an ardent Christian. We are Christians, but not ardent.

Athens was wholly given to idolatry. You cannot stop at one idol. One idol brings another. There is no stopping-place in idolatry until the very last little niche is filled with such god as it will hold. This law has also its force and sweep in higher directions. You cannot stop with one virtue—one singular and isolated excellence. It is not excellence if you so use it. If the supposed excellence be figured as an angel, then you are unjust to the heavenly spirit. You deprive the celestial visitant of companionship ; your piety is cruel. The law is impartial ; vices go in groups ; piety is a whole excellence and not a partial virtue. The Athenians covered their irreligious lives by these religious forms. "Fill the city with gods, and let us live as we like," was the Athenian philosophy—it is ours too ! Do not stand up in Christian pride, boasting over Athenian paganism. We play the same trick ; we are caught in the same intoxication. "Found another society, and let us live at home as we please." "Start another mission, and let us play what pranks we like under the darkness." "Build five hundred more churches and set them all in a row, and let the city know that we are not afraid of church-building, but let us drink the devil's cup right down to

its last hot drop." We vainly suppose we have made advances upon Athenian idolatry, whereas we may but have changed the outward and visible form. There are more idols in London, in Paris, or in New York, than ever there were in Athens; not marble idols, but idols we can hide, expensive idols, ruinous idols, idols that will *make* us worship them, idols that infuse their poison into the blood, and taint the inner life of the heart. Athens was quite a godly, clean little city compared to either of the cities I have named. Were Paul to come to London, Paris, or New York, he would see fashion, fortune, ease, ambition, self-seeking; yet a census could be taken even of these idols; but we scorn little Athens in mighty, measureless London, for every man is his own idol! When Christianity undertakes a man's education it never rests until it shows him that every heart is its own idol; and Christianity alone can take away a man's self out of himself, and associate him with the larger life which is called Divine. Man is not a mere unit, a single and detached individual, but he sustains responsibilities to the sum total of life in all the universe, and must give an account to every creature below him and above him; for he may have stopped Divine currents, or interposed in the on-rush of Divine influence in the universe. That is the worst kind of idolatry. Stone idols may be so many marble steps up to the highest altar; but when the heart is its own idol, and its own idolater, nothing can break up the deadly paganism but God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The break-up does not come through schooling, through book-reading, and through crafty devices in language; the break-up comes through *crucifixion*, so that idol and idolater are nailed to Christ's grim Cross, and there they die amid the sevenfold night of Divine wrath, and out of that death there comes the resurrection, which is immortality. The Athenian pagan might be led away argumentatively from stone deities to higher intellectual conceptions of deific being and force; but the pagan *heart* never listens to logic, and never cares for intellectual appeals. Only one thing can break the heart-idol—"the hammer of the Lord," that could grind to powder the stoniest heart that ever shut out the clemency and love of Heaven. To that "hammer" we must look, in that hammer we must trust. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord."

Paul did a little introductory work. Paul, as we have often seen, always began just where the opportunity permitted him to begin. "He disputed in the synagogue with the Jews and with the devout persons," and he found a custom in Athens of meeting in the market-place, which was the general school-house of the city; and there learned men were talking upon learned subjects, and Paul listened. Having listened, he spoke, as he had a right to do according to Athenian custom, but he so spoke as to bring upon himself the contemptuous name of "babbler"—literally "seed-pecker"; one who took little seeds to pieces; who separated one little seed from another. "What will this seed-pecker say? He is evidently nibbling at something, poor little, small-minded, weak-eyed man with Jewish cast of face—what will he say?" "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods." The word "strange" in this reference to Paul's doctrine in the twentieth verse—"Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears"—means startling things. The Gospel startles; it never comes easily and smoothly into any civilization—it flames, it throbs like thunder, flashes like lightning, plashes like deluges of water from infinite heights; so that men say, "What is this?" Jesus did not come to send peace on the earth, but a sword, not quietness, but fire! The Gospel is not to be received slumberingly. If you can receive it slumberingly, you do not really hear it; if you can preach it slumberingly, you do not really preach it. The Gospel is not a sleep, it is a resurrection; it is the trumpet of immortality!

The Athenians were interested in the matter from an intellectual point of view. Some said, "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; let us hear what he has to say about them." That is not religious inquiry; that is mere speculative excitement. If you want to know what religious inquiry is, recall an instance which has just passed under our review. The jailer at Philippi said: "What must I do to be saved?" The Athenians said: "May we know what this new doctrine whereof thou speakest is?" Mark the difference between the one question and the other. The Philippian jailer was in earnest; the Athenian philosophers were simply speculative, willing to turn the conversation into a new channel, and not unwilling to hear a strange speaker discourse with strange eloquence upon strange subjects. Are we

typified by the Philippian jailer or by the Athenian stoic? Why are we in church? How many of us are in fiery earnest to know God's will and do it? How many of us are inclined to a little philosophical dispute, and to a little intellectual debate? And how many of us are not unwilling to experience a new spiritual sensation? Only let it be as short and trenchant as possible, but we are not unwilling just to hear what some seed-pecker may have to say. Let us be honest with ourselves in this matter. If we are in God's house for the purpose of really ascertaining and obeying God's word, all heaven will be aflame with sacred light, and every guest at God's table will be satisfied and refreshed; but if we are here in the Athenian spirit, we may be disappointed and mocked; great questions will go with little answers, or little questions will be mocked by irrelevant replies.

Paul will speak; he was always ready to speak. But they were learned men—he, too, was learned, but not in their sense. He was learned in the one subject that he cared for. So many men are burdened with unavailable learning. Paul was learned in his Gospel. He asked for no time to prepare in; he would not return and dispute with refined disputants when he had had sufficient time to make preparation of an intellectual and rhetorical kind. Instantly he stood up, and to stand up was to establish himself in the confidence of all who heard him, as an extraordinary man at the least. What came afterwards would be seen; no man could despise him who listened to his revelations. To begin his statement he said, "Ye men of Athens." That was Demosthenic; the great orator always began his appeal in those very words. Paul often began, "Men, brethren, and fathers." Alas! he was in a city where there were no "brethren." He must begin upon the broad human relation. There the true preacher can always begin. He cannot always say "Dear friends," for there may be none; "brethren," for that may be an unknown term. Had Paul begun by calling the Athenians "brethren," they would have accosted his salutation with unanimous and contemptuous laughter. There is genius even here. There is a gift of God in these little matters, as well as in matters that are greater. Paul was never wanting in tact; he knew how to open the door and how to enter in. Mark the simple dignity of the salutatory form. They were "men;" they met upon a common platform; there

could be no dispute as to the character in which they stood as to one another. "I am a man speaking to men." In salutation there should be no controversy. Then the next: "I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious," or too "religiously-minded." Mark the broad and generous recognition. Do not affront the people you intend afterwards to persuade. Do not mock the idols you are about to sweep away. There are two methods of delivering a country from idolatry. The one is to override the country, so to say, by military force, taking away all brazen gods, and marble deities, and figured divinities, and so, Jehu-like, destroying Baal out of Israel. That is not destruction. The other way is to reason, to persuade, to displace, to expel the false by the introduction of the true—not to deride an idol, but to preach a Saviour. So Paul recognizes what he sees; he says, "You seem to be excessively religious." He did not scorn them as idolaters, but credited them with a superabounding religious spirit and activity. "For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. I will begin where you end. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him I declare unto you." What infinite tact! What sublime adaptation of means to ends! "You yourselves," said Paul in effect, "will supply me with the text on the marble slab. You declare yourselves to be agnostics, or to have an unknown or unknowable God. So far you have come along the line of religious education; I will take up the matter where you have left it, and now you must listen to my appeal." That is the true method of preaching to-day. You must interpret to men what they do not interpret to themselves. It would be possible to go into some assemblies not called Christian and to say to them, "Men, you who think yourselves not religious are actually too religious." That would be a startling declaration to make to a number of atheists, secularists, or positivists; but it would be true in proportion as they were earnestly pursuing the subjects with which their labours are identified. Endeavour to make the most of a man. Every man has upon him this inscription who is out of Christ: "To the Unknown," and the Christian teacher has to say, "Then I will make it known to you. Do you ever yearn and long and desire and wish?" The reply would be, "Certainly I do; my whole life is one con-

tinual aspiration." Then as a Christian teacher I tell you that such aspiration is the beginning of *prayer*. What you ignorantly do, I declare unto you, in its broadest interpretations. You cannot exclude prayer from life. I hear you say, "I wish—"; "I would—"; "I long for—"; "I yearn for—"; "I desire—." Why, these are the negative terms which are equivalent, in Christian language, to "I pray." You are praying in some sort of dumb, uncertain, troubled way. I am not going to mock you as an atheist, or tell you that you are an agnostic, or fasten upon you some stigmatizing term. I heard you just now sighing, desiring, yearning; I saw you lift up your poor head in an attitude of expectation and hope, and I said, "Behold, he prayeth, and did not know it." I will not have you called "infidel," and "unbeliever," "outsider," and "Philistine." Have I not seen your fingers laced as if you wanted to say something for which there are no words? That is prayer. Call it negative prayer, call it dumb prayer, call it inarticulate prayer, I hardly care for the epithet by which you qualify it; it is my business to tell you that you are not atheistic, or godless, or prayerless, or lost; but in you there is the beginning of the kingdom of heaven.

Or take it from another point. Do you suffer for others? Do you say you will endure hunger that others may be satisfied; you will sit up all night that others may sleep; you will take upon you the full burst of the storm that others may be quiet at home? Is it in that noble language you speak? If so, that is the beginning of *sacrifice*. The Cross is in those sacred words. You are not a worldling; you are not a scoffer; you are not an atheist. You do not know it, but I tell you that by every act of heroic suffering, that others may escape pain, you represent the mystery of the Cross; you show forth in human form the transcendent glory of the work of Christ. Do not let men come and rub out the inscription, "To the Unknown God," as if you had committed an insult to high Heaven. You have come along the philanthropic line, the educational line, and you have got right up to that point, saying, "I am willing to suffer that some other man may not suffer. I would I could take half the pain which my friend endures and so divide the agony with him, that there might be two of us to carry the burden instead of one." Thou

art not far from the kingdom of God! If some Paul should meet you—some great, heroic, inspired Paul—he would tell you that such an offer, such a feeling or impulse, on your part, meant, being fully interpreted, the very Cross and agony of Christ. Or, take it from another point. Are you dissatisfied with earth and time? Are you filled with discontentment? Do you say, “I have drunk every goblet, and still my thirst remains; I have tried every medicine, but my disease is untouched; I have hunted over every field for pleasure, and have never found it”? That is the beginning of *immortality*; it is “the divinity that stirs within you.” See the greatness of man in his very discontentment with earth and time and sense. He takes it up, says he will absorb it, does absorb it, and then says, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” What is the meaning of that? You are not a secularist; you are not a dust-worshipper; you are not—oh, believe me!—a base groundling. You have got down to those experiences to learn that it is not in matter, time, space, sense, to satisfy the infinite faculty which makes you akin with God. Why not start from that point? Why not give broad interpretations to human instincts and human experiences?

This text of Paul’s is in every man; every life furnishes a Mars’ Hill from the top of which Christian preachers may preach. The sun does not plant the root, but warms it into fulness of life. The witness of God is in every one of us, and answers to the claim of the written Book. Here is the grand appeal of the Cross. It comes to something that is already in us. It is one revelation speaking to another, and in proportion as the two revelations harmonize, supplement, and complete one another, is the inspiration of the Scripture proved, and the grandeur of human capacity established.

LXII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art the God of gods and the Lord of lords, yea the King of kings ; the root of all life ; the glory of all light. We know thee not except by our love. We know thee through our holiness, and that holiness is thine own work ; for in us—that is in our flesh—there is no good thing. We are saved, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to thy mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. So, what we have of pureness in our hearts is the snow and the wool which thou hast made out of the crimson sin and the scarlet transgression. The blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, hath wrought this miracle in us. We do not understand it, nor do we ask for it to be explained. We open our hearts and receive the great gospel which we need. We feel our need of it, and when it comes, it fills the heart with a strange glowing of love unfelt before, the very warmth and tenderness of God's own grace. Sweet is the day thou hast set among the days that are common. It has a light of its own ; it dawns upon the weary world like no other day. We are glad of its peacefulness ; we are thankful for its rest—may we enter into it as of right Divine, and enjoy the calm, and be healed and soothed by the heavenly serenity. This is the day the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it. We would have all days touched by its glory ; we would that into every other day some breath of its peace might quietly steal ; so that the tumult of the week might be checked as by a presence from heaven. We thank thee for strength and health and spirit, with which to do our daily work ; it is no more a toil to us if thy strength be in our soul. Then we stand upon it, and speak to it, and lift it up, and set it down, and keep it at arm's length ; it is no longer our master, because of the kingdom of heaven which rules in our hearts. Thou art bringing us onward a day at a time. We bless thee for the black night when we can see nothing : it is good for us to have no eyes. We bless thee for letting down a great curtain we cannot see through, though our curiosity would peer into the secret so near as to-morrow. This is thy way of teaching us, and behold, we know it to be good. Thou hast brought us to this acquiescence in thy method. Once we chafed as Ephraim, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke ; but now we have become used to God's light burden. Thou dost also lead us forward into truth a day at a time ; thou wilt not allow us to read two lessons at once. We bless thee for this care of our sanity ; thou hast many things to say unto us, but we could not bear them now.

So we may not turn over one leaf until we have read it well. Thou dost turn the pages—not we. Help us to read every syllable, and to print the whole lesson upon our heart, so that we may be able to say it over to ourselves when we walk the earth or travel on the sea ; when we are alone in the night-time, or when we are hurried by the crowd. We would that thy truth might be in us—part of us ; so that we shall feel it to be no burden to carry, but a source of new life and new hope day by day, till the winter of earth is quite gone, its last snowflake melted, and the great warm summer of the eternal heavens is upon us, with infinite beauty and fragrance. By thy good hand upon us, we have conquered another week and set it up amongst our victories. If we feared it, our fear is now forgotten. We have slain every giant—not with our own arm, but with thy strength ; we have wrestled with the foe and flung him in the encounter, so that he cannot rise again ; and this we have done, not by our own skill or power, but by the indwelling strength of God. We come to thee in the sweet spring-time, when the earth is young, and every living thing is going back to its early childhood, and showing all the beauty of its heart. May we, too, feel the vernal breeze in our inmost life and root of thought ; and about us may there be an upspringing of things beautiful and good ! The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. May our hearts welcome thy descending kingdom, as the earth welcomes the growing light and warmth of the sun ! Be with those for whom we ought to pray who are not here to join the common speech at thy throne ; the sick ones ; the weary toilers who are almost stealing unconsecrated rest to-day ; men who are bringing earth's weariness to be refreshed by Heaven's bounty. Be with our loved ones far away in the little house at home, in the quiet village, in the middle of the wood, in the new country, in the colony unformed, in missionary lands speaking unknown speeches, on the sea, torn between two continents, leaving love and coming to love. Do thou bind up the divided heart, and grant safe landing to those now on the deep. As for those who are beyond our reach, slipping over the brink, dear old friends, who have only now to say good-bye, may they be stronger than those who watch them ! In death may there be more than there is in life, and through the closing eyes may the light Divine stream into the waking heart ! And when all is over, the battle and the feast, the dark night and the bright day, may we meet through the blood of the everlasting covenant and the washing of regeneration—"no wanderer lost"—a congregation in the skies ! Amen.

Acts xvii. 24-28.

24. The God [comp. Rom. i. 18 ff.] that made the world and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands.

25. Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything [any additional thing], seeing he himself giveth to all life and breath and all things.

26. And he made of one? ["blood" had offended these autochthonous Greeks] every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation;

27. That they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

28. For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said [*Ovid* said of the Cilician *Oratus* that his astronomical poems would make him immortal "as the sun." But to this half-line from *Phan.* 5, quoted by his countryman on this occasion, he owes his rescue from oblivion. The Stoic poet *Cleanthes* in *Jov.* 5, and a number of other Greeks, had expressed the thought]. For we are also his offspring.

PAUL'S THEISTIC ARGUMENT.

HOW to address a reluctant assembly; how to conduct a difficult case in the presence of men who are filled with unbelief? This was Paul's task. He is now in comparatively new circumstances. He could fight with Jews; he could bear opposition; he had an answer to the tempest of antagonism—how will he deport himself under the pressure of *indifference*? This will try his mettle, and he will fail! Indifference will kill him—antagonism never! Athens will be too many for Paul, because Athens will not fight. Athens will go home to its dining and refining and speculation. Indifference has killed many a noble soul. It is killing many of you, mayhap, at home. You do not feel it—because you are not public characters—as Paul felt it, but you may have some idea of it in the domestic sphere. You could get through a controversy, but the indifference that never looks at you, never caresses you, never speaks one gentle word to you, the Athenian coldness that never appears to live, except when it sneers, will kill the youngest, freshest heart amongst you.

How does Paul begin his work? Like a master builder. He lays before himself one clear, distinct purpose which is to be accomplished. He takes the text from his congregation and says: "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Jesus Christ always found his texts in the congregation.

When a man looked at him, he saw in that look the beginning of a new discourse. Paul did not open a scroll which had no relation whatever to Athenian tradition and Athenian education ; he read the marble slab, and said, in effect : " You shall be your own Bible ; I begin where you have ended ; I will supersede that inscription, ' To the Unknown God,' by revealing him to every one of you." Find in the man himself the beginning of your speech. Find in the little child, in home or school, the text. The child will then follow you with interest. Do not lay a heavy volume upon its young head and say : " You must carry all this." No. The child will smile, or cry, or sigh, or look, or lay its little hand upon you. In every one of these actions find your initial Bible, and bring the other Bible in now and again as you go along ; but begin with natural instinct, inborn reason, conscious necessity, dumb prayer, sighing that has in it the beginning of supreme religious desire. Paul said, " You are in search of a God, and I have brought you one." Instantly attention was arrested. Had Paul begun at the Christian end of the argument, the people would have turned away from him with unbelief ; but Paul was a workman not needing to be ashamed, handling the word skilfully ; so he began where Socrates himself might have begun, he joined the great speculation just where the door happened to open. Christianity identifies itself wherever it can with ancient thinking, and current systems, and traditional practices ; and from these starting-points, supplied by others, it works its way up to its own Cross and its own heaven ! We should be crafty in this business ; herein men should be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. This was Paul's purpose. Paul announced his text and kept to it. Let us hear him.

The twenty-fourth verse is the first chapter of Genesis and the first verse over again. How often in our teaching have we seen that there is but one verse in the Bible, and that the very first ! The other verses are all " Amen." Away they pass like many-coloured and many-toned anthems ; but they come back again to the original note, and constitute in relation to the opening verse in the Bible one all-reconciling and all-contentful Amen. Listen to Paul's retranslation of the Bible's opening words : " God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth." That is Moses. All complete preaching

must begin with Moses and go on to the Lamb. What other names are there in heaven or on earth but "Moses and the Lamb"?—law and grace, stern beginnings, tender endings, foundations of granite, pinnacles tipped with light. This is ideal, because Divine, completeness.

Paul revealed the spirituality of God, saying, "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands." No explanation was attempted. To explain is to lose. Religion is not a thing of explanations, a riddle with an answer; but the Divine angel has been debased into a church conundrum with a clever answer! On the contrary, we should have said, "God is a Spirit." What is the meaning of "Spirit"? It has none to us in our present fleshly condition. What is God? No man can tell. It is the Mystery of being; the Glory of light; the Secret of all things. There is no explanation. He who attempts to explain God blasphemes the God whom he explains. The best explanation is silence. The noblest prayer is a speechless look. How far you have realized the true spirituality of God will appear in your *life*. The proof is not intellectual but practical. By noble character, by charity of soul, by love that would die for its object, you will know whether your God is a nightmare or an inspiration. This is not an affair of words. You have none other than an Athenian marble *god* if you have a marble *heart*. If you can forgive till seventy times seven a thousand multiplied, then you have the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ glowing in your heart like an infinite fire which burns but does not consume. The marble heart always means a marble god. The proof of your deity is in your spirit. Some doctrines are not to be explained as some spaces are not to be used. How little even of the universe that is about us do we use! Whatever we have to set down we are obliged to set down on the ground. Yes, now I think of it, that is true. I wanted to hang something upon the horizon, and I could not reach it! What a magnificent ring for hanging things on is the horizon! And yet we, who can see it and talk about it, are obliged to set down everything on the cold ground! The flying bird—dear little self-deceiver!—thinks it is suspending the law of gravitation when it goes up to sing in the air. It says, as it flaps its tiny wings, "You talk about things seeking the centre of the earth; I know nothing about your centripetal force—see!

I am going away from the centre of the earth all the time." Sweet rationalist! Watch it. It is coming down again—why come down? Because the centre of the earth is stronger than any wing that ever attempted to compete with its infinite pressure. At night the bird will be glad to rest in the earth which in the morning it avoided with a song! There will be a good deal of coming back again amongst many flying minds; let us not object to their flying in the meantime. Learn that the air is but a larger earth.

This nobility of expression on the part of Paul does not interfere with the solemn roll of his logic. "Seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything." A spiritual God requires spiritual worship. That is the philosophy of the whole case. You determine your worship by the nature of the object which is worshipped. Do you worship a marble slab? You will be as cold as the marble. Do you follow a God that answereth by fire? Then there will be fire in your prayer, and there will be fire in your pure and purifying life. Men like a god they can patronize. To be able to "do something" for God pleases the little vanity of little minds. But we cannot do anything for the God of the Bible except obey, and we cannot obey unless we love. You cannot keep the law in the letter; he who keeps the letter of the law breaks the law itself. The law can only be kept by love. You may do it all, and do nothing of it. A regulation-life is a life of self-idolatry.

Another view of God is given in these wondrous words: "Seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things." How infinitely Paul has gone beyond the point which he found in the text! The Athenians had wrought their way up to Unknown; Paul makes the dumb speak; he turns the stone into a living revelation. Read the words again, for in their repetition you find their best explanation: "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands." And this was said on Mars' Hill! This was said in the presence of the Parthenon! This was said in presence of pillared temples and majestic edifices, raised to deities fancied and unknown. "Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to

all life and breath and all things ; and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth." Who could read these words without feeling that they carry with them their own proof? This is the peculiarity of the Gospel. It brings with it its own fire ; it carries along with it its own eloquence. The Gospel only asks to be stated or preached that it may be heard in its own tongue. In Paul's speech there is no uncertainty of speculation ; there is no hesitancy of doubt, as if the speaker ventured to make a mere suggestion in elucidation of another scheme of cosmogony.

Paul stands on Mars' Hill in another sense than that which is indicated in the mere letter of the text : he stands *above* it, and looking from the heavens down upon Areopagus, the Acropolis shrinks into a handful of dust, and is viewed by the inspired and heaven-illuminated eyes with contempt and disdain. Athens had to climb its Mount Zion foot by foot, yard by yard, up to its top ; but the Christian revelationist came down upon it from the clouds, stood upon it for a moment, and reduced it to contempt by the eloquence of an infinite contrast. Your god will determine your prayer ; your god will be the measure and force of your preaching. If you have come to pit one little god against another, then you will be but jostling a whole crowd of godmongers, and you will be poor preachers, not deserving sleep when night comes, for you have toiled in a bad cause ; but if upon every infidel Areopagus, every speculative rock, you come down from immediate face-to-face talk with God, your face will burn and your voice will be charged with a tone which will throw all other tones into grating discord. The Church will be worsted through not knowing God. If the Church has been patronizing God, she has not been living in the heavens. If the Church betake herself to the revelation of God, rather than to his explanation, she shall always have a hearing in the world.

I hold God because I need him. I do not explain him, because I cannot ; I do not defend him, because he needs no defence. I prove him by reasoning higher than formal logic : by the reasoning of a life that goes upward in daily prayer, and outward in continual sacrifice. This may give peace perhaps to some disquieted minds who have imagined that mechanical theology was to be mastered before Divine communion could be realized. Have

nothing to do with mechanical theology. You can make nothing of it, neither can any man. Theology-making is an attempt to serve God with hands, and God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything. All mechanical theology is untrue, because it is incomplete. What you have to struggle after is to feel God—a rebuke to all evil, a judgment of all crookedness, an inspiration to all nobleness, the fountain of purity, the pavilion of defence. Do you so feel your need of God? Then the only explanation you can now have of him is to be found in Jesus Christ. He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father; no man hath seen the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. So we must go to Christ's words, Christ's life, Christ's whole priesthood; and there we see the beginning of a light which the universe is too small to contain or express in all its intensity and fulness. A little ray comes down to gild the disc of time, but for the whole glory we shall want the immeasurable fields of eternal duration.

LXIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, in Jesus Christ thy Son we thank thee for everything that hints at the great home-going. We love to think of going home ; we are stirred by the happy reflection that we are even now on the road—stony, uphill, often hard to climb, but still on the home-road, with many a tree on the wayside under whose shadow we can rest a while, and many a rill of pure water of which we may drink, and so become fitter for the next stage of the journey. We love to think that we are only on the road, and not yet quite home. This world could never be home, because it is so small, and in it there is such uncertainty and trouble, and behold men are digging pits under our feet which they call graves ; and at home there must be no death. We bless thee that we are lifted up sometimes quite above all cloud and wind and high noise, and are brought into the stillness, the peace, the security of a very near sight of thy shining face. This enjoyment we have only in thy Son—never out of him. It is in Christ that we see thee, through Christ that we come to thee, and through the Cross of Christ that we see Righteousness and Mercy embracing each other in infinite and eternal reconciliation. These are visions the prophets did not see ; these are the revelations which make our Sabbath-days and our rest-days ; yea, it is no ox that rests, or beast of the field, or plough that stands still in the furrow ; it is the troubled heart, the sin-riven spirit, the disobedient soul that is caught up into the movement of thine own righteousness and love, and in the harmony of the Godhead we find the harmony of humanity. We bless thee for great doors in heaven. Once it was a curtain without break or tear ; we could not see through it ; but now there are open doors and windows larger than the constellations, and we see the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Our hearts need no telescope ; they are far-sighted because much-loving. Blessed be the vision of love, the eyesight of the heart, for unto it shall be granted vision upon vision, until the whole sky shall be one flame of glory. We bless thee that as sinners saved we can say all this, and love thee for the larger life, the ever-increasing liberty, the perfect freedom of Divine sonship. What wait we for but to forget the earth, and to escape from time as from a cage that bounds our liberty ? We want to be consciously swallowed up of love—absorbed in God. We would have no feeling of foot or hand, of earth or air, but would live the ineffable life and breathe eternity itself. To this end withhold not the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of fire, the Spirit of God. May he dwell in us, and be with us, and

lead our every thought, and lift up our every impulse, and move our whole being with the energy which is infinite and gracious. The week is behind us—the spoiled, blurred week. It came from heaven white as snow, and we have sent it back scarred and ill-treated, and into thy heaven it is taken only because thy grace is greater than our sin. Thou hast begun to send us another week, another bright chance, another gracious opportunity. May we make better use of this than of the last. We are sure to spoil it, for our snow is blackness, and our beauty is a blot; there is in us—that is, in our flesh—no good thing, no perfect power, no faculty that can please thee if thou dost judge by thy holiness and not by thy compassion. Write thy word for us everywhere, on every opening flower, on every dawning morning, on every brightening, lengthening day. On all the events of our life may we see thy Gospel traced, thy meaning made clear, and thy purpose surely established. We thank thee that old friends are with us to-day. In these reunions we have a pledge of a larger fellowship. For all travelling mercies, for all home enjoyments, for every element that makes life pure and glad, we bless thee with a full heart. We thank thee that the father is here, and the child, that the mother has come back again, that the old man has come to look upon young life, that young life has come to be blessed by paternal graciousness. For all these reunions and fellowships—how temporary soever—we bless thee, because they bring with them glowing love, and hints of longer, brighter days. As for those who are under the sod, they are not forgotten, they are still with us; they cannot die. We bless thee for all that was brave in their lives, and for all that was sacred in their death. We commend one another with tenderest love to thy great keeping, Father-Mother of us all. Spare us every one. Make the blackest the whitest; make the worst the best. Give the heathen for an inheritance to thy Christ, and this day, in this house, may he see of the travail of his soul. In our preaching touch us with the music of heaven; in our hearing bless us with the attention of earnestness; and when the day closes and the cold stars come out to replace the sunshine, may we feel as if we had touched the heavens and seen somewhat of the glory that is beyond. Amen.

Acts xvii. 29-31.

29. Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of man [this *iconoclast* spoke facing the Acropolis and Parthenon, in full view of Phidias' colossal Minerva].

30. The times of ignorance [ver. 23] therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent:

31. Inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance ["afforded faith"] unto all men, in that he hath

raised him [the Lord Jesus, who *is not named*, but upon *Whom* the whole argument here concentrates itself. The orator's art here supplies the demand of the evangelist's zeal] from the dead.

PAUL'S CUMULATIVE ARGUMENT.

UP to the twenty-ninth verse Paul has made a general statement respecting God. In the twenty-ninth verse he lays down the ground-work of a true and abiding Christian philosophy. If the Church could fully understand the meaning of the first word in that verse, and would fearlessly apply it, there would be no infidelity worthy of a moment's notice. What the Church has not yet mastered, so as to be able to use it with perfect ease and fearlessness, is this word "Forasmuch." The armoury of the Church is in that word. The weapons of our warfare are all kept within the sacred custody of that most simple, but most inexhaustible, term. We have hurried over it as if it were an antiquated phrase—a piece of very old, quaint English, whereas it is a theological armoury. It contains all that is necessary for the completest and sublimest revelations of God. That word throws man back upon himself, and says, "If you want to know what God is, know yourself." That is the mystery of reason. That is the transcendent rationalism—the sublimest faith. Find your way to the Unknown through the known; to the Invisible through the visible; to the Infinite through the finite.

"Forasmuch then" as we ourselves are not "like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto them." We ourselves are limited expressions of God—we are made in the image and likeness of the Creator. God has left his witness within ourselves, and if we would but fairly and honestly and continually study *ourselves*, we should have no difficulty about the Godhead. This is what the Church dare not say, except with great guarding and reservation and parenthetical subtraction from the essential meaning. The Apostle's words are sublime: "Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device." *We* are not so made; we are not carved images; we are not straight lines; we are not empty vessels. If we would study *our-*

selves, we should know the mystery of the *Trinity*. Men have abandoned the self-study, and have taken to book-reading and word-fighting, instead of dwelling within themselves until the quietness was deeper than the stillness of death, and until the movement of the Ghost could be heard. They have gone out to fight one another with long words, and arguments long and cunning and mischievous as serpents. If you want to know what God is, enter into you closet, shut the door, sit down, and listen to your own heart-beat. You have all the mystery there. This is not an argument of my invention ; it is the expansion of Paul's own statement. To the Athenians he said : " You do not know one God, you have openly called him Unknown ; whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. He made us ; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." Then judge the Father by the child ; judge the Creator by the creature—not by the creature of his *hand*, but by the creature made in his own image and likeness, and rise from the human to the Divine—the ascent of reason and the way of faith. I see heaven opened ; now I know of a surety that the Bible representation of God is true, because it is true of *myself*. My reasoning is now invincible, because it takes this turn, namely : Forasmuch, then, as we are not *entirely comprehended*, even by those who know us best and love us most, even so is God a mystery, even to those who linger longest at his altar and honour him with most zealous fidelity and the incense of sacrificial lives. How strong I feel when I rest upon that ground ! Your *child* does not know you fully ; there is always some other word you could say if so minded ; there is always some deeper depth of being, some inner secret of mystery ; the father is always in advance of the child. That is so amongst ourselves, and is so, not arbitrarily or whimsically, as if we had invented the process, but is so necessarily, essentially, unchangeably. Forasmuch, then, as this is the case between man and man, friend and friend, heart and heart, we ought not to think that it is otherwise with the *Godhead*. You must reason upwards, and your reason will soon take fire and go up as a burning sacrifice before the eternal throne.

Take it from another point, and the reason is equally valid, because equally Pauline and inspired. Forasmuch, then, as *we have not been seen* by our dearest admirers, we ought not to think

that the Godhead can be seen by angel or archangel or seraph that first saw the light of his face. You have never seen your friend ; you have never seen—let me say again and again—your own SELF. No man can see himself and live. What wonder I have not seen you when I have not seen myself? Forasmuch, then, as we have not seen *ourselves*, we ought not to think that *God* is a plain surface, which every eye may look upon in its entirety. The mystery is in ourselves. Any mystery that we find in God we find initially and typically in our own nature. We must first settle the mystery of man before we attempt to deal with the mystery of God.

Or take it thus, and see how the Pauline reasoning clears its way through all difficulties : As we express our thought and feeling through *body* and *form*, so does God. We proceed by incarnation. We have supposed that incarnation was a theological term, and belonged wholly to the Church ; we must now learn that incarnation is the necessity of love. Indifference need not incarnate itself ; but love that thinks about us by day and dreams about us by night—love that would give its very heart for our salvation—must come in visible form, must be borne in some Bethlehem—in inn or manger somewhere, and must show its radiant self simply because it *is* love. Forasmuch, then, as *our* love must incarnate, en flesh, and embody itself, so as to touch us, we ought not to think that the *Godhead* is independent of the method which amongst ourselves he has made essential to union and happiness. If we have come upon the doctrine of incarnation through some long and weary process merely intellectual and verbal, I do not wonder that men should stumble at it and endeavour to argue it down ; but if we have come upon it through the deep study of our own nature and ways of self-revelation, when we come to the historical Bethlehem of Judæa we feel we have only come home. That Bethlehem has been in our hearts ; that Bethlehem is the inner circle of our sacred home ; that Bethlehem is the secret of our union and fellowship and hope.

Take it from another point. Forasmuch, then, as we *forgive* our children who repent of their sins with broken-heartedness and honest confession, we ought not to think that the Godhead is unwilling to forgive. How is it with you when the child comes home and says, “ Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy

to be called thy son'? Did you fall upon his neck and clothe him and jewel his fingers and kiss him back into sonship? Forasmuch, then, as that man did so to that sinning son, we ought not to think that the Godhead is made of iron or is a carved statue in the sky. This is the Biblical reasoning leading up to the Biblical faith. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!" You note the reasoning, the mysterious, gracious balance of the sentences—"As—so," "If ye—how much more!—He." The lines are the same, they only grow in height and width and burn into purer splendour; but you must find in yourselves the root-thought of God.

Now the speaker rises to a higher moral tone in verse 30. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." God saw as if he did not see. The Gracious One made allowances which would not enter into a narrow calculation. God gave the world wide chances for a long space; but now we date from Christ; all our epistles, and bookkeepings, and commercial transactions, all our nativities and festivities, and bonds and covenants, must be dated at Bethlehem—*that* is where you sign! That little Child, with eyes that see not, divides the old from the new, and you dip your pen in the inkhorn of his revelation when you date your commonest letter or sign your meanest bond of merchandise. But now a new bell has rung, a new day has dawned; from this time forth there is a "command to repent." We have now the responsibility of ignoring the revelation. That is a tremendous responsibility. You have to stand up and say to Moses and the prophets, to the minstrels of Israel and the evangelists of the Church, to Christ in Bethlehem and Christ on Calvary—"We do not believe!" We thus come into a great inheritance of responsibility. No man is the same at the end of a religious service that he was at the beginning; if he has not gone up, he has gone down. We cannot take up the position of uninstructed inquirers and sit down with ancient Greeks and say, "We know no more than they did." That opportunity has been destroyed. We do not go up from ancient Greece, but from modern Christendom, and according to

the line along which we have walked to the judgment seat will the judgment itself be conducted in every case. You who were born in Christian houses—you who were sung to sleep with snatches of Christian hymns when you were irresponsible infants, you who were carried to Christ's house and nurtured in the fear and love of God, cannot go up to the judgment seat as if you had been born in some barbarous country and had never heard of the name of Christ. Thus our responsibilities are increased apart from our own control. No man can draw the line and say, "My responsibility begins here and ends there." Civilization every day adds some new weight to the obligation which rests upon every human soul. Our responsibilities are oftentimes created for us, as well as created in us. Now that the sun shines we must not be striking lights of our own. No man will be held to be irresponsible if he has not availed himself of the light which lay within his use. Believe me, you cannot act as if you had never heard of the Bible. You have now to thrust your way past the Bible and to say, "I will not believe one word you utter; I resent and denounce every appeal you make." Are you prepared to make that violent reply? O, answer, No!

LXIV.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art our Shepherd in Jesus Christ thy Son, through whose sweet name we now come to thee, as through an open gate on which thou hast written all the welcome of thy love. We love to be thought of as a flock. Thou makest thy flock to lie down at noon; thou ledest thy flock by the still waters and the green pastures; thou carriest the lambs in thy bosom; thou art merciful as well as mighty. We need the shepherdliness of heaven amid all the bleakness and sore travail and labour of earth. It is sweet to think of the descending heavens and of their warmth and comfort and tenderness, and to know that they come down to take us up as into strong arms, which will hold us lovingly in eternal security. We bless thee for this vision in Christ. He said we would see heaven opened and the Son of man descending upon us. Our hearts long to see no other figure; they love the Saviour. They would see Jesus only—all beautiful sights in one—the glory of God, the Light of heaven, the Jewel of eternity. We bless thee for a Word that touches our life's necessity and pain; a Word that is no burden, but a morning light, a summer hope, a gladness that has no comparison. May that Word enter into our life and make us young again! May that sweet Word sing in us like an angel sent down from God to comfort and cheer the heart! We know thy Word; there is none like it, there is no counterfeit. It comes to us with its own authority of sweetness and power and joy in the Holy Ghost. We have come to hear it, to believe it, yea, to devour it, as hungering men devour bread. May we now know that the festival is spread for our soul's delight, and may thy banner over us be Love! We want to live as thou wouldst have us to live. Thou didst make us, and not we ourselves, and thou wilt account to us as to thyself for our individuality. Thou hast a set purpose in each life; we are all thine, jewels thou wilt number, and not one of us in Christ Jesus thy Son our Saviour can ever be lost. Thou hast made our life into night and day. Thou hast set the one against the other. Thou hast made the day partly ours and the night mostly thine own. Thou dost set us up in the presence of light, and thou dost lay us down to sleep that we may get back our youth and strength and hope and begin another day's work with yesterday's experience. Thou hast also given us the bright day, so full of light, so full of joy, a gleam of heaven, a hint of the world in which there is no darkness at all. Help us to understand this variety of night and day, and to feel that it is a parable full of Gospel meaning to those

who have the pure heart. We commend one another and all our interests and relations to thy tender care. Be unto us all in all; bind us together in the bond of eternity. Save us from despair, from sin, from death. Fill our hearts with life that shall say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" May the life of thy Son be in us abundantly, and more abundantly, like wave upon wave of waters that cannot be measured! Regard the traveller and the stranger, the friendly visitor, and those who would enlarge our prayers by the addition of their own. Regard the dear young ones and save them from the cold wind, the cruel tempter, and the snare cunningly laid; and help the old to believe that onwardness in age is progress towards youth. Be with the dying, and grant unto them the power to wave the banner of triumph and to speak the fearless and hopeful word. Help every good man to be better, every faithful servant to be more industrious, every sufferer to be more patient, and every waiter for the kingdom of heaven to stand still with a deeper and happier contentment. Our sins thou wilt deal with, for we cannot; they will not baffle thee. Thou hast opened a fountain of blood. Where sin aboundeth grace doth much more abound. Thou dost magnify thyself against our enemy, and show thyself to be greater than all that can be against us. We fall into thy hands in this great sweet faith. We are quite strong; no cloud is before our eyes, the earth is a solid rock, and the heaven an eternal security, whilst this faith that is in Christ Jesus reigns and rules in our souls. The Lord's love be our Sabbath blessing and the Lord's light our Sabbath glory. Amen.

Acts xvii. 32-34.

32. Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked; but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again [expression incompatible with the view of some Evangelical commentators, who argue from the name of Jesus not having been spoken that Paul was interrupted before his intended close].

33, 34. Thus Paul went out from among them. But certain men clave unto him, and believed: among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite [one of the council], and a woman called Damaris, and others with them.

THE POINT OF DEPARTURE.

WE have heard of Paul's great sermon, and yet that sermon would be called by very hard names if it were preached to-day. Consider that Paul was never at Athens before, and that Paul never went back to Athens any more; and consider that this is his deliverance to Athenian hearers on a great and historical oc-

casion. Having put these points before your mind, tell me where is what we too narrowly call the *Gospel*? There is a theory—popular with those who have never considered it—that in every discourse there ought to be a clear and complete view of the way of personal salvation. The theorist founds his theory upon the probability, or at least the possibility, that some hearer may hear only once and nevermore. That theory found no respect in the Sermon on the Mount, or in the sermon preached by Paul on Mars' Hill. Life must be taken in averages; life must be taken in breadths of time. We can only address ourselves with intelligence and effect to the broader possibilities and probabilities of the case, and not to exceptional circumstances, which are of a kind that would, if attended to exclusively, upset the whole policy and scheme of civilized life.

Paul began adroitly by beginning where the Athenians themselves were prepared to begin. They wanted a god—he said he could declare or reveal the very god they were seeking after. That is sublime preaching! sitting down beside a man and asking him where he, poor groping soul, can begin. Christianity goes about asking men themselves for the starting-point. The religion of benevolence, the religion of love, the religion of the heart of Christ, is willing to give us a chance by saying to us, with tender graciousness, "What is your uppermost question?" or "What is your special and most urgent desire? Tell me all about it, and let us sit down on this green hillock and talk it all over. Tell me what is in your troubled heart? for I have with me balm and light and true wisdom and grace, sympathy and help. Now, poor heart, begin." That is not a ruthless religion, forcing itself upon reluctant attention, but taking up our poor weaving and completing the web, or disentangling the piece that has been woven, and saying, "Now let us both begin together and see if we cannot do something better." These are the traits of the religion of the Cross which lift it above the necessity of all patronage and all vindication.

Paul addressed at Athens the very congregation which every preacher addresses to-day. The congregation never changes. If it is "The king is dead—Long live the king!" it is also the same with the congregation. There is but one assembly, for there is but one blood among all the nations of the earth. Paul's assem-

bly was divided sharply into Epicureans and Stoics—the very men who are here to-day ! Do not let us put off the Epicureans and Stoics on account of their peculiar names, and think of them as Grecian antiquities. Nothing of the kind. We are the Epicureans and Stoics, though mayhap we did not know it. The Epicureans glorified *lust* ; the Stoics glorified *suicide*—so do we ! Any protest you may lodge against the suggestion is an affair of weak words. Centrally, substantially, protoplastically, we do precisely what was done by Epicurean and Stoic. The Epicurean would have what he liked—not this dish, but that. He would tarry long at his pleasures ; he would pay any price for a new sensation. He awoke in the morning to find a new delight ; he lay down in the darkness to dream of a novel pleasure. He lived in his palate, he lived in his taste ; and his posterity is with us unto this day. The Stoic was a fatalist. His great ambition was to suppress all feeling, to retire within an impervious shell, to regard all the events of life with equal indifference, and to put an end to intolerable agony, concealed and suppressed, by suicide. He took matters into his own hands ; and are not we committing suicide every day ? An etymological definition of suicide would be a childish answer to that tremendous impeachment. Do not play off against this terrific indictment some little knowledge of the Latin language. Suicide is not one act. Self murder we perpetrate every day. We say we will “ put an end to this ” ; in higher anger we say “ this shall not go any farther ” ; in madness we declare that a line shall be drawn, and the affair shall be determined, cost what it may. What if we escape the charge of etymological suicide, and yet be convicted of having committed self-slaughter in the deepest sense of that term every day in the revolving year ?

Christianity creates a third class. Whatever the third class may be in any congregation, it is the specific creation of Christian teaching. Christianity says, “ Do not live in your pleasures.” Christianity says, “ Do not take cases into your own hands as if you had no Father in heaven. Sacrifice is better than indulgence, and resignation is better than suicide.” So, though it is true that humanity, and substantially the congregation, is made up of Epicureans and Stoics, it is true doctrinally and spiritually that there is a third quantity—the Christian life, the Christian hope, the Christian victory, for which God’s name and Christ’s Cross be praised !

If Paul began adroitly, he proceeded, as the subject unrolled itself before his spiritual vision, to touch upon distinctively Christian points. He came to the Man not named. That was a touch of happy and permissible cunning of a rhetorical kind. The *anonymous* is often more influential in the case of the ignorant than the avowed and duly-testified declaration. Paul refers to his Master as "that Man whom God hath ordained." Paul will touch attention; he will excite wonder; he will compel those people to listen to him. Had he begun by thrusting a Jew's name upon their attention, they would have turned away from him and left him to address the empty air. He kept his bolt to the last. If he did fail, he would fail as only a great general can do. He will get his men well in order; he will watch his opportunity; with that wonderful eye which saw behind and beyond the near and the tangible, he watched the working and beating of every heart, and when the moment came he launched the grand appeal. He failed, but he failed magnificently. There was no blundering in the generalship; there was no flaw in the inspiration; he failed, but he failed as only a great soul can fail. Some failures are better than some victories. Sometimes weakness is strength.

"When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter." But they never did! That is precisely what we are doing to-day. Were I to give an account of any Christian congregation, I should give it in the very words of the thirty-second verse. Congregations now listen as long as their fancy is pleased, and no longer. If a preacher can dominate by intellectual lordship, or moral supremacy, the public crowd, he will hold his position. The public do not listen to him longer than fancy is titillated or some selfish desire is gratified. The poor deluded preacher sometimes imagines that the public—I am not now speaking of the inner circle of friendship and love, but the promiscuous public—care something for him personally. They would leave him to-morrow if his throat failed! Some of them would not mind taking up their hats in the middle of his feeble discourse and going out to seek some other man to kill! Why will preachers delude themselves by such folly? Do not preach on that ground, young aspiring brother, but preach for Christ's sake and in Christ's name,

and find your compensation, not in pecuniary wages, but in your Lord's "Well done!"

The Athenians left the discourse at the point of *moral pressure*. So long as Paul played the part of a Jewish Socrates they were willing to hear him. They said, with Athenian contemptuousness, "This seed-pecker seems to have picked up some new and strange god—I wonder what it is." But the moment Paul flamed into moral earnestness, left the intellectual plane and came down to struggle with the heart and question it with hard interrogation, then the Athenians mocked, or with partial civility nodded to him a promise that they might come again to-morrow. Is it not exactly at that point that the congregations leave the preacher now? After the beautiful anecdotes; after the exquisite language, so pearly, so translucent, so charming; after the strong smell of scrap-book, then comes the moral appeal, and the people say they will not be lectured! They will devour any amount of rhetoric, and they will listen to any number of anecdotes, but the moment the preacher becomes the messenger of God with immediate charges from heaven the people go out—not physically, that would be vulgar; not uproariously, that would be discourteous and indecent; but sympathetically, attentively the soul seals up its hearing and will listen no more. That is the cause of failure on the part of Christ's Gospel to-day. We do not want to hear its essence. It was the same with Jesus Christ himself. We are told that "the common people heard him gladly," but that was not so. Many a minister's heart has been made sore by the misquotation of that passage. The common people do nothing of the kind. The common people then were like the common people now, and like the common people of every age. The passage has been used to show that if we would speak as Christ spoke, in parables and in images, and in sweet, beautiful sentences, "the common people" would understand words of one syllable. The common people do not care for words of one syllable or ten syllables. Do not suppose that the common people of any great city are lying outside the Church this day, fretting and sighing for some man who will come and talk in words of one syllable. It is preposterous! The common people heard him gladly so long as He had anything to give away, and on one occasion he said, "Let us be frank now. You have come, not

because of the words, but because of the loaves and fishes. Do not imagine that you are taking me in. I will still go on doing you good, but do not suppose that I give you credit for a good motive." How terrible he was! What rebuke was that! How they might have withered up! For a man to tell you to your face the exact motive which moves you, and for you to know that he has found you out! The common people!—the moment he began to be spiritual they turned away in crowds. The moment he began to say, "You must eat my flesh and drink my blood," they said, "This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" They had come to eat and drink, but not to eat and drink his flesh and his blood. He had lured them, as Paul afterwards lured the Athenians, on from point to point. He healed their sick, gave bread to their hungry, and was kind to them in what they would term a practical manner. But all the time he was leading them up to its application, and when he said, "You must eat my flesh and drink my blood. If a man eat not my flesh and drink not my blood, he hath no life in him," the common people, whom you thought to be worshippers of the god-monosyllable, turned right round to seek some other giver of loaves and fishes. Do not torment the preacher's heart by telling him that if he would speak words of one syllable, his church would be too small to contain the great crowds that would thrust down the most substantial walls.

The Athenians mocked and procrastinated. It is easy to mock. We mock the preacher's manner, and think that that excuses us from attending to the preacher's doctrine. We say, We will come again to-morrow. So we may, but *Paul* may not be there! I dare not say that the Epicureans and Stoics did not return to Areopagus, but if they did, they would wait in vain for the man they had called "babbling" or "seed-pecker." "So Paul departed from among them." If they had beaten him, he would have been there to-morrow. If they had been angry with him, he would have invited their attention a second time, or he would have returned some distant day. He never was afraid to go back to a city where he had been beaten or stoned or imprisoned; but to be mocked, to be treated with indifference—*that* kills the heart! To pour out one's blood for the people, and then for their very

next remark to be one about the weather—that kills a man, though he be mailed with great strength and have a lion's heart within him. To suffer, to live, to die for your hearers, and then simply to be *mocked*—that is DEATH !

LXV.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, everything is in thine hands. It is thine to set up and to pull down ; to make rich and to make poor. It is well. " Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." We rejoice in all this rule of thine. Whom thou lovest thou chastenest ; whom thou wilt enrich thou dost first impoverish ; whom thou wilt lead into nobler prayer thou wilt for a small moment forsake. Thy purpose is all love. There is no hatred in God. All thy ways are light, sometimes so bright as to be dark. Clouds and darkness are round about thy throne, but in thyself is no darkness at all. Thou knowest that we are here but for a little time, and during that little time thou art training us for the eternal day, for the unwearying service in the everlasting temple. Thou dost train us variously, but always with tender wisdom. Take thine own way with us, for we are thine, and into thine hands we fall in the name of Jesus Christ, our only, because infinite, Saviour. We assemble in his name. His resurrection day is the brightness of our time ; his triumph over death is our victory in pledge and earnest. Because Jesus lives, we shall live also. This is his own sweet word, and we cannot part with it. It is the angel that sings in the house, and that makes the night of trouble better than many a day of joy. We stand in Christ Jesus the Lord. When we have least to say it is because our hearts are full of wonder, love, and praise, for which there are no words. Enable us to live in Christ Jesus, the Priest of the world, the Saviour of sinners, the Redeemer of all that have transgressed. May we learn of him. May we know his very Spirit and reproduce it in our own. He was pure, gentle, true, self-forgetting, sin-forgiving ; when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself unto him that judgeth righteously. May we attain the measure of the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus. This is beyond our ability, but thy grace is sufficient for us, thy Spirit is our Comforter. The Spirit of Truth dwells with us, yea, dwells within us, and it is his purpose to purify us and make us like our Lord. May we not interrupt the sacred work by impatience, or by ill-nature, or ingratitude ; but may we abide constantly in the sure confidence that all things work together for good to them that love God. If thou wilt enrich us with this faith, we shall never be poor again. To have this faith is to have all things —things present and things to come. Lord, increase our faith ! We bless thee that we are united in Christian love. We thank thee for a new object which constrains our love, and

binds to itself all our desires. That object is to know thee and to glorify thee in and through the blessed Son of thy love. We would have no other care; each would say for himself, "For me to live is Christ. God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." May each remember this holy vow, and breathe its spirit, that he may live loyally the life of sacrifice and the life of eternal hope. We know how wanting we are, lacking in every good quality, often speaking good words and forgetting to obey them; but thou knowest our fall, thou rememberest our beginnings. If we forget the hole out of which we were dug, thou dost never forget. Have pity upon us! We often mean better than we do. Our purpose is often thine own creation; it is our unworthy deed that seems to throw discredit on the inspired motive. We are unequal; the force within is Divine, but it is marred in the expression because of our fallen humanity. Lord, pity us! Thou Triune God, let thy compassion fall upon us! Make the house a home. Train up all the little children thyself. Set them in such trades and occupations as are best for them when their schooling days are done, tell each what he ought to be, according to thy will, and let his little young heart accept the destiny with eager love. Spare all that will make the world better. Thou dost seem to take away the teacher and the reformer and the wise, and to leave behind many we could well spare. This is our ignorance. Thou art the Husbandman; pluck what thou wilt where thou wilt, the trees are all thine. We have nothing that we have not received. Heal the sick. How long their days! How longer still their nights! How wearily the time moves! Sit beside them, look at them, touch them, speak to their inward hearing, and then they will forget all time and darkness, night and day, for they will be living with the Lord. Reconcile us to all thy way. Send messages to us from the sanctuary, and grant us a great reviving. Let thy Spirit fall upon this assembly and upon all our interests, and inspire us with heroic faith and enrich us with inexhaustible patience. Amen.

Acts xviii. 1-6.

1. After these things he departed from Athens [i. 4], and came to Corinth [Julius Cæsar had rebuilt Corinth, constituting it a *colony* and the provincial capital, v. 12. It was now again, after lying waste from B.C. 146 to B.C. 46, the greatest commercial city in Greece, while Athens was but a superannuated university town, xvii. 21].

2. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy [from Rome, his dwelling-place, whither also he returned, Rom. xvi. 3] with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome [Suetonius tells us the name of the chief agitator of the Jews was *Chrestus*; not "Christus," which name he rightly spells when mentioned. *Chrestus* was a common slave name].

3. And he came unto them; and because he was of the same trade, he

abode with them, and they wrought [to assume that Aq. and Pris. were Christians *already*, in order to account for Paul's intimacy with them, is both gratuitous and ignores the actual reason, *the Jewish custom*, which Luke gives]: for by their trade they were tent-makers [*tent-tailors*. A Cilician industry; the goat-hair rugs themselves were called *cilicia*].

4. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks [proselytes of the gate].

5. But when Silas [xvii. 10] and Timothy [xvii. 14, 15] came down from Macedonia [from Thessalonica, whither, *on second thoughts*—comp. xvii. 15 with 1 Thess. iii. 1—Paul had directed Timothy to go], Paul was constrained by the word [G. “seized upon by the word.” The opposite experience is when the minister has difficulty in “finding a text”!], testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ [Messiah].

6. And when they opposed themselves [to this *word*], and blasphemed, he shook out his raiment [Matt. xxiii. 35; Rom. xiii. 2], and said unto them, Your blood be upon [2 Thess. i. 8] your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles [xiii. 46].

AT CORINTH.

“PAUL departed from Athens.” The Athenians said when they left him, “We will hear thee again of this matter.” How like selfish human talk that is! They forgot, what we too forget, that there are two parties in every contract. When did it occur to a selfish man that he had anything to consider but his own purpose and his own convenience? It did not occur to the Athenian mind that perhaps Paul himself would not be there the next day! “Paul departed”—the sun goes, the preacher ceases to preach, the vain hearer says, “I will hear thee again concerning these things,” and perhaps when that hearer returns Paul is not there! How then? We think the sun will always be present. We take for granted that our mercies, privileges, and opportunities will always be available. This is vanity; this is selfishness; this is the very sin of sin. We read in sacred Scripture that “the door was shut.” The laggards came again and found that the door was shut. They never thought about the door being possibly closed! We think we can go to church when we like, and take up the broken hymn where we left it. Some day we shall find that “the door is shut.” We go back to Mars’ Hill and find the teacher gone. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of

bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord"—the famine that kills the soul! Whilst Paul is available make the most of him. Whilst the Redeemer tarries tarry along with the sacred Presence. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near." There have been those who went away to buy oil for themselves, and when they came back the chance was gone; there was nothing left but the outer darkness! Now is the accepted time!

"Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth," the apostolic journey, as we have seen, of about forty miles. Probably he did not go by road; that might have taken him a long time. The supposition is that he crossed by water for about five hours, and then walked some eight miles to Corinth, and Corinth did not know he had come! The only event that lifts up Corinth in history was an event that Corinth knew nothing of! Corinth was the Venice of Southern Greece, so situated as to catch two civilizations—the east and the west; and a right gay city was Corinth! The Corinthians could drink and dance and follow the devil through all the mazes of his pranks and antics! The Corinthians were skilled in sin. There was no city superior to it in its devotion to the altar of darkness. A little bleary-eyed Jew went into it with a sore heart, and Corinth that night sang as loudly, drank as deeply, showed its finery with as base and vain a profusion as if the wandering Jew had never been born! The man may have come into London last night who will invest the metropolis with its sublimest fame. Poor man! living in one of the poorest lodging-houses in all the city, perhaps having hardly enough to pay for this morning's breakfast—perhaps he may be in this house. We do not know what is happening. Give us drink enough, meat enough, drum and trumpet and dance enough, and what care we what Jew or Gentile is making his way amongst us? We have no eye but for purple and fine linen, and no palate but for sumptuous fare. Poor Jew with the Christian fanaticism in his heart! Poor, ill-shapen Jew, laughed at by every man of form and nobleness, with an idea in his mind that the world is to be saved by the Cross! Put him in anywhere, his room is better than his company. All things fail but truth. The fine gold becomes dim, and the canker-worm eats the fine clothing, and the painted cheek shows at last its well concealed ghastliness, and the noble frame

falls down a meal for death, a festival for worms! But truth, spiritual truth—the kind of truth that gets down through the fancy, imagination, taste, feeling, right away into the very heart's heart, *that* lives when gorgeous palaces and Corinthian grandeurs and vanities are forgotten—this is immortality. Not iron, or brass, or things of outward beauty made with hands, but the inner loveliness, the meek and quiet spirit, the pure heart, the truth-loving mind, the soul that yearns for God—these shall abide. The sun himself shall sink in years, but the truth of the living God will be the light of the universe when that poor celestial spark is utterly forgotten!

Had the visit to Athens been without advantage? We were sorry for Paul when he turned away from the Athenian city, mocked by Athenian taste. We felt grieved that such a fire should have been extinguished by such indifference. Was the visit, then, wholly without advantage? No. It involved a great lesson to Paul upon the art and mystery of preaching. He preached better at Corinth than he did at Athens. We noticed that in his Athenian discourse there was hardly an evangelical tone. It was a classical speech; it was addressed to a speculative question; it involved that which was practical indeed, but the whole subject was approached in a philosophical spirit. Men are not philosophers, and that is the reason why philosophy seldom touches them. He who speaks to the heart is the true Christian philosopher. In going his forty miles from Athens, Paul seems to have said to himself, "No more preaching like that for me. Give me another chance and I will preach in another tone." So when he came to Corinth he did, and when he wrote to the Corinthians he said, in the second chapter of his First Epistle, "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God (I learned at Athens that that would never do again, so) I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." The visit to Athens was not in vain. For once, poor Apostle, he tried to talk the Grecian speech, and when he was done they mocked him and said, "We will hear thee again, thou seed-pecker." Going to Corinth he said, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." There he will succeed! He made room for the Lord. He seemed (only seemed) to have got up a sermon

for Athens, and when the Athenians heard it they mocked both him and his discourse. But at Corinth he got nothing up; he said, "Lord, take thy way. I am here, play what music thou wilt upon me." "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God." That is the way to make the best of your losses! Here is the secret of the true treatment of human failures. When you are going from the Athens in which you have failed to the Corinth in which you may have another opportunity, put some sharp questions to yourselves. Say, "How was it that I made no impression there? Where was the flaw? Was my tone wrong? Was the substance of my matter wrong? Was my spirit a little too controversial, or contentious? Did I lower the dignity of the Gospel and make it one of many, as if the Athenians had as much right to speak about these things as I had? I see it now. Let me but stand up in Corinth and, God helping me, the Corinthians shall hear of Christ and the Cross!"

Entering Corinth, Paul "found a certain Jew, named Aquila." How did he find him? He found a "certain Jew" amid a population of tens of thousands! How do we find one another? That is a social mystery. We "came together." How? How do the roots know where the sun is? You put stones upon them and they still work their way, and more stones and still they are growing as fast as they can. What is their purpose? To find the sun! There are mysteries of the earth as well as mysteries of the written Word. Paul had never seen Aquila before, and yet when they met and hand touched hand, they had been with one another from eternity! Banish chance from all your criticism of life. There is no chance, but the chance of the eternal purpose.

Paul came unto Aquila and Priscilla, "and because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent-makers." It did not follow that they were therefore poor. According to the Jewish law every man was bound to bring up his son to some way of getting his living. Some Christians have outlived that fanaticism. According to the Jewish law, if a man did not bring up his son to a trade he was said

to bring him up to be a thief. There are many such thieves in Christendom ! Why do you not learn to work ? You can easily set it down if you can do without it. He is not the gentleman whose only claim to the title is that he cannot make his own living. He must then get somebody to make it for him ! Will you submit to the humiliation ?

In the fourth verse we read that Paul " reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath." So the first verse is explained in the fourth. The first verse is this : " After these things Paul departed from Athens"; and we thought he had departed from the *work* ! He had not changed the work, he had only changed the city. The word " departed " in the first verse made us feel apprehensive. We said as Paul went away, " Is he then disgusted with the work ? Has he seen its folly ? Does he now see that epicureanism and stoicism, as represented in Athenian life, are better than Christian devotion ? Will he preach no more ? " We wait until the forty-mile journey is completed, and, behold, Paul is once more in the synagogue every Sabbath, persuading the Jews and the Greeks. What a hold this Christian work gets upon a man ! You can give up almost any other kind of work, but who can give up the service of the Cross ? We have seen enough of the results of Paul's preaching to lead us to suppose that if any other man might have given up the work Paul might have surrendered it, for surely he was badly treated in the exercise of his ministry ! But the work gets hold of the heart. It pays poor wages ; it makes no worldly promises ; it tells a man that he will be buffeted, and stigmatized, and sneered at. Many a Christian preacher occupies a lower social level than he might under some circumstances have done. Still, the work gets hold of his heart ; he cannot give it up. That is plainly proved. In the old, old time the enemy was determined to put down this preaching ; he would have no more of it, and he tried his very best, and what was the result ? As for the preachers, " they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword : they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ; being destitute, afflicted, tormented ; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth ; " and no man gave up the work. That is its best vindication ! If they had been man-made preachers they would have changed their occupation, but being born of

the incorruptible seed of the Divine will and purpose they were faithful unto the end.

Paul gains some new experience in Corinth ; he puts down this note in his book : “ For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death : for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. . . . Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; and labour, working with our own hands : being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we intreat : we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” Why then did he not give it all up ? He could not. In the very first words we heard from his lips the reason was given. I have read from first Corinthians, fourth chapter, ninth verse ; and in the opening of that verse you have the whole secret : “ For I think that GOD hath set forth.” It is *God's* doing. God takes us to the whipping-post and sets us within reach of the mocker. This is God's discipline ; this is the way he will test our sincerity and reveal his Gospel. Let a man think that his ill-treatment is limited by human spite and malice, and he will surrender his mission ; but let him feel that GOD hath set him there to be mocked, ill-treated, defamed, spat upon, and he will accept all this base treatment as part of the sacred discipline. The enemy would have no power over us but with God's permission. The devil cannot add one link unto his chain until God enables him to forge it. The whole thing is in God's keeping. Seize that idea, and you will be quiet with the peace of heaven.

LXVI.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to thee in Jesus Christ thy Son, the door that is ever open, and the only door by which men can come to the Father. We bless thee for that open door. May we hasten to it and enter, lest by delay we find that the door is shut when we come! We would ask for large room in thine house, and being in it we would abide there for ever. Who would wish to leave thy table? In our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. Once we perished with hunger when we were in a far land, and no man gave unto us; but now we are in our Father's house, and thou hast said unto us, "Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved, and let your souls delight themselves in fatness." We wish to come to thee through great increase of faith. Our prayer is that every doubt and hesitation may be destroyed, and that our hearts, being filled with faith and burning with love, may have no question to ask concerning the nearness, the goodness, and the infinite sufficiency of God. Thou knowest what temptations assail us, thou knowest how our hearts are often hardened by unbelief, and thou knowest how our eyes are often blinded because of disobedience. Thou dost receive us in thine house that thou mayest do us good. Thou wilt reply to every heart's necessity; every life has its own prayer, weak or strong, earthly or full of heavenliness, and thou wilt listen to every heart's own speech, and answer it with appropriate love. Thou hast called us to growth, and in calling us to growth, thou hast given the sun to warm us, and the rich rains to refresh the roots of our faith. May we accept the gracious gifts of heaven, and answer them by daily increase of strength, and continual growth in loveliness and beauty. We would be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; we would be men of God; we would be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Our desire, created by thyself, and therefore to be satisfied by thyself alone, is that we may be temples of the Holy Ghost, wise unto salvation, well-instructed in the heavenly testimony, baptized into the very Spirit of Christ, and being filled with his Spirit, to wait in patience, and toil in hopefulness, until the day of maturity and reward. Do thou, by the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit, work in us all the good pleasure of thy will, and the work of faith with power; may there be no remnant of the old nature left in us. May the city of God within our hearts lie four-square, the length and the breadth and the height of it being equal; so that being perfected according to thy purpose, our life, washed with the blood of Christ, and made to glow by the purifying

energy of the Holy Ghost, may be lifted up into heavenly service, and comforted with heavenly rest. We remember—because thou dost put it into our hearts—the sick, the poor, the wandering, and those that are ill at ease—men who cannot find rest at night or work by day; lives that knock at doors that never open; wanderers that search and cry, but never find or hear the friendly voice. Thou knowest those who are on the sea, in trouble and fear. Thou knowest the loved ones from whom we are parted as by the stroke of a sharp knife. They are all present to thee, the good and the bad, the wheat and the tares, those who are nearly angels, and those that are nearly lost. The Lord's pity weep for them, the Lord's love go out after them, the Lord's grace be as a portion of meat in due season to every soul suffering the pain of hunger. What we most need we cannot tell thee in words, but thou readest the speechless prayer. Look upon us. Read our thoughts we cannot speak, and enter into covenant with us, pledging that whatsoever our sin may have been, thy grace is infinitely more, and will surely drown it, as the stone is lost in the sea. What we forget thou wilt remember. If we have omitted from our prayer any name, or life, or interest, thou wilt not omit it from thy love. We give one another to thee standing hand in hand—fathers, mothers, children, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, pastor, people—standing heart in heart, hand in hand, we say, at the Cross, and in the name of him who died upon it, take us all, love us all, cast none away. Amen.

Acts xviii. 7-11.

7. And he departed thence [from the *synagogue*, where the words of the previous verse were spoken], and went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus, one that worshipped God [a proselyte], whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8. And Crispus [1 Cor. i. 14], the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord [G. believed the Lord], with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9. And the Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision: Be not afraid, but speak, and not hold thy peace;

10. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to harm thee, for I have much people in this city.

11. And he dwelt [G. "tarried," as Luke xxiv. 49] there a year and six months, teaching the Word of God among them [writing thence two Ep. to the Thess., the earliest of all the N. T. writings].

ENCOURAGEMENTS—DIVINE AND HUMAN.

IN the fifth verse we read that "Paul was pressed in the spirit;" in the seventeenth chapter and the sixteenth verse we read that Paul's "spirit was stirred in him." In both cases there

was a paroxysm. It was not a little transient excitement, or momentary ruffling of the feelings, it was really what we ourselves never feel now—agony. He could stand it no longer; his soul was in pain. He would have been more accustomed to it now. Would God we could recall our early enthusiasm, our virgin passion, our first burning hate of sin. We are familiar with it; we pat its black head! There was a time when Paul could not look upon idolatry without his soul writhing in pain, and when he could not look upon Jewish obstinacy and unbelief without his breast heaving with violent paroxysm. We can now drive through whole miles of idolatry, unbelief, worldliness, and sensuality, and sit down at the other end to the smoking feast, as if we had come through hell blindfolded. Familiarity has its acute and terrible danger. Paul was a man of conviction. He really believed in his soul that there was no other name given under heaven among men whereby they could be saved but the name of Christ. That faith will not lodge in the same heart with indifference. That faith wants a whole heart to itself. It says, "If this salvation is worth anything, it is worth everything." That old martyr-faith is dead.

In the sixth verse we read, "And when they opposed themselves"—literally, set themselves in battle array—"and blasphemed, he shook his raiment [symbolically], and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." We do sometimes long to be missionaries; to plough a virgin soil; to name the name of Christ to men for the very first time; to meet men to whom the Gospel would be *news*. Paul did not say he would give up the work. Paul was not the man to lay hold upon the plough of the heavenly kingdom, and to turn back; Paul would not even keep company with a young man who had broken faith with him in the Christian work; so if he himself had at last broken down in the middle of it, surely then the pillars of heaven would have been rottenness, and earth's base built on stubble! He went clear through with it to the end. The old Paul—"such an one as Paul the aged"—sat down and said, "I have fought a good fight"; lay back in his bed, and said, "I have finished my course." Let us never give up the work. We may give up this corner of the vineyard or that; we may leave localities, but we

must not leave the Cross. We may turn in vexation of soul from stolid unbelief and preach to ignorant and bewildered heathenism, but do not let the work have less of our energy because we have been disappointed in this or that particular circle.

A little encouragement would cheer us now. One ray of sunlight shooting athwart this gathering gloom would make us young again. Here it is in the seventh verse. Paul departed from that quarter of Corinth, "and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." "One that worshipped God"! Is there any greater phrase in all human speech? Perhaps you are waiting in order to know something *about* God before you worship him. You can never know anything about God except—GOD! But the little, inventive, ingenious, industrious, fussy human brain wants to *define* God and classify his attributes, and practise upon him a kind of spiritual vivisection. The firmament will not be taken to pieces! I preach GOD, not some *view* of God. If you begin to have "views" of God, you will begin to have sects and classes, orthodoxies and heterodoxies, divisions, and whole libraries of pamphlets with nothing in them but words. *Worship* is greater than any *definition* of worship. God is the undefinable term. The soul knows him, but cannot get the mouth to speak Him. In this stupendous temple words may soon be lies. What is your feeling? Is there an uprising in your heart that can only say, "Abba!" "Father!" That uprising of the heart is the miracle of Christ, the inward and wondrous working of the Holy Ghost. Why do you not order back your obtrusive intellect, and tell it to be still in the presence of such an experience? Many of us could be almost good if we could hold our tongues! Some of us could almost pray if we were dumb!

When Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed, many of the Corinthians thought they would believe too. A quaint commentator has said that great men are the looking-glasses into which ordinary men look to see what they ought to be like. There was much human nature among the Corinthians! It is so with all departments of life and thought. This is not an

argument on one side only, but on every side of human life. What we want, then, is courage on the part of those whose influence is legitimately beneficial and extensive. If you, the head of the house, could say, "Let us worship God," many within the house might respond affectionately and earnestly, "So be it." We must have leadership—may that leadership always be in an upward and solar direction.

A little encouragement now, I say, would come in well. Here it is again in the ninth verse, in another form. "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city." These words express a Divine encouragement; they are addressed to every sincere heart; they were not spoken once for all and limited to a personality and a place, they are spoken from the heavens every day to every earnest labourer. The time of visions has not gone for ever. To-day it is possible to hold heart-to-heart fellowship with God. Even now the spirit can assure itself that it is reading the very will of God and doing the very behest of heaven. Paul was accustomed to visions. The first vision startles a man; the second is expected; the third longed for; and the last hailed with thankfulness and expectation, for it is the vision of heaven—the vision of rest. God took the census of Corinth from a religious point of view; he said, "I have much people in this city." He was going to work miracles in Corinth. Apparently there was not a saint in the whole place. As Athens was "wholly given to idolatry," so Corinth was, apparently, wholly given to sensuality. We cannot tell where God's people are. The ancient prophet thought that he alone was left; but God told him that he knew of seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Surely there are more good and brave souls and Christ-worshippers and Christ-seekers than we have yet supposed. I see no reason why in the presence of this tenth verse we should not take a more hopeful view of human society. "How can I give thee up?" Even yet he expects some of us to pray; even yet he knows that many of us will come home. The Christian Gospel is not an exclusive one; whoever is excluded from its hospitality is self-expelled. God is looking for his own. He is looking for the religious among the irreligious; and one of the most gracious sur-

prises in store for the Church is that there will be more people in God's pure home—heaven—than it may have entered into the most generous human heart to conceive or venture to anticipate.

But the twelfth verse seems to contradict the vision. We no sooner hear of the vision than we learn that "the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." What a violent transition in personal experience! At night, lost in the ecstasies of Divine fellowship, in the morning dragged before the judgment seat by an incensed mob! Is it thus that Providence contradicts itself? Apparently so, but not really. Good will come out of this evil; character will be developed; friendships will be tested; the way will be broadened and improved, and evil shall be overruled for good.

You may probably have read the "History of Civilization in England," by Mr. Buckle. Mr. Buckle has, in that most refined and erudite work, made no concealment of his opposition to what are called Christian missions. He refers to certain good-natured and well-intentioned people, whose motives he would not question for a moment, who have gone to distant parts of the world to propagate the Christian faith. He says they bring home, or send home, very interesting reports of spiritual successes gained in the mission-field; but he says he has taken pains to test the accuracy of those reports. He sets side by side along with them the testimony of impartial, independent, well-instructed travellers—not religious agents of religious societies—and those travellers say in the distinctest terms that whilst many heathen populations have received Christian baptism and taken upon themselves Christian forms of worship, they are destitute of the spirit of Christianity, and if they could be seen, and lived with, by men who believed in missionary reports, those men might very possibly have their faith in missions considerably shaken. How can we, after reading such a testimony, take any part in missionary operations? This, unfortunately for Mr. Buckle's originality, was recognized in the Bible itself some hundreds of years before he lived. It is beautiful to notice the verdant simplicity of men who have just discovered that converted people—nominally converted and baptized people—are not angels. They write it in their books as if it were news. They quote from "impartial and independent travellers" as if at last they

had found the reality of the case. "Independent travellers" have never written such burning, scorching words against Christian converts as Paul wrote. Mr. Buckle has written most classic and refined English, but he does not touch the moral agony, the sublime vehemence of the Jew, who nearly nineteen hundred years ago wrote words of condemnation regarding Christian converts, which probably are unequalled in the most energetic eloquence of the world. Take Corinth as described by Canon Farrar—one of the most learned and eloquent Christian writers and preachers of this day. These are his words: "Corinth was the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire, at once the London and the Paris of the first century after Christ. . . . But there was one characteristic of heathen life which would come home to Paul at Corinth with overwhelming force, and fill his pure soul with infinite pain. It was the gross immorality of a city conspicuous for its depravity, even amid the depraved cities of a dying heathenism. Its very name had become a synonym for reckless debauchery. . . . East and West mingled their dregs of foulness in the new Gomorrah of classic culture." Out of that city Paul brought some converts! But "impartial and independent travellers" testify that they were not angelic in spirit and temper and character! Take ancient Corinth as described by Frederick William Robertson, of Brighton, the prophet and the martyr of his age. These are his words: "The city was the hotbed of the world's evil, in which every noxious plant, indigenous or transplanted, rapidly grew and flourished; where luxury and sensuality throve rankly, stimulated by the gambling spirit of commercial life. All Corinth now, in the apostolic time, as in previous centuries, became a proverbial name for moral corruption." That was the field in which the Apostle Paul had to labour. "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized"; but "impartial and independent travellers" testify that even after that they were not so good as they might have been. Did Paul set them forth to be perfect men? Read his Epistles to the Corinthians. Read above all—a passage, the whole of which I dare not read in public—Paul's description of heathenism as given in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and then say whether any "impartial and independent traveller" is to testify against a man who used such accusatory language. We must not give up mis-

sionary work simply because some "impartial and independent travellers" interrupt their geographical business by little scrutinies into the spirit and manners of people who had been baptized into the name of Christ. Let us go to the States—the Southern States of America. You talk about Freedom ; you boast about Liberty ; you have written odes and sonnets and poems of divers length to the Spirit of freedom and liberty. I will show you what it is. Here are some millions of black men who used to be slaves, and at that time the auctioneer who sold them used to give them really very nice characters, spoke of them in really creditable terms, and so put up their price. But now that they have become freed men look at them ; lounging about the streets ; lying and basking like dogs in the sunshine ; going to the tavern ; rising late ; doing next to nothing—that freedom ! And yet your poet says—

" Spirit of Freedom, on,
And pause not in thy flight,
Till every clime be won
To worship in thy light !"

Look there—this is freedom ! These are freed men ! Oh for the old days of slavery and obedience ! You would resent the application of such an illustrative instance if *freedom* were in question. I ask you to be as just in your judgment of *Christian* evangelization. We do not expect a man to grow in a night. If they have been arrested ; if their attention has been turned in the right direction ; if they have expressed a desire to enter even into the veriest elementary lines of discipleship, let us be glad, and rejoice, and report at home that the battle is moving towards victory. We are not at home what we ought to be, but always remember that things are seen most by contrast. What is black is blackest when seen upon a white surface, and so many of our shortcomings and failures look very black because of the background of the holy Name which we profess to have accepted as our symbol and our hope—the spotless name of the Son of God !

LXVII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou hast in Christ Jesus provided a feast for all people ; a feast of wine on the lees, a feast of fat things. Thine invitation is—"Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved." Jesus Christ is the true bread sent down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall hunger no more, but be satisfied with the satisfaction of his Lord and quiet with the peace of the Saviour. We have come to this feast upon the mountain to-day, and as we have travelled up the steep sides of the hill, we have heard a voice, which our hearts knew well, saying, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled ;" and again, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." That voice is the voice of Jesus Christ, thine only-begotten, thy well-beloved Son, the mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. There is no voice like it ; our hearts know every tone of its gracious music ; our life rises to it because it is full of God, and full of grace. Thou wilt come to the feast thyself ; without thee it would be no feast. We come to see thee ; to eat bread with thee ; to touch thy dear hand, thou wounded Saviour of the world ; and to look into Thine eyes full of heaven, full of eternity. Thou wilt not disappoint the least of thy guests ; for the least thou wilt prepare the most—yea, for the youngest a double portion. This is our hope, and it makes us glad ; this is our confidence, and it makes us strong. No more is there any fear in our heart ; no more can night settle upon our lives, in gloom and darkness ; death itself is swallowed up in victory, and sin is a forgotten shadow. Thou wilt cast sin and death into the lake of fire ; thou wilt burn them out of thy beautiful universe. In this great faith—sometimes as a calm river, sometimes as mighty music of triumphing in the heart—may we conduct all the affairs of life, and go on from strength to strength until every one of us appears in Zion before God. Thou knowest that every day we fall ; every morning ere the dew has gone up we have eaten the forbidden fruit ; every day we have talked with the serpent and been worsted by his baneful speech. But the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent ; our enemy shall be slain, and we shall be delivered with a mighty and costly redemption, and shall be set in thy heaven far above all sin, temptation, storm, and sorrow. Meanwhile, we are upon the earth, the way is weary, the well is seldom at hand when we seem to need it most ; at night time the road is dangerous, and the day itself thickly beset with foes. The Lord grant unto us grace, peace, and confidence in the Holy Ghost. Give us the larger view Help

us to take in the "all things" which work together for good. Deliver us from superficial views and narrow and straitened outlooks, and give us that clear eye of believing love which sees amid all time the "third day" of perfectness. For special mercies we pray thee. Some hearts have but one sharp, clear prayer. In some cases life is narrowed to one point of need; in other cases the heart is full of laughter and joy, the delight of those who have been to the wedding festival and have seen the summer side of life; others have no prayer though they are not without love; others are lost in wonder, are amazed at the sight of the altar, and know not the reading that is inside the Book, and yet are willing to see and know and fall down with us in common adoration. To such let there be light given from heaven, more beautiful than the dawning of the day. So shall there be joy at thy feast this holy Sabbath; and many hearts shall arise to bless thee in new hymns, and psalms, and anthems full of sacred joy. The old man's prayer is already taking to itself the tone of a song. He has prayed long and expected much and received of thy fulness grace upon grace. Now he is in a strait betwixt two: his prayer ends in singing: the Amen of his prayer has in it the first note of his anthem. The Lord be gracious to such and destroy old age as somewhat that belongs to death; and establish in the heart of the veteran worshipper the sweet, dewy, tender thankfulness which comes of faith. Away beyond the church-line we see bed after bed of sickness and pain and weariness; around each bed a little circle of servants, kindly, affectionate, devoted. We hear, even on this day of Resurrection, sighings and groanings, and farewells; and we see, even on the green earth so rich with the emerald of spring, showers of tears, hot and bitter, that have been rained out of grieved hearts. But thou seest more than we see; there is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there. The Cross of Christ is the answer to all sin, and therefore the answer to all sorrow and pain and distress of heart. Do thou reveal it. Show all sides of that wondrous Cross, and take the heart through all its mystery of shame, agony, priesthood, sacrifice, triumph, and the eternal and ever prevalent intercession of him who died upon it. Then in the Church, and beyond the Church, the feast shall be enjoyed in common, by a number which no man can number. Amen.

Acts xviii. 12-17.

12. But when [after this quiet year-and-a-half] Gallio was proconsul of Achaia [*i.e.*, in 53 and 54 A.D. Tacitus tells us that Gallio, the brother of Seneca, was likewise put to death by Nero], the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul, and brought him before the judgment seat,

13. Saying, this man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the [*i.e.*, Moses'] law.

14. But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If indeed it were a matter of wrong or of wicked villainy, O ye Jews,

reason would that I should bear with you [suffer you to proceed with the case] :

15. But if they are questions about words and names and your own law [G. "the law *which concerns you*"] look to it yourselves ; I am not minded [G. "inclined"] to be a judge of these matters [this just judgment of the secular judge is styled by the persecutor of Servetus, "atheistic"].

16. And he drave [G. "*dismissed*," see Dem. 272, 11, 1373, 12] them from the judgment seat.

17. And they [the bystanders] all laid hold on Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue [*not* the Sosthenes of 1 Cor. i., who was apparently *not* a Corinthian], and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of these things [took no official note of them].

REPORTS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

HAVE you ever considered how extremely appropriate to all ages is the sentiment which inspires this report? As usual, our endeavour is to find out what is modern as well as what is ancient in the text. The report which is given of Paul's work in the thirteenth verse is exactly the report which is being given to-day by hostile journalists, critics, and hearers of Christian truth. Again and again, as you can bear witness, I have begged you, as fellow students of the sacred Word, not to put away from you the apostolic annals as if they belonged to a society that lived nineteen centuries ago. To-day Christianity is suffering from the perverted reports of its spirit and its service, which are being rendered by those who are hostile to its claims. We report *ourselves*. Even when we attempt to report the most simple and patent facts, we cannot separate the personality of the reporter from the report which he renders. There are bad men who undertake to report what Christians are doing! What can be the report of such men but a perversion? Even if the exact letters could be chosen to represent the exact occurrences there would be wanting the subtle music of sympathy, the tender spirit of love, the high influence which comes of personal identification with the thing which is being reported. You cannot report with the hand alone. You must, if you would truly report spiritual doctrine and heroic service, report with the heart. Do not take any bad man's report of any Christian service he may have attended; do not take any worldly man's report of it; do not listen to the unsympathetic

narrator of Christian occurrences. All these men lack the one thing that is needful, the inexplicable sympathy, the subtle and wordless masonry of oneness of heart with the worker who is toiling and with the work which is being attempted. This lesson overflows with instruction ; it touches an infinite area of thought and service. No man is qualified to report a religious meeting who is not himself religious. He can tell who rose and sat down, and give some kind of abstract of what was said ; but there will be wanting from it the aroma, the fragrance, the heavenliness, which gave it all its gracious power. This has a wide bearing upon all matters religious and theological. We misreport one another, therefore, we had better not report one another at all. We believe in God, but we are often reported as only believing something *about* God. That is a lie ! We believe in Jesus Christ the Saviour of the world, and yet we are only reported as believing something *about* him. Now wherever the word " about " comes in it qualifies the thing that is referred to ; and we are not saved by our qualifications of terms and doctrines, but by our inward and often speechless FAITH. We are saved by faith, and we have no explanation of it that can satisfy ourselves. But how little progress I make as a teacher in this direction ! You need not discourage me by further obstinacy ; I am already sufficiently discouraged. The fussy, mechanical, irrepressible mind wants to write down something about God, and thus create a field of battle, for no two men believe identically, absolutely, inclusively, and finally, the same things about any great question. You can have spiritual *faith* without man-made creed, but how it pleases the puerile mind to write down something in regular, numerical order ! This creed-mongering, and this church-manufacturing, has crucified Christ on ten thousand crosses. Yet I know enough of the working of the mind to know that even now some man is thinking that he could put down in black ink and in plain Roman letters something that he would expect somebody else to believe in " about " God. So, indeed, you may be able, but you must not make that endeavour either essential or final. We are kept together by common FAITH. I would not sign with my right hand any creed which that right hand could write. Why not ? Because words change, doctrines never ; because the word that meant one thing yesterday may mean another to-morrow. Circumstances are

continually occurring to change the colour and the tone and the under-tone of words, and no man can read in another man's tone, and therefore my signature might give a false impression to those who read it. This is precisely what the unanimous Jews did in the days of Paul. They heard him speak and they said, "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law"—that is, contrary to their *reading* of the law. The law is one thing, and my reading of it another. So with the Bible: the Bible is one thing, and the preacher's reading of it is another. I must read it for myself; my heart must read it, and through the faith that comes of that personal reading, equal, by the energy and ministry of the Holy Ghost, to a personal interview with the Son of God, I must be saved. Words can hardly suffice to explain how much I fear lest any man should be believing simply because I believe. You cannot believe as I believe, nor I as you. Every man must have his own faith, his own light, his own hope, and yet, when that personal and discriminating process is completed there will be found at the end wondrous unity, the more beautiful that it is non-mechanical, and the more lasting that it is a city not made with hands. Have no fear of perverting Jews misrepresenting inspired Apostles and bringing God's doctrine to ruin. The form will change; there will be second and third amended editions of catechisms; there will be long and angry debates in Christian assemblies; and yet when all the words have been rearranged and readjusted, by very skilful and cunning distribution of their terms, we shall find the inner, spiritual, holy doctrine untouched. What is it you believe? If you are trusting to definitions and calling that "intelligent" Christianity, take care that your "intelligent" Christianity does not ruin you. I want a Christianity that has the fewest possible human definitions, but that sums itself up into terms we can hardly quote too often and not too pathetically—

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall."

We can all say that. There are men of enlarged capacity, singular gifts, and competent training, who must, by a species of, I hope, Christian fate, trouble themselves about the mechanical arrangement of words and phrases; but the great sinful, needy, broken, bursting heart of man can believe where it cannot explain. If we

have been trusting to reports of apostolic doctrine and service, let us henceforward go to the apostolic annals, each for himself, and find out, so far as the Holy Spirit may reveal it, the inner and lasting meaning which words can only momentarily typify and symbolize. "To the law and to the testimony" must be the cry of every teacher who would destroy the priest and honour the sanctuary and the truth of God.

I find from the twelfth verse that the Jews were unanimous in the insurrection which they made against Paul. Unanimity is nothing ; sincerity is nothing. We must inquire what the unanimity is about, and what the sincerity implies. Sincerity is only good when rightly directed, and unanimity is worthless if moving not in the direction of truth, righteousness, and grace. Paul stood alone, so far as men were concerned, on more occasions than one. Said he, in one instance, "No man stood with me . . . notwithstanding the Lord stood with me." When a man speaks in the Lord's name you hear more than one speaker ; as there are voices as the sound of many waters, so there are voices that bring unto themselves the music of all heaven. Let us take care, then, lest we mistake human unanimity for Divine counsel. Whether the unanimity is with us or against us, it counts nothing if the foundation is wrong ; and if the foundation is right, the unanimity will come in at the last.

And now Gallio, much maligned, and greatly preached against by those who do not know him, comes into the story. Gallio is a man who has suffered many things at the hands of preachers. He has always been set up as a type of the careless man. The text has often been, "And Gallio cared for none of these things." And base creatures have been told that they were "Gallios" ! They never were so honoured in their lives ! They Gallios ! Gallio would not touch them with the tip of his fingers ! Gallio was not a careless rake ; Gallio was not a religiously indifferent man ; Gallio knew his business and attended to it, and limited himself by it ; and his carelessness was not a moral blemish, but was rather a personal honour and a distinct evidence of his high qualification for the office which he sustained in the community. Gallio was the brother of Seneca, and Seneca said, "No man can look so sweetly upon any one creature as my brother Gallio can look upon all mankind." He was the sweetest, loveliest, most

genial of hearts. To charge him with moral carelessness is unjust, but to make many modern sluggards into Gallios is to libel the dead. Let them find in history some other symbolic name, but do not let them imagine that they are followers of the brother of Seneca. Sweet soul! The genial heart who, not understanding the controversy, declined to take any part in it.

Yet I would chide even Gallio for the unintentional injury he has done to the world. We read in the fourteenth verse, "And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews ——" There Gallio did us unintentional mischief. He has deprived the Church of another speech by the greatest speaker that ever served the cause of Christ. Paul's speech was ready; Paul's defence was always within call. What he would have said to that sweet Gallio who can tell? We miss the accidental eloquence of a few measurable sentences, but we know from what Paul did say upon other occasions that he would only have varied the majesty of his eloquence by the tenderness of a special appeal. The substance of his speech we have in all the other speeches; but we do wonder with what accidental beauty and subtlety of allusion he would have addressed the sweetest heart that ever listened to him. Gallio used a phrase which brought him within lines which we wish could have enclosed him for ever. Speaking from his point of view, he said, "But if it be a question of words and names." Could Gallio have heard Paul upon the Word, who can tell what would have occurred? But are we not always putting away from ourselves great opportunities? Do we not feel weary just when the discourse is sharpening itself into the eloquence that would touch our mind like light, and our heart like a wand of love? Why do we not live in an expectancy that turns water into wine, and common suppers into sacred sacraments? The next sentence might have saved you, but just then your ears waxed heavy and you did not hear! There may be careless people notwithstanding the misapplication of the name of Gallio. Instead of calling you by that historical name, I would call you by your own names, plainly and frankly; with a plainness which you might at first resent, but with a candour which you will afterwards come to bless. Is it true that you care "for none of those things"? Then for what do you care? What is it that absorbs your mind, that constrains your heart, and that moves your whole

nature as with the energy of a passion? Show it me. What is it? I undertake to show you, by fair argument that would pass as gold in the market-place, that whatever it is out of Christ it is unworthy of the immortality that trifles with it and of the manhood that is being debased by its frivolity.

LXVIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we stand at the Cross of thy Son, thanking thee for all goodness, for daily care, for love unbroken and complete. We bring our thanksgiving unto thee and lay it humbly and lovingly on the altar, and ask thee to take it as our only gift. We have nothing that we have not received, but thou hast been pleased to work in us a thankful heart, and we bring our gratitude to thee in return for blessings that have no number, and for compassion infinite and unspeakable. We know what sin we have done, and we hide ourselves in darkness. Thou hast set a great light before us in the Cross of Jesus Christ the Saviour, and we would hasten out of the night of our gloom and despair into the broad, glorious morning of thy pardon and mercy and love. Receive us, we humbly pray thee, every one, and let us all be released from every memory that torments and from every accusation that burdens the soul. The house is thine, and in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare. May we eat of it abundantly, and so destroy the hunger which is consuming our inmost life. The day is thine ; the beams of the sun seem to come in tender brightness as if charged with special messages of love. This is the day of resurrection. This morning all tombs are vacated, and death has no place in the earth which it has apparently conquered, for Christ is risen to-day, and in Christ all that are Christ's arise. He is become the first-fruits of the dead ; and if we be risen with Christ we must set our affections on things above and not on things of the earth. Enable us by the power of the Holy Ghost so to elevate our affections as to show that we have been delivered from the prison of this present life, and have been introduced into the infinite liberty of thine own eternal being. Our prayer cannot be so great as thy love. All our words when put together can ask but one drop out of the firmament of thy pity. Giving doth not impoverish thee, neither doth withholding enrich thee. Thou hast unsearchable riches in Christ Jesus the Lord. Thou hast a gift for every heart ; in thy love there is an answer to every necessity. There is no wound in all the smitten heart of man which cannot be healed by the balm of the Cross. So will we enlarge our prayers and add to them all that our mind can think or our imagination conceive ; and when we have made the appeal all that we can make it, thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. We pray to be surprised by the revelations of thy light, and the communications of thy love. May we daily be startled into some new prayer and some higher hymn of praise. Give us

the occasional vision which makes our hope a still brighter flame. Come to us in some special way that shall unite all the ordinary visions of life, and make the common unusual, and the daily vision a special brightness. We thank thee for personal mercies which we may not name in the hearing of others. We bless thee for family light and security and rest ; for all that makes the household the centre of our life and the strength of our confidence. We thank thee for prosperity in business, in basket and in store. Thou didst increase the flour and thou didst cause the oil to overflow the vessels. God be praised for blessings in the market-place, in the house, and in the open life, and in the secret heart. Now speak comfortably to us. Let all things temporal and sensible fall away into their proper place ; and may our eyes be fixed upon the eternal glory, the eternal throne, the eternal King ; and so fixed, our hearts shall forget their trouble, our weakness shall become strength, and our perplexity shall be turned into quietness and confidence. The Lord hear us when we ask for pardon. We must be heard. for the cry goes up to heaven through the Cross of Christ—through that blessed Cross send back thy great reply ; and every one of us shall feel that there is no past of guilt, but a great past of forgiveness, and a bright future of service and friendship and love and toil that brings no weariness. Amen.

Acts xviii. 18-23.

18. And Paul having tarried after this yet many days [after the conclusion of the year-and-a-half of security, and after the Jews' abortive attempt] took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence for Syria, and with him [sailed] Priscilla and Aquila ; having shorn his [*not* Paul's, but *Aquila's* head. G. "and Aquila shorn as to his head," an idiom which the Vulgate rightly translates by, "Aquila, who had shorn his head in Cenchrea, for he had a vow"] head in Cenchrea ; for he had a vow [the Revisers, by their punctuation of the Greek text, separate the adjective from Aquila and so shave Paul].

19. And they [Priscilla and Aquila "*with* Paul," v. 18. *They* sailed ; *they* came ; he left *them*] came to Ephesus, and he left [ceased to lodge with] them there ; but he himself ["by himself," or "for his part"] entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

20. And when they asked him to abide a longer time he consented not.

21. But taking his leave of them, and saying, I will return again unto you, if God will, he set sail from Ephesus [the words omitted were supplied by copyists from xx. 16].

22. And when he had landed at Cæsarea, he went up and saluted the [Cæsarean] Church, and went down to Antioch [for *Syria*, v. 18, was his destination. Note the summary account of the journey from Corinth to Antioch].

23. And having spent some time there, he departed [on his THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY], and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia [*i. e.*, Lycaonia] in order [as before], stablishing all the disciples.

PREPARING FOR LABOUR.

PAUL had conquered his position in Corinth. He seemed to have acquired a right to remain there. The battle had raged and Paul had been brought into rest, and confidence had been established, in some degree, between himself and the Corinthian public. Paul, seeing an opportunity of doing very much good, consented to remain there, and to work constructively rather than disputatiously. But Paul "took his leave of the brethren." This is a new tone in the narrative. Paul has not often gone away from a city in this quiet, friendly, and social manner; Paul's going out has often been amidst tumult, battle, evil-feeling, and malignant criticism and treatment. Paul now must take leave of the brethren. He has a purpose which he must carry out; that purpose will presently come before us in a few significant words. The intention was in the Apostle's heart a long time before he expressed it, and it gave, no doubt, a subtle pathos and tenderness to a good deal of his concluding service in Corinth. When his tone became sweeter and tenderer; when his appeals were more urgent and ardent, people around him might wonder at the change of accent and emphasis. They would say, "Is this premonitory? Is the spirit of death already upon him? Is he talking from under a shadow that will presently deepen into the final gloom? How sweetly he now speaks! how gracious is his whole manner! how the old rigour and sternness have become subdued! and how like a little child is this foremost of disputants, this invincible assailant of evil!" The explanation was that Paul had made up his mind to go to Jerusalem and there complete a Levitical obligation. Over part of the road he took with him Priscilla and Aquila. But their names did not come before us in this order when we first made their acquaintance. Then they were husband and wife, now they seem to be wife and husband. There is an order in these things; there is a subtle primacy of influence, character, and spiritual genius which asserts itself naturally, and which has to be carefully looked for because of its unobtrusive-

ness. It would be easy to read the eighteenth verse without noticing that Priscilla comes before Aquila. Who noticed that change of relation in the public reading of the Word? Does it not seem as if Priscilla ought to be a greater Christian teacher than Aquila? What can *he* know of the interior of the faith-temple, the love-life, the sacrifice which is Christianity translated into its native tongue? It is not the *man* that should preach, but the *woman* always. The man should be but tolerated, for what can he know of spiritual mystery, of religious instinct, of that sharp, clear vision which, taking little heed of the letter, sees the angel behind it, and that angel, looking back to the woman's heart, what only a woman's heart can see? My wonder is, not that the order of the names should stand as it does in the eighteenth verse, but that ever Aquila should have taken the precedence of Priscilla. Go to the humble heart, if you would have a right reading of Scripture. He, or she, who has suffered most can read God's Bible best. This elocution cannot be taught for money; it is the genius of blood. You must feel, or you cannot read. Let me hear the suffering mother read sobbingly, and though her words be blurred by tears and chokings, there will come out of them gleamings of spiritual fire that will tell me that inside the whole transaction is the God of the Abrahams, the Isaacs, and the Jacobs, of all massive and sublime history.

Paul had "shorn his head in Cenchrea: he had a vow." The greatest liberalist in the Church was also addicted to Levitical obedience. The man who so strenuously and nobly fought the battle of circumcision himself took the Nazarite vow. Do not think that a liberal Apostle is necessarily a latitudinarian in action. Paul maintained a hard discipline over *himself*, and, therefore, could afford to be very liberal and compassionate towards other people. He is the man to be dreaded, who is severe with others and clement to himself; and he is the man to be trusted—almost to the point of idolatry—who keeps *himself* "under," who strikes himself, as Paul said he did, in the eyes, and who is gentle, gracious, and hopeful in relation to everybody but himself. Could Paul be prevented from carrying out this now? Not all the forces of Corinth, not all the seductions of Ephesus could keep back that

faithful heart. The vow could only be completed in the metropolis. It was permitted by the Nazarite law for a man whose hair had grown long under the necessity of the vow to cut off his hair, but he must keep it and take it up to Jerusalem and burn it in the Temple at the appointed hour in the appointed fire. That hair could not be burned elsewhere and the law be honoured. Paul carried his shorn locks with him. Think of *Paul* doing it. The Apostle of liberty, the man who would not give place by subjection, no, not for an hour, to those who would limit the liberty that is in Christ Jesus, carrying up his shorn hair to burn it according to the Levitical law. We can trust that man. Sometimes we dare not approach Paul, when he is wrapped, as it were, in a mantle of light and fire, and when he is his very self, standing between heaven and earth—more a figure of the former than of the latter. Then he seems a long way from us, but when he comes down to the plain level and says—“ I have a vow, and I must by all means keep it”—we feel that a man so honest in a matter so comparatively trifling is likely at least to be severely true in matters of larger breadth which transcend oftentimes, not only our intellectual, but our moral comprehension. It is thus we must judge one another. Where we cannot understand the doctrine we can understand the action. If I cannot understand your metaphysics of the Trinity, I can understand how you keep your engagements with me ; and if you fail in those engagements you can hardly be surprised if I begin to doubt concerning the metaphysics which lie beyond my usual intellectual line. Men cannot, perhaps, understand the articles of our theological belief, but they can understand our temper, our honesty over the counter, our punctuality, our ordinary honour in life. If they find us faithful in little things they must reason that we are faithful also in greater things. We may not be able elaborately to defend our theology, but we can live such a life of simplicity, honourableness, decency, nobleness, and purity, as shall make it hard work for the sceptic to get at the inner citadel which we call our theological faith. We can build such moral outworks as will cause the assailant or the sceptic a great deal of difficulty. Finding our honour so brilliant, our daily virtues so complete, our temper so magnanimous, our word a bond of adamant—the unbeliever will find it hard work to say one

word against our prayer, or to mock the utterance of one article of our faith.

Paul came to Ephesus and left Priscilla and Aquila there, but he himself finding that he had a little margin of time said he would look into the synagogue and reason with the Jews. That is how Paul kept holiday. We cannot run with this footman ; he is swifter than the horse-rider. He does not want to look at anything in the city of Ephesus—famed in a country famous for great cities. Again he says, “ Where is the synagogue ? Where are the Jews ? Let me reason with them.” But the woods around Ephesus are beautiful—why not drive through them ? Imagine Paul driving through a pine-wood for the purpose of sniffing the scented air. He lived in the synagogue ; the Jews were the mountains he wanted to see, and the obstinacy of the unbelieving heart was the only field in which he cared to take holiday. At Ephesus he met with an unwonted reception ; he so “ reasoned ” with the Jews there that when he talked about going farther on “ they desired him to tarry longer time with them.” We have seen how these Jews spat upon him, hated him, banished him from their synagogues and their cities ; but at Ephesus he meets with another reception. What is the meaning of that ? Is the devil playing a trick here ? He has one trick that he tries occasionally—not too frequently so as to spoil it—and he may be trying that subtlest trick at Ephesus. Was there an attempt here to keep the Apostle Paul from Jerusalem, whither he must go to accomplish his vow ? Was this a *bonâ fide* welcome ? Did the Ephesian Jews speak the sentiment of their hearts ? We cannot tell ; but if they did not they got their answer. Paul “ bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem : but I will return again unto you, if God will.” Did they want him to return ? Did they say anything to encourage him to come back again ? He *will* come back ; he has his greatest day yet before him ! What we have seen in the eighteen chapters gone is next to nothing to the battles that have to come. Paul will be greater when he comes back from Jerusalem, for there the spur will touch his blood, and he will have a new and broader work before him.

In the twenty-second verse are the saddest words in the Acts of

the Apostles. The words are but three in number, but they hide a whole grave full of shattered hopes and anticipated joys. Paul going back to Jerusalem for the fourth time ! The Church will wait for him ! The Church will pray with him ! The Church will hold a great banqueting day after a spiritual fashion, for the noblest of her warriors has returned, and his speech will be a recital of battles fought and won. Paul went up to Jerusalem and "saluted the Church." That is all ! Paul went up to Jerusalem and made his bow. Paul went up to Jerusalem and offered courteous homage to the Primate of the Church. Where the sound of festival ? Festival there was none ! Where the clang of trumpet, and the throb of drum, and the unfolding of red banners ? There was none ! Did that take place in the Mother Church ? Yes. Can a woman forget her sucking child ? Yes. Paul was never greater than when he held his tongue, and left the dignitaries to perish in their own vanity. What a time they might have had had they gathered around the warrior and said, "Show us your wounds and scars, and tell us what news there is from the seat of war." But no. Paul was a liberal thinker ; Paul had protested against the Judaizing teachers ; Paul had committed a great offence by claiming liberty in Christ for Gentile believers ; and some men cannot forgive. Do not blame them until you have blamed a flint for not bleating. Did Paul change his faith or his policy because of this metropolitan coldness ? No ; having played the gentleman where he rather would have displayed the Christian, "he went down to Antioch ; and after he had spent some time there ——" He was more at home among the Gentiles. Paul made short work of his visit to the Church in Jerusalem, for the door was shut and the key was lost ; but when he came to Antioch he said, "The sun is brighter, the earth is greener, friends are cheerier ; this is home." We cannot live on ceremony ; we cannot live on dignity ; we cannot be happy where persons do but touch us with the tips of their fingers, intimating thereby that they would rather not touch us at all ; but only live in love, in mutual trust, in mutual prayer. See how Paul was treated at Jerusalem, but Paul will live, a growing figure, when the men who snubbed him at Jerusalem are forgotten echoes. Have faith in God ; try to find out that which is true and right and good, and follow it to the end. It would be cheering to have a

kind word at Jerusalem in the very midst of the battle ; to have an opportunity of looking over the armour, and seeing that the panoply was in good condition. It would be cheering if the elder Apostles could come and say, " Brave heart, fight on ! for our prayers and our love will follow you across all the war-fields." But at Jerusalem they were too orthodox to be **Christians.**

LXIX.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou dost say with kingly love to every one coming to thee in Christ Jesus, the Priest and the Saviour of man, "What is thy petition? and what is thy request? and it shall be granted unto thee." Thou art not as the kings of the earth, reserving unto themselves half their kingdom when they make great promises. Thou hast given unto thy Church all things—all height, all depth, all riches, all spaces, all duration; all things are ours, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Wilt thou give us to feel the infinity of our riches, that there may be no longer any word or tone of poverty upon our lips, but that we may speak as rich men, to whose wealth there is no end, and whose joy is wide and lasting as God's heaven. We are children of the dust, and our lower nature drags us down to its own beginning; but we are also children of light, children of the Holy One; and thou dost give us lifting up of heart and thought according to the measure of our dignity in Christ Jesus. Our hope in him is that the higher will destroy the lower, and that in thine own good time and way we shall be made like unto the angels, stainless, infinite in the whiteness of purity, loving God with undistracted heart, and serving him with undivided strength. Having this hope in us we would purify ourselves; having within us this most sacred joy, we would be no longer children of the night, but would become children of the day; loving the light; loving the noontide most because the noontide is brightest; crying for higher heavens and brighter light; moved by a sacred and Divine ambition to which there is no answer in things that can be seen or spoken of. For the holy feeling of this aspiration we bless thee. When it comes upon us in the full tide of its power we feel like men who shake off their chains and rise into places fit for souls that are unstained. This is thy Sabbath blessing. This is the Lord's day. We have come to thee from the battle of the week, and we have come to praise thee for some defeats which have been real successes, and for some victories that have caused us pain. We would no longer be as those who undertake to see and hear and act for themselves. We will do no such thing; thou shalt be our eyes, our ears, and our hands; and we will stand behind and hear thy report, and answer thy command, and follow it so far thou dost give us strength by the mystery of thy will and love. We want to live so. Our desire is to live and move and have our being in God. We would be swallowed up of love. We would know nothing that is not thine, and do nothing that is not according to the good pleas-

ure of thy will. This we have learned in Christ, and not out of him ; out of thy Son no such lesson can be learned. This knowledge is born of the agony of sacrifice ; herein is the Cross of Christ in all its infinite meaning. We would be crucified with Christ ; we would glory in the Cross of Christ ; we would bear the name of Christ. Help us to know what it is to carry his flag, to breathe his name, and to represent his court, feeling the dignity of the call and the solemnity of the obligation. May we throw open our window seven times towards the Jerusalem that is above, day by day, and thus live in fellowship with God, and stoop to earth merely as a temporary discipline. Some whom thou lovest are sick. Thou canst help them. Thou knowest every bone and every member of the body, for thou didst make it all with the infinite cunning of Omniscience. Heal those whom thou hast laid down after a time, and during that time may their thought be moving upward in loving and anxious desire. Guide the perplexed. They do not know whether to go to this side or to that ; they might as well be blind. Take hold of the hand that is groping in the darkness, and lead thou on. Comfort the broken-hearted ; turn tears into jewels ; make sighing equal to prayer ; and may those who are ill at ease be brought into the sanctuary of Christ. Foil the enemy ; break him down in the very power of his pride ; when he is about to strike what would be the fatal blow, do thou bend back his arm and cover his eyes with eternal night. The Lord lift up all the children, that they may feel safe in thine arms, and may return with childish laughter the light of thy smile. The Lord hear ; the Lord read our unspoken thought ; the Lord exalt himself by forgiving sin through the infinite merits of the blood of Christ. Amen.

Acts xviii. 24-28.

24. Now [—while Paul was progressing through Phrygian Galatia towards *Ephesus*, God was preparing his way in that city :] a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned [G. “eloquent”] man, came to Ephesus ; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

25. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord ; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully [G. “accurately” ; so far as he had learned them] the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John [xix. 3, 4] :

26. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully [G. “with fuller accuracy”].

27. And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him [I Cor. iii. 1. Note this evidence of a Church having been founded at Ephesus] : and when he was come, he helped them much which had believed [which he did] through grace :

28. For [as only *grace* could have enabled him to do] he powerfully

confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ [1 Cor. iii. 6. Bengel's note on Apollos is, "he *watered*, but did not plant"].

A NEW MAN IN THE CHURCH.

HOW marvellous is the pre-eminence of individual men. Herein is the continual miracle of daily Providence. The great man always comes ; yet few can tell how or whence. God is pleased to make sudden revelations of power. He is pleased to surprise men themselves by unexpected accessions of strength, so that the feeble man becomes as the mighty, and the obscure man steps up to the very summit of prominence and renown. Elijah comes without warning, and is Elijah all at once. Other men have been found on the same lines and have challenged society with equal suddenness. Men are so much alike up to a given point, and then without potent reason they separate from one another into individualities, assuming distinctive colours, and going out on separate and independent missions. It is not the first hundred feet that give a mountain its name, but the last ten feet. Just that little peak will get the mountain a name among mountains ; that little hardly visible outline will create the fame of the hill. It is so that God is always distributing human power, talent, and influence. We have very much in common, and then after that which is common we have that which is individual, and so become particularized into glittering units, each standing alone, yet each having subtle relations to the whole. Study the miracle of the succession of the generations, those of you who have what you call your "doubts" about historical miracles. The anecdotal miracles have passed away, but there is an eternal miracle, and men would see it but for the impoverishing familiarity which takes no notice of the sunlight because it is so regular, so common, and so plentiful. Yet we are all one, centrally and morally. The little bird that can fly seems to have a larger liberty than man who can only walk ; but the air is only the wider earth—it is all earth ; the air belongs to us, and though birds can fly in it, they never get away from the earth really. So with the great mental eagles, flying souls, minds that open the broad pinions of immeasurable power and flap them at heaven's gate—they all belong to us ; they

are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Argumentative Paul and eloquent Apollos are brethren with us, sitting at the same table and kneeling at the same altar. If we could get that view of our leaders we should destroy all envy, suspicion, distrust, rivalry, and jealousy, because Apollos would be my larger self, and Paul in his noblest moods would be myself transfigured. We should glorify God in the greatness of our brethren.

Let us look at the pre-eminence of Apollos and study the characteristics which were natural and inimitable and those which were acquired and therefore possible of reproduction by ourselves. Apollos was "an eloquent man," and therefore his temptations were great. It is difficult for any eloquent man to be what is popularly known as honest. It is a tremendous trial of integrity, as usually understood, to have great command of language. Do not suppose that the eloquent man hears his own eloquence as we hear it; he is *told* about it. If he be artificial in his eloquence he hears every tone of it; but if inspiredly eloquent he is himself a hearer as well as a speaker. How does it come to be almost impossible for an eloquent man to be popularly considered as honest? Because he sees so many colours in words, so many critical variations of meaning. He does not speak with broad vulgarity any word that he utters; and when I suggest the difficulty of an eloquent man being honest I am bound to add that he is often thought to be dishonest when he is not really so. He is speaking another language. Some persons have only two colours—black and white. What can they know of the revelations of colour which God has granted to these latter times? Some voices have only two movements—loud and low, they have no internal line, no broken, mysterious, weird tones. They are either speaking very loudly or very lowly, and they know nothing of the mystery of the mind which sees a whole apocalypse in the action of intonation. In English we have only two numbers. We are a concise people; we speak of "singular and plural." But there are other languages that have more numbers than two. In English we have but three cases; but there are other languages that have six cases, as many of my junior hearers know only too painfully. In a language that divides everything into singular and plural there can be, so far, no great mystery. In a language that has only the nominative, possessive, and objective he would be a

backward boy who could not master that little variety of case in one short day. But where language becomes more subtle, complicated, and involved, men may be saying things which to the simpler mind appear to be of the nature of tergiversation and even lying, which are in their substance critically and punctiliously true. We know that there are men among us—healthy men—of large and active digestion, who say, “Yes or no!” They mistake their abruptness for frankness, and their violence for candour. “Yes” and “No” are not the poles of truth and integrity. Here Apollos cannot be reproduced by us. Eloquence cannot be acquired; it is the gift of tongues.

Apollos was not only “eloquent,” he was “fervent in the spirit.” There he may not be imitated. You can paint fire, but it will never warm you. Fire is the gift of God. He fixes the temperature of the blood, the scope and fervour of the mind. Men who are not fervent are not to be blamed. You would not blame a man for being born blind. You are not cruel in your judgment of a man who is lame from his birth. In those physical instances you can see the meaning of the truth; that same truth has also its inner and spiritual meaning with regard to intellectual faculties and moral qualities. Fire can read the Scriptures; fire is at home in the Bible. It is like blaze mingling with blaze when fervent Apollos reads burning Isaiah. How the flames leap together and form one grand oblation at the altar of the sun! The difficulty here is lest men who are not fervent should blame men who are fervent; and lest fervent men should be impatient with men who are not fervent. Here also we belong to one another. Human nature is incomplete without the smallest, youngest, frailest child that ever crawled in the dust. The door must not be shut upon the gathered hosts until the last little creeper has been brought in and sat at the Father’s table. Men who are not fervent are often most useful. There is a purpose to be served in the economy of things by ice as well as by fire—only do not let them quarrel. Do not let ice say, “You, fire, exaggerate things”; and do not let fire say, “You, ice, are an offence to every planet that burns in the sky.” We are all treated by the same Maker, and we shall be judged by Infinite Justice.

Apollos was not only “eloquent” and “fervid,” he was

“mighty in the Scriptures.” There we cannot imitate him. Might in Bible reading is the gift of God. It is a wondrous word. To read the Bible so as to become mighty in it requires insight, sympathy, kinship with the writers, a spiritual knowledge of the language, identification with the Spirit of God. All men cannot read—some schoolmasters cannot read; some preachers cannot read. Therein so many blunders are made. To become mighty in the Scriptures is to know such a variety of mind: Moses, and the prophets, and the minstrels of Israel, and Christ, and the Apostles—who can comprehend all that gamut of inspired utterance? We may be able to repeat every word of the Bible, and yet know nothing about the inner Scriptures. The Scriptures are *in* the Bible; the Scriptures are within the Scriptures. “The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” We can toil at this service. Some of us can understand one portion of Scripture who cannot understand another. We must not begrudge one another the partial gift, nor endeavour to reduce it to contempt. There are some hearts mighty in the Psalms; there are other minds mighty in the histories of the Bible; there are others with a special gift for taking hold of, and explaining, Christ. We must all work together. No one minister is the whole ministry. To hear the sermon which is preached in London to-day you must add all the individual sermons, and when they have gathered themselves up into one sublime thunder, you have heard the sermon preached to-day in the name of Christ. You should go further still and take in, not one capital, but all cities, not one empire, but all kingdoms, nations, and states; add into one mighty sum all that has been spoken in them, and then you will have preached in the ear of inspired fancy the complete sermon heard to-day respecting Jesus Christ. I claim for every servant his own place; for every minister his own special vocation; and I would have every teacher, minister, speaker, honoured according to the particular gift that is in him.

Apollos was not only “eloquent,” “fervent,” and “mighty in the Scriptures”; he was “instructed in the way of the Lord.” There we may join him. He spoke through instruction, which is the surest basis of inspiration. We are not to suppose that inspiration excludes instruction. Instruction is the proof of inspira-

tion—that is to say, the inspired Word so comes down into the life as to prove itself along the line of our intelligence and moral responsibility. How few people are “instructed in the way of the Lord.” There is nothing in this world more astounding than its ignorance. There are preachers gifted with an imagination, I know not whence descended, that speak of “this large and intelligent assembly”; you cannot tell anything about the intelligence of an assembly until you have examined man by man alone in any book in the sacred record. There is a gift of kind heaven by which a man can publicly look much wiser than he really is. “Instructed in the way of the Lord.” Why, these words involve the devotion of a lifetime. The “way of the Lord” is in the deep waters, and in the secret places, and in the tabernacles of the thunder, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He speaks riddle and enigma, and utters words that startle us by reason of their peculiarity and utter strangeness. What scope for industry! What a field for teachableness!

So far Apollos out-soars us, but this cannot be all; even in Apollos there must be a weak point. Let us find it out—indeed no long quest is needed, for we are told distinctly in the twenty-fifth verse that Apollos knew “only the baptism of John.” If he could be so eloquent about water, what will he be when he comes to speak of blood? We shall find this man doing wonders in the Church. If he could burn so in the very soul when he knew only the initial baptism, what will he be when he sees and feels the Cross, the Blood, the Sacrifice, and understands somewhat of the forgiveness of sins, and the glory of immortality, and the splendour of the Christian heaven? It is possible to teach even the alphabet earnestly. Apollos knew only the alphabet, but he taught the separate letters as if they were separate poems. It is quite possible to repeat the alphabet as though it contained nothing, and it is possible to repeat the letters of the alphabet as if they were the beginnings of temples, libraries, and whole heavens of intelligence and revelation and spiritual possibility. The fervent man touches everything with his fervour; even when he repeats the alphabet it is repeated as with fire. Do not despise the teachers who are not teaching exactly the fulness of the Gospel. If they are teaching up to the measure of their intelligence, thank God for their co-operation. There are men in all great cities who

are teaching the baptism of John, who are teaching the elements of morality, and who are endeavouring to save the world by political elevation and the larger political truth. They must not be undervalued; they must not be talked about scornfully; they ought to be treated exactly as Aquila and Priscilla treated Apollos. If the offer of further information is declined or resented, the offer has been made and the responsibility has thus been discharged. But do not despise men who do not teach your particular phase of doctrine. They may be earnest and not belong to your Church; they will, however, show their earnestness by their teachableness. The moment a man, in the Church or out of it, puts on the priest and enters a claim for personal infallibility, that moment he is a trespasser in the sanctuary of God. The oldest of us has hardly begun his lesson; the wisest of us will be the first to receive another suggestion; the most advanced scholar will be the most docile learner. You may not have come to my Gospel of forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Cross, but you are here, in the sacred place, to-day—I will set that fact down to your credit. If you go to church I will make that out a line in your favour. You may not have travelled far along the road, but your face is in the right direction, and that is a circumstance that must not be undervalued. The Cross of Christ was set up not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

“Aquila and Priscilla took Apollos unto them and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” Thus, in an indirect way, Apollos became a pupil of St. Paul himself. Paul will probably one day get hold of him, and when the two fires meet the light will be seen and the warmth will be felt afar. These men are ours. The sun belongs to the very poorest man that lives. The sun belongs to the blind man who can only feel the warm beam upon his dark face. The great things are all ours. We cannot go into the rich man's house or room and warm our cold hands at his blazing fire; but the coldest child can hold up its little hands to God's sun, and, so to speak, bathe them in its impartial warmth. The capital of the country belongs to every villager. The obscure dweller in the obscure hamlet cannot claim the secondary cities in the same way in which he can claim the metropolis. The metropolis does not belong to any one particu-

lar set of inhabitants ; it is the Imperial city ; it belongs to every one in the whole empire. To go to the metropolis is indeed to go to the mother city ; to go, in a sense, home, and to have some well-established right to be there. So with the great Pauls and Apolloses, and the mighty speakers and teachers, poets and thinkers—they belong to us, every one. The language of the country belongs to every man, woman, and child in the country, simply because of its largeness. If it were a *patois* it would belong to its valley, or a particular hill-side ; but being the pure speech of the country it belongs to every one who can utter its words ; and it is “ enough to fill the ambition of a common man that Chatham’s language was his mother-tongue.” So the higher we go the more we own. “ All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” This is Paul’s own inventory of our property ; let us claim it, every whit and line.

LXX.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou art near unto us in Christ Jesus thy Son. We come to thee by him, and, therefore, by the only way. We would come boldly in his name, speaking to thee what is in our hearts, telling thee of our sin, singing to thee of our thankfulness, and asking from thee daily direction and continual sustenance. This is our delight; it is no longer a burden to us, because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our hearts. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us. Jesus Christ himself thus enlarges upon our wondering vision until he fills all things with his radiant presence. Under the ministry of the Holy Spirit we would live, and would prove that we are under him by our joyfulness, peace, hopefulness, triumph over the world and time, and by all the fruits which they bear who are warmed by the presence of the spirit of fire. We bless thee that we have passed from the baptism of John to the baptism of the Cross. We are no longer in the state of mere repentance which daily begs forgiveness; we enjoy communion with God, fellowship with the Father—yea, we have access into inner sanctuaries, into the Holy of holies, which we have obtained through the Cross of Christ; so that we are no longer children of grief and of fear, carrying burdens many and heavy; but are children of the day and of the light, filled with sacred hope, animated with unutterable joy—yea, glorying in tribulations, also. This is thy miracle wrought in our hearts; we know it to be thine; this is no workmanship of ours; this is the gift of God, having in it the quality of eternal life and the joy of heaven partially begun. We bless thee for all the gifts of the week; for the balmy winds of summer; for the bread of the table; for the sleep which has refreshed us; for the thoughts which have made us men; for the hopes which have proved us to be in Christ Jesus; for all the favours thou hast shown throughout the rising and falling of the days. We stand here to-day to praise God with a full heart and an open mouth. Verily we are not afraid of our own voices. We would make a joyful noise unto the rock of our salvation. We would speak with holy confidence and emphasis of the preserving, sanctifying, tender care of which we have been the continual subjects. Hear thy people when they sing their psalm. Listen to them when they would whisper in the heart of thy love some tale of pain, of sin, of shame, and answer them with great answers, when, at the Cross of Christ and in the presence of its atoning blood, they ask thee for a double portion of thy Holy Spirit. We remember the sick—those who are at home and those who are in

public institutions. We pray that they may be healed and comforted, and that the thought of their weakness may become a new strength. We desire that having seen the side of life which is humiliating, they may now see the side of life which presents itself towards heaven's light and rises towards heaven's rest. Sanctify affliction and pain, sleepless nights, and weary days. Speak comfortably to those who can hear no voice but thine own, and where eyes are closing on earth's dim light may the eyes of the soul be opened on heaven's cloudless morning. Give wisdom to all physicians; give patience and tenderness to all nurses; make thou the bed of the afflicted, and keep thou watch by the side of the helpless. We pray for all mankind; and if specially for the land we love the most, thou thyself hast set that partiality in our hearts. We bless thee for love of home and native land; and we pray that every one now before thee, praying for special places and countries, may be heard and graciously answered. Read thy word to us thyself. May we know that we are only listeners, and may the expression of every life be, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Let this be a wonderful day in the history of the Church. May thy servants speak with new boldness, and by their ministry may special miracles be done. Amen.

Acts xix. 1-12.

1. And it came to pass that, while Apollos was at Corinth [18, 27], Paul having passed through the upper [G. "more inland"; *i.e.*, Lycaonia, the *Phrygian* district of Galatia, 18, 23] country came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples [older term still used for *Christians*, 11, 26].

2. And he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? [G. "Holy Ghost" *without* the article, as in John vii. 39; signifying, *the gift of the spirit*. "Given" is therefore correctly supplied below, as in John vii. 39: "Did ye receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as the consequence of your believing?"] And they said unto him, Nay, we did not so much as hear whether the Holy Ghost was *given* [1 Cor. xii. 13; for a strikingly illustrative *modern* instance see John Wesley's Aldersgate Street "experience," as narrated by *Tyerman*].

3. And he said, Into what then were ye baptized? And they said, Into John's baptism.

4. And Paul said, John baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus.

5. And when they heard this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord [the Ascended] Jesus.

6. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues [x. 46, 1 Cor. xii.-xiv.], and prophesied [xi. 27. Signs and wonders were still necessary to enable *their* minds to grasp the new conscious fellowship of the Spirit].

7. And they were in all about twelve men [the *Spirit* saith "about"].

8. And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9. But when some were hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way [compare with ix. 2] before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, reasoning daily in the [? rabbinical] school of Tyrannus [as *Jews* came freely to hear Paul this was probably a "private synagogue," Tyrannus being the Greek name of a Jewish teacher].

10. And this continued for the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

11. And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12. Insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body [G. "skin": after use by the Apostle] handkerchiefs or aprons [used by tent-stitchers], and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out.

APOLLOS COMPLETED BY PAUL.

PAUL said he would return to Ephesus. In this chapter we find Paul again in that famous city. Something has occurred since he was last there—that event occupied our attention in our last study. An "eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures," named Apollos, had been exercising his ministry in Ephesus, and some twelve men had answered the persuasion of his matchless eloquence. Paul found them out, and as he looked upon them he was surprised. They did not look happy. There was a severity in the face which excited Paul's anxiety; there was nothing radiant in that little Church. The twelve heads were bowed; the twelve faces were written all over with lines of discipline, subservience, fear, penitence. Paul was a direct speaker. Looking at them, and observing their mode and appearance, he said, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost?" He noticed that something was absent. He said, "This is not a Christian assembly; these twelve men are unhappy; they are not singing men; the spirit of triumph is not in their hearts—what is it that is lacking here?" "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" If you had, your heads would have been erect; your eyes would have been flames of light; a new life would have lifted you up to higher levels of thought and feeling and utterance; what is wanting here is the Holy

Ghost. Paul was a penetrative observer. He looked for causes, traced their operation, and judged of them by their effects.

Is there no lesson here for us? Looking upon us to-day, what would Paul inquire? He would read our faces; he would listen to our voices; he would pay attention to our mode of singing the sacred psalm and of reading the Holy Book, and if he saw happiness in our faces and heard music in our voices, and saw that we were not men who were time-bound and fettered by sense, he would say, "This is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven, and these are the living miracles of the living Spirit of God." But if he saw us world-bound, if he saw our truant minds running out of the church for the purpose of collecting accounts and alleviating temporal anxieties, and making arrangements for the lower life—if he saw our prayers like birds with bruised wings that could not fly; and if he heard us talking the common speech of time in the common tone of earth, he would say, "What is wanting here is the Holy Ghost—Spirit of fire, Spirit of light, Spirit of love!" There is no mistaking his presence, for there is none like it. The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy."

The twelve men who followed Apollos were like their eloquent leader. We have seen, in the 25th verse of the preceding chapter, that Apollos knew only the baptism of John. What he knew he preached. Paul recognized the work that had been done, and did not attempt to undo it, but rather to complete it; and that is what we must study to do in reference to the education of the world. If you come to me knowing only the first four rules of arithmetic I must begin with you where you end; and recognizing the validity of these four rules of arithmetic, I must lead you up into heights on which no tape line can be laid, and gradually so enlarge your vision and increase the inheritance of your soul until you despise with ineffable contempt everything that can be measured by arithmetical figures and standards. I must not begin your education by throwing into contempt the only four rules you do know; my object as a wise prophet must be to lead you on until you yourselves feel that the first four rules of arithmetic are only for infants, and not for princes and kings of heaven. Paul did not attempt to undervalue the work of Apollos—he carried it on to holy consummation. One minister must complete the work which another

minister began. The students of Apollos must become the students of Paul. We began by loving eloquence ; we end by loving instruction. But do not let the instructive teacher undervalue the eloquent evangelist. They belong to one another. Apollos has the silver trumpet ; Chrysostom has the golden mouth. Let such men make their parables, create their metaphors and figures, thunder with strenuous energy of rhetoric, and they will do a good work in the world. By-and-by their students will look out for other teachers, and will pass on from the lower school of eloquence to the higher school of instruction, doctrine, even the theology which is truly theological. So must we have large appreciation of men : so must we put out no little light, but be thankful for its flicker and spark. The young man likes to hear a fluent speaker, one who rushes with unbroken force at a speed incalculable over an area immeasurable. The young man calls it "eloquence." He goes to the church where the Apollos preaches long before the doors are opened, and willingly stands there that he may see this rushing torrent of eloquence, and hear this mighty wind of sacred appeal. I will not condemn him ; many of us once belonged exactly to that class. But Time—teaching, drilling, chastening Time—works its wondrous wizardry upon the mind, and without violence, or consciousness of transition, we come to a mental condition which says, "There was more in that one sentence than in the infinite Niagara whose bewildering forces once stupefied our youthful minds." But do not condemn any man. Let him teach what he can. If he is still calling for water to throw upon the faces of the people, or calling for people to plunge into the water, he knows no better—let him do it. Have faith in the revelations which accompany a wise use of time.

If Paul did not discredit the work of Apollos, the disciples of Apollos did not discredit the larger revelation of Paul. The inference is, that the disciples of Apollos were well-taught. They were not finalists ; they felt that something more might be possible. That is the highest result of education. The heart in a state of continual expectancy and preparedness in reference to spiritual possibilities—that is the image of the true scholar, and that is the condition of true progress. Christians are always "looking forward and hastening unto." Marvellous attitude ! A posture

created by inspiration ! The look, the hastening—these are the proofs of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Jesus Christ availed himself of this wonderful provision in human nature which creates continual expectation of still larger and brighter things. When did Jesus Christ say, “This is the end” ? We know what he did say. For example : “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.” Or again, “Thou shalt see greater things than these.” The future will throw the past into relative insignificance. And again : “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.” “Henceforth, know we no man after the flesh ; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, henceforth, know we him no more.” Is there then a new Christ ? Certainly not. What is there ? This : An enlarging appreciation of the true Christ. Christ is always giving to us his larger SELF. These are the “unsearchable riches.” We have not changed our Christ, but our view of him has become larger, purer, clearer ; so that he is to our best conception as is the cloudless noontide to the gray dawn. Look for no new birth in Bethlehem, for no new historical, visible Christ ; but see if, in the growing time, the expanding and developing ages, there is not everywhere the print of the nails and the scar made by the sharp spear, and lay your finger-tip upon one proved and established benefit of civilization which cannot be traced back step by step to the cradle in Bethlehem. Perhaps preachers may have themselves to blame for not having given a true revelation of the magnitude and glory of the name of Christ. For myself, I find Christ everywhere ; I cannot get away from him. If you have been thinking of some merely ecclesiastical Christ, I can, to a large extent, agree with you that such a Christ can never spread himself over all the ages and take into himself all the experiences of mankind. But the Christ we preach is not a creation of the Church, is not under the patronage of the Church, is not secured in his place by the lock and key of the Church. He is Alpha and Omega—First, Last ; who was, and is, and is to come ; filling all things. This view of Christ enables me to look hopefully upon some persons who do not know the full extent of his name—even upon Apolloses who have only got so far as the baptism of John. Such men are not to be won by denunciation, but by recognition, and recognition of the frankest, manliest, and

most independent quality. The Church is larger than any four walls built for its accommodation.

We learn from verse seven that "all the men were about twelve"; and yet there is no whining about a "poor" Church and a "weak" Church. We must burn such adjectives out of the speech of Christians. There is no "poor" Church; there can be no "weak" Church. If you think of the Church as a commercial institution with investments, endowments, revenues, and outgoings, then you may speak about the Church being both poor and weak, but the Church is a spiritual fellowship, a branch in the vine sucking the very life of the root. Have we now to re-define the term "Church"? I fear so. There is a great deal of inquiry as to whether the Church is "poor," or "rich," or "weak," or "strong." It is not heroic inquiry. Moreover, we may be totally wrong in our estimate as to which is the "poor" Church and which is the "rich" one. A Church is not necessarily strong because its pews are thronged and its collections are heavy. It may be that the handful of copper given by some village Church may be more than the two handfuls of gold given by the metropolitan congregation. In the large sum there may not be one sign of sacrifice—and giving only begins when sacrifice begins. The little sum may represent pinching and suffering and economy equal to sacrifice. Banish from your thought and speech the idea that any Church, redeemed, purified, inspired by the Holy Ghost, can be either poor or weak—though the number of the men may be "about twelve." If you allow the other style of reasoning you will insult not only the ministry, but the very genius of the Christian Church. We shall then talk about our "weaker" brethren and our "poorer" brethren, and will apportion them places on the back seats when they come up to the feast of trumpets. Let us protest against this. On the floor of the Church and in the presence of the Cross all Christians are equal.

We find from the verses remaining that the Gospel produced its usual twofold effect. Some received the Holy Ghost and advanced in the doctrines of grace, being strengthened daily by the indwelling Spirit of God. "But when divers were hardened and believed not"—is the other side of the case. It must always be so. The Gospel is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. Every

sermon makes us worse or better. Here you have the same city, the same preacher, the same doctrine, but not the same result. The results were twofold. In the one instance the Gospel resulted in life unto life, and in the other in death unto death.

In the eleventh verse we have an expression which would indeed be out of place in the cold speech of to-day's Christianity. We are afraid of the word "miracles"; we have almost to apologize for its use. But the writer of the Acts of the Apostles not only speaks of miracles, but of "special miracles"; miraculous miracles; miracles with a difference. Truly such men were not afraid of the word "miracles." We whisper it, or slur it; even in our most energetic speech we have cunning enough to drop the word miracle into a kind of tertiary tone; it is not uttered with a boldness, roundness, emphasis. But in the eleventh verse we find "special miracles." Until the Church becomes bold enough to use its native tongue it will live by sufferance, and at last it will crawl into a dishonoured grave—the only tomb which it has deserved.

LXXI.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, surely this is thy day, and thou art in this place, and the gate of heaven is not far from our hand. The brightness of the sun is thine ; the living air blows from the hills of heaven, and the calm day is a pledge of still deeper rest. This is the day which the Lord hath made—hast thou not made all days ? Were they not all rounded by thyself into the completeness of their beauty ? Yet is there upon this day some touch more wonderful, some sign more tender, and about it there breathes an atmosphere unlike all other. We know this day amongst all the seven. It stands alone, yet is the friend of all ; none may aspire to its sublimity of memory, though all may be touched by the grace of its history. We would that all our time might receive from this sacred day some touch that shall lift it up into nobler responsibility and honour. Thou hast led us through the week, and brought us to see the beginning of another. May we know the meaning of all these beginnings in life. Thou hast jewelled our time with new chances. Thou dost make every day a new possibility, every week a fresh opportunity, every year another time for doing better than before. May we understand this providence of time ; may we know the meaning of the succession of days. We bless thee for the black night-river into which we can throw all that was evil in the day gone. We come with psalms—yea, with shoutings and raptures before thee, because thy gentleness hath made us great. Thou hast withheld nothing from us. Thou hast delighted in our souls. We have been as a garden of precious flowers unto thee, which thou hast watched and tended and watered with dew and warmed with special fire. Thou hast cared for us with wondrous care. When we put our life together and see its true shape, it is a temple not made with hands ; it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. When we thought we saw the place of ruin, thou didst clothe the wilderness with choice flowers. When we said, " This river will surely swallow us up," behold, thou didst strike it with a rod, and the waters parted, and we went through on soft golden sand. Thou hast beaten down mountains for us, and made our foes into friends, and caused our persecutors to become our helpers. We will not burn incense unto ourselves, but wave the censer of a thankful heart before thyself—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, from whom all good things come. We would remember our sin were not our hearts filled beforehand with the Cross. We cannot see the blackness through the sacrificial blood. We hide ourselves in the Cross. Rock of Ages, let us hide our-

selves in thee. Pity us. Lift us up from the lowest dust. Show the miracle of grace triumphing over the rebellion of sin, and may we in the Cross of Christ find the answer to our hearts' guilt and the despair of conscience. Thou knowest what we need, every one of us, down to the least child whose only song is laughter, and whose only prayer is wonder. We want so much, but it is all as nothing to thee. Feed us with the bread of heaven. Lead us into all truth. Give us the royal heart that takes in the prodigal and prays for him as if he were already at home. Take away from us all anti-Christ, all bigotry, littleness, exclusiveness, self-idolatrousness, and may we stand in the love of God as shown in the Cross of Christ, and carry up the whole world as the object of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. Destroy our love of opinion. Utterly drive out of us the notion that we are to be saved by notions. Help us to slay our views and thoughts, our conceptions and theories, and to abandon the base idolatry which kneels to its own inventions. Help us to know nothing but Christ and him crucified—not to know him with explanations, but without them, by the wondrous insight of the heart. The Lord dry our tears; make our knees strong, and our hands skilful, and make our eyes clear and far-sighted. The Lord reconstruct our manhood, and make us like Jesus Christ through and through. We have friends at home who cannot come to thy house because they are sick.—Thou wilt visit them, and make the house a church, and bring to the heart memories and hopes and joys full of heaven's own tender grace. We have friends for whom we dare not pray if Christ had not died. Find them out, and as a shepherd layeth the strayed lamb on his shoulder and bringeth it home, do thou bring by the sweet compulsion of grace every wanderer to thine own table. The Lord hear us; heighten the heavens above us, and make the earth greener, and work in us all the wondrousness of a conscientious immortality, until there shall be in our life no sin, no sorrow, no night, no death, and may our life be as the New Jerusalem, which lieth four-square, the length being as the breadth. Amen.

Acts xix. 13-16.

13. But certain also of the strolling [itinerant] Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them which had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest [? head of one of the twenty-four courses of the Levitical priesthood], which did this.

15. And the evil spirit answered and said unto them, Jesus I know [recognize], and Paul I know; but who [what sort] are ye?

16. And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

SEVEN SONS OF SCEVA.

IN considering these circumstances we must call to mind what had been done in the city of Ephesus, the capital of Asia. A great spiritual revolution had taken place. Paul had been resident in Ephesus, more or less, for two years. At first he found the twelve disciples of Apollos utterly without Christian knowledge beyond the introductory baptism of John. Under Paul's ministry the Holy Ghost had been poured out, and from that time great interest was felt in the whole subject of spiritual influence. From time immemorial superstition has grown in Ephesus, and to add one superstition to another came quite easy to the sophisticated minds of the Asiatics. Christianity was another department of magic. It seemed to succeed well in the hands of Paul and his colleagues, and it might be worth while to incorporate it with Ephesian mysteries. At all events, the men who had practised exorcism, or the art of casting out, were willing to try it, and the trial is related in this passage.

Even the Jews of Ephesus were tainted by this superstition. As we see from the 14th verse "there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests," which "took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus." We must not dismiss the men as impostors. They were deluded, but not necessarily wicked. They wanted to do a good work, and so far we must credit them with a good motive. You and I are most concerned in finding out the modern meaning and present-day force of the narrative. A wonderful testimony—the more wonderful because unconscious—is here borne to the power of Christianity. Such testimony is of high corroborative value. The outsiders had been looking on, wondering how the new magic would act. They said nothing about it, but when occasion served they endeavoured to practise it; and so much to the world's testimony, unconscious or reluctant, to the potent power of Christian action. The Ephesians did not say, "This argument is cumulative, cogent, and unanswerable, therefore we yield our intellectual citadel to the holy siege." They uttered no words, but looking on they saw wonder after wonder, and when the Apostles were not there they tried to conjure according to the apostolic necromancy,

as they regarded it. That is being done to-day. If Paul had failed, the Ephesians never would have tried the new art. When the seven sons of the chief of the priests tried to repeat the processes of Paul they unconsciously certified to the practical influence which Paul had exercised in Ephesus.

The thirteenth verse sums up a large mass of evidence ; it is a condensed history of Christian triumph. The Ephesian necromancers and exorcists had seen the most stubborn of the devils dragged out of their heart-caves. For years they had been trying to silence this evil spirit and that, and the evil spirit had mocked them, chattering back in broken speech the boldest words of a timid audacity. But in this instance the most reluctant and stubborn of the spirits had been dispossessed, and the Ephesians, without saying to Paul, " You are right and we will follow you," tried to turn Paul's art into a department of Ephesian mystery. Much is expected of Christians to-day, as much was expected of Paul in his time. Never did the public arise and say to Christ, " You really must be excused if you cannot cast out this one particular devil." They expected him to cleanse the very hell of the heart. There must be no break-down ; there must be no saying, " Hitherto thy power can go, and no further." He must walk through the very centre of the burning hell, and work miracles where miracle had never before been worked. It is exactly so with Christians to-day. They are expected to keep the whole ten commandments and to add all other possible commandments to them, and if they fail to touch the very uppermost line in the heights of virtue there are men at the foot cruel enough to chide them for failure, to mock their prayers, and turn their aspiration into reproaches. Necromancers may fail in their momentary trick, but Christians must be kept up to the mark. Christians are never allowed to tamper with law, pureness, commandment, moral authority, Divine or human exaction—*they* are scourged to the mark. What is the meaning of this? Rightly understood, it is the sublimest tribute which can be borne to the moral nobleness of Christian faith. They who would but laugh a careless laugh over a necromancer will denounce bitterly any Christian heart that fails to give in its life the Amen to its own prayer.

Add to that thought the one which arises in connection with the endeavour of the seven sons of Sceva to cast out evil spirits.

Wherein did they fail? They failed at every point. They came into the ministry in a wrong way; and that is always an explanation of failure of the worst kind. How did they come into the ministry in a wrong way? The answer is given in the thirteenth verse. "They took upon them,"—that is the explanation. When men take the ministry "upon them" it fails in the last outcome in their hands. No man must go to war in this battle on his own account or at his own charges. This ministry is not something which a man may elect in preference to something else. The ministry is nothing if it is not a burden, a necessity, a fire in the bones, a spectre that will not let a man sleep at midnight till he has given his answer in a vow to serve it. There are those who would tell us that if we give our ministers better incomes we shall have better men. God forbid. Such teaching is the ruin of true ministry. When a man begins to calculate that he can have so much in the ministry and so much out of it he is not called to the ministry. This is a vocation, not a profession; this is an inspiration, not a calculation.

They—the seven sons of Sceva—knew nothing about the Name with which they conjured. Instead of saying, "We adjure you by Jesus Christ whom we love," they said, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." The sacred influence will not pass through such negative or non-conducting connections. That is one of the noblest tributes that can be paid to the dignity and heavenliness of Christianity. It will not have anything to do with any other thought; it will not be incorporated; it will stand by itself and by itself alone. There are many persons who would be glad to amalgamate Christianity with something else. But Christianity will not be amalgamated. This is new cloth that will be put upon an old garment without making the rent worn. *This is new wine that will be put into old bottles without utterly tearing them to pieces. Christianity will not mix. Christianity will not consent to be part of an eclectic philosophy, saying, "You can add a little of me to a little of Aristotle and other great teachers and inventors of ethical systems." Christianity wants the world to itself. It would be more popular if it were more neighbourly. If it could sit down with other philosophies and confer with them upon equal terms it might receive a little caressing and a little patronage and a more immediate recognition. But no; it must

cleanse the house, drive out all revelry, and reign alone. Can we wonder that it is not the popular religion? The wonder would be if it were.

How much modern meaning there is in the expression, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." There was no doubt about the subject of Paul's preaching. If you asked the seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, whom Paul preached, they would answer you instantaneously and without qualification, "He preached one Jesus." This is a tribute to the honesty and consistency of Paul. Here is a certificate signed by seven unexpected but trustworthy signatories. We are urged to-day to preach the Christ whom the Puritans preached. That exhortation is not without deep meaning; but a man may stand in the pulpit and say to his hearers, "I adjure you to serve the Christ whom the Puritans preached," and his hearers will return the answer of indifference or the reply of mockery. A minister may go further and say, "I adjure you, by the Christ whom the Apostles preached, to save yourselves," and the word would have no power; the powder might blaze, but there would be no ball to take effect. A man might go even further and say to nineteenth-century hearers, "I adjure you, by the Christ of the New Testament, to believe," and the nineteenth century would know nothing about such a Christ. What then is the secret of force? How is the Christian man to suit his age and arrest it? By preaching the Christ whom his own heart knows and loves—not by preaching a Christ whom somebody else once preached with great effect, but the Christ known to him, loved by him, so that he can at any moment stand up and say, "Once I was blind, now I see, and a Man called Christ opened mine eyes, and it is to my Christ that I call you." Paul uses an expression which some persons cannot think is in the New Testament. He uses the expression, "My gospel." Every man has his own conception of God, his own hold of the Gospel, his own reading of truth, and he must preach that. If I have to preach a Christ whom another man preached I have to commit a lesson to memory and to be very careful lest I stumble in the verbal recitation; but if I preach a Christ born in my own heart, the hope of glory, living with me day by day, talking to me on the road, watching me whilst I sleep, meeting me in new converse when I awake, showing me the mystery of sin and the greater mystery of grace;

if I have communion with him, deep, loving, ardent fellowship—then I can preach without learning a lesson, my whole life must break into argumentative eloquence, and men must be constrained to say, “He has been with Jesus and learned of him.” O Church of the Living God! do not refer the nineteenth century to books written in the seventeenth, or even the first, century, except as incidental illustrations and corroborative testimonies. The only Christ any age can listen to is the Christ which the preacher himself knows, loves, and serves.

The answer returned by the evil spirit is the answer which every age will return to professional necromancers and moralists. “The evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcome them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” Exactly what every ministry is doing that adjures or conjures in a secondary way. The answer of the spirits was argumentative; so is the answer of the spirits to-day. The answer of the spirits was violent; and the answer of the spirits is violent in every age, when they are charged or appealed to by unauthorized assailants. These seven sons of Sceva are living to-day. Here is one of them. A man who indulges himself in some way and then seeks to exorcise the spirit of intemperance in others. He gratifies every appetite, never cuts with a knife right into the indulgence which pleases him; but looking over his own indulgence, as over foaming wine, he bids some other man be self-controlled. What wonder if the drunkards of the land should throw back in the face of the Church its calls to sobriety? They are mocking calls. He only has power over his age in this direction who says, “I should like to drink this—to take this; I could take so much and let it alone, but for your sake I set it down. Now be sober!” That man is not preaching a total abstinence which somebody else practises, but a self-control which he has imposed upon his own appetite. The seven sons of Sceva have seven sisters, and the whole fourteen of them are living to-day. They are living, for example, in that person who reproves worldliness and practises religious vanity. If the Christian is not consistent with his own principles, what wonder that the nineteenth century should laugh at his preaching? It is quite right. O evil spirit, if I might speak to thee, black, damned

thing, go on, mock the preachers, mock the Christian assemblies, twit them with their inconsistencies and vanities and follies, never let them alone! O hell, be the ally of Christ! There is a religious worldliness as well as a worldliness that does not debase the name of religion by calling it in as a qualification. Shall we who have a beam in our eyes be preaching about the mote that is in the eyes of other men. You will hurl the ten commandments at the head without effect if you do not go along with them. The world can laugh even at Christian theology when marked out in abstract propositions, but when Christian theology is incarnated in personal godliness, individual holiness, when the Christ that is preached is not only a historical Christ but also a living, present, and personally-known Christ, the age will begin to wonder, and there is a wonder which may end in prayer.

LXXII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, there is no night in thy city. Thou dwellest in eternity. Through Jesus Christ thy Son, we are children of the light, we have nothing to do with darkness ; our souls are birds of the morning, and we are called in the Holy One to shine as the sun in his strength. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, and we, too, are named by that great name. We have no light of our own. The light which shines in our life is borrowed from the original and infinite lustre. We have nothing that we have not received, every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of Lights. Thou hast called us to a religion that is a revelation. Thou hast not called us to secrecy and mystery, but to openness and far-sounding gospels, clear as the voice of love, and pleading as the tones of prayer. May we know to what we are called and by whom we are called, and knowing these things make us strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, that we may show forth unto all men that we are children of the light and not of the night. Make thy book an open secret to us. May we feel its mysteriousness, and yet rejoice in its light and sympathy. Restrain the curiosity that would become profanity, and help the faculty that would search in reverence for thy word and thy truth as for hidden treasures. Thy book opens before us like an immeasurable sky ; it is full of stars, it is full of suns. May we walk in its many lights, take upon us its many colours, and have in our character the mystery that can only be explained by nobleness of conduct. Feed us with the bread of heaven. It is the food of the soul ; without it we die. Lord, evermore give us this bread. Lead us by the river of God, which is full of water. Give us a sense of infinite wealth in Christ, so that all poverty, all death, all darkness, and all sense thereof may be destroyed in us. Thou hast crowned the week with thy goodness ; thou hast spread our table for us ; thou hast sent the gift of sleep night by night to tired eyes ; thou hast surrounded us with securities not easily violated ; thou hast given us love one for another, so that life lives in life, and love answers love, and a glad music unites the whole. This is the daily miracle of daily providence. Now would we give one another to thee in Christ Jesus. Nourish us, comfort us, speak to us the word we most require. Make the strong man stronger by added tenderness. Make the working servant more industrious by rekindling the lamp of his hope. Heal those that are ready to perish ; show them what life is and what is death, and speak unto them from thine own heaven, and comfort such with the tem-

porary healing of time or with the eternal healing of immortality. The Lord be with those who are not with us. David's place is empty ; the father is not with the child ; the mother is unwillingly absent ; the little child is disappointed at not being here ; the man of business has gone a long journey ; some are on the sea, and some in far-away lands. The Lord bring all around us in spirit, sympathy, and religious expectation, and let the feast-board be enlarged until all for whom we ought to pray sit down and eat and drink abundantly of the Lord's provision. We put ourselves absolutely into thine hands. When we are in a great sea of tumult we would not put out a hand to save ourselves. Come to us and the waves shall be as solid rocks. Relieve the heart that is much plagued about the prodigal, the vow breaker, the little child, the life yet undirected and uncentred. Take all our affairs into thine hands, for thou who didst plant the lily and teach the bird its song, and make all things beautiful in their season, canst, and wilt, arrange all our little concerns, and make us laugh with rare, great joy, because thou hast made all things work together for good. We say our prayer at the Cross, and when we clasp our hands we put them around the body of him who died, the Just for the unjust. Amen.

Acts xix. 17-20.

17. And this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus ; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18. Many also of them that [now] had believed [those in whom the "fear" had wrought repentance and faith] came, confessing and declaring their [previous] deeds ["tricks"].

19. And not a few of them that practised curious ["vain"] arts, brought their books together, and burned them in the sight of all : and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver [*drachmae*, about £1875].

20. So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.

THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.

THESE was a kind of religious indignation in the man who was possessed by the evil spirit. He was made stronger than all the seven men who conjured with a Name which they did not know and love in their hearts. Nominal faith is always coming to grief. It has no backbone ; it carries only a painted fire ; there is no iron bullet in its gun. The devil is always real, and the more real when he pretends to be an angel of light. His

cannon is full of iron. Hypocrisy only adds to the reality of devilism. It is not so with Christianity. Christianity is powerless if insincere. If I may so put it, I may say that Christianity when it ceases to be sincere ceases to be Christian. That is the difficulty of the Church. It is the difficulty of keeping up sincerity. Sincerity is sacrifice, and it is difficult to find fire every day for the altar, and to climb upon it and lie down in its hot centre and be burned in the sight of heaven. It is so much easier to do a trick ; to read a word—so much easier to say a prayer than to pray. There the enemy has the advantage over us. He has nothing but the meanest work to do. When he mocks he is religious ; when he sneers he is at church ; when he helps himself he serves the only altar he ever kneels before. It is so different with the followers of him who made the Cross the symbol of discipleship. They are watched at every point. When they fall below the line of passion they fall into criminal lukewarmness. God will have nothing tepid in his Church—fire, and only fire ! Christians, who are really such in their hearts, have, therefore, a hard time of it in the world. But is there any humiliation equal to that inflicted upon a man by the devil he vainly tries to expel ? Look at the text for an answer. Such an unvanquished devil mocks the impotent exorcist, laughs at him, sneers at him, leaps upon him, bites him, and sends him home a sad sight ! Such was the faith of the “ seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests.” A sermon that has to expel devils must not be a recitation but a sacrifice, not words but drops of blood. Hence it is so hard to preach ; easy to write miles of empty sentences—hard to cut the whole heart into little pieces—into Gospel syllables. But this can be done by thy power, thou Spirit of Pentecost !

What result followed a clear conception of the majesty of the name of the Lord Jesus ? The answer is given in the seventh verse : “ The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.” That which could hardly be seen before grew, expanded, and unrolled itself until it filled the whole arch of the skies, and nothing could be seen but the splendour of its own light. These are the results which could be secured to-day if the cause were equal to the effect. Was this a merely sentimental adoration on the part of the Ephesians ? Clearly not. Practical issues were realized. A clear con-

ception of the sublimity of the name of Jesus Christ affects the whole circle in which we stand. It clears that circle of all impurity ; it fills that circle with light ; it lifts that circle up to heaven.

But a very painful process first takes place. Let us see what that process is? In the eighteenth verse we read : " And many that believed came and confessed." That is the great social consequence. The enemy comes in and lays his books on the church floor, and says over them, " These, one and all, are lies." You can forgive men who speak thus frankly. There might be more forgiveness if there were more frankness. Think of educated men ransacking their libraries and bringing out of their secret places all documents that were more or less tainted with falsehood, and bearing them right into the centre of Christian society, and saying, " These are lies !" That is what must be done. But that is only one side of the case. How sublime the force which constrains a man to confess that his life has been a lie ! We have seen in our last study that Christianity would not mix with any other religion. The practical proof of that is in the instance now before us. When the Spirit of Christ enters into a man it says to him, " You must make no mistake about me. I never eat with idols ; I never share the house with strangers ; I am always master and never servant. You must go up and down, though it cost you the remainder of your life, confessing, acknowledging, and begging forgiveness. You cannot swallow the lie ; you must expel it, and take the shame of its proclamation, and then we can begin anew. Marvel not that I say unto thee, thou must be born again." So many of us want our immoralities simply to rot within and pass away by processes of decay ; but Christianity says it must not be so. Out with them ! Name them ! Brand them ! Burn them ! Drop them with iron hand right into the hell they deserve, one by one, each with its own curse upon it like a load that will never permit it to rise again through the billows of fire. What wonder, we may ask again and again, that Christianity makes so little progress in the world ? It hinders its own way ; it blocks up its own path ; it will make men so good that men hate it. Were it a notion, an intellectual theory, a mental idol, a branch of contemporaneous culture, it might have the Primate's chair ; but it is a new birth, coming through crucifixion with Christ and the regen-

eration wrought by the Holy Ghost ; and therefore Christianity is by so much the self-hindering religion, but, for that very reason, the religion that never needs to be patching up its own work and doing it over again. It works slowly, surely, finally ; setting on the top stone wherever it lays the foundation.

Confession never stands alone. You will find that confession was followed by sacrifice, “ Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men ; and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” That is the Cross ! We cannot have merely sentimental confession—that may be but a variation of the original guilt. Christianity always says, “ This is the way to the Cross : walk ye in it.” The sacrifice was expensive ; the men lost their trade ; and that is the last thing a man is willing to lose in an earthly direction. The men gave up business. Christianity shuts up many commercial institutions. This, therefore, let us repeat for the sake of the grave lesson it conveys, was not a sentimental confession, but a sacrifice of daily and stated income. The days of the text were not days of printing, when ten thousand copies of the Ephesian letters could be struck off in so many hours. The letters were copied from the stone by hand. The copying of the letters was itself a profession by which men sustained their families. Some of the letters had been copied by ancient members of the household, and had been handed on from sire to son, and there were those who kissed the precious documents as heirlooms of the family. These documents were taken into the open air and burned in the sight of all men ; and if some of them appeared to be dropping out of the fire they were taken up and thrown into the middle of it. This was not playing at life. How tremendous in energy, how sublime in pathos, the force which could operate upon men’s hearts so as to issue in this unparalleled sacrifice ! The men at Ephesus who took part in the surrender are to be regarded with honour. It is easy for us to look upon a fire which is burning other people’s books ; but Christianity has done nothing for us until it has lighted exactly the same fire in our houses. Do not wonder you are not quite happy in your mind—you have not had a fire ! Do not be surprised that you are dyspeptic theologians, analyzing your notions and rearranging your ideas, and asking yourselves vexatious ques-

tions which are only meant to contribute to your own vanity. You have not had a fire ! Until we have reached this point we can have no heaven. We know the trade is evil, but we do not shut it up. We compound for the continuance of the trade by giving tithes to the Church. We know the money is got by a species of swindling and public deception and trickery, but we double our pew subscriptions and keep the infernal machine grinding for us. Then we find fault with the preaching or with the Church, and we suddenly find that we must be "abreast with the times," therefore must leave the Church and take to other ways of thinking. O thou whited sepulchre ! O thou lying spirit ! You must burn down your place of business. I should not wonder if many a joint stock company has to be thrown into the blaze, and you may have to give up your director's fees. I should not wonder if some part of the Royal Exchange would have to be thrown in also. I do not say this must be so ; I am sketching rather a large possibility than stating a solemn fact. But the lesson is the same, though the incident and the illustration may vary ; and that lesson is that until we have had a fire in the house and in the heart it is blasphemy to be painting our notions in red letters and holding them up to the heavens as if they were acts of sacrifice. There are those who are going to renounce strong drinks and are going to be abstainers out and out, but—they are going to keep something in the house for callers ! No ; you must have a fire ! The "something" you are keeping for visitors will remind you of its existence, and say seductively to you, "It is now a long time since you had anything of my kind ; you are stronger now and better, and have learned the manly art of self-control. Now let us renew our alliance." You must have a fire, if you are to succeed. If you mean to play with yourself, then have no fire. If you mean to see how near you can go to the edge without falling in, then I have no speech to make to you. I began by supposing that you were earnest in asking me to help you to save your life. There are those who intend giving up all evil things, but they do not exactly see why they should waste so much property by burning it ; so they will hide it away in a secret drawer. I read nothing of that kind in the sacred record. There must be no secret drawers, nothing excepted, no reservations, but a dragging out of every leaf and tittle and iota, and a complete and final conflagration. Again

and again, let us say, what wonder that Christianity makes such little progress in the world? Of what avail is it that we keep our curious arts and our curious books, and yet buy a weekly sermon to sleep over on Sunday afternoon? That is not the Cross.

What is the whole issue? The answer is in the twentieth verse: "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." The "word" had it all its own way. Devils ran out of the path lest they should be killed, and all bad things said, "Pity us, and spare us," but the great fire devoured them. We must have root and branch work. There must be no parleying with the foe. We must have no sympathy with men who teach that Christianity is a string of notions much resembling a string of unconnected beads. Christianity is crucifixion, self-dethronement, self-hatred, trust in Christ, death with Christ, resurrection with Christ; it is not a notion, but a sacrifice. Lord Jesus, why didst thou make thy way so hard in the world? We would take thee into our houses along with other great men, and give thee high place at the table; but thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and asking every one of us, the daintiest as well as the roughest, to stretch out his hands and his feet and be nailed to the Cross, and open his side to the sharp spear. If thy religion were something else we would like it, we would wear it, we would try to make it the fashion of our time. But who can make the Cross a fashion, or make crucifixion popular?

LXXIII.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we have heard of thy mercy, and therefore our hope is yet alive. We dare not look at thy law; we have broken its letter, we have grieved its spirit, we have trampled upon its purpose. We are not here to turn the altar into a place of self-defence, but to say with our inmost heart, "We have all sinned and come short of thy glory." We know what sin is, though we cannot tell. We have felt the darkness of that night-shadow, and it is deep and cold and full of fear. We have felt the warm shining of thy grace upon our souls, and in it there has been morning brightness, vernal promise, summer glory, and an abundance of pardon. Thou dost not pardon grudgingly; there is no upbraiding to follow the gifts of thy heart. We live in thine answer to our prayer, and thou art pleased to live in our love, thou art grieved by rebellion; we pain thee by our wandering; the heavens are black with astonishment, and the earth trembles, because of amazement, when thou dost upbraid us for oft-repeated ingratitude and sin. We stand at the sacred Cross as thirsty men stand before springing waters. There is no other hope. It is not a Cross of letters and words with meanings we can fully tell, but a great love-Cross, a great altar whereon is seen the very heart of the heart of God. We may not speak about it without humbling our own power of speech and mocking ourselves, because of the emptiness of our noblest terms. There is no speech for the love of the Cross; we must be dumb with gratitude, silent because of adoration, filled with joy that trembles because of its infinite fulness. Give us the heart purity that sees God. Thou wilt not give us the tongue that can tell about thee, but we do ask for the heart that sees thee, looks right into thy beaming face, and reads with holy insight the innermost thought of the Cross of Christ. We bless thee that no man can take the Cross of Christ from us. The blood is always there; it cannot be sponged out, nor hidden, nor covered up with all the nights that ever darkened upon the earth. It is thy testimony, it is the tragedy of heaven, it is the answer that we can only need now and then—the great, secret, deep, marvellous answer that men may not trifle with in many words or thoughtless speech. We have seen the Cross, and we must now see it evermore. The sight is graven upon our heart; the Lamb of God in his great agony must forever be before the eyes that have once beheld him. We think of thy love in the house and on the roadside, and in the market-place; in the chamber of affliction, up the hill of difficulty, and down in the valley, sultry and

imprisoning. Thy love is an angel that never sleeps. Thy gifts are flowers that know no winter blight. Thou dost evermore beset us behind and before, and lay thine hand upon us and hold us up by thy mighty grace. We are the living to praise thee. We have seen the grave and demanded its victory; we have looked upon death and mocked him to the face—ghastly indeed, but overthrown. Death is swallowed up in victory. This is the triumph of the Cross. May we abide in Christ, live in Christ; may our life's music be taken from Christ, and may we find that the surest places in all the wide universe are the places where he sets his feet. The Lord gather from this assembly to-day all special praises, all particular songs, all individual utterances, for every heart has its own hymn within the public hymn, deeper and higher than the public psalm. Send blessings upon the old, that they may forget the winter of age and feel the breeze of the coming heaven-spring. Send messages to little children, that they may think life is all sunshine, and keep back the care, the anxiety, as long as thou canst. The Lord hear us, poor weary pilgrims, grouped around the Cross; pity us, lift us up; give us to know that we live in the love of God, and not in the caprice of men; and, abiding under the roof of that sanctuary, give us to know that the storm can never put out our fires, and that in the darkest night there is a brightness which the pure heart can see. Amen.

Acts xix. 21-41.

21. Now after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

22. And having sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23. And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the Way.

24. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines of Diana, brought no little business unto the craftsmen;

25. whom he gathered together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this business we have our wealth.

26. And ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:

27. and not only is there danger that this our trade come into disrepute; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana be made of no account, and that she should even be deposed from her magnificence [better, "that the temple be disesteemed and the splendour of the goddess impaired." Demetrius foresees the *injury*, but not the destruction of Diana's worship], whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

28. And when they heard this they were filled with wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

29. And the city was filled with the confusion; and they rushed with

one accord into the theatre [ruins of which building, constructed to hold over 25,000 spectators, still remain], having seized Gaius and Aristarchus [xx. 4 ; xxvii. 2 ; Col. iv. 10 ; Philem. 24 ; Caius of Macedonia is not elsewhere mentioned], men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel.

30. And when Paul was minded to enter in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.

31. And certain also of the [G. "Asiarchs" : the *ten* annually elected presidents of the provincial games and sacrificial rites were thus named. They defrayed the enormous expenses of the games which were held during the whole of *May* (hence called Artemision), and they retained the honourable title when *past* the presidency] chief officers of Asia, being his friends, sent unto him, and besought him not to adventure himself into the theatre.

32. Some therefore cried one thing, and some another ; for the assembly was in confusion ; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. [Yet they were unanimous for assembling, v. 29.]

33. And they brought Alexander [1 Tim. i. 20 and 2 Tim. iv. 14] out of the multitude [or better, some of the multitude *instructed* Alexander], the Jews putting him forward [compare v. 9]. And Alexander beckoned with the hand [moved his hand up and down], and would have made a defence [G. "apology"] unto the people.

34. But when they perceived that he was a Jew, all with one voice, about the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35. And when the town clerk [an official who wrote, kept, and read publicly, when required, the statutes and judgments of a Greek democracy] had quieted the multitude, he saith, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there who knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is temple-keeper [G. "temple-sweeper." Cf. Psalm lxxiv. 10] of the great Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter [must therefore be supposed to have been saved when Herostratus burnt down the old temple on the night when Alexander the Great was born. This image had many breasts, and tapered to its base].

36. Seeing then that these things cannot be gainsaid, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash.

37. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38. If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen that are with him have a matter [a charge] against any man, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls [there would be only *one* in each province. The meaning is, proconsuls (judges) as well as courts, are provided by the state] ; let them accuse one another.

39. But if ye seek anything about other matters [not yet defined by statute], it shall be settled in the regular [legislative] assembly.

40. For indeed we are in danger to be ["run the risk of being"] accused concerning this day's riot, there being no cause for it ; and as touching it we shall not be able to give account of this concourse. [The re-

viser's Greek text is here corrupt. The "not" is obviously a copyist's repetition, and "this day's riot," involves an ungrammatical transposition of the Greek order of words, quite without N. T. precedent. Translate: "For we run the risk of being accused of riot concerning this day, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse."

41. And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly. ["So," says Chrysostom, "he quenched their rage, for what kindles easily is easily put out."]

OLD COMPLAINTS AND NEW REPROACHES.

THE application of these words to present-day life is a task that might be assigned to a child. The speech of Demetrius is a speech that was made yesterday in every centre of civilization affected by Christian ideas and demands. Demetrius never dies; his word is to be heard in every tongue; he is present in great force in every Church, and present as representing two very special and remarkable phases of life. In the twenty-seventh verse he puts these two phases before us in the most vivid colouring. With the subtlety of selfishness he puts the case with comical adroitness. He knows the value of a little piety. How it flavours the appeals that are made to man's fears and to man's commercial fortunes! See how religious he becomes quite suddenly! If it were a mere matter of trade he would not have troubled himself about it. He could have lifted his noble self above all market-place considerations and reflections, but—"not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised." The second was the thought that afflicted his pious heart! The mere matter of losing a few silverlings in shrines would never have excited him beyond a momentary flutter, but to see the great temple of the great Artemis despised was more than that godly soul could bear. Said I not truly that Demetrius never dies? Was it not a wise word—wise because consistent with facts—that Demetrius is present in great force in every centre of civilization affected by Christian ideas and claims? What was the reality of the case from the first point of view? "A certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen." Trade was injured; "no small gain" was destroyed; the weekly takings had gone down to nothing. If

Paul had preached abstract ideas and lived in a painted theology, and clothed himself in clouds "rolled" a thousand miles above the air, Demetrius would have made shrines for him if he had ordered them, but a preacher that comes down upon the earth, walks in the common dust, thunders upon immediate iniquity and visible falsehood, may get himself into trouble. We have escaped all this. Modern preachers are never in trouble; they tell the false dealer that after all if he did not deal in that he would deal in something else. The preachers might preach a whole year upon the evils of intemperance, but if those who deal in strong drink were to find their takings going down very considerably, the preacher would soon hear of the circumstance and find himself involved in no small trouble. That is one reason why a modern institution, known to us all, is often persecuted, opposed, denounced, and vilified. It is not an institution of ideas and propositions, and theological placards, propounding curious problems for curious minds, but an institution that stops people from going in to spend money on bad counters; and Demetrius comes out and shakes his indignant fist in its face. He is quite right. I thank God for it, personally. You may circulate what books you please if you do not interfere with the profitable circulation of corrupt literature—you are quite at liberty to walk upon both sides of the street; but if the literature that is eating out the morality of our young people is interfered with, is arrested in its baleful progress, then you will be caricatured, travestied, spat upon, contemned, laughed at. My brethren, rejoice when such persecution befalls you. It is a sign of true success; your blows are taking effect. Demetrius will not fail to let you know how your work is going on. Do not believe yourselves about it; you see things through painted glass, and report that the orient is white and the day is coming when there is nothing of the kind on the road. Do not take the Christian's word for progress; he means to speak truth; from his own point of view he speaks nothing but truth, he is honest and upright, but he does not know the reality of the case. Demetrius knows it. I want to hear Demetrius when he calls the men of the same craft together and says, "Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth," and "this our craft is in danger to be set at nought—what shall be done?" Then the war is going well; the fight is at its highest point of agony; press on

—another stroke; another rush, and down goes Demetrius, and all his progeny fall into the pit to keep him profitless company. What bad *journal* have you, as a Christian Church, ever shut up? What place of iniquitous *business* have you ever bought and washed with disinfecting lime, and within its unholy walls set up the altar of Christ? What *property* do you buy? Where do you follow and out-bid Demetrius, driving him back, and back, and back? Is he in the thoroughfares of the capital cities of the world, or is he not? We are afraid to build churches too near one another; we study one another's feelings about that. I would God the thoroughfare five miles long had churches on both sides of the street, one after another in great godly rows, phalanxes of moral strength, sanctuaries into which the poor and the weak and the weary might run, with great hospitable doors standing open night and day. Show me the thoroughfare in any great city in the world in which Christian churches have pushed back evil institutions and made them take up their quarters in narrow streets—back, back to the river's edge and into the river, if possible. To see such a city would be to see the beginning of heaven. Christ would almost have to inquire for his own address if he came back to earth; he would need some one to point out his dwelling-places; they are quite back; they are put up on sufferance; they are watched with suspicion; they are left to decay; and if any adventurous spirit should propose to paint them, clean and repair them, such proposition would be received as a new assault upon the purses of the people. *Demetrius* will let you know how the work is going on. Do not let us deceive ourselves and trifle with facts. Who dares assail an evil institution, an effete society, and obsolete secretariat and pension? Preach abstract ideas, rewrite "Paradise Lost," add to it "Paradise Regained," publish them both in sumptuous editions, and Demetrius is well content. He never suffered much through blank verse, he rather likes it; it sounds as if there might be something in it, but that something is not a thunder-bolt.

The next phase of the case as put by Demetrius is infinitely more humiliating. The temple of the great goddess Diana is in danger of being despised. How shall we name that particular phase of the situation? It is best represented by the words a

religious *panic*. The temple was in danger. That is the language of to-day. We have set up societies for the purpose of defending Christianity. All those societies represent, with few exceptions, some degree of religious panic. The temple is never in danger—that must be our faith. If it is a temple that can be put in danger, it is a temple made with hands and must go down. Hear the great challenge of the Master: “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” What panics we have seen! What godly godless excitement, as if truth could ever be in danger; as if some blind Samson could catch hold of the pillars of heaven and shake down upon us the contents of the sky. What a sky we live under if you think it can be shaken down! Some time ago a number of highly learned and morally and spiritually distinguished men issued a volume entitled, “Essays and Reviews.” It was the doom of Christianity! It was the end of the world! Edition after edition was published—for sceptical books enjoy a circulation whilst orthodox books enjoy a slumber. The Church likes to buy heterodox literature; it looks like being “in advance of the times.” From what I can understand of the case Christianity has come forward since the day of the publication of “Essays and Reviews,” and the smell of fire has not passed upon it. What excitement there was! What panic in religious halls and on religious platforms! and yet Christianity, quiet as light, pure as the living breeze that blows among the snowy tops of the hills, has gone forward on her beneficent career without ever having bought a copy of the volume that some people earnestly thought was to have taken her life. There was no need for panic. Some time ago a bishop, who was born to take an inventory of things, and to reckon them up within the four corners of the multiplication table—a small universe and hard to lie down upon—began to suggest that it was impossible for seven-and-twenty thousand men to stand upon six square inches! What a panic there was! It was the end of the world, *this* time! “A man,” as Mrs. Carlyle well said, “with a little silk apron on had undertaken to find fault with the Pentateuch.” She took it wisely; she was in no panic. She looked at the “apron” and despised the arithmetic. So far as I can understand, the Pentateuch seems to be very much where it was. Why these panics? Why these causeless distresses? We want to get at truth and fact and right, and if any man can help us

in that direction he is not an enemy but a friend. I would rather teach that the men of true science are all men of a Christian spirit. They may not be so advanced as others ; they may be sadly wanting in this or that department of theological culture and knowledge, but wherever I find a man whose supreme purpose is *truth* and *reality*, I find, not an enemy, but a fellow-worker. We ought to have a religion that cannot be put in danger. No man can touch my religion. If our religion is an affair of letters, forms, dates, autographs, and incidents of that kind, then I do not wonder that our cabinet is sometimes burglariously entered and certain things filched from it. I do not keep my religion in a museum ; my Christianity is not locked up even in an iron safe ; my conception of GOD no man can break through, nor steal. You cannot take my Bible from me ; if you could prove that the Apostle John wrote the Pentateuch, and that Moses wrote the Apocalypse, and that the Apocalypse should come in the middle of the Bible and not at the end, you have not touched what I hold to be the revelation of God to the human mind and the human heart. Let us leave all such questions to be decided by the very few who are capable of gathering together the evidence, adjusting and distributing it, and founding upon it wise critical conclusions. What we, as the common people, have to be sure about is, that God has not left himself without witness amongst us ; that God has sent great messages of law and love and light and life to every one of us ; that God's revelations do not depend upon changing grammars, but upon an inward, spiritual consciousness and holy sympathy, whose insight is not intellectual but moral—the purity of heart which sees God. When all the assaults have been concluded there remains the tragedy of human life ; when all other books have been published, there remains another publication to come forth—the Book that can speak to conscious sin, to blinded penitence, to broken-hearted, sobbing, supplicating contrition. The Bible speaks to my own heart as no other book speaks ; it knows me altogether ; it is a mirror which reveals me to myself ; it is a voice which calls me out of myself ; it is a friend that will quietly sit down beside me seven days, because my grief is very great, will wait until its turn comes, and then will speak in silvery tone, in tender accent, so winningly, so graciously, so lovingly. It hath a history, it hath a psalm, it hath a song, it hath a tongue, it hath a

fire. It proves its own inspiration by its grasp of human life, by its answers to human need.

The town-clerk laid down the principle that ought to guide us. He did not know probably how good a philosophy he was propounding. The town-clerk said, "Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet." That is what we say about our Christian teaching. There are some things which cannot be "spoken against" so far as my own experience is concerned. The brevity of life, the certainty of death, the reality of sin, the present hell that burns me, the need of a Saviour who needs no saviour himself—these things cannot be "spoken against"; therefore, those of us who feel them to be true "ought to be quiet."

THE PARACLETE.

I.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

JESUS CHRIST taught the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and St. Paul, “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,” taught the complementary doctrine of a direct personal *witness* of the same Spirit to the soul that had become renewed,—“the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.” In a sense, then, which is evidently as probable as it is consolatory, the act of regeneration is succeeded by the act of confirmation; which, indeed, would seem to be the Divine method even in nature itself, seeing that not only did God create the heavens and the earth, but he followed each act of creation with the assurance that it was “very good”; thus, as creation was followed by approval, so the higher act of regeneration is attested by a special witness and seal. It is quite true that the works of nature are continually vindicating their own goodness, and it is not less true that spiritual sonship is its own witness in the presence of all men; yet the soul which has passed through the agonies of penitence and reconstruction—having known all the sinfulness of sin, and felt that self-redemption is as impossible as it is blasphemous—needs just that word of tender assurance and comfort which is expressed in the doctrine of the Witness of the Spirit. It is not enough that great events be merely accomplished, as if by a great strain which has taxed every power; their accomplishment is often followed by a wonder that stuns the beholder; a wonder so great, indeed, that it is not unlikely to settle into doubt and fear unless the mind be well fortified and watched; and so a beneficent revolution may collapse and leave behind only memories of disappointment and pain. Take the case of the New

Birth : a man has been born again, a new world is round about him, new impulses animate his conduct, new hopes enlarge and brighten his future,—the probability is that the very completeness of the change (seeing that he is limited and embarrassed by the old physical conditions) may be attended by perilous excitement. In view, then, of such possibilities, an extension of the Divine ministry is required : re-creation must be followed by assurance, benediction, clear and tender witness that the change is a reality, not a dream, and that all exigencies are more than provided against by the infinite sufficiency of God. So the mind is stayed ; superstition is warded off, and the fear which often succeeds paroxysms of joy, is not allowed to descend upon the newly-born and newly-illumined soul.

Thus, the Witness of the Spirit brings with it the most gracious and nourishing *comfort*, in which sense it may be well to consider the doctrine for a moment. In all the great experiences of life we need a voice other than our own to give us confidence, and to complete the degree of satisfaction which begins in our own consciousness. For current action in common affairs we may be strong enough without external encouragement ; even our mistakes in such affairs may be a part of our education ; but when life is sharpened into a crisis, and the whole world seems to have become our assailant, we need something more than is possible to our unaided powers. Even where by a violent strain we could encounter opposition single-handed, it is most strengthening and comforting to have the support of a second witness. There are times when we need to hear our own convictions pronounced by the voice of another ; we know they are right ; death itself could not affright us from their avowal ; yet when we hear them spoken aloud by a friendly voice, we seize them with a still firmer grasp, and strengthen our heart in God. Let that second witness be *greater* than ourselves, and his testimony will bring with it proportionate comfort ; let him be the *wisest* of men, and still the consolation is increased : let that witness be not a man but *God* himself, and at once we are filled with peace that passeth understanding, with joy unspeakable and full of glory ! According to this view of the case the renewed man is entitled to talk to himself in some such fashion as this :—“ I know that I am born again be-

cause of the complete change of my convictions, sympathies, and habitudes ; old things have passed away and all things have become new ; still I am often tempted, and often sorrowful on account of sin ; when I would do good, evil is present with me ; I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members ; yet through all my conflict there comes a voice which tells me that my Divine sonship is a fact, but that not until resurrection has done for the body what regeneration has done for the soul can I have perfectness of spiritual release and enjoyment ; this is the witness of the Spirit which calms me with ineffable tranquillity." The witness is not that the whole work is done, but simply that it is *begun* ; and after all, *that* is the great difficulty. As to progression and sanctification there is a great law of movement ; but how to re-establish *life* itself was the question which astounded and baffled the universe. Possibly, men may be occasioning themselves grievous pain by mistaking the scope of the witness : they may be expecting too much all at once ; it is not that we are already in heaven, but that we are the children of God, that the Holy Spirit testifies in the experience of regenerated men.

Still, the very divineness of this comfort clothes the witness with the severity of inexorable *discipline*. Apostolic teaching will not allow man to settle down into the enjoyment of spiritual comfort, as if sonship had no responsibilities. " Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost ?" Will any man make the temple of the Lord a temple of idols ? Will the Holy Ghost share the heart of man with the spirit of evil ? There is to be no balancing between the comparative advantages of two rival dominions, for " no man can serve two masters." We are to walk in the Spirit ; to mind the things of the Spirit ; and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. Otherwise there can be no comfort ! If there is sweetness in the mouth, it is the taste of stolen honey. The comfort is not a spiritual luxury, a genial condition of feeling which has no relation to moral health,—it is the assurance of a true standing before God, the summer which descends out of heaven from the Spirit of righteousness. The apostolic doctrine is that the promises of God

should move the heart towards more and more purity ; thus St. Paul says, " Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." That is, do not let your comfort from heaven be lost upon you, but let it encourage you towards the very highest progress possible to earthly conditions ; if you are living trees, the sunshine will help you to grow ; if you are dead plants, it will hasten your corruption. A terrible thing to have the witness of the Spirit as to newness of life, if men do not *grow* in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ ! God's purpose as to character is *growth*. Let the sacred germ lie dormant in the heart, and the witness of the Spirit will decline in vividness and emphasis, and the germ itself will perish beyond all possibility of restoration : " For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, AND WERE MADE PARTAKERS OF THE HOLY GHOST, if they shall fall away to renew them again to repentance" ; " If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning." Their spiritual state is not to be described by mere negations. No man can blaspheme so consummately as the man who once knew how to pray ; therefore, says the Apostle : " Pray without ceasing," because to " cease" is to recall the dominion of the devil. Once interrupt the communion of the soul with the Father, and the soul may never be able to resume the fellowship : then (the Apostle would say) " Pray without ceasing," if you would enjoy the permanent witness of the Spirit. Thus the argument arising out of Divine comfort in the human soul points steadfastly towards *discipline*, " If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit" ; " If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" ; " They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, do mind the things of the Spirit,"—a high law of discipline given for the preservation and ennoblement of the sons of God upon earth.

Yet with all the comfort is there not an aspiration hardly distinguishable from discontent, and with all the discipline is there not a secret but most gladdening hope which makes it easy ? The ex-

planation is found in the fact that the present enjoyment of the Spirit is but an *earnest*,—a gift beforehand,—a pledge of the coming fulness. In his Epistle to the Romans (viii. 23) St. Paul speaks of those “which have the firstfruits of the Spirit”; and in his other epistles he uses equivalent expressions: thus—“After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance”; “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit”; “Whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” What can be meant by such words but that the spiritual life is a continuous progression, receiving, with its widening capacities, richer gifts of the wisdom and holiness of God? The Church by mistaking the “earnest” for the “fulness,” runs the risk of stating incomplete truths as final revelations, and then follows a sensitiveness lest the enlargement of its own dogmas should involve an offence to the Spirit of truth, utterly forgetting, in its unreasoning veneration, that self-correction is a moral necessity of spiritual expansion and enlightenment. The “earnest” of the Spirit constitutes a lien upon the future service of the receiver; if the service be unperformed, the “earnest” will be withdrawn; whereas, if the service be lovingly rendered with the whole might of the heart, the measure of the gift will be filled up even to the sanctification of the “whole body, soul, and spirit.” The Church is in its infancy as to realization of spiritual blessing. It is, too, so much engaged in controversy, that it can hardly be preparing itself for the completion of the holy promise. By mistaking the part for the whole it is in danger of settling itself into premature satisfaction, as if it had exhausted the possibilities of prayer! Will it be uncharitable to suggest that the Church is too much engaged in that worst and most cankering of all worldliness, the elevation of one sect above another, and the angry defence of forms which are but transient conveniences? What is delaying the outpouring of the fulness of the Spirit? There is, indeed, a still sterner inquiry, which cannot be put without emotion, yet it may not be honestly suppressed: *Is not the Presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church less distinct to-day than in the apostolic age?* Without encroaching upon the function of the preacher, it may be well to urge this inquiry, and so force the Church in the direction of self-examination or penitence. Cer-

tainly there is not much appearance of pentecostal inspiration and enthusiasm in contemporary Christianity. Can modern piety enrich its history with such a passage as this :—“ When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost ” ? Or this : “ And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance ” ? Is the Church baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire ? (Matt. iii. 11.) Is it honourable to escape the challenge involved in such inquiries by suggesting that such manifestations were confined to the early Church ? It was *after* those manifestations that the Apostle Paul described the measure of the Spirit already given as an “ earnest,” and if only an earnest where is the fulness which there is not room enough to receive ? Christianity is nothing if not *spiritual* ; yet its spirituality is not to be shown by its adroitness in substituting refinements of wickedness for the gross vulgarities of crime, but in that heavenly-mindedness which can neither be tempted by vanity, nor disturbed by such accidents as shake the world of the atheist. With a felicitous accommodation of himself to human ideas, God speaks of the gift of the Holy Ghost in terms of measure and quantity ; hence we read of “ firstfruits,” “ earnest,” “ double portion,”—terms which do not impair the personality and unity of the Holy Ghost, but describe rather our human realization and enjoyment of his presence. We may be said to receive more and more of the sun as noontide approaches, and to receive a “ double portion ” of the spirit of every author whose writings we study with admiring affection. Now, why has not a Church eighteen hundred years old a fuller realization of the witness of the Holy Ghost than had the Church of the first century ? Has the Church accomplished all the purpose of God, and passed for ever the zenith of her light and beauty ?

It is true that believers in the Holy Ghost have been guilty of the opposition of *fanaticism*, which is probably more mischievous than are the assaults of disbelief. Macedonius openly degraded the ministry of the Holy Ghost to a level with the ministry of angels ; and Pelagius, whilst professing the Holy Ghost, actually disowned his grace. On the other hand, Montanus not only claimed to reproduce the phenomena of Pentecost, but to repre-

sent in his own person a larger effusion of the Divine Spirit than had ever been realized in the history of mankind. After Montanus arose his disciple, Tertullian, who claimed for his master at least an equality of inspiration with St. Paul. In the great African schism, distinguished by the name of Donatism, the most arrogant claims to exclusiveness of inspiration were asserted; and the Paulicians, of the seventh century, insisted upon a spiritual pre-eminence not less vain and impious. What has to be found, then, is the point between hostility and superstition,—the doctrine of a simple and joyous communion with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. How, then, are men to know that they enjoy the witness of the Spirit? Partly by the anxiety with which they put the question, and partly, too, by the occasional comforts which suffuse the soul with inexplicable gladness, but mainly by the daily sacrifice of loving service, and the disquietude of an unutterable and enrapturing expectation which sometimes touches the very point of agony. How is it, nevertheless, that men who do enjoy this holy witness have to confess many sins, and to humble themselves in the deepest abasement because of many omissions? Were the inward witness genuine and reliable, surely the heart which received it would be incapable of coldness or disloyalty towards God, would it not? But as a matter of fact, no heart has attained to the high estate of unblemished and incorruptible piety; of what value, then, is the spiritual witness? Can any man be both good and bad at the same time? This is a question which requires a special exposition and argument, which shall be given immediately.

II.

THE HUMAN SPIRIT LIMITED BY THE HUMAN BODY.

EARLY in this discussion we said, Man *has* a body but he *is* a spirit. We have now reached a point in the argument where it becomes necessary to get some understanding of the hindrances which the physical constitution of man throws in the way of his spiritual progress. It is too obvious that the body and the spirit seldom act in common and happy consent ; yet it is supremely difficult to say which is right and which is wrong in any strife that may arise between them. The spirit may seek release from some of its highest obligations by an unjust reproach of the body, and the body may complain of the ignoble and mischievous uses to which it is put by the spirit. So there is a war in every man, a war which enfeebles and, probably, vitiates the whole nature. What, then, is the reality of the case in the light of scriptural evidence as interpreted by human consciousness and experience ? It is quite certain that the body does limit the capacities and functions of the spirit. Taking human life as a whole, and having regard to infancy, disease, sleep and occasional prostration, it is more than probable that half the *time* of the spirit is engrossed by the body. When, therefore, seventy years are spoken of as the limit of human life, the body must be regarded as having decidedly the larger share of the lease, and from this very circumstance the body must charge itself with great influence and responsibility. The spirit may wish to work all the twenty-four hours of the day, but it must deny itself that the body may have needful rest. In like manner the spirit may desire to free itself of the limitations of time and space as known to us, and to penetrate with reverent boldness into things that are hidden from sense ; but the body detains it here with a vulgar force which chafes and humbles the soul. Fierce passions thrill along every nerve ; unholy appetites madden the senses ; the very blood seems to be set on

fire of hell ; the question is, whether in the midst of such excitements the spirit is sitting in its hidden place like an injured angel, mourning the corruption and waywardness of its companion, or whether with subtle, though unexpressed consent it is not really the cause of the riotousness which it affects to deplore ? It would certainly be most convenient if we could at once set down the criminal side of life to the credit of our untamable flesh ; but would it be just ? Can spiritual discipline be so perfected as actually to subdue and even sanctify the flesh ? Or, after all that is possible to spiritual discipline, will there remain a fleshly despotism which can only be destroyed by death itself ? These questions are discussed by St. Paul in the most candid and fearless manner, especially in a very graphic passage in his Epistle to the Romans. The seventh chapter of that epistle presents a very complete summary of the strenuous contention in which all earnest men are engaged ; it is a universal spiritual biography ; the Apostle therein showing that when any true man speaks distinctly the innermost secret of his spiritual experience, he becomes a citizen of the world and an interpreter of human nature in its totality. Let us look carefully at the minute and persistent analysis :—

“ *I had not known sin, but by the law : for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.*” The sudden change to the first person singular which takes place here (ch. vii. ver. 7) gives very keen interest to the statement, taking the question, as it does, out of the region of mere speculation, and investing it with all the vividness of actual experience. But what is it that *does* “covet” ? Is this “desire” a bodily or a spiritual act ? An answer seems to be furnished by the fifth verse : “For when we were in the flesh, the motions (incitements) of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.” And yet this is hardly an answer, for are we not “in the flesh” still ? The meaning may be that though we are “in the flesh” we are no longer under its dominion, but are conscious of a new and better mastery, that is to say, the control of a *spiritual* director. Human life is begun in an animal condition. The animal has, so to speak, the first chance upon human destiny. Possibly the animal nature may never be subdued ; the spiritual kingdom may never supersede the fleshly dominion ; and consequently the man

will always be "in the flesh," and will always be victimized and befooled by the importunity of sinful incitements. How is the animal tendency in human nature to be assailed? By a spiritual *law*. The law may not succeed, still there it is, as a new fact in life, bringing with it new chances and new responsibilities. Whilst the lower nature is seeking nothing beyond its own gratification, it suddenly encounters opposition in the form of a law which authoritatively says, "*Thou shalt not covet.*" At once the flesh has to adjust itself to this definition of liberty; that is to say, the flesh must set itself in a distinct relation to it, a relation of acquiescence, or of open and violent disregard. The Apostle accepted the former position, and therefore declared himself to be no longer "in the flesh," in the sense of obeying and gratifying all its desires. There was set up within him a new and holy power which held his passions under beneficent control, and thus the body was degraded from mastery to servitude. But the body did not accept the degradation without resistance; on the contrary, sin took a still firmer hold of the flesh, and wrought in Paul all manner of concupiscence! Who can accept the limitation of enjoyments without rebellion? The flesh can never do so. Its only idea of liberty is license. To say to it, "Thou shalt not," is to infuriate all its passions, and to add to its strength the violence of desperation. Still, this must be done, or the motions of sins in the flesh will "bring forth fruit unto death," and at all risks death must be escaped. So, then, the Apostle would argue, we are *in* the flesh yet not *of* it, as we are in the world itself yet superior to its maxims and vanities,—and even the letter, "Thou shalt not," is superseded by "newness of spirit." How, then, does the controversy stand? Thus:—

"*It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. . . . To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not: for the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.*" Here is a strange but most positive duality, the proof of which is in the consciousness of every man. Commentators appear to have misspent much industry upon the exegesis of these words. Are they not fulfilled in the experience of every one of us? Is not every man's life a self-contradiction? We smile at the notion of a man talking to himself, yet all men

do this very thing, and *must* do it, in obedience to a sovereign law. What expressions are more common than, "I reproached myself," "I corrected myself," "I blamed myself," "I was angry with myself,"—confessions of self-reproof which are much more numerous than confessions of self-complacency. The question to be determined by every man whose self-complaining is honest, is simply: What is the direction of my *will*? As soon as Paul was able to say, "To will is present with me," he was also able to add that his evil deeds were not done by himself, but by "sin that dwelleth in me." So there may be in a man a power in some respects superior to his own will, dragging him into forbidden ways, and blotting the most carefully-written pages of his highest life! What, then, is the consequence as to Divine judgment! Will God visit the overborne man with frowning and wrath, or will he come to the struggling soul with benediction and succour? The question is answered by St. Paul himself:—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit";—they are *in* the flesh, yet they do not *walk after it*; whenever they seem to have yielded to it, they have been momentarily dragged from the sanctuary of their delight, and their soul is inflamed with indignation and sorrow. But if a man be divided against himself, can he stand? St. Paul answers, that he is *not* divided against himself; he himself is wholly on one side, hence he says: "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me;" what evil he did was done against his will, and therefore he denied that his spiritual individuality was involved.

Where, then, is responsibility? The responsibility is entirely towards God: "Thou knowest our frame; thou rememberest that we are dust." Where social offence has been committed, social responsibility has been incurred; but the question of social offence does not rise in the Apostle's argument, which lies wholly between himself and the idea of Divine sanctification which has been shown to him by the Holy Ghost. The man cannot reach his ideal. His most vehement prayers fall short, and his severest self-discipline is incomplete. He seems to be within reach of the prize, yet misses it by less than a hair's breadth. Out of all this, there comes complaining which is very bitter, and there sets in a war which turns life into a spiritual tragedy,—“O wretched man

that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin.' But no man can serve two masters ! True ; nor does Paul attempt this impossibility,—*he himself* served one master, yet another mastery had laid hold of his outer and inferior self ; that is to say, the flesh on which was written the condemnation of death.

A more thorough understanding of the influence of the body on the mind would modify the fearfulness of many honest spirits, and create a tenderer charity in all social judgments. Religion is affected by temperament. It is not equally easy for all men to *pray* ; nor is it equally easy for all men to *hope* ; and the reason simply is, that it is not equally easy for all men to *live*. Life is one thing to the man who never had an hour's pain, and another thing to a man who never knew the joy of health. The sanguine temperament and the bilious temperament will express religious convictions in two almost totally different languages. The one will have long sunny days of gladness, and the other will walk through life covered with clouds and oppressed with burdens, and possibly the one might be to the other a temptation and an offence, because of the want of a common language of interpretation and sympathy. Summer must be a great mystery to winter ; and the fern, thriving in the moisture and shadow of its cool grot, must wonder how the rose can bear the hot sun on its face all the day long. It should be pointed out that the difference which is seen so conspicuously under the action of religious sentiment, is after all not a religious but a *natural* characteristic ; that is to say, religion does not change temperaments, but works through them, and takes its tone and colour from their distinctiveness. The man whose spiritual life is gloomy, will be found to be gloomy also in business, and even his family love may be tinged with a melancholy which may often cause it to be misunderstood and undervalued. Such reflections as these, arising out of the most obvious facts, should lead to the exercise of a nobler judgment of human life. We do not know through what suffocation some poor broken hymn of piety may have struggled ; and we may give the loud songster credit for religion which ought to be given in no small

degree to the healthiness of his lungs and the redness of his blood. Under all circumstances it should never be forgotten that the minor as well as the major key is part of the music which expresses the gladness of all things.

Then the body is to be treated as an incorrigible criminal, and to be held free of all discipline and subordination? No. The Apostle Paul is never more precise and emphatic than when he states the course which every follower of Christ is bound to pursue in the matter of physical control. The proof of this might be established by the most copious citations from his writings; for example:—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts"; "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof"; "Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"; "Glorify God in your body"; "As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness"; "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth"; "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these . . . of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." When Paul explained the anomalousness of his moral condition, in the seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, was he not describing his pre-Christian state? Did he undergo the same conflict after he had been crucified with Christ? It would distinctly appear that he did, and consequently that the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is part of his actual Christian experience. What other can be the meaning of his exhortation, "unto the churches of Galatia," viz: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would" (Gal. v. 16, 17). A collation of these passages will show that even the renewed life is a daily conflict, and yet that he whose will is strenuously on the side of holiness will be accounted victor in the strife, even though he may be weakened and impeded by many bodily infirmities. Judge a man by the lower side of his nature, and there may be found room enough for taunting and

discouragement ; but judge him by his best efforts, his purposes, and his sacrifices, and on all the ruggedness of his difficult way there will be seen a light which could have come from heaven only. The Christian is not in heaven, yet he is often judged as if he were an angel. Faults and slips on his part are aggravated into great sins, and men who point them out imagine that to indicate the failings of others is to exemplify perfections in themselves.

But what of that great prayer of the Apostle's, found in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians :—“ And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ” ? The answer is, that it *is* a prayer. Prayer is the ideal rather than the actual life ; it shows what we *would be* rather than what we *are* ; and it calls up every disciplinary act to the highest point. It is in the religious life what high and urgent aspiration is in other objects and services. The painter who *desires* (prays) to reach perfection will excel the sloven who never knew the compulsion of a pure ambition ; so he who desires, with all the vehemence of unceasing prayer, that his body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of Jesus Christ will, as a reward, be enabled to realize the highest possible degree of self-control and chastity. That is the great and beautiful life which confesses its faults and turns each of its mistakes into a reason for more critical self-watchfulness ; and that is a poor and superficial existence which declines all hard tasks and all severe exposures, lest so much as a flaw should mar the polish of its respectability. It should be remembered, too, that higher holiness always brings with it higher sensibility, so that where once an evil *action* could be looked upon without self-reproach, now even a questionable *thought*, in its most transient passage through the mind, leaves in the heart a sting of shame and self-hatred. That is proof of growth. It is worth while to say these things, because they may help others towards a godly cheerfulness in passing through the sharp discipline of a life which is assailed and torn through the weakness of the flesh.

III.

GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST CONSIDERED AS THE GOSPEL'S CULMINATION.

TO understand the meaning of the proposition that the culmination of the Gospel is to be found in the gift of the Holy Ghost by Jesus Christ, it will be needful to get at least some general notion of what is known as the Gospel scheme,—scheme, novel as may appear this application of the term, for the gospel has a distinct though often a hidden or unprojected method ; that is to say, it is not a mere congeries of assertions and emotions, but a vital system of thinking and service though with next to nothing of framework or technicality. In other words, the gospel is stateable in distinct and progressive propositions, and consequently it can be treated methodically for expository and argumentative purposes. This is what we mean in applying the word “scheme” to the gospel, and it is of such scheme that we now propose to get a general notion.

I.

In the first place, the Gospel proceeds upon *a most distinct and exceptional theory of human nature*. If this theory be mistaken or disputed by the student, there will be a succession of difficulties and angry controversies along the whole of that historical and doctrinal line which terminates in the cross of Jesus Christ. No point in that line can have its proper relation and value assigned if this theory be unknown or unaccepted, a fact which shows that the doctrine of human nature as held by the Gospel is fundamental ; that is to say, is neither tentative nor potential, but absolute and unchangeable. Herein is one of the permanent difficulties of Christianity—namely, that its students too generally approach it upon the Divine rather than upon the human side. Thus, they

begin with the cross ; they invert the natural and self-explanatory process ; and in doing so, the mind becomes unbalanced by the pathos of the spectacle, and is tempted to suggest that surely something less awful might have sufficiently met any exigency that could have arisen in the growth and discipline of moral life. In this way a prejudice is set up. The inquirer is troubled too much to be able to look calmly at the whole argument ; the shadow of the awful cross accompanies him and darkens all subsequent study : he owns himself at a loss to imagine the fundamental theory of a movement which has culminated in so distressing a catastrophe, and thus he comes upon the mystery from a wrong level, and probably may be either revolted by its extravagance or tempted to regard it as a merely dramatic agony. Instead of beginning with the cross, he should have begun with *himself* ; that is, with human nature. Undoubtedly the gospel theory of human nature is one which involves severe and unmitigated accusation ; so severe and unmitigated, indeed, that if we did not already know every step of its progress we should wonder how such a theory could be succeeded, argumentatively, by anything short of perdition. What is that theory ? It is expressed with infinite simplicity and terribleness by Jesus Christ in one word ; according to the teaching of our Lord, human nature is---“ *lost*.” At this moment we are not asking whether the Gospel theory is true or untrue ; we are merely asking what it *is*. Let us keep to this one point closely, resisting every temptation to mix up with it something for which we are not yet ready. We must completely understand the impeachment before we accept or reject it.

Christianity teaches that all men have erred and strayed like lost sheep : “ all we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way ” ; it insists that all men are morally alike : “ there is none righteous, no not one ; ” it pronounces mankind to be “ dead in trespasses and sins.” Never, even for one moment, is it tempted to relax the severity of its charge, so as to modify what it has to offer in the way of salvation. It acknowledges the accidentally or temporarily beautiful aspects of human life, but, fundamentally, includes it in one condemnation, that it may afterwards recover it by a common process. We speak of the fall of Adam, and baffle ourselves by wondering what that Fall was, and what it can have to do with the men of to day. Instead

of talking of the fall of Adam, let us think of the *self-revelation* of Adam ; and in place of the word " Adam," let us take the generic term *Man*. We know ourselves more thoroughly through our *sins* than through our supposed excellences. Adam would never have known sin but by the law, and not to know sin is not to know the whole capacity of human nature. Every man must fall for himself that he may have his own measure of self-revelation. We may indeed be shocked or grieved by the fall of others, but not until our own hand has touched the forbidden tree, and the poison has mingled with our own life, can we tell how much is concealed in that greatest of all earthly mysteries—the human heart. Every man (according to the Christian theory) has done substantially what Adam did ; whatever there may be of difference is merely nominal and accidental. But it is precisely in this region of accidental differences that the supreme difficulty of Christian appeal and persuasion is found. We distribute offences into primary and secondary orders, conveniently and properly enough for social purposes, but involving a profound fallacy when regarded as sufficient and ultimate. " Sins" is itself a misleading word, unless specially limited ; it invites comparisons, it calls attention to lights and shades which modify each other, and it so exaggerates one class of enormities as to make another almost respectable. For " sins" say *sin*, and then degrees and modifications are abolished. So long as a man limits the inquiry as between himself and some other man, he is incapable of handling this great controversy ; moreover, such a limitation (except for merely social purposes) is itself an offence, for we are not at liberty to separate ourselves from the race, and to set up isolated humanities. All men are branches of a common root, and are to be spoken of in their corporate qualities and powers. Individuality there will of course always be ; but even individuality presupposes a common life. By typical instances we are to learn the nature and scope of the entire mass. We must look beyond the mere *names* of Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham, and Moses, and think of the whole quantity *man*, which they partially represented, if we would know our own nature, and turn to right meanings and uses the current of human history. " But *I* did not fall in Eden !" says the objector. No ; but you *would* have done just as Adam did had you been placed in the same circumstances, and therefore you *did* (not historically but

morally) do the very thing that was done in Eden. There is nothing but meanness in the suggestion that *you* would have done better than Adam. Consider the case again, and you will see that the only other thing beyond meanness is a charge against God himself. Adam represented God's own idea of *manhood*; to suppose that he made *you* a stronger man than he made Adam, and yet that he risked the destiny of the whole race upon the weaker man, is undoubtedly to bring a grave charge against the Divine administration. But the charge recoils upon the accuser. He ought to be a very pure man who suggests that if *he* had been at the head of the race mankind would have been in a happier position to-day. He compels attention to himself, and forces from society an inquiry into his quality, disposition, and achievements. And if he be mean, covetous, hard, unsympathetic, selfish, he gives but a poor guarantee that he would have been a better Adam than the first! More than this: if there is so much as *one* weak point in him, whatever be the stern strength of other sides of his character, through that one weakness he would have perished in the great struggle. And who is there who will declare himself exempt from every weakness, and claim for his own character the actual perfection of God? We know precisely how such a claim would be treated by the common-sense of mankind,—it would be ridiculed with laughter rather than with anger, so thoroughly would men understand its monstrousness and insanity. When men are every day touching forbidden trees, breaking holy laws, giving way to evil tempers and desires, and proving to themselves the need of incessant watchfulness lest they stumble irrecoverably; and when it is being shown by the most tragical and startling instances that there is but a step between life and death, honour and dishonour, heaven and hell; it is, to say the least of it, irrational and indecent to suppose that the first man was weaker than ourselves. A terrible thing to have been the first man! Without experience, without history, without an equal, without a footprint on all the road,—this was itself a temptation, or a sorrow which could not put itself into words.

Do not instances of personal nobleness—heroism and sacrifice in all their varieties and degrees—contravene the theory of human nature on which the gospel proceeds? Surely such instances ought at all events to modify the accusation which Christianity brings

against human nature ! The gospel distinctly answers that such instances confirm the accusation instead of impugning or disproving it. In reference to such instances, the gospel would first of all examine the ostensible nobleness in a dry and pure light, and show how far it was merely apparent, how far it was relative, and under what pressure it would utterly break down ; and in the next place, the gospel would properly ask why such nobleness is exceptional, or how it comes to be so marked as to draw any attention to itself, and whether this would be so were human nature fundamentally sound and true. Moreover, if the argument of numbers be introduced (a fallacious argument generally, but in this case utterly vicious) the gospel will logically insist that the proofs of its own theory are, taking the whole world into account, innumerable more than can be quoted by its opponents. The gospel will continue the argument by denying that any one man (whose judgments must of course be affected by the necessary limitations of his personality) can know human nature in its totality ; and will follow up the denial by protesting that *human nature is, in its own degree, quite as much a revelation as is the Divine personality itself*. Day by day the progressive man is more and more fully revealed to himself ; men must likewise be revealed to one another ; and even after the widest collation of instances there will always remain a further something—distinctly felt, but too subtle for the treatment of words—which further something is the very essence of what we know as the nature of man. It would appear to be commonly thought that whatever mysteries becloud the Divine identity, we can undoubtedly see and measure the whole quantity of human life ; but that is the very thing which is denied, and certainly is the very thing which is contradicted by the best psychology and metaphysics. Who is there that is not often self-surprised by the course of his own thoughts, volitions, and sympathies ? A new self would seem to come every day, or foretokenings of a self other and better than we now realize ; so much so that our whole being is yet unmeasured, or we have not yet come into full possession of ourselves ! What, then, if it be a mistake to suppose that we can test the whole question of human nature exhaustively, and if the principal fact in our history be the fact of an ignorance hardly relieved by the illumination of twilight ? The gospel distinctly says that human nature is to be revealed to

itself, and that the proper revelation of its moral condition is to be found in such words as "corrupt," "lost," "dead in trespasses and in sins." Suppose that this revelation is not believed by mankind? Such disbelief would be a strong presumptive proof of its truthfulness; for what man is predisposed to believe evil of himself, or to do other than resent every suggestion of impotence or dishonour? And if the gospel have any propositions to make to man, the probable truthfulness of its first unwelcome disclosures is infinitely increased by the fact that it would simply stultify itself by first setting up a needless but most proper and righteous antagonism, and then offering what it supposes to be the greatest of all blessings for the acceptance of mankind. Who would accost a man with unfriendly and even scurrilous epithets in order to conciliate his attention or get a lien upon his confidence? On the other hand, what physician would be credited if he trifled with the gravity of a disease merely to create false hopes, or to get some temporary advantage from his patient? Looking at these considerations, and other reflections from which they are inseparable, the probability would appear to be that the disbelief of mankind would be a strong presumptive proof of the truthfulness of the gospel theory of human nature.

"It would appear, then," the dissatisfied reader may say, "that we must not go to the gospel for a high estimate of humanity; it will try to humble us by the most emphatic assurances that we are 'lost,' 'dead,' and 'corrupt,' but it will never speak of our greatness and value as men." Precisely the contrary is the case! Instead of making these declarations a ground of contempt, the gospel says that notwithstanding these things *man is worth saving!* How great, then, must be its estimate of the value of human nature! Given any state (even though only imaginative) which can be described as "lost," "dead," and "corrupt," to find out the appropriate treatment. Who can hesitate to answer that the appropriate treatment is *destruction*? Yet the gospel says—"No: the appropriate treatment in the case of mankind is salvation." So, in this very gospel which was supposed to treat human nature with contempt, is found an estimate of its worth unparalleled for benevolence and hopefulness. And consistently so, if the scriptural testimony be carefully studied throughout. Nowhere in that

voluminous testimony is there one derisive tone, or one signal of Divine contempt ; everywhere there is poignant grief, yearning of love over the prodigal, a cry as of bereavement and loneliness, the lament of a broken heart. Still, not one word of the accusation is withdrawn or softened. The impeachment is, so to speak, written upon the whole front of the heavens, that the universe may be confounded with astonishment in learning the ingratitude of man,—yet God cries out for his child, and follows up the mystery of sin with the higher mystery of forgiveness. Compare this with the poor flatteries which other theories of human nature have addressed to mankind ; the selfish compliments which have been paid to the genius and strength of man ; and say whether viewed simply as an intellectual conception the highest tribute ever paid to human nature was not paid by One calling himself the Son of God, who avowedly came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. Have the flatterers of human nature ever suffered anything on its behalf ? Consider what the flattery of human nature is, and at its very core will be found the idolatry of self. No wonder that men who live in an atmosphere of mutual applause resent the violence of a theory whose primary principle is that there is none righteous, no not one ! The first destructive ambition of man was to be *as God*, and to this day he is falling over the same rock, and madly kicking against the same pricks. He is very sensitive as to his dignity. You wound him when you tell him of his weakness, and yet you cannot so far delude his consciousness as to get him beyond a changeful and troubled joy even when you most effusively assure him of his glory and strength ; even then a ghost dilutes his wine, and challenges him to a battle which he knows must end in his own death. The gospel reads the riddle to him : with loving frankness it reveals his failures, and shows him that all outward blemish is but an imperfect expression of his inward corruption. It does not tell this with harshness or with the slightest refinement of cruelty, but with the explicitness of incorruptible honesty, and with a tenderness which means that presently it will have something better to say. What that something is we shall now endeavour to define : meanwhile, to the charge that Christianity takes a low view of human nature, the Cross of Christ is the answer of God.

II.

It will be seen that the gospel has (taking the objector's word) by its very *extravagance* brought a heavy responsibility upon itself by proposing to deal remedially with a nature which it has with persistent austerity described as "dead," "corrupt," "lost," "born in sin and shapen in iniquity"; it should have spared its epithets if it had any misgiving of its strength, for by this free, and almost riotous, use of condemnatory words it has determined its own tests, and there can be no escape from their judgment. What can be more incautious (not to say unjust) than to exaggerate a disease, and then boastfully to propose remedies which are monstrously inadequate? And what can be more cruel than to dilate upon the horrors of an affliction for which it is known that cure is impossible? If from this moment—now that it has been allowed to state the case in its own way—the gospel forget one item of its impeachment, or prove itself (as weakness always does) more energetic in condemnation than in the provision of adequate help, it will not only provoke the most indignant reprisals, but be justly chargeable with the most atrocious cruelty. We are, therefore, if in earnest in this argument, intensely excited to know the precise remedy which the gospel has to propose, and we have been prepared, by its own condemnatory tone, to receive the proposition with aggravated and resentful jealousy: nor do we apologize for this, for men ought not to allow themselves to be first damned with the most odious epithets, and then to be trifled with by speculative suggestions or empirical nostrums. As the gospel has come to the point on the one side, so it must at once come to the point on the other. The question which urges itself after hearing the indictment is—*Does God himself believe it?* Or, has he magnified the disease that he may glorify himself by an easy and inexpensive arrangement on his own part? We shall get the answer in the proposed remedy. What is it? This: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now (even from an imaginative point of view) it may be fairly claimed that how awful soever the impeachment, this answer transcends it in solemnity and pathos. At this moment we are

not affirming either this or that theory to be either true or false ; we are simply getting hold of a case as it is outlined in history, and our submission on strictly literary grounds is, that the impeachment of human nature was so terrible that it seemed to defy everything like an answer or a mitigation, and that this answer, found in the love of God and expressed in the mediation of Jesus Christ, fills up and overflows the measure of the occasion, and is the sublimest sentence in the literature of mankind.

A very curious question, however, arises out of the construction of this answer. Is there not an abrupt and most unsatisfactory turn in the language ? We are told in the first place that God loved the world, and in the second place we are told the exact degree of his love ; but, strange to say, that degree is not measured by God *himself* but by the gift of his Son ! We do not read that God so loved the world that he gave himself, but he so loved the world that he gave some one else ! A great gift, no doubt (the greatest, indeed, to any giver), but still secondary, and bringing with it many difficulties which would appear to be insuperable. It will be seen that a case of this kind, involving humiliation so deep and other consequences so disastrous and intolerable, could not be met by any degree of mere *consent* on the part of the Son. Consider what is involved in any arrangement by consent of parties : however full the degree of the consent, it is evident that the Son, if an inferior Person, could only regard the salvation of the world as an idea which had been suggested to him by the Supreme Mind, and which had, either by force of argument or force of sovereignty, laid such hold upon his understanding and affections that he yielded to it, and for the time being became the very slave of this great thought. Now such arrangement, regarded from a human point of view, must be seen to be painfully insecure. An idea of this kind, so vast in its scope and so costly in its execution, cannot, in the very nature of the case, be realized derivatively and secondarily. Such realization may be *attempted*, indeed, but the attempt must end either in blasphemy or madness. If Jesus Christ could have had an idea suggested to him then he was less than omniscient ; if he was less than omniscient he was less than God ; and if he was less than God he was exposed to all those counter considerations which modify and rearrange finite judgments, and which, therefore, might impair his resolu-

tion to be the instrument of the world's salvation. But what if he was so inspired and ruled by the Almighty as to render his faithfulness invincible? Then he was no longer a voluntary agent. A man may be overborne by inspiration as well as by meaner forces; and to whatever extent he is under the dominion of influences which he can neither understand nor control, he loses sympathy with those who do not share his elevation, and, in fact, cuts himself off from their approach and their petitions. The term inspiration is, of course, variously understood and applied, and therefore it may be worth while to point out the exact sense in which it is used in this argument. In a sense far from inconsiderable *every man* is divinely inspired; some men (as the highest thinkers, whether philosophers or poets) are *especially* inspired; a yet smaller number of men (as Isaiah and Ezekiel) have been the subjects of an inspiration more peculiar and distinctive still. Our contention is that in not one of these senses was Jesus Christ inspired, but rather that he himself was the actual *Inspirer* of these very men! To say that he was *inspired* is to put him into a secondary position; because if inspired he was of course inferior to the Being from whom he derived his inspiration. Say rather that Jesus Christ was *self-inspired*; that his whole ministry was self-originated and self-directed; and though he is thus argumentatively set infinitely above the race which he redeemed, he is yet left in full possession of that power, which happily is inseparable from God, by which he can with infinitely pathetic condescension stoop to the meanest of his creatures. In saying that such a Being is unapproachable we do not, even theoretically, destroy his ability to do on his side what without his aid is impossible on ours. He can come to us; he does come to us every moment; thus the thing which may be even unthinkable in theology is one of the continual and necessary facts of daily human experience. When we say that the *sun* is unapproachable, we do not mean that his *light* cannot come down to the meanest of human habitations.

Is there, then, a serious discrepancy between the first part of this marvellous answer and the second? If we take Jesus Christ's estimate of himself we shall see the answer in another light. Speaking of himself he said, "I and my Father are one"; if only one in sympathy and purpose he was in reality saying nothing, for

this is a commonplace which applies to many human covenants and enterprises ; any holy angel could have said the same thing, and even some devoted men might use the very words. If, however, we regard the words as expressing not only sympathy but equality, we come at once to a new and satisfactory reading of the answer now under discussion ; thus : God so loved the world that he gave himself in human form, Emmanuel, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. How far, then, is this reading supported by other Scriptures ? Is there any evidence to show that Jesus Christ claimed originality and voluntariness for his own interposition ? If he derived the idea from God, and held it (with whatever tenacity) as a suggestion only, he would be careful to give God the glory in terms so distinct as to render any reference to himself, that was not guarded with jealous rigour, an act of profanity and blasphemy. What, then, do we find to be the tenor of apostolic teaching as to Christ's part in the proposed scheme for the salvation of the world ? A few citations will show this clearly :—"The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ who GAVE HIMSELF for us" (Titus ii. 13, 14). "Our Lord Jesus Christ who GAVE HIMSELF for our sins" (Gal. i. 4). "The Son of God who loved me and GAVE HIMSELF for me" (Gal. ii. 20) "Christ Jesus who GAVE HIMSELF a ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 6). There is no qualifying clause, as, for example, "at God's suggestion," or "in deference to a higher will" ; the terms are simple, unencumbered, and absolute ; and therefore the following paraphrase of the answer would seem to be wholly justified—"God so loved the world that he gave himself, embodied in the form of Jesus Christ, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life ;" and herein is it true that "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" ; and, "it is not I that do the works, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." A mystery, indeed, on every side, not to be dispelled wholly by any explanation, yet so to be expounded as to prove, without one broken link in the evidence, that when God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, he so loved the world as to give *himself*.

But Jesus Christ was a man ? Undoubtedly : to forget his manhood is to forget half the gospel, and to overlook one of the reasons which originated the scheme of saving the world. It

is in the highest degree remarkable that when God proposed to come to earth to save the children of men, he did not attempt to improve the plan upon which man was originally made, but on the contrary he reproduced it so completely that Jesus Christ was actually known as the *second Adam*. This should be remembered as a proof that the first Adam fully represented manhood as it existed in the Divine conception, and was not set forth as the type which was to be matured by the progress of ages. Jesus Christ was "made in all points like as we are"; as much as to say, that God could not have added another element or feature to his original idea of manhood, without having completely changed it and really made something other than man; and therefore when he purposed to constitute a new head of the race, he actually made it on the first plan. But whereas the first man was made only in the image and likeness of God, the second man was God himself, the Lord from heaven. Jesus Christ adopted a remarkable method in the treatment of his own humanity; he challenged men to destroy it, and he would raise it up again in three days; he said that it was his Father who did the works, at the very moment that he was in the act of doing them himself; he said that he came from God and went to God. So the alphabetic letter says: "I am but a form, a medium; I do not give wisdom; the *Spirit* which I represent gives life and understanding; the wise man uses me, and so does the fool, yet how different the spirit of the one from the spirit of the other! When the eyes of your understanding are enlightened you will see me as I really am, and then, having seen me, you have seen my spirit and meaning also." The treatment of his personal humanity which Jesus Christ adopted was more needful and important than may at first sight appear. Why did he so carefully separate it from Godhead? Why did he show his exhaustion, his hunger, and weakness to the men who were round about him, and openly say that he had not where to lay his head? Because it is in human nature to worship itself, and to look no farther than the range of its own power and wisdom. From the very beginning this has been its temptation—"Ye shall be as gods." On this ground, therefore, it became him who was the second Adam, and the head of a new race, to define the proper limits of human nature, to separate the formal from the essential, and to be for ever pointing men away from the

physical and the visible to him who is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

Jesus Christ was so careful to assert his proper humanity, that he called himself by no less singular a name than "the Son of man"—a name which is not only most distinctive, but one which by its very delicacy admits of easy perversion and impoverishment. Its meaning would be destroyed were it *a* son of man, or the son of *a* man. The fact is, the name so precisely expresses what it was intended to convey, that it cannot be rearranged or varied in any degree without sustaining injury and dishonour. If we want God's idea of *man* we must go back to the creation of Adam ("God created Adam [man] in his own image, in the image of God created he him"), and then the name "Son of man" will be equal to son of Adam, and the meaning of the name will probably be that Jesus Christ was, merely as regarded his bodily manifestation, what the son of Adam would have been had the estate of innocence been retained. That is to say, he was God's ideal of humanity realized in all points; as human as any other man *yet without sin*, really and properly human, touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and in all points temptable though invulnerable. A beautiful condescension this, on the part of God; coming all the way to us, and actually laying hold of our very nature. And a marvellous answer to the difficulty of sin! An answer after this fashion—"Sin has brought human nature into captivity and death, and so far has to all appearance successfully challenged my Divine dominion; I first set up humanity in my own image and likeness, and sin has defaced the work of my hands. But the day shall be surely turned upon the enemy: through this selfsame humanity shall come redemption and immortality, and the serpent shall be crushed by the seed of the woman,—the Son of man shall be the *Saviour* of man, and human nature shall thus be protected from the charge of weakness and failure." So it can only be a false theology which puts into a secondary place the proper human nature of Jesus Christ. We separate ourselves from his most helpful influences by magnifying his divinity at the expense of his humanity; and by our very eagerness to worship his Godhead we exclude that subtle and tender sympathy by which he seeks to get his first hold of our confidence and love. We are, too, tempted to narrow the term Godhead, and to set up Unitari-

anism on another than the common basis ; that is, we are so vigorous in our assertion of the proper Deity of Jesus Christ, that we overlook both the Father and the Spirit. Probably the principal reason why the humanity of Jesus Christ is not acknowledged with sufficient distinctness and honoured with appropriate homage is, that the very term " human nature " has lost its true meaning ; it is not thought of as God's own highest idea of earthly existence—a translation of himself into form—but as something almost self-created, corrupt, contemptible, and worthless. This is not God's view, nor is it a view which is held with God's approbation. At best it is but the *accidental* condition of human nature,—a rough and tragical episode, revoltingly and mournfully true within certain limits,—not the Divine idea which is yet to be reclaimed and vindicated, and covered with glory ineffable and everlasting. When we see human nature as God meant it to be, pure, strong, loving, wise, clothed with its original dominion, and moving up the immeasurable altitude to which it is called in the purpose of God, we shall see how lofty is the title Son of man, and that to be a *man* is to stand at the right hand of God.

III.

Upon these two points our conception of the gospel scheme is tolerably clear ; at all events we know that as a matter of fact it presents a distinct and expectant theory of human nature—a theory so obviously *sui generis* as to be substantially original, and originality on *such* a subject is equivalent to a revelation—and proposes to meet the human condition which it describes in terms so graphic and humiliating by a method which, if true, is, on the face of it, transcendently sublime,—the incarnation, the sacrifice, the resurrection and priestly mediation of God the Son. But, how to bring this method to bear ? Not only how to bring it to bear as one great act, for the time being eclipsing everything else and smiting the universe with a terrible surprise, but how to give it nearness and influence in all lands and in all ages even until time shall be no more ? Just now we were excited to know how such a condition of human nature as had been described could possibly be met by obviously *adequate* remedies, and we have at

this point precisely the same excitement arising out of the inquiry : How can this work of Jesus Christ overflow the limitations of time and space, and extend its advantages to all generations and all the habitable places of the earth? It is clear that the continued bodily presence of Jesus Christ could not have met the case, and that besides falling short of it, would have created difficulties not only insuperable but most mischievous. Who would have believed in his proper humanity if he had lived five centuries and five more, and then add a thousand years, and promised to live as a man for ten thousand more? By the mere lapse of time he would have destroyed all confidence in his claim to be regarded as "made in all points like as we are," and would, in his professed humanity, have become an infinitely greater mystery than in his claim of equality with God. How then, according to the gospel theory, whether true or untrue, did he propose to secure duration and universality for his work? This is the brilliant and astounding answer—*He ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.* All things, all time, all space, all hearts, all kingdoms and masteries. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The inquirer will be able to say whether the sublimity of the second answer equals the sublimity of the first, or whether the gospel scheme outwits itself by the creation of difficulties which it can only meet by impotent expedients. Has that scheme created an ideal Christ which it cannot universalize?

By the inspiration of the Holy Ghost there is a human ministry of the gospel in the world. Men are especially called to that ministry by the Holy Spirit; they are qualified by appropriate gifts; their living word is accompanied and confirmed by the power of God; their hearts are quickened by an enthusiasm which can find no sufficient expression but in the proclamation of the truth as it is in Jesus. The Holy Ghost creates a Church—companies of men who live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, pray in the Spirit, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit; men who are, the temples of the Holy Ghost, and whose union is a continual testimony to the power of Jesus Christ. That they are despised and rejected of men is true, but true only in so far as the fact connects them with the history of the Lord, whose name they bear.

Unquestionably the Church is at a discount in the world : to belong to it other than nominally, is to provoke opposition and sneering ; to be earnest in the cause of the Cross, is to invite the charge of fanaticism or the insinuation of hypocrisy. Still, the Church lives, and its ministry is resuscitated from age to age. A continual resurrection thus supervenes, and the morning freshness reappears in spite of all the centuries and their impairing power. By the action of the selfsame Spirit, the Atonement is saved from all the disadvantage of merely historic distance, so that, to the spiritually earnest man, the Cross of Jesus Christ is as near to-day, as if the crucifixion had just transpired. Herein, truly, is a marvellous thing, that men are *now* preaching Christ crucified. What do they know about the crucifixion? Yet they preach it as if they had but just left Golgotha after seeing the blood of Jesus ; and no story so deeply moves the human heart, or so mightily stirs the energies of mankind, as the story which takes us back nineteen centuries, and translates itself out of a strange tongue.

Now, mark the effect of this Spiritual ministry upon the doctrine of Human Nature and the doctrine of Incarnation and Sacrifice just stated. We have been told that human nature is "lost," "dead," and "corrupt," and by the very fact that it is so it is clear that its condition can be effectually reached only by *Spiritual* influence,—that is, by influence that is superior to the nature on which it acts, and that is *quickenings* or life-giving,—“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was make a quickening spirit.” “The letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life.” “It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing ; the words that I speak unto you they are Spirit and they are life.” Surely, such provisions wonderfully fulfil the conditions on which the gospel theory proceeds ; the theory is rescued from the fate of mere intellectual abstractions, and applied in the direction of revitalized and sanctified human nature, and so is shown to be founded upon reality and adapted to experience. Still, there is the inquiry, Can this quickening power be brought to bear upon human nature without the interposition of material instruments? And to this inquiry the scriptural answer is distinctly in the negative. Human nature could not, in its lost condition, be communicated with directly by absolutely spiritual agents. Its ears were waxed heavy that they could

not hear, and its eyes were made dim and sightless by unrestrained transgression. Then must the Almighty thunder if he would be heard, and spare not his lightnings if he would be seen even in roughest outline : the " still small voice " would be wasted music. There must first come that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual,—first the earthquake, the fire, the sounding storm beating on the mountains and sending the horror of darkness and a noise of trouble through the valleys ; and then must come the sweet peace of a spiritual ministry—a harmony too exquisite for the ear of the flesh, but ravishing the soul with refinements of music indistinguishable from the praise of heaven. We have more than once in the course of this essay claimed that this is precisely what has been done in that administration of human affairs which culminated in the gift of the Holy Ghost ; and this brief review enables us to reaffirm that the gospel theory is, even in the most subtle and delicate points, consistent from beginning to end with itself, and is therefore presumptively *true*. It can only be with a feeling of grateful surprise that we observe how graciously it has been provided that this entire scale of revelation, so to speak, should be available, in all gradations, to mankind as much to-day as at any period of the history of Christianity. To preach the high doctrine of the Holy Ghost to the heathenism which surrounds the piety of the most enlightened countries would be simply to speak an unknown tongue, and, indeed, to speak the language of heartless irony. So also with lands which are visited by the Christian evangelist. He may begin his ministry with the words, " God is a Spirit," but he will soon find that he will have to take his heathen hearers through almost literally the course which runs through the Old Testament and the New, and terminates in the gift of the Holy Ghost. To the heathen must be spoken the commandments, and revealed the exacting " law," which more than anything else can teach man the poverty of his moral resources. The alphabet and the picture-book will be found indispensable by the missionary. Then will come the narrative of Jesus Christ's outward life,—miracle, parable, and startling word—then the prætorium and the cross—then the Holy Ghost. There is no escape from this line : it is, as we have endeavoured to show, the line of intellectual growth and of social development, as distinctly and unchangeable as it is the line of spiritual training and

progress. On the other hand, to be preaching the "first principles" to congregations who have been listening to Christian exposition for a lifetime is to the discredit either of the preacher or the hearer. Perhaps, however, there is some excuse for the preacher, seeing that he is conventionally compelled to address all classes in a common speech, instead of being permitted to address each class in its own language, and according to the degree of its spiritual enlightenment. Christian teaching regarded in its proper distribution would furnish a magnificent picture if we could command the whole in one clear view. Far away in the distance are heathen nations taking their first lessons (in large and highly illuminated letters) under the direction of the Christian missionary; nearer still are little children to whom the Divine word is being spoken in its utmost simplicity with all the aid of parable and story; still nearer are groups of partially enlightened inquirers who see men as trees walking; interspersed amongst many other classes are persons who can be approached only through their sensibilities and emotions, and who can constitutionally never have any strong hold of truth apart from its most pathetic objective expression; but at the centre of all there should be a class of inquirers specifically different from all the rest,—a class whose studies are far beyond miracle, picture, ritual, and the limited "letter," intermeddling with "the deep things of God," and breathing the air of a higher world. But how is any preacher to address all those classes when they come together in common assembly, except in generalities which will hardly satisfy any one of them? To speak with edification to the last would simply be to speak an unknown tongue to all the others, and to speak with edification to the first would be to offer "milk" to strong men, or to fret philosophers with recollections of the alphabet and primer. Out of the working and conflict of classes so varied, and apparently so little related (yet between which there is a constant inter-transition), come charges of heterodoxy, rationalism, mysticism, and transcendentalism! What wonder? Surely the child who is in dissyllables must think the mathematician a heretic and the metaphysician a madman for spending his nights and days in quest of the "cosmic reason." And probably the tyro to whom the multiplication table is a mystery would hear of algebra with shuddering and horror. A wise word is that, here as elsewhere, "Judge not, that ye be not

judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged : and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." It is a long way from the letter which killeth to the Spirit which giveth life, and the progress from the one to the other must always be a mystery,—a mystery to the advancing man himself, and a mystery to those who take an interest in his growth. Yet what great reliefs accompany the mystery ! The fruit of the Spirit is not unintelligibleness, self-inclusion, scorn of backward learners, and latent disdain of human nature generally ; the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. The better the scholar the deeper his humility. If any man say, "I walk in the Holy Ghost," his claim can easily be tested by the inquiry, What are his *fruits* ? "By their fruits ye shall know them."

IV.

THE MIRACLES OF THE HOLY GHOST.

WE are so accustomed to connect the word "miracles" exclusively with the name of Jesus Christ that it may startle us to associate it with the name of the Holy Ghost, especially if we do so for the purpose of showing that the word is only partially and temporarily applicable to any ministry but his own. The miracles of Jesus Christ were well called "signs" by himself and by others. That is, precisely what they were, and nothing more, — outward and visible signs of great spiritual realities. If we reverently regard them in this light we may talk freely about them, and come to a just understanding of their import and value. No man showed so clearly the worthlessness of miracles as Jesus Christ showed it. Beyond a very limited line he made no account of them, and how properly so is evident enough. Jesus Christ healed a lame man, but what of it? Is it a great thing to mend a bone whether by much surgery or by one quick word? Is it not mocking a man to raise him from the dead, when he must needs die again in a war from which there is no discharge? We say that Jesus Christ suspended the laws of nature, but we forget to add that nature showed herself greater than all her laws by resuming everything that had momentarily been taken from her dominion. The lame man was restored, but in the long run nature smote him with a deadlier infirmity. The dead body was reanimated, but nature waited and won. Let this be thoughtfully observed, as not only explaining the cessation of what is called the "age of miracles," but as showing the worthlessness of the physical wonders which once made men wild with much astonishment. Jesus Christ did no physical miracle which remains until this day: lameness, blindness, deafness, are still at hand, and the sea is as noisy as if he had never spoken to it. In effect, Jesus said about his own mighty signs and wonders, "You see that these things do not satisfy you. I no sooner do one miracle than you ask me to

do another, and the more miracles I do the greater is your bewilderment, and not a whit the less is your scepticism. Now let me tell you the meaning of what I do, and so lead you away from the outward to the inward—from the sign to the thing signified. I have healed, for a while, your lameness, blindness, and dumbness, but all your physical disadvantages will recur with aggravation in the hour and article of death. The thing I aim at is *spiritual* restoration, *spiritual* completeness, *spiritual* immortality. I have come to give you life, and to give it more abundantly; and if you miss this meaning of my miracles, your vague and tumultuous wonder will do nothing for you. I gave you bread in the desert, but you must eat *myself* if you would hunger no more. My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger. I have found water for you in dry places, but you must drink the water that I shall give you if you would never thirst again." In this way Jesus led the observers from the mere sign to the eternal grace that was signified. In the same manner he taught the inner circle of his apostles the true value of astounding deeds: "The seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name": Jesus answered, "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." If miracles, as that term is generally understood, could have answered other than temporary and intermediate purposes, they would have been permanently established amongst the ministries of the Church. In their place they had a high use, but beyond it they were of no value. Jesus provided for the development of true and abiding miracles by the promise, "Greater works shall ye do; because I go unto my Father." And in drawing the attention of the disciples and others from the outward miracle to the inward truth, he did exactly what he attempted when he taught the disciples to see in *all* outward things some hint of spiritual meaning or care; as, for example, in the lilies of the field, the fowls of the air, and the impartial benediction of the sun and the rain. He referred to these as points from which spiritual reasoning might start, and suggested that if the spiritual truth of these symbols escaped the observer, the great purpose of the type was lost. If God care for the grass of the field, how much more will he care for men? If he feed the

fowls of the air, will he neglect his children? It is nothing to admit that he gives the young lion his prey, you must go further, and allow that in doing so he is proving that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." All these outward instances of beauty, patience, care, and government, are but so many superscriptions on the envelope; the seal must be broken by man, and the inward writing must instruct and gladden his heart. We are not to be letter carriers but letter readers.

Bearing upon the point which indicates the spiritual uses of the outward and visible, there are some remarkable scriptural expressions. The Apostle Paul teaches that "the invisible things" are to be understood from "the things that are made;" and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—an anonymous writer of great power in spiritual interpretation, as shown in his reading of the Levitical ritual—says that "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." The meaning would seem to be that what we call the universe is only a symbolical expression of a spiritual power which cannot otherwise make itself known to us under present conditions,—but a foothold, indeed, from which we may see only that there is yet everything to be seen. Were either of those writers to accompany us in our physical studies he would probably address us to this effect: What you call Nature is only a mode of the Divine Personality; not, indeed, that the Divine existence is either limited by it or synonymous with it, but it is God's first manifestation of himself to you,—his pictorial alphabet, large enough and vivid enough to make you wonder, and to get you to ask questions. You cannot see God himself (neither, indeed, can you see your *own* self); but you can see this symbol of his brightness and power, as you can see your own figure and identify your physical individuality. See how wonderful all nature is, how calm, how vast, how rhythmic; "day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." If you could get one glance behind the veil you would be blinded by the essential light. What is required of you is that you walk by *faith*, that you live *as if* you saw the invisible, that you wait patiently for the fuller revelation. When he who is your life shall appear, you shall be like him, for you shall see him as he is. Now you see what you call light; it is God's garment; you are amazed by the *profusion* which is characteristic of Nature; not

merely a star here and there, but millions beyond all conceivable number ; not flowers enough for one year only, but for all ages, yet so economized that each flower is the garner of its successor ; not one or two varieties of living form, but endless types and degrees : all this profusion is but a hint of God's unsearchable riches. Look at Nature in this way, and you will not err. You know in part, and you can therefore only teach in part ; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. This would seem to be the teaching of the writers of the Epistles to the Romans and the Hebrews, and it clearly commends itself as wise and modest. Sir William Hamilton tells us that a concept would fall back again into the confusion and infinitude from which it has been called out, were it not rendered permanent for consciousness by being fixed and ratified in a verbal sign. It is so with our highest idea, the idea of *God* ; we should lose it, or walk for ever in confusion and vexation, but for this alphabetic sign, the gross and palpable universe.

It is interesting to notice how in some instances *spiritual* miracles were done by Jesus Christ, and in others *physical* miracles were done by the Holy Ghost. Yet in a marvellous manner the functions of the Son and Spirit were kept from mutual encroachment. Look at the case attentively in order to prove this. It appears that the Spirit wrought miracles which were distinctively physical, as when Ezekiel says, "The Spirit lifted me up and took me away"; and as implied in the words which Obadiah addressed to Elijah, "The Spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not." This same manifestation of power was seen in the case of Philip, recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles : "The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more." These were the *physical* miracles of the Holy Ghost ; on the other hand, there are *spiritual* miracles by Jesus Christ. For example, Jesus saw Nathanael under the fig-tree,—a circumstance which so impressed Nathanael himself that he yielded homage to the Messianic character of Christ. Jesus also revealed so minutely his knowledge of the history of the woman of Samaria that she exclaimed, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet." There is a yet more notable instance of spiritual power : Jesus had forgiven the sins of a man sick of the palsy, whereupon "certain

of the scribes reasoned in their hearts, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies?' The reasoning was not audible. Not a word was uttered, nor was any sign made, yet "Immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts'? A spiritual miracle truly, and far more exciting than the cure of blindness or palsy. It should be further observed that though the miracles of Christ were almost wholly physical, yet he always magnified what may be called their *spiritual* aspect, and so trained the observers from curiosity to worship. It is well worth while to look at the proofs of this. When Jesus was called upon to interpose in the storm lest the disciples should perish, he rebuked the wind and sea, and instantly there was a great calm. But what was the meaning of the act which Jesus intended to convey? Evidently this—"The sea was not disorderly; not a wave was out of its place; but your fears were excited, and so much excited that only what you call a miracle could allay them. I have therefore only quieted the wind that I might quiet your *hearts*,—objectively the miracle is wrought upon the sea, but subjectively it is wrought in your spiritual nature,—all things are for your sakes." A great thing to rebuke the sea because of a man, instead of sacrificing a man to the "laws of nature"! And if one sea, all seas; and if all seas, all nature: "for heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"; all things must give way before spiritual claims and moral necessities. In this fashion did Jesus Christ press upon men's attention the true meaning of the mighty signs and wonders which he wrought. He went even further still in this spiritual direction, and spoke words which may well amaze and confound mankind. When he restored sight to the blind man, or recovered the woman of her plague, how did he account for the result? Did he sound a trumpet, and say to the astonished observers, "Behold my power! Look upon me with awe! Fall down that I may trample upon you"? He actually made no reference to himself, but said to each of his beneficiaries: "Thy faith hath made thee whole!" As if they had done the miracle *themselves*, he being but the medium through which they found access to omnipotence. So, then, the physical result came through a spiritual process, and was intended to convey spiritual meanings. Miracles were not

ascribed to faith in a merely isolated instance, but continually ; that is to say, not by accident but on principle : “ Thy faith hath made thee whole ” ; “ Be it unto thee according to thy faith ” ; “ He could not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief ” ; “ How is it that ye have no faith ? ” “ If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye would say unto this mountain, Be thou cast into the midst of the sea, and it would be done ” ; “ All things are possible to him that believeth. ” In the face of testimony so direct and positive there is no escape from the conclusion that through every miracle Jesus Christ intended to educate the *spiritual* nature of mankind, and specially to reward, and strengthen the faith without which it is impossible to please God. But what faith ? Faith in destiny ? What ? “ *By faith that is in me,* ” — faith in Christ, — “ Without me ye can do nothing ” : so when Jesus Christ credits a believing man with having made himself “ whole ” by his faith, he is careful to explain that he himself is at once the inspirer and rewarder of that wonder-working belief. “ Lord, increase our faith. ” *

In his self-resurrection our Lord repeated all his miracles in one exclusive act. So in the ministry of the Holy Ghost, regeneration

* “ When our Lord said to his disciples, ‘ If ye have *faith*, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig-tree, ’ but also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, ‘ Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done, ’ it is plain that the faith, which in this and in several other passages, he was inculcating on them, is not to be understood of mere belief in Jesus as the Messiah, or in the doctrines of his religion, or of trust generally in Divine power and goodness. It evidently has reference to miraculous powers, such as are not bestowed on all Christians ; though faith, in another sense, is required of all. But in this and other declarations of like import, there can be little doubt that our Saviour had in view *confidence in those admonitions and injunctions which his disciples and many others of the early Christians from time to time received, authorizing and empowering them to work certain miracles.* Their extraordinary gifts were not (as those of Christ himself were) at their own command. Even Paul, who performed so many mighty works, and, among others, possessed the gift of healing in a high degree, yet was not always permitted to exert this gift, even in favour of his dearest friends (2 Tim. iv. 20). A special commission seems to have been requisite to enable them to exercise their delegated powers. And this was conveyed to them, — their commission and call to perform miracles was announced to them, — in various ways. ” — *Archbishop Whately.*

is the spiritual grace of which physical resurrection is the outward sign. Regeneration sums up all the miracles of the Holy Ghost. The minor miracles are intellectual stimulus, prevision, the upward movement of the will, interpretations, tongues, groanings that cannot be uttered, manifold solaces and helps for which there are no corresponding words ; but the supreme miracle is the NEW MAN ! “ If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature, old things have passed away and all things have become new.” This result has been vividly stated by St. Paul in another passage : “ Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners” ; what can be made of such a list ? Put in a parallel column the kind of difficulty with which Jesus Christ had to deal—halt, blind, withered, maimed, deaf, dumb, leprous, palsied, dead,—look at the two lists together in one view, and say which is the one upon which *non possumus* may be most distinctly written ! We know how Jesus Christ succeeded in the latter case ; now we have to ask as to the success of the Spirit in the former. Recall it : “ fornicators, idolaters, thieves, drunkards, revilers, extortioners,”—“ Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” This is the supreme miracle, and the proper rendering and completion of all the miracles of Jesus Christ. This, too, is the *enduring* miracle. We have reminded ourselves that all the wondrous works of Jesus Christ were redemanded by Nature ; but in the instance of the Spirit’s miracles we find continuance and immortality. Observe how appropriate is the distribution of the service. The human Saviour does the outward and visible work ; the Eternal Spirit sets up the inward and spiritual kingdom ; the *man* heals the body, the *Spirit* renews the soul. This is not only the logic of history, it is the music of vital and indivisible consistency. A healed leper may appear to be a greater miracle than a renewed soul, but in reality, in comparison, he is hardly a miracle at all ! Which is greater, to quiet the storm, or to give peace to “ a mind diseased” ? The inquiry answers itself in favour of the work of the Holy Ghost. It is remarkable, too, as showing the ever-dwindling importance of merely outward and physical miracles, even as wrought by Jesus Christ himself, that they are scarcely so much as referred to in the apostolic writings. A fact this which is

full of meaning, and helpfulness in the way of interpretation, if we lay hold of it properly. Nothing made of the miracles even by the Apostle Peter who had seen them all! Here and there just a pregnant reference (as notably on the day of Pentecost—"Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs"), but soon away again to spiritual interpretation and spiritual comfort! In the Epistles of Peter there is probably not a single reference to the mere *miracles* of Christ. Yet how full are these Epistles of spiritual exposition and application! It is Peter who speaks of "obeying the truth through the Spirit," and of "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever,"—a sentence fit for the pen of John. It is Peter, also, who tells us that "the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets," and who insists that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." As for Paul, on whom a miracle had been wrought, the whole of his argument is intensely spiritual, so much so that he expounds the Christian doctrine as if no miracle had ever attested the claims of Jesus. But the miracle of regeneration was the central fact in his ministry, as thus—"We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." If Paul had been asked for miracles in proof of his apostleship, he would have pointed to those who had believed his testimony and become temples of the Holy Ghost,—to dead men born again, to aliens enfranchised in the Jerusalem from above. The best miracles, surely! Jesus does not want to see the repetition of his signs, he waits to be satisfied with *the travail of his soul*—the sons which he will bring to glory. Yet Paul's case is remarkable for the fact that he never loses sight of *himself*, as the one great miracle wrought by Jesus Christ. He could never forget that a blasphemer and a persecutor had been put into the ministry. And if for a moment the merest shadow of a doubt fell upon his faith, he instantly chased it away by reminding himself of his journey to

Damascus, "with authority and commission from the chief priests." Paul had the witness in himself, so much so that to have destroyed his Christianity would have been to obliterate his consciousness ; even if his logic could have been answered his *life* would have remained. Christianity repeats this same work to-day in supreme and undecaying power. Why deny the spring when buds and blossoms are bursting forth on every hand? Why doubt the authority of Christian doctrine when the proofs are so abundant of Christian *life*?

So, then, the age of miracles, supposed to be gone, is now in the very zenith of its glory. There is indeed no more natural sign, but there is the actual thing which was signified. Is it a miracle to give a man new physical power, and but a commonplace act to give him new dispositions and desires? Is it a great thing to open his eyes, and nothing to renew his life? The miracle of miracles is this : "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." When the proud Brahmin has received the truth as it is in Jesus, and extended the right hand of Christian fellowship to the meanest member of the lowest caste whom he has met at the Cross, a greater miracle has been wrought than in the healing of the lame or the raising of the dead. To put the law "in the inward parts" and to "write it in the heart," is more than to fill the firmament with stars.

V.

HOLINESS.

IT would appear, then, that the great miracle is *Sanctification*, variously described as Holiness, a New Creature, and a New Man. The demand for this, on the part of Christ and his apostles, is unequivocal,—it is, indeed, the very life of their word; thus: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect”; “As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation”; “That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” The Christian affirmation is that there is a Holy Ghost, and that his function is to regenerate and sanctify human nature: and the question arising out of that startling statement is: How far has the Holy Ghost succeeded in his work? If he has completed it there must be facts enough on every hand to prove the completion; or if he has not fulfilled his purpose there must be some ascertainable reason for the failure or delay. Let us say at once that the Christian Church, as we now know it in all evangelised countries, is as perfect as God himself is perfect. The very statement would be received by the Church itself, not only as ironical, but as an impious taunt. Yet the Holy Ghost has been working in the Christian Church for many centuries. Other miracles were done instantaneously, but this miracle lags with stubborn reluctance. Why? Is the word of the Lord without power, or is the prey taken from the mighty? We have not to answer the mockery of bad men, or to repel the charges of false accusers, but to meet the honest and humbling confession of the Church itself that sanctification is a miracle not yet accomplished.

But society is better than it was, say, a century ago? Probably; but everything depends upon the exact meaning of the word “better.” Manners have certainly undergone a favourable change in several respects, and many gross social enormities have been outgrown, yet society may be only outwardly not inwardly the better. Mor-

als may be artificial, and as for manners they may have been treated merely as a branch of the fine arts. Your host no longer considers himself bound to conduct you to the point of intoxication and helplessness in order to show the generousness of his hospitality, but that he is therefore a better man, in the Christian sense of the word, does not follow. The disease which showed itself in a noisome form may be reappearing very subtly. It may be a critical question in the correlation of moral forces, whether the force "bacchanalianism" has not its equivalent in the force "covetousness" or "hypocrisy." Possibly enough, as every man knows, a passion may not have been extinguished, but only, so to speak, put further down in the heart, so that it is not so easily awakened as it used to be, and certainly not so noisy, but still *there!* A man boasts that he is not so irritable as he was twenty years ago, but he does not say that his self-control is used as an element of strength in doing bad deeds with a steadier hand and a calmer effrontery. In the old days he would have fumed and made himself heard in angry words; but now he waits, he strikes with cold steel. He has replaced fury with a heartless and bitter sneer, and he boasts that he has grown in the grace of self-control! He gets credit, too, from society for marked improvement. His acquaintances who now see him under provocation, say that they have seen the day when he would have flown into a rage for one tenth of the reason, and they wonder at his patience and forbearance! They do not know that what they praise so much is the result of calculation, and has in it a strong infusion of malignity. Their friend has said to himself, "My opponents get the better of me when I am in a rage; I miss my aim; my blows are wasted in the air; I must hold my temper down with a strong hand, and bide my time, and then I can do more with one finger than I can do now with my whole strength; I will be cooler now." If such reasoning precede the self-control which society applauds, the self-control is not only vicious in itself, but is actually an aggravation of the original offence. It may be the same with other social changes and judgments. The reformed drunkard no longer dishonours public decency, but if he has sunk into miserliness he is not a whit the better for his reformation. We change our vices and call them virtues. We have cleansed the skin, but driven the impurity back upon the heart. Christian men will honestly say so in speaking about

themselves ; they will own that in their heart of hearts there is a root of offence and bitterness, and that beyond all their prayers there is a shadow which can only come from the presence of the devil. Yet the Holy Spirit has been operating in the Church for centuries, and in the hearts of those very Christians it may be for most of a lifetime !

We may get further knowledge if we give full liberty of speech upon this whole subject to a cynical critic ; he shall have his own way of stating the case, and it will be for each of the parties adjudged to say how far the disagreeable observations are true. We shall imaginatively invest our cynical critic with the largest conditions of relationship, confidence, and insight, and thus invested he shall find speech for himself :—

“Take my own spiritual adviser, and see what the Holy Ghost has done for him. He is an ordained minister of Jesus Christ, and his profession of godliness is distinct and emphatic. He goes amongst men for a good man, and is respected in the most respectable circles. Yet look at him. When he composes his sermons he writes between the lines that he is a clever man, and that no one can hear such sentences without applauding their taste, their beauty, or their rhythm : he chuckles over their shapeliness and grace, and is pleased, as a child is pleased with a toy, when he hits upon some novel conceit in phraseology : he says it will strike, it will gratify, it will be talked about, it will be declared original and piquant. His sermons are all composed for a selection of his hearers, not for his congregation as a whole. He calls an eclectic circle round his desk, and nods to them, and receives their smiles, and he says, ‘If *you* be absent when this discourse is delivered my labour will be lost. I am making it for *you* ; I am studying your taste and measuring everything by your judgment ; *you* are my real hearers, the others are but so much padding ; if they can get any good they must get it through you.’ He preaches self-denial, but secretly leaves no appetite ungratified ; he denounces worldliness, but insists upon ‘the pound of flesh’ for which he himself has bargained ; he bears other people’s trials with elaborate and pompous patience, but yields to fretfulness and petulance when the sting of care pierces his own life ; he will unctuously mourn the decay of his intellectual power, but if any

man even seem to believe him that unhappy man will be marked and distrusted. My spiritual adviser boasts of the high respectability of his cure ; he says that the educated and the intelligent are his most appreciative hearers, and it is known that he will change any appointment to meet the wishes of the chief attendant upon his ministry,—the parishioner who comes to church in the sumptuous chariot, or the pewholder who dictates the decisions of the leading bank. This is my spiritual adviser ! He will talk by the hour to his rich visitors, and assure them that his delight is to know his parishioners more and more intimately ; but when a poor man calls upon him he is just at that moment going out to an appointment, or is in the agony of composing his next brilliant discourse. Am I to believe that this man has been baptized into the Spirit of Jesus Christ, or that he is living under the special benediction of the Holy Ghost ? You tell me that he has all the appearance of being a most amiable man, and so he is when all things go his way ; but oppose him, and you will find that his words are no longer softer than butter. Many a man who makes no profession of religion, and whose voice has no pretence of amiability, has in reality a far more genial and noble nature. He speaks with tender softness when all things are sunny and blooming, but he can frown like night when his grain is reversed. I want to know if this man is a temple of the Holy Ghost and a specimen of Christian sanctification ? ”

Again—

“Take literature as it is conducted by avowedly Christian men, and observe what degree of holiness it represents : that literature is professedly conducted for the ‘glory of God,’ as in the first instance it was projected at the bidding of conscience : the editor is in high office in the temporal section of one church, and the reviewer is as dignified in another ; an unpopular course, however, is never espoused ; it is agreed that nothing be said about the circulation, so that the advertising agent may draw upon his imagination when seeking for ‘clients.’ It is a standing rule in the office to proclaim the ever-increasing and unexampled popularity of the publication, and to encounter the appearance of every rival with the bold announcement that such appearance has been followed by a twofold or a tenfold extension of its own constituency. The reviewer determines his criticism by his liking or dislike of the au-

thor ; he sneers broadly at unpopular or struggling men, and kick with great vigour the cause that is down ; he endorses the most worthless trash if it issue from a successful or influential school, and snubs with rude audacity the efforts of men whose very shadow he is intellectually unworthy to touch. And the publisher is equal to his colleagues in duplicity and meanness. He never speaks the truth wholly and simply ; he has meanings which are unknown beyond 'the trade' ; he pays his advertisement by one scale and charges the unhappy author by another ; he inserts a dozen advertisements for a guinea, and then charges a guinea to the account of each writer ; he promised me 'half profits' for my book, and returned a statement showing that at the end of the year my profits were exactly nothing, and I know that in the case of a dozen other writers the result was precisely the same ; yet he rides in a carriage of his own, and we have hardly the necessaries of life ! All these are strictly religious men. They combine in an anti-ritualistic movement, and denied slumber to their eyelids until a reredos was taken down and the table of commandments set up instead ; they hunted one clergyman out of the diocese because of his cloudy notions respecting the Fall of Adam, and they protested against another on grounds which they were too indignant to explain. Are these holy men ? Is this the work of the Holy Ghost ? When we ask for sanctification, are *these* its living tokens and symbols ?"

Again—

"Take the case of general business as it is conducted by professional Christian men. There the one law is, 'Every man for himself' : the pure truth is never told ; yea never means yea, and nay never means nay ; business is a process of sounding, tempting, luring, compromising, and sharp practice. I bought a house, and immediately I had paid the money I was told that one thing had slipped the memory of the vendor—namely, that the foundations were giving way at one corner ; and when I asked him to return the money, he said, 'Business is business, and you should have asked more questions,'—yet this man 'takes the communion' regularly. I had a horse to sell in order to meet a pressing obligation ; I knew the horse to be sound in wind and limb, and to be in every way good and useful. I offered it to a church-going man, violent in the no-popery controversy, and fond of the uppermost seat in the synagogue, and he told me that in his judgment

the animal was not worth more than about half the sum I was asking; the animal was wrong in the knees, faulty in the neck, not up to the mark in the hind quarters, and, in short, not to be compared to a horse which he himself had almost given away. I was pressed for money, and the man took the horse at his own price. Next day he told his friend that he had bought the best horse in the country, and that he would not take twenty pounds for his bargain. Knowing this, I asked him if he was satisfied with the arrangement, and he told me that I had just got rid of the animal in time! The next thing I heard of this benevolent and public-spirited man was, that he was about to preside at the annual meeting of a great missionary society. What is true of one business man is substantially true of all. They vary in method, in tone, and in several particulars, so that the one can blame the other, and point to himself as a model of commercial honour; but in spirit and purpose they are in reality all alike, and all bad."

We have not restrained the speech of the cynical critic, for it is better to know all sides of a case than to be deceived by the flatteries of partisans. Instead of asking the cynic to bate something of his harshness, let us take his statement exactly as it is given, and in full view of it let us ask, Is the miracle of sanctification ever likely to be accomplished in human life? Its progress is slow, we admit. St. Paul himself did not claim that is was completed in his own case: "I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus." And in the same connection he says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I FOLLOW AFTER." As for those whom the cynical critic has just described, it must never be forgotten that nowhere are they condemned with severity so keen as in the very book by whose precepts they profess to be ruled. It is important to repeat the observations we have already made upon this point, to show that it has not been left for an enemy to find out that Christian professors are often inconsistent and unworthy. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. iii. 18). "By good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom. xvi. 18). "These are spots in your feasts of

charity : clouds they are without water, carried about of winds ; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots ; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame ; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 12, 13). The cynical critic never rose to *that* dignity of accusation. He pointed out with cruel care his details and particulars, but where he used the point of a pin the apostles used the edge of a sword. We thus first of all dispossess the cynic of all claim to originality ; for in his criticism he is only putting into vulgar terms the lofty impeachments of infinitely superior men. In the next place, we have to remind him that how great soever may be the inconvenience which he suffers from the imperfections of professing Christians, the one great sufferer in this case is God himself. If God can be patient in the outworking of this holy miracle, is it a great thing that man should be asked to restrain his tongue from unwise and unmerciful judgment? It was in some such light that God stated the case of Nineveh to the petulant and sensational prophet. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow ; which came up in a night, and perished in a night : and should not I spare Nineveh?" This is the principle upon which the sanctification of the world proceeds,—spare mankind ; spare the tree yet another year ; do not break the bruised reed ; do not quench the smoking flax ! God requires *time* for this last all-crowning and all-glorifying miracle, simply because man is indisposed towards the highest goodness : partly good he is quite willing to be ; good for the occasion, and then at liberty to return to his old ways ; but to be good as God himself is good is not in his heart, for then, he thinks, his whole pleasure would die, and he would mope and chafe under a harsh discipline, with no relief but the promise of a remote heaven.

But *this* is a miracle, that any man should ever have felt any *desire* towards holiness ! Consider the view of human nature which is given in Holy Scripture, and then hear that same human nature pray, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," and *there* is the miracle which outshines all other wonders. We need not wait for absolute holiness, for holiness is a growth ; the miracle is at the *beginning*, not at the end,—in the prayer for mercy, not in the completed character. We hear of people in India who would rather perish

in time of famine than accept relief under conditions which would even seem to compel them to become nominal Christians. Now, suppose that such people could be brought to see the meaning of Jesus Christ's cross, and to seek Jesus Christ's mercy, at *that* point the miracle has been wrought,—a very wonderful miracle considering the stubbornness of the original conditions. As to falling short of the completeness and glory of perfection, there may be some aspect of a miracle even in that failure; for it is of the very nature of holiness to be dissatisfied with its attainments so long as there is any accessible point beyond; holiness always has some further prayer to offer; and so long as there is any desire towards God unsatisfied must there be a sense of shortcoming and imperfection. But the Divine promise abides to soothe and assure the soul; those who are now afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, shall yet rest on foundations of sapphires, their windows shall be of agates, their gates of carbuncles, and all their borders shall be of pleasant stones (Isa. liv. 11, 12).

The Christian aspirant says that he sees holiness afar, in the figure of a shining angel, and that he longs with ardent desire to seize the prize. Then why not seize it instantly? Because between himself and the angel there is a wide battle-field on which a deadly fight is proceeding without break or pause, and the combatants are his own passions and his own better nature. The miracle is that he still wishes to penetrate the opposition and find his way to the other side; the temptation is to surrender, but he is saved from that humiliation by the assurance that he that endureth to the end shall be saved, and that he who overcometh shall eat of the tree of life, and live for ever. "Holiness" is a word not easily written on the rugged surface of human life, but it shall in the long run be graven upon it indelibly. It is to be written upon the bells of the horses, and to be inscribed upon the lintels and the doorposts of human dwellings. All unrighteousness is to be driven away by its benign power, and all weakness, and all death. It aims at no partial empire,—at nothing less than universal dominion! It is now the one condition of seeing the Father Everlasting: "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." It is the peculiar characteristic of the sanctuary in the heavens: "Nothing that is unholy shall enter therein." It is the appellation of the Inhabitant of

Eternity : "His name is Holy." Towards "holiness" human life is being moved, how slowly soever, by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, and when the end comes there will be no such miracle in the universe. Is this a picture? Meanwhile perhaps it is. But how poor the world would be but for its pictures! They are prophecies and promises; inspirations towards high action and noble patience; and presently, even whilst men are looking upon them, they will cease to be pictures by becoming real and immortal.

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