

THE  
REASONABLE CHRIST

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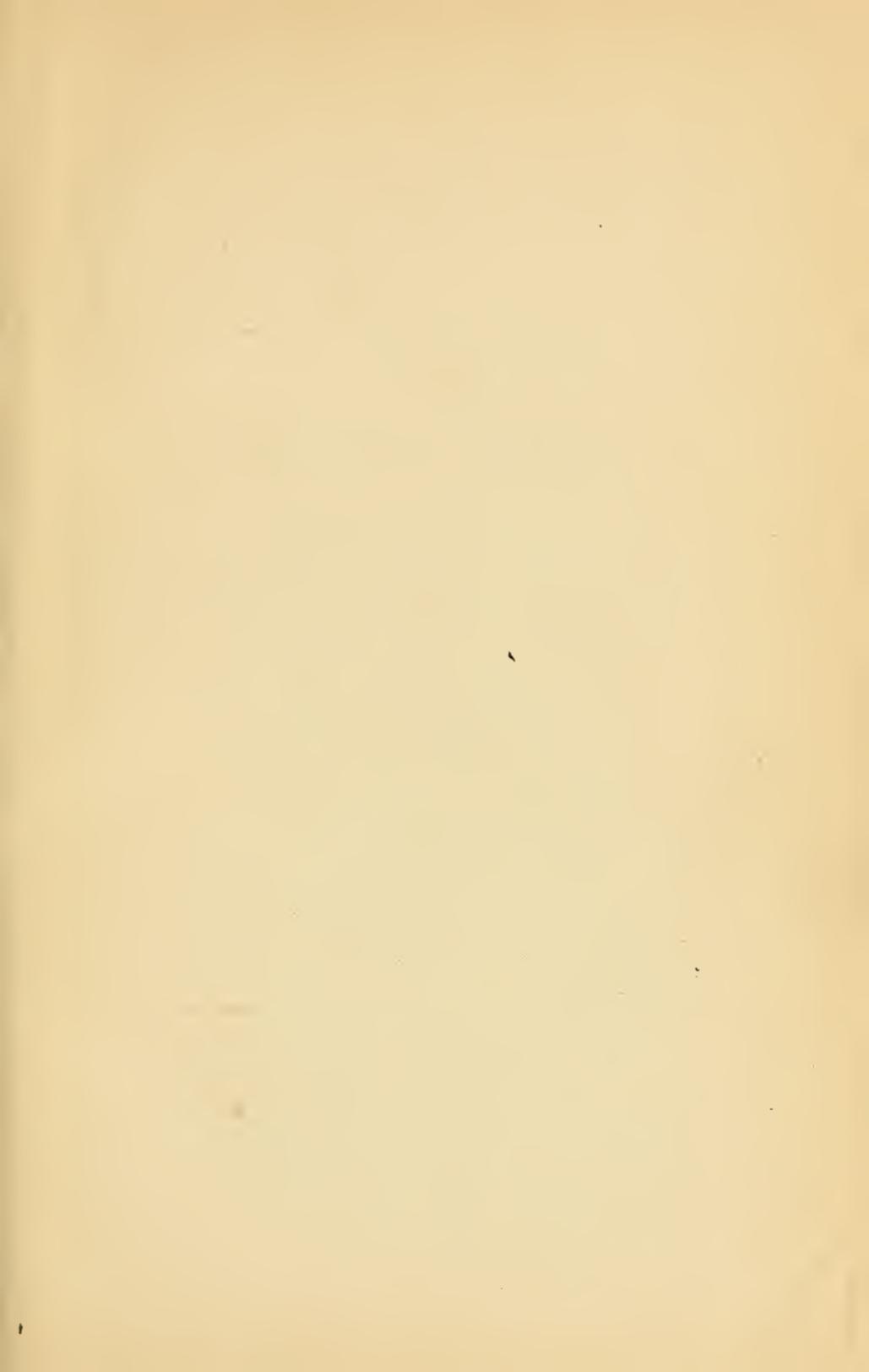
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THE

# REASONABLE CHRIST

A Series of Studies

BY GEORGE E. MERRILL

Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us. — ISAIAH AND MATTHEW

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. — PAUL



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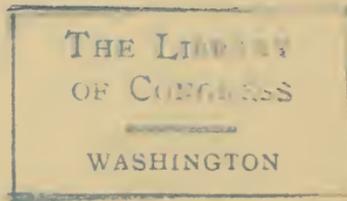
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## P R E F A C E.

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ONLY one desire has found expression in the preparation of this book,—to present the Christ of the Gospels as One who satisfies the reason as well as the heart of Believers. The book presupposes faith, and sets for itself only the humble task of aiding faith to grow by fixing the attention upon the content of the Gospel as reasonable, upon the person of Jesus as satisfying the conditions which called for His life and work upon earth. Our argument is from facts. It begins with the experience of mankind in sin; it ends with Christianity established in the world; and prior experience and present fact find their satisfaction and explanation in the Christ of the New Testament. If any reader should find that positions are sometimes quietly assumed, which have been the ground of learned and bitter controversy, and perhaps in time long past have been either apparently refuted or formally condemned, the writer would only say that he has tried not to be swayed by any considerations apart from what seems to be the plain story of the New Testament and its own appeal to the mind. He has not turned aside to consider whether the views advanced are new or old, or whether they have been approved or condemned in the history of the Church and

its doctrine. In general the pages have not been burdened, nor the attention diverted, by references upon such matters; and it may be added that merely technical discussion and the use of terms which might be desired by the professional theologian have been avoided as much as possible, that the general reader might be the more easily approached.

Jesus becomes most lovely to him who understands Him best. The more the mind dwells upon His matchless Presence, the more does the heart respond to the love that suffered for the world. These studies are laid at the feet of the disciples of Jesus, in the hope that they may help some to understand Him better, and in the remembrance that He said that our service to each other is the best that we can render to Him.

G. E. M.

NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

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STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,  
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,  
By faith, and faith alone embrace,  
Believing where we cannot prove !

. . . . .

Thou seemest human and divine,  
The highest, holiest manhood, thou ;  
Our wills are ours, we know not how ;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day ;  
They have their day and cease to be ;  
They are but broken lights of thee,  
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith : we cannot know,  
For knowledge is of things we see ;  
And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,  
But more of reverence in us dwell ;  
That mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,

But vaster.

TENNYSON.

THE REASONABLE CHRIST.

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

SAINT PAUL.

If reason is not of itself capable of finding the highest truth, but, on the contrary, is in need of a revelation, still, reason must be able to understand the revealed truth, at least so far as to recognize in it the satisfying and convincing conclusion of those upward-soaring trains of thought which reason itself began, led by its own needs, but was not able to bring to an end.

HERMANN LOTZE.

I report as a man may of God's work, — all 's love, yet all 's law.

ROBERT BROWNING.

## I.

### “THAT HOLY THING.”

IT is significant in the story of the Gospels, that the angel who announced to Mary of Nazareth that she had been chosen to be the mother of the Son of God, said: “That Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”<sup>1</sup> The word was not “babe,” or “child,” or “man,” but “thing.”

The choice of this word was only natural after the other wondrous announcement: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.” It was to be no common conception that Mary was to experience. The child was not to be the carpenter’s son. He was to be reared in the carpenter’s home, and Joseph was to be His reputed father; and long afterwards people would say of Him, when He had been doing mightier works than the most skilled craftsman could ever do, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?”<sup>2</sup> But He Himself would always know that carpentry was not “His Father’s business;”<sup>3</sup> and from the first His mother knew it. She was and remained a virgin, according to the story, until after “that Holy Thing” was born of her. Afterwards she was wife to Joseph, that patient and kind man, who at first was minded to be just and

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ii. 49.

yet merciful with the maiden of his love, and so to "put her away privily," and bring no scandal upon her. But as he was better taught, he took her and kept her for his own, and she bore him other children.<sup>1</sup> There is no adequate reason for supposing that Mary remained a virgin, and that they who are called the brothers of the Lord were only His cousins. But whether there were other children in the Nazarene family or not, the record concerning Jesus is not altered; the declaration is that Jesus Christ was born of human maid from conception produced by God's Spirit; that He was therefore Son of God and Son of Man, — not man alone like all other men, nor God alone as God is God, but a Personality entirely unique. The angels' word, therefore, may be supposed to have been spoken with care. We are face to face with the teaching of the Incarnation. Is this miracle credible? Is it in accord with reason? If it is, the whole wonderful life portrayed in the gospel is open to our faith.

A popular writer describes a certain German professor in a work of fiction as one who "had his theories of God." All men, soon or late, come to have their theories of God. We believe that there is a knowledge of God that is not the product of reason. Revelations direct to the soul, innate and instinctive assurances of God, may be assumed, we believe, with safety; but beyond all these the reason is impelled to a belief in God. The demonstration of God is impossible; but the assumption

<sup>1</sup> This is believed to be the only natural interpretation of the narrative. The view that Christ's "brethren" were children of Joseph by a former marriage, or children of Clopas and Mary, and so His cousins, will be referred to hereafter.

of God is necessary. We hold it to be thoroughly scientific to give faith to Him even as the Unknowable, and to follow the life that is in Him, though He be "past finding out."

That the processes employed for the attainment of belief by science and religion are similar, is evident. The student of nature notes phenomena that send him back to beginnings beyond his ken, for which he must assume a cause. The chemist, for example, assumes the existence of atoms. To take the latest definition which is within reach of all (Century Dictionary), "the atomic theory in chemistry is the hypothesis that all chemical combinations take place between the ultimate particles, or atoms, of bodies, and that these unite either atom with atom, or in proportions expressed by some simple multiple of the number of atoms. Modern atomism is, primarily at least, merely a physical theory of the inner structure of matter, constructed for the convenience of physical research." Now so far from any positive knowledge of atoms being claimed, the very contrary theory of the absolute homogeneity and continuity of bodies has been held. Sir William Hamilton declares that strictly speaking "atomism is inconceivable, for this supposes atoms, minima, extended but indivisible." In other words, so far from atomism being known as a fact, there are objections even to its conception. And yet modern chemistry assumes atomism, and finds the theory satisfactory in actual work. Phenomena are explained by it, and induction confirms faith.

In like manner the physicist relies on an hypothetical medium of great elasticity and extreme tenuity pervad-

ing all space, not excepting the interior of so-called solid bodies. He thus explains light, heat, and electricity. The assumption of the existence of an ether is a good "working hypothesis." Until the untruth of such hypotheses is proved, they are accepted as true; they are not demonstrated, but they are probable from induction; they are therefore the *credenda* of science, and heresy must either prove another faith, or be crucified.

Now the process of religious reasoning is the same. Prof. J. P. Cooke of Harvard University in the Ely Lectures of 1887, repeated before the Lowell Institute in Boston in the same year, said: "The knowledge of God has come to man through nature precisely in the same way as the generalizations of science, and is subject to the same limitations and carries the same conviction as all general truths. Man knows God by the same means and through the same sources that he knows the principles of gravitation, heat, and electricity. In each case an assumed energy acting through special channels under definite laws is the best explanation he can form of a certain class of phenomena." Under the general title "The Credentials of Science the Warrant of Faith," the lecturer proceeded to establish the truth, that the fundamental postulates of theology rest upon the same basis as the teachings of science. It is to be admitted at once, that "God is past finding out." He is to be assumed. He is the Intelligent First Cause. Phenomena find their only adequate explanation in the hypothesis of God. "No man hath seen God at any time;" but all induction leads to Him. If we believe in God we are able to explain natural, including spiritual, phenomena, at least

to some extent. Without Him, the universe, and most of all man, remain a mystery. Anselm's dictum, "*Crede ut intelligas*," is therefore scientific. Faith is scientific, and atheism falls entirely out of the line of scientific thought.

We decline, therefore, to have any argument with atheism. It is not necessary to prove God. The task is impossible, and equally undesirable. Were He brought to demonstration, there were loss of ideality. Not even Christianity, reverently defining God as Trinity, dares to reduce Him to rules of the triangle. That God is, and that He is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him, making such revelation of Himself as His own perfection and our frailty need, is all that even this best religion claims.

But if this be granted as the basis of faith, what follows? Only that what God is and what He does shall be harmonious. We find the phenomena of nature attaining their ultimate explanation in Him. Natural law, or orderly sequence, we refer to Him at the last. The question, therefore, whether any apparent exception of usually observed sequence in phenomena is possible or likely, is reduced to a consideration of what God would be likely to do in given circumstances, impossible perhaps to foresee, but easy of apprehension after God has acted. The mere question of miracle as resting upon the credibility or number of witnesses to the alleged fact, is of less importance than the antecedent probabilities found in appropriate conditions for that fact, or than acknowledged facts which may be traced back to the alleged fact as an adequate cause. Deduction may prop-

erly follow induction. Scientific investigations proceed upon this principle. A progression is observed in the history of man. By and by a human skull of peculiar shape is found in a cave, with a few rudely carved implements. The presumption is irresistible, that the implements were made by the man whose skull is the sole evidence that that man ever existed. The case is not one of demonstration. There are wide possibilities that the tools might have been made by another, perhaps even by some one of the human family long antedating this poor remnant of a human frame. No one saw this man; no one saw him carve these tools. The known rudeness of the world at that time and the propinquity of these remains are the only testimony; but the reason is satisfied with the probabilities. Without multiplicity of witnesses the conditions of the case are eloquent.

Not to delay longer,<sup>1</sup> the conditions of miracle as consequent upon a belief in God, are these:—

1. The fact of sin in man.<sup>2</sup>

2. The probability that God as God, having the attributes usually assigned to Him by human thought,

<sup>1</sup> The credibility and number of the witnesses of the miracles of the Gospels can hardly be impeached with success, though the attempt is old. We believe their testimony to be ample and sufficient.

<sup>2</sup> Even if the Biblical doctrine of the Fall be denied, as we think it never rightly can be, the argument of the following pages does not fail. If there was never an abasement of the race, it is beyond cavil that there is much baseness in the race; and this baseness is sufficient to admit the opportunity for the introduction of a great moral force to limit and finally destroy it. The theory of evolution permits the introduction of conditions which may hasten improvement, the creation of environment in which the process of elevation shall be promoted. But a proper understanding of Genesis will leave little space for conflict upon this point.

a God of power, justice, love, will undertake to negative sin, destroy its power and effects, and save man.

3. The fitness, the appropriateness of such a revelation of God for this purpose, as shall be an addition to man's previous knowledge of God; some change in the conditions of human life, by which the conditions in which sin had resulted should be counteracted, if not contradicted. It might not have been possible of prediction, that such change, however appropriate and desirable, would occur. But having occurred, the fitness may be recognized that a force should be introduced, or if existing previously should be revealed and set in action, to more than restore equilibrium to moral conditions in a world in which the balance had been in favor of wrong. It would be fit to *more* than restore equilibrium, since equilibrium would only leave the morally depraved in his sin and not lift him out of it. In some way there must be moral levitation, which must overcome the power of moral gravitation, and actually draw man upward out of the abyss in which he is found. More exactly, since levitation is only the action of gravitation itself, by which the lighter body rises as the heavier falls and occupies the space beneath it, what if the very laws of righteousness themselves, under which the sinner has remained in sin hitherto, shall effect his moral elevation by the introduction or revelation of a hitherto unknown agent? Just as the heavy silk, or other material, out of which a balloon is made, must fall to the earth from whatever height set free, but will be quickly lifted from the earth by the same law of gravitation which previously acted, if spread out to inclose a

gas lighter than air, so it would seem God's moral laws might have some provision for lifting those who are in sin, from the depths of their abasement to the lofty height of His own moral perfection. A revelation of such a power might negative all previous human experience, and yet be so far from an infraction of divine law as to be wholly necessary to its fulfilment. It might have been ordained "from the foundation of the world."

The historic Christ, suddenly appearing among men, attested by many, actually produced and produces such moral results. If only one man had been lifted into righteousness as the result of Christ's work, the conclusion that a new force had been revealed would be irresistible. Of this Christ certain things are affirmed. Concerning these affirmations we are not interested to know whether they are in the line of former experience or not. In the circumstances of this case it is more likely that they will be extraordinary and counter to the line of former experience. The problem is that man shall be brought out of the power of sin and made righteous. The fact is, that the problem has been solved, and man has been thus saved from sin by an experience new and extraordinary. Former experience was uniform, and uniformly powerless to bring man to God. To effect the new fact, a new experience, so far from being unlikely, is to be expected. Christ, so appearing, with such claims, *accomplishes the work*, sets in train the moral renovation of the race. It is affirmed of Him that never man was like Him. This is consistent with the conditions and with the results. It is therefore credible. He is shown as coming in the most extraordinary way, with

a change in all that we have known of the generation of human life, begotten of God, born of a virgin, because this would make Him a being wholly adapted to the work to be done, — a work hereafter to be defined in His own words and wrought out through all His life. It is a miracle, a wonder, according to the speech of men; it is only a “sign” according to the speech of God. By one act Omnipotent Love brings God and sinful humanity together. A sudden flash of angelic vision reveals a baby born in Bethlehem of Judæa. His parents are too reverent to name the child. An ancient prophet of their people had called Him IMMANUEL, or “God with us.” Long afterward His Apostle would say of Him: “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.” Therefore He was named from heaven JESUS, for He was to save His people from their sins. It is Incarnation of Deity. Incarnation is shown as the baby grows to boyhood, and passes on to man’s estate and to life’s end. “That Holy Thing” which was begotten of the Holy Ghost and born of Mary, Son of God and Son of Man, is always the same consistent Being, doing His one work of bringing God and man together, through Himself reconciling the world to God. It is this *purpose* that makes the Incarnation reasonable.

Jesus Himself thus stated His mission: “The Son of Man is come to save that which was lost;”<sup>1</sup> “I am come in my Father’s name;”<sup>2</sup> “I am not come of myself, but He that sent Me is true, whom ye know not. He hath sent Me.”<sup>3</sup> “I am the Light of the World;”<sup>4</sup> “I am come that they might have life, and that they

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> John v. 43.

<sup>3</sup> John vii. 28.

<sup>4</sup> John viii. 12.

might have it more abundantly;"<sup>1</sup> "I am come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;"<sup>2</sup> "I am come not to judge the world, but to save the world;"<sup>3</sup> "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth;"<sup>4</sup> "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."<sup>5</sup> Such sayings of Jesus might be multiplied many times, showing the nature of His mission, the one purpose of God, to save the world from its sin through the clear revelation to it of God. That which the blinded race had always been groping after, the God that had become "unknown" to men, was to be brought nigh. The avenging deity placated only by men's unworthy offerings, pacified or bought off or cheated by their inventions, was not the God of heaven. The true God must reveal Himself to men,—a God hating sin, indeed, but loving the sinner, and so hating and loving that He Himself would give the greatest sacrifice of divine love, and send His Son to reveal Himself to man. He would unite Himself to man in the imperishable bond of nature. And thus as God-Man, Jesus would show the truth of God's nature, the boundless need of man's nature, and at the same time the infinite loveliness of God's life as lived on earth amid human conditions. And so by Him would "the world be reconciled to God."<sup>6</sup> The sacrifice would be made complete. The Son of God would dwell with man,

<sup>1</sup> John x. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. ix. 13.

<sup>3</sup> John xii. 47.

<sup>4</sup> John xviii. 37.

<sup>5</sup> John iii. 16.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19; Heb. ii. 17.

learning even the worst that sin could do, though Himself without sin; becoming its victim, and dying in sacrificial atonement to save men from their sins. It is not our province now to enter upon any statement, much less philosophy, of the nature of the atonement to be effected by the Son of God. That task is for a later page. The fact is all we need to keep in mind. The purpose of God, the desire of the Father to bring His children to Himself, and to redeem the world to its best destiny, was to be worked out by the Christ. The truth of God revealed in this Word, the spoken God, was to show men the way to heaven, and to bring them into reconciliation with God. This was the end for which Jesus was born and lived, — "that He might be among us, until we should behold His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."<sup>1</sup>

If the advent of such a being was thus necessary for the salvation of the world, it was not only probable but necessary that He should be born of a Virgin. Was it to secure purity in Him? Not at all; for even thus the ordinary laws of heredity might have given Him through Mary many physical and mental taints that had come down the long stream of her lineage until her own nature was imparted to Him. Nor was it that the Holy Ghost might find His contact with human clay unpol-  
luting. Were it necessary for the Holy Ghost to find always an immaculate abiding-place, the poor souls of myriads of sinners now redeemed would have been in hopeless case; the Spirit would have been less gracious than the sun that pours its rays freely and without pol-

<sup>1</sup> John i. 14.

lution on places of pestilence till they are healed. It is true, we find a fitness in the innocence of Mary to welcome the influences that were divine. We can hardly imagine the choice of an unclean and polluted woman to be the mother of the Lord. But it was not on this account that a virgin was chosen. If Mary had been already the wife of Joseph and mother of children by him, her station would have been as honorable, her moral nature as uncontaminated, her purity as spotless as it had ever been in girlhood. Marriage does not dishonor. Wife and mother may be as pure as any maid. Honorable love carries no stain, and fatherhood and motherhood are sacred as ordained of God. It was an imputation of an unnatural impurity to the marriage-rite, when it was imagined that by remaining unmarried a person gained sanctity. There is not a word in Scripture to indicate that the union of the sexes in lawful love is unholy, and it is everywhere taken for granted that a celibate condition is contrary in ordinary circumstances to the law of God. The utterance of an apostle upon the subject distinctly assigns his reason for advising certain persons, whose calling would require entire self-devotion and the practical deprivation of home, not to marry; but there is no hint that any unholiness would attach to the marriage even of these. It could not have been for this that Gabriel was sent to a virgin with his great message of favor, though strangely enough this has been the thought uppermost in the minds of men in all times.

Moreover, suppose for a moment that it was for purity, absolute and perfect, that the mother of Jesus was a

virgin. What is gained for the great purpose for which He came unto the world? There is an addition, forced and unnatural, to the miraculous nature of the event, and the divinity of the new Saviour finds an adventitious and unnecessary emphasis. On the other hand is the distinct loss of the hereditary union in Jesus of the perfect and spotless Divinity and the sinful and polluted humanity that He came to save. If we believe the Virgin Mary to have been like all the other women of Israel, sharing in their common human-nature, child indeed of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, daughter in very truth of David, with a genealogy to be traced through sinful men, then we can see that from the very first it was the undeserved grace of God that came to her, and the grace of God that took up into union with the divine in Jesus the sinfulness of the race. Seek no miraculous and unwritten virtue for Mary, and you have then a Saviour indeed, one whose human mother gave to Him our human woes, which He was thenceforth to bear in Himself for redemption and cure. Let Mary be like any other Jewish maid, except, as we note hereafter, her lineage, which fulfilled the prophecies of her people; then we find in Jesus indeed our Brother, knowing our frame, sharing our very life, "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin;" without sin, because at once, by the very virtue of Incarnation, the Holy redeemed the unholy, and "in Him," from His first conception, "was no sin." In Him and in Him only was no sin. Never is there any statement that Mary was without sin. But *in Him* Mary's nature became pure, as does the nature of all, who are made one with Him.

What, then, was the reason for the choice of a virgin to be the mother of the Christ? It is found in the need that the divine paternity must be forever beyond question. To this unmarried one, to her whose child would be known by all not to be the child of any earthly husband, must be given the honour to become "wife unto the Holy Ghost." The "Holy Thing" to be born of her must always be accepted as the Son of God. No man should ever rightly say, that Jesus differed from other men only in the degree in which holiness dwelt in His soul. The world to which He came must discriminate His nature. His first baby-breath must be that of true Mediator. And so it was equally necessary that He should be born of woman, but be also Son of God. Born of a virgin, but "conceived by the Holy Ghost," the Anointed Saviour, the Reconciler of Heaven and earth, bore in Himself the Sonship of God and the Brotherhood of men.

And thus He was more than a child of Abraham and the brother of the Jew. He was the Son of Man because He was not the son of a man. There was a reason why He should come from the Jewish people, as will appear in a moment. But as He was the Redeemer of mankind, He could not be of one family alone. As His paternity was of Heaven, His nature was of our universal manhood, that "whosoever believeth on Him," whether Jew or Gentile, His contemporary or the last man on earth, might know the love of God, and not be stranger to the nature of God. Therefore the accompaniments of His birth were not merely Jewish. To Eastern astrologers, in the way which they best could understand, the

time and place of His birth were made known. The one aged Jew, who had waited long and expectantly in the Temple to see the Salvation of Israel, at once hailed the babe as bringing a "salvation" which God had "prepared before all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel."<sup>1</sup> The angels, though they sang to wondering shepherds on Judæan hills, sang the world's evangel, for they gave it to all "men of good will."<sup>2</sup> But how strange this "good news" was, and how prone men would be to restrict the new salvation to a favored race, if He had been born of merely Jewish parentage, is evident at once from the thoughts of all those who were most interested in the great event, with the exception of the angels, the aged Simeon, and the representatives of the Gentile world, to whom the Epiphany was given. The father and mother of John the Baptist had no message given to them of the greatness of the salvation, of which their son was to be the prophet, and their words are only of the coming day of glory *for Israel*.<sup>3</sup> Mary, when she meets Elisabeth, salutes her with an inspired Psalm of the divine help *for her people*.<sup>4</sup> The learned men of the nation, when appealed to by the wise men from the East, have no suspicion that the old-time prophecies of their sacred books were even in that moment fulfilled, and they answered only with a quotation about Bethlehem and a Governor, who should rule *his people Israel*.<sup>5</sup> All seemed to have prevision that a greater than David or Solomon had come, but only to redeem Israel and

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 32.<sup>3</sup> Luke i. 41, 59-80.<sup>5</sup> Matt. ii. 6.<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 14.<sup>4</sup> Luke i. 46-55.

to confirm the children of Abraham as the children of God. It is a sign of the natural tendencies of human thought which must be negatived at once, if the truth were to become the possession of the world. If Jesus was born, as He said,<sup>1</sup> to bear witness to the truth, then this error must be revealed at once, and His nature and mission as the Son of Man must be shown. He came unto His own indeed. But His own were of far larger number, and of races more diverse, than men could realize at first. As well might one household claim all the sunshine for itself, as the Jewish race believe that their Messiah, so long foretold as exercising rule also over the Gentiles, should belong to them alone. The sun is a thing of the sky, and shines for all the earth. And Jesus was the Light of the world. These things "were not done in a corner," not merely in little Judæa and in the Bethlehem that was least of the cities of Judah, but *in the world* and *from God*. His parentage, therefore, was not of one race, but He belonged to mankind. To his people, indeed, He was sent first, and He was their Messiah, though they knew it not. But His light was not the candle-glimmer of the Jewish race alone; He was the Sun of Righteousness for all the world, because though born of Mary, He was also the Son of God, who was the Creator and Universal Father of mankind.

But even with this mission to the world, it was natural that He should be born in the midst of the Jewish people, and in the line of all their prophecies. From the earliest ages this people had been remarkable for

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 37.

their monotheism. Surrounded on all sides by polytheistic nations, their whole history is one great moral struggle against idolatry. Jehovah, One God, making and keeping covenant with His people, "a jealous God," guarding Israel from all alien loves, and keeping for Himself through every vicissitude this nation,—Jehovah alone was Israel's God. The history, the faith, the ritual, the literature of this people would lead even the least thoughtful student to the conclusion that from this nation, if at all, would be likely to appear the representative of God among men. Centuries of promise and prophecy led to the confident expectation among the Jews themselves that the great Deliverer of the world would be their Messiah,—an expectation yet held tenaciously by the great body of the Jews who have not received Jesus as the fulfilment of their hopes. Prophet after prophet, singer after singer, had kept the national heart and mind true to the coming One. Every day had the sacrifices of the Temple typified the great Sacrifice that was to come. The first declaration of angels, the first utterance of those who saw His advent, proclaimed again the sayings of old, and in the words of their Scriptures welcomed the heavenly Babe. Though He was the Saviour of the world, to whose nature no human being was to be alien, it was natural that He should be born of this people, of the royal line of David, to rule over His people Israel.

But with His origin from the royalty of heaven and of earth, He was born of the common people, accessible to all. It is not necessary to understand that poverty was His lot, but only that His was the condition of ordi-

nary life. His parents were not admitted to the inn, not because they could not pay the charges, but because it was already full. But while the birth in the stable was thus an apparent accident, we cannot help believing that if Joseph and Mary had come to Bethlehem with the pomp of great wealth, or of princely condition, room would have been made for them in the inn. Neither abject poverty nor conspicuous prosperity was theirs. It was quite in accord with the conditions to be met in His coming among men, that Christ's appearance was of this character. Coming as the world's Saviour, He came in such guise as the world would welcome most readily. If He had come "with observation," born in a palace, clothed in princely garb, surrounded by an obsequious court, secluded from the public gaze, the child of the most pampered luxury, and with all the power of the nations and the glory of them at His command, He would not have been the world's Saviour. Such surroundings of His cradle would have been a devil's gift.<sup>1</sup> The rich would have flattered and feared; the poor would never have drawn nigh; the sinful would have plunged deeper into evil; the sorrowing would have looked elsewhere for sympathy; the despairing would have seen no halo of hope gilding such a throne. The manger-cradle was better. The annunciation to shepherds was more in accord with the Messiah's mission. It needs no commentary upon the Scriptures of the Advent to show what every age, every clime, every race of man exhibits. The poor will not come to the rich, the lowly will not seek the great, to find the comforts of fellowship and the help

<sup>1</sup> Luke iv. 5.

for poverty or sorrow. But the rich will go to the poor, and they do, in constant love and pity. A reversal of the rule is rarely if ever seen. Kings might bow around the Babe who lay cradled in the stone trough from which cattle were fed; but peasants could not and would not have tried to gain access to a baby prince, whose glory was great and of the world's reckoning. What fellowship has darkness with light? The dark mind, the dark lot do not seek the light. Poverty, ignorance, crime, woe, do not voluntarily seek the light. Even the innocent poor are sensitive and suspicious of all who are in better circumstances than they. It is for the rich to make the advance and give their service unsought. Wealth, education, rightness, joy, overleap all barriers, and flow down to those who lie beneath. Hopeless, then, would the world's woes have been, if Heaven had not condescended to the poorest, to the lowliest. It was necessary, if poor and rich alike were to share in the salvation, that the Anointed One should come in the family of the peasant or the common artisan. The Advent was thus most reasonable. As Jesus was proclaimed first to the shepherds upon the Judæan hills and received their wondering worship, so to the end of time He will be the Friend of the poor, and the common people will hear Him gladly. His coming appeals to angels, to shepherds, to Eastern magi laden with rich gifts, to all men of good will. The old Christmas carol enshrines the truth in its quaint but beautiful rhymes:—

“He neither shall be born  
 In housen, nor in hall,  
 Nor in the place of Paradise,  
 But in an ox's stall.

“ He neither shall be clothed  
In purple, nor in pall,  
But all in fair linen  
As were babies all.

“ He neither shall be rocked  
In silver, nor in gold,  
But in a wooden cradle  
That rocks on the mould.”

It needs must be, if the Son of God was to be a Saviour to all men. And so it happens that what was mere anachronism in those artists who have painted the Christ as a dweller in the artist's own land, becomes beautifully significant to our faith. Hans Holbein clothed the Madonna and Child in Dutch garments, and surrounded them with the kneeling forms of Burgomeisters and Dutch dames. Raphael loved to place Mary and her Child in the foreground of an Italian landscape. Both were right. Jesus was native to every land, for He was the Son of Man. He was the Saviour of His own people Israel, but in His face shone the glory of God for all men. The song that hailed His birth was one of “Glory to God in the highest, Peace on earth to men of good will.”

## II.

### THE LUMINOUS BOYHOOD.

ONLY a single gleam of light shines from the boyhood of Jesus in the story of the Gospels; but it is enough to make all those hidden years luminous, and from the few words we see what He was, and how He grew in favor with God and man in the interval between the infancy and the beginning of His public work.

“And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth. And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it. But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day’s journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said unto him: Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee

sorrowing. And He said unto them : How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the saying which He spake unto them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them : but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." <sup>1</sup>

This is all. In passing we may note the singular reticence, and its tribute to the simple faith and single purpose of the sacred narrative. Thirty years are written in a few sentences. We have but to turn to the apocryphal gospels of The Infancy to see what the hand of fraud would do in elaborating this period. Even the learned and devout scholars of Christendom write whole chapters concerning the probable training and employments of a Jewish boy in Nazareth, seeking to picture the scenes of these silent and hidden years with all the art that a reverent scholarship may permit. But the Gospels make no such attempt. The silence is in itself an eloquent testimony to the sincerity of the writers, who would not go beyond what was known and essential to their one purpose. Not even under what must have been to them as great stress of temptation as to any modern biographer of Christ, would they suffer their imaginations to play with their sacred theme. They were writing with one definite purpose in view. They were to transmit to others their own knowledge of the nature and work of Jesus. They were not romancers, nor did they care to excite interest beyond what would naturally follow the recital of facts.

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 39-52.

Doubtless the boyhood of Jesus was comparatively uneventful. The incident at Jerusalem stood alone. It showed the waking intelligence, the desire to learn from the doctors of His people, the appreciation that His Father's business was pressing upon Him, and that for this already He must begin to live. It was the great event of His childhood of a public, or half-public character. It excited attention; it awakened among the chief persons of the nation a question as to this boy, so strangely precocious, and so wonderful in His spiritual insight. There is no evidence that the child usurped the office of a teacher at this time. "Both hearing them and asking them questions" are the words that express His attitude with reference to the scribes and priests in whose company He was found. What days or hours of meditation previous to His twelfth year the boy had had, no one can say. Possibly His "questions" showed only some sudden impulse as He listened to the disputings of the scribes, or sought some interpretation from them of the law, which He had been taught at school. But He knew that He was about His Father's business in thus learning in the Temple. The time was coming when He would speak there "with authority, and not as the scribes." But now he "questioned," and they wondered as they heard; they were "astonished at His understanding and answers." He too was questioned, and already the scribes found in Him a deeper knowledge of their law, a truer appreciation of its spiritual import, than they had found in all their subtlety of interpretation. Already "never boy spake like this boy."<sup>1</sup> This single incident is enough to

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 46.

show that at the age of twelve He was aware of His high mission, though how far His knowledge of it went we cannot say.

But when at last His parents found Him in the Temple, He submitted at once to their authority. If His Father's business had detained Him three days in the Temple, that same business would now require Him to live as boys should live, and so He went back to Nazareth and the years of quiet. There was no thought of stepping out of the humble life of a boy because He was Lord and Saviour, the Anointed of God to be the world's King. If at this early time He fully knew that such was His nature and destiny, He was in a position in which any common boy would have been likely to assert himself in some obnoxious way, with some attempt to command already, or with at least a restive spirit resentful under rebuke and impatient of authority. But such a spirit was farthest from the boy Jesus. There was no premature exercise of power. He returned with His parents, and "was subject unto them."

So reads the Scripture. But the so-called Gospels of the Infancy to which we have referred, have such inanities as these: "And when the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys his companions about the same age. Who when they were at play, made clay into several shapes, namely, asses, oxen, birds, and other figures, each boasting of his work, and endeavouring to exceed the rest. Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, I will command these figures which I have made to walk. And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return, they

returned. He had also made the figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly, and when he commanded to stand still, did stand still; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink. When at length the boys went away and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them, Take heed, children, for the future, of his company, for he is a sorcerer; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him.”<sup>1</sup> Another prank in a dyer’s shop is related in the same chapter, when Jesus took all the cloths that were lying ready to be dyed, and threw them into the furnace. The dyer cried out: “What hast thou done to me, O thou Son of Mary? Thou hast injured both me and my neighbours; they all desired their cloths a proper colour, but thou hast come and spoiled them all.” He replied, “I will change the colour of every cloth to what colour thou desirest;” and then “he presently began to take the cloths out of the furnace, and they were all dyed of those same colours which the dyer desired. And when the Jews saw this surprising miracle, they praised God.” In like manner it is related how, if Joseph made a mistake in his carpentry, Jesus always helped him out of the trouble by simply pulling the gates, boxes, thrones, or what not, into the proper size and shape. And not always do these false writings ascribe to him miracles of benevolence; but in fits of anger he would paralyze the arms of boys who struck him, or strike dead those who opposed him or accidentally ran against him in the street.<sup>2</sup> It needs no word to emphasize the contrast between such fictions, and the

<sup>1</sup> Gospels of Infancy, I. xv. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., I. xix. 22.

reserve, the repose, the dignity of the narration of the boyhood in the canonical Gospels.

In the simple record that He went back to Nazareth with His parents and "was subject unto them,"<sup>1</sup> we have the reasonable record of all those years of quiet preparation for His great work. It was the same preparation that every man must have, by which to learn self-restraint and gain that experience of life, which at last will result in strength of character to endure and accomplish. From the earliest years to the last He was "to learn obedience by the things He should suffer."<sup>2</sup> Already He had begun to live the life which would be marked everywhere by obedience. Already He began to develop the perfect character, which by and by would be called upon to meet the most awful strains, the severest testing. And that perfection was developed in the only way possible, the only way in which any human character can become strong and fit to lead men in the way of life.

"He was subject unto His parents." Submission to authority the human race had refused. Sin against God, the denial of His Fatherhood, the arrogance of self-will, the usurpation of the throne of morals by the self-confident human soul,—these were the very sins that had been the undoing of men. "To be meek and lowly of heart;"<sup>3</sup> "to esteem others better than yourselves;"<sup>4</sup> "to be poor in spirit;"<sup>5</sup> to "fulfil law,"<sup>6</sup> and "not to destroy it;"<sup>7</sup> to be trustful and dependent,<sup>7</sup> as the lilies

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 51.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. v. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. vi. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

of the field or the fowls of the air ; not only “to say, Lord, Lord, but to do the will of the Father in Heaven ;”<sup>1</sup> to cry under the most dreadful stress, “nevertheless not my will, but Thine be done,”<sup>2</sup> — these were things of the new life, that Jesus came to give. He could not give it until He had it. He could not teach obedience until He learned it. He could not prove Himself perfect, until He obeyed to the letter, and until His obedience went even deeper than the letter, in whatever was required of Him. On a later page this subject must be farther developed, but it meets us here in His very earliest life. The key-note, which was to govern all the wondrous harmony of His life, is struck in those few simple words : “He was subject unto them.” The one essential thing for the perfection of His work was the perfection of His own character. And it was with Him as it is with every human being ; character is developed only by training, by submission to tests, by constant response to the appeal of duty. He was to grow from babyhood through boyhood to full manhood exactly as others grow, by the same processes maturing His powers and doing His life’s work in the time of preparation, as well as in the period of fulfilment. So only could He “grow in favour with God and man”<sup>3</sup> as He grew in physical stature.

But now the question will surely be asked : Why *learn* obedience ? Was He not divine ? Was not His pater-nity from God, and therefore was not all virtue innate ? Was He not at all times divinely endowed with all the attributes of God ? At least in His “divine part” was

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Luke ii. 52.

He not thus beyond all need of instruction and possibility of growth?

It is a vicious method of regarding Jesus by which we assign one attribute, or act, to one part of His nature, and another to another part of His nature. He is to be regarded only as One Being, not a man of double consciousness; not of human soul and divine soul; not of twin natures refusing to mingle in one being, as oil and water in a clear glass may always be discerned in their own places. We intend no dissertation upon the mystery of Christ's person. We may leave entirely the disputes of schoolmen and theologians, however interesting they may be, for our one effort is to study the Christ of the Gospels and see how reasonable He is. And just upon this point the Gospels are explicit. They never speak of the human nature and the divine nature of Jesus as separate and distinct entities. "That Holy Thing" is always presented simply as Jesus the Christ. From the cradle to the ascension it is Jesus, Jesus only, who is the theme of discourse. If He is wearied and sits "thus"<sup>1</sup> on the well-curb, or if He is worn out with teaching and falls into deep sleep on the cushion of the fisherman's boat, it is nowhere said that the human part of Jesus was thus exhausted. If He speaks one word and stills a storm, or puts forth His hand and lifts the dead to life, the Gospels never say that He did it by His divine power. Sometimes we stupidly seek to make this dissection of His nature, but the Scriptures always say, "He spake; He did the deed." It was Jesus, the Mediator, the One Being, in whom the divine and human dwelt in inseparable

<sup>1</sup> John iv. 6.

arable union, who was wearied, who suffered, who grew, who learned; and it was Jesus whose human power is never to be distinguished from the divine power, who stilled the storm, healed diseased folk, forgave sins, and arose from the dead. The narrative is thus consistent from its first word to its last. And this fact is to be borne in mind throughout our whole discussion.

Accordingly, there was much that Jesus must learn. He was to grow in favor with God and man, as any being must grow who is not independent of earthly surroundings and temporal conditions. We make no denial of true deity in Him, and there is nothing inconsistent with His divine origin from the Heavenly Father, when we see in Him one who divested Himself by the very fact of Incarnation of the "glory that He had with the Father before the world was,"<sup>1</sup> and "made Himself of no reputation."<sup>2</sup> He "took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."<sup>3</sup> Otherwise He would have been too far removed from the "likeness" of those whom He came to save, to be in any essential brotherhood with them, or to know anything of the painful processes by which the regeneration and rebuilding of lost character must be accomplished. He was limited, as all other men are limited, by His environment. Experience of life on earth could come to Him only by living life through, day by day, to its end. His knowledge was at any given moment not that of God alone, for though "God was in Christ,"<sup>4</sup> God was not Christ, and Christ was not the eternal and omniscient Father.

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 19.

Jesus declared that there were things that He did not know.<sup>1</sup> He distinctly said that there were things He could not do,<sup>2</sup> owing to conditions existing outside of Himself. He had laid aside "glory,"<sup>3</sup> and would receive that glory again<sup>4</sup> after His life and mission on earth were accomplished. Meanwhile He was subjected to that share of the lot of men, which was necessary to make Him our brother, an example to all, one "who was tried in all points like as we are, that He might be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,"<sup>5</sup> and be made a perfected High Priest.<sup>6</sup>

When Jesus, therefore, returned to Nazareth and "was subject" unto His parents, He entered upon that course of life which was to be expected until the mission of His maturity should be possible. He learned obedience here in boyhood that He might obey even in manhood and even unto death<sup>7</sup> the will of His Father who was in heaven. He knew the life of a child in a Nazarene home. He studied in school as the Nazarene boys studied; and if school-hours ever seem long and tedious to any Christian boy, it may help him to think that Jesus sat cross-legged on the floor of some house in Nazareth, while He repeated aloud the passages of the Old Testament until body and mind were alike weary in the prolonged effort to memorize the Scriptures, to which all Hebrew boys were subjected in His time. And yet that one scene in the Temple at Jerusalem, when He was twelve years of age, helps us. Not exactly as all other Hebrew boys could He have studied, who had

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiii. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Phil. ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 58.

<sup>4</sup> John xvii. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. ii. 16-18.

reasoned with the doctors, and even then had been eager to be about His Father's business. There must have been in Him, as He learned the Scriptures at His mother's knee, or at the school of the village-rabbi, a strange insight into the ancient word that would often puzzle His teachers, and an enthusiasm for His studies that even the most studious would rarely if ever feel. He was "learning obedience," and with what delight must He have read the word of Samuel: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." The loyalty of Psalmist and Prophet would find response in His deepest heart. The Messianic hope, wherever uttered, would thrill His soul with forecasts of fulfilment as He should "finish the work which had been given Him to do." Delight in the Word of God would kindle enthusiasm in Him like a clear flame of heavenly fire.

But all this delight would not save Him from the common weariness of the student. Perhaps the very burning of His soul would consume His energy the faster. He would allow no phase of truth to escape unnoticed. The three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, were familiar to Him, though the Hebrew had long been a dead language. But His quotations from the Old Testament indicate a familiarity with the Hebrew text as well as with the Greek of the Septuagint, which was the translation then in common use. Plainly nothing but the most intimate and painstaking knowledge of the sacred literature of His people

would satisfy Him. His student-life was one of conscience, and here duty was dear to Him.

So in all this period of silence in the Nazarene home, the later years of which we shall regard again when we come to see Him as a man in the home, He was subjected to the customary processes by which human life is shaped. His work doubtless did not preclude the sports of boyhood, which must have brought the glow of health to His browned cheek, and the rest of health to His little cot in the wall at night. But we need not picture with the realism which modern research into the manners and customs of the Jews would justify, the ordinary life of the Jewish boy at this time. It is enough to say, that through it all Jesus was receiving the ordinary discipline of life, learning its one great lesson, through all trial and every temptation proving that the will of His Father in heaven was better than any opposing will, and so subjecting Himself to the voice of authority, that even His boyhood was perfect.

And what a wonderful and joyous thing it is to be a boy! To have exuberant life! To feel yourself growing! To be so full of good spirits that you cannot walk except by special restraint, but must leap and run! To know that life is before you! To see manhood in the distance! To think what you will be and do, when you are a man! To be so rich in opportunity! And yet never to be so taken up with the long look forward that you forget the present, — a present so full of content, so joyous, so free! It is a great thing to be a boy. But to be a boy learning no evil; indignant at wrong; repudiating shame; loving truth and honor; shunning all pollution; daring

to look every one in the eye because there is nothing to conceal; with a heart pure as the leaping brook; with a bravery that trembles only before a possibility of sin; with lips unstained by any foulness, and a mind that is a fountain of good thoughts; to be a boy chivalrous, right's best champion, pouring out happiness upon the world, anticipating manhood by a true man's work already, and showing the life of a gentle and gentlemanly soul, because it is the life of God in a boy, — this is a wonderful and beautiful thing indeed! This is the kind of a boy Jesus must have been, according to the very few words we have about His boyhood. Thus He grew in favor with God and man, as He grew in stature; and at last His true and strong manhood was but the development of His boyhood, as the flower bursts to its full and glorious bloom from the perfect bud.

### III.

#### THE BAPTISM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WHEN boyhood and youth were over, is it a surprise to see Jesus coming to John the Baptist to be baptized of him in the Jordan? The surprise vanishes, when we hear His words, that answered the objection raised by John: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."<sup>1</sup> Jesus was but continuing the work that had engaged all His boyhood and youth. His baptism was no isolated act. It was only one step in that path of righteousness, which was necessary if "all righteousness," the whole pathway, were to be fulfilled.

But why? Was it not a mere form? Could this plunge in the Jordan have any intrinsic force to add to His native fitness to be the Saviour of men? If, as so many millions have believed, there is in baptism some magic or some supernatural power to cleanse the soul from sin; if it was truly a regenerating bath, certainly He did not need it, who from the first had been without sin. It could not have been for cleansing that Jesus came to John.

If we look at the rite itself, as it was administered by John the Baptist, and see its place in the economy of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 15.

preparation for the Gospel, we shall understand better why Jesus should submit to it, and so "fulfil all righteousness."

In four hundred years no prophet had spoken in Israel. The period had been one of degradation for the nation, with occasional gleams of hopefulness and heroism, and sometimes of prosperity. Wave after wave of foreign invasion had swept over the land. The toil and bloodshed of the devoted patriots, who had risen against the alien oppressors, seemed in vain. Hopelessness and fear settled down upon the people. With foreign mercenaries and heathen courts had come decadence in faith and morals. It must have seemed to devout Israelites that the darkest prophecies of their ancient books had never found such fulfilment as had now come, or must soon come, if indeed any worse fate could yet be in store. Even religion had degenerated into a heartless ritual, or a trivial subservience to the letter, which had proved fatal alike to Pharisee and Sadducee, driving the one to fanatical and bigoted zeal and the other to a materialistic rationalism. Righteousness, spirituality, the love of good and of God that flows from a true fellowship with heaven, was like a hidden refugee in the secret hearts of a few choice men and women, who could not believe that Israel would be forsaken of God.

Malachi, the last prophet of the old time, had not ceased to speak without foretelling the advent of One who would bring judgment to the earth. A day would dawn when there would be a discrimination, a separating between the good and the bad, a day of burning, when

the good would be purified and the bad would shrivel and vanish like the stubble under flame. The Sun of Righteousness would arise with healing in His wings.<sup>1</sup>

But this advent of a righteous Saviour and Lord must have a preparation. The world must be roused to repentance. The Messiah must be preceded by Elijah. Once more the spirit of that old prophet would blaze forth like a fire, and a great spiritual awakening, a moral revolution, would occur, so that the heart of the fathers would be turned to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers,<sup>2</sup>—words that the angel repeated to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, when the birth and mission of John were foretold. “In the spirit and power of Elijah” John was to come. “The spirit and power,” not the *person* of Elijah, would fulfil the prophecy. But the lack of spirituality of the Jews of the time of Malachi and the succeeding centuries may be well typified by this one fact,—that they took the prophecy in a material sense; they believed that Elijah would return in person to set the order of the world right. They kept a place and set a chair for him at the circumcision of children. If articles of value were found and no owner claimed them, or when difficulties could not be solved, it was said, “Let it wait till Elijah comes.” Even to our own times at every Passover the door of the room is set open, in the belief that at that hour Elijah may appear. But it was only “the spirit and the power of Elijah” that was promised, and these came in John the Baptist. He turned the hearts of the fathers to the children, and of the children to the fathers. The degenerate descend-

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. iv. 6, and Luke i. 17.

ants of Abraham, the unworthy children of the former and greater age, were turned again to repentance. The old righteousness was rekindled in the new time. Elijah had been the prophet of fire, destroying, not constructing. John the Baptist was the prophet of fire, kindling a fire of repentance, "lest God should smite the earth with a curse."<sup>1</sup> Repentance, or wrath, was the cry of Elijah. Repent, and flee from the wrath to come,<sup>2</sup> was the message of John.

But John was not only a prophet to Israel, as Elijah had been; he was the forerunner of Him, who, as we have seen, was to be a Saviour to all men. If, then, John's mission was to prepare for the world's Saviour, the sign, if he used any, by which the purpose of his mission should be shown must be no mere Jewish rite, though it must be one which the Jew could receive and understand. In the Jewish code there was but one rite that had a meaning so general, that in that code itself it was of constant and universal occurrence, and had never been incapacitated for the great purpose for which it was now to be adopted by any specific and restricted use. Burnt-offering, sin-offering, trespass and peace-offering, had their narrow limits of application. All such rites, too, had suffered alike from the degeneracy of the people, and had come to have little force as expressing a real renewal of life within the soul. But the rite that was used by the Jews to purify every other rite, the rite which must precede every formal offering and service, was really more than Levitical, of greater antiquity and wider acceptance, and of such clear significance that in

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Luke iii. 7-9.

any land or age it would not fail to be symbolical of regeneration and purity. This rite was baptism.

Ablution, or bathing, was common in almost all ancient nations as a preparation for any sacred duty. The Greeks and Romans bathed before sacrifice. At the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, the *mystæ* went in solemn procession to the sea-shore and bathed in the sea for ceremonial cleansing. In Egypt the priests bathed twice in the day and twice in the night as a preparation for their sacred offices. In Israel it was necessary to wash before every ceremonial, and at any time to bathe carefully the person, if there had been any contact with unclean things.<sup>1</sup> Even the sacrifices themselves must be washed before they could be offered; and in Solomon's Temple there were ten great lavers, or tanks, for purifying the burnt-offerings.<sup>2</sup> The priests of the Temple bathed in the "molten sea" before sacrificing; and when the high-priest<sup>3</sup> was consecrated, baptism was the first of the three ordinances of which anointing and sacrifice were the last. And in this rite, it must be borne in mind, the spiritual cleansing, the significance of the outward act in the real inward condition of the mind, was never lost from view. It was as when Pilate washed his hands before the mob that clamored for the death of Jesus. The people cared nothing that Pilate's hands were clean; they and he only cared to know that he freed himself from participation in the murder of that just man, and from responsibility for it. Christ's blood must be on them, not on Pilate.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxxv. 2; Ex. xix. 10; Lev. xvii. 15; Deut. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxii. 4, 6; Lev. xvi. 26; John xi. 55.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. iv. 2-6.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. xxix. 4; Lev. viii. 6.

Baptism was thus a very ancient ordinance, known everywhere in some form, and with the Jews always having a profound spiritual force, and therefore constantly employed as an introduction to the greatest religious actions of their lives. It was specially used to prepare for priestly or sacrificial functions, both of which Jesus was soon to assume. Moreover, this was the only Jewish rite of equal importance which John was free to administer in the wilderness, for it was used by the Jews with far greater freedom than anointing, or any form of sacrifice.

That this baptism of John appealed at once to the conscience of the nation we have abundant testimony in the Gospels. Crowds went out to him, awakened by his stern rebukes and glad to flee from the sinfulness of the age, which according to this preacher was soon to pass away and a new age dawn. The voice of John, "crying in the wilderness," and the baptism of John with its symbolism unmistakable, brought thousands to repentance and confession. Nor were the penitents of the Jews alone. Roman soldiers came and asked, "And what shall we do?" Already these "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," oppressors and foes, came as representatives of the heathen world, and were touched by the appeal to conscience and received the baptism of water. The lofty and the lowly, the rich citizen of Jerusalem and Jericho and the peasant of Galilee, tax-gatherers and soldiers, men of all faiths and no faith, heard the voice calling them to forsake sin. And then the plunge in the flowing river was the glad recognition by each penitent that he had confessed the evil of his

heart, and in the mercy of God had sought to wash away all wrong from his life.

Suddenly Jesus appeared upon the river-bank and demanded to be baptized. The same thought leaped to John's mind, that comes to ours: "Not so! This is baptism for remission of sins. Thou hast no sin. John hath need to be baptized of Thee." But Jesus answered calmly, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It was not a confession of sin on His part. He makes no claim to the rite because He would be bathed in the laver of regeneration. He virtually grants John's objection, and merely says: "Yield for the time," "suffer it," "we must fulfil righteousness." In other words, a thorough and open commitment to righteousness is demanded of every man. If any being be perfectly holy, yet he must show that holiness in every way which is demanded by custom, or circumstance. It was not for Jesus to stand apart from this scene, in which John was carrying out the plan of God, and ushering in the new day of grace. The one symbol of righteousness now was this immersion in the glistening stream, as for ages sacrificial victim and sacrificing priest had been alike bathed before the offering was made, and as, through ages yet to come, a similar immersion in water would be a sign of consecration and renewed life in the Spirit of God. Should Jesus have no part in the declaration of righteousness? Should He give no sign of spiritual fellowship and sympathy with all these multitudes, who desired a new and good life? In this great turning to God, should He hold aloof and miss the great chance of formally iden-

tifying Himself with the new era? Above all, if it was His purpose to perpetuate this rite, and ask from every disciple this public consecration, should He refuse to suffer and to do all, that He asked of others for His sake? He could not. This was a righteous deed. Then He must do it. He would not "fulfil all righteousness," if He did not do it.

We have, then, these answers to our question, why the baptism of Jesus was necessary to the fulfilment of all righteousness, the perfection of His life:—

It was the one good deed, by which He could most forcibly declare His righteousness and identify Himself with the new regeneration of His time and of the world by the same act and sign employed by all around Him. But besides this, it was the inauguration for Him of a public career. By a rite that all men would understand, and yet a rite that would in no wise separate Him from His own nation, He would proclaim Himself as set apart for His work. All men were accustomed to lustrations as a religious form, when any great service was to be performed, when any great sacrifice was to be offered, when any great office was to be assumed. In all these respects Jesus showed the importance of the hour. He was to enter upon a great service. He was to assume the great office of the spiritual High Priest of mankind. He was at last to become the victim of His service, He was to die as the Lamb of sacrifice. The sacrifice, therefore, was washed in the laver, the High Priest was bathed before He stood before the altar. To the men who witnessed the scene at the Jordan, this was not known, except to the one preacher, the

prophet who hailed the coming Christ as The Lamb of God.

Again, in this service Jesus was ever to be meek and lowly. Exaltation was to come only by submission. He was to found a kingdom indeed, but as its king, He was to wear only a crown of thorns. Its throne was to be a cross. "Let him who would be great among you be your minister, and whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be the servant of all," was to be the motto on the shield of the kingdom. Where, then, an earthly king would have gone to his coronation of pomp and pride, this King "humbled Himself," suffered Himself to be baptized by another; and that other was less holy than He. By no exceptional sign would He be set apart to lordship, but by the common symbol to which all men were then eagerly submitting would He show His part and sympathy with them in a position of humility before God. He was meek and lowly of heart. If long afterward the washing of the disciples' feet by the Lord was a sign of meekness and an example to His followers, the baptism in the Jordan at the hands of a sinful man was the sign of the new era of good-will, the new reign of divine love on earth.

Finally, though it was not known at the time, this plunge in the Jordan was to be the accepted symbol of the new Church, the world over, in every age, by which repenting men should enter into it. Simple, impressive, significant, it would at the same time be possible. It was not necessary that the waters of the Jordan should be used, for there was no special sacredness attached to that river, nor was any special blessing needed to con-

secrete water anywhere for this purpose. In all His later commands Jesus never hinted at any necessity of this kind. Men have foisted strange notions upon the simple rite, but primitive usage was free from them. Burial in water was the only essential thing. Whether in the flowing stream under the open sky, or in the shallows of the sea, or in the great baptisteries erected in the Middle Ages, or in fountains of village churches, the act would be the same. The Jordan at Bethabara, the wells at Salim, the pool of Siloam at Jerusalem, the prison-fountain at Philippi, the wayside spring in the desert on the road to Africa, were alike scenes of holy baptism. Jesus chose no form of consecration that was dependent on place or extraordinary circumstance. It was a rite possible to all men and significant to all. Thus could He with right make it a duty for all. No human being who is of moral responsibility, whose conscience hears the call to repentance and to a holy life, whose circumstances are those of a common humanity, can be free from the obligation of Christ, to follow Him and to join with all who are His in this one sign of devotion and consecration. By baptism no man would be saved. In the act itself was no mysterious power of regeneration. Christ's submission to it proves as much as this. But as the sacred sign, as the speaking symbol, of the inward change and the renewed moral state, which were already accomplished facts, baptism was to be forever the chosen form for those who follow Jesus into His kingdom.

In accordance with this purpose He gave His commandment at the very last before going away to His Father: "Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them *into*

the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>1</sup> His disciples were to be in more intimate relationship with Him than that of master and pupil. They were to be of His own nature. He had made Himself bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh. They were to become spirit of His spirit. They were to be His brethren, sons of God, the temples of the Holy Ghost. Possibly it was *only* for His sake that at His baptism a voice was heard out of Heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased;” and it may have been for Him alone, that the Holy Spirit descended to rest upon Him. But certainly we who enter into the divine Family, being baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, may remember that in His baptism, as in every other experience of His life, He was fulfilling all righteousness for our sakes, and was an example and Saviour for us. It would seem, then, most natural, not only that the Father should speak to Him in this special consecration, and the Spirit come to Him, but also that the names in the Trinity should be joined together when the repenting and loving believer enters by the same sign into eternal communion with God.

It was a simple thing for the Christ to come to John and be baptized of him; but it caused the heavens to be opened, the voice of the Father to be heard, and the Spirit to descend and rest upon Him, because He had shown Himself ready to do *every* act of righteousness. We question if any true soul ever consecrated himself to God in the same way without also having the assurance that Heaven was well pleased with him; without

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.

hearing the voice of God in approval, and finding the Holy Spirit coming into real union with his own spirit. By such consecration of self; by such commitment to service; by such typical obedience, in which the whole future life is mirrored as faithfully as the physical form is mirrored in the glassy stream; by such spiritual burial<sup>1</sup> to the old life of sin, and such resurrection to a new life of pure desires and holy effort, as is pictured in this sacred rite, we come as with a prayer to be admitted into the family of God. Baptism is a prayer, and the answer to it from Heaven is prompt: "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God."<sup>2</sup> "It doth not yet appear what we shall be," for sons grow daily, and the likeness of character and form to the Father develops daily; but already are we made His children, and may believe that He is "well-pleased."

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iii. 2.

## IV.

### THE NAZARENE FAMILY.

WITH His baptism Jesus turned away from the quiet life in Nazareth, and began that heavenly ministry, which was to change the character of the world. But before we follow His public career we pause to look more closely at the years not properly included in His boyhood, and to glean from them some knowledge of what His contribution to the Nazarene home was, and to learn something concerning the homes that He loved. What would be the life in our homes most Christlike, and what for all men are His teachings about the relations, which are the foundation and the blessing of the home?

If we regard the probable course of Jesus in His own home in Nazareth between boyhood and the age of thirty, there can be little doubt that He worked at the bench in Joseph's shop. It is not at all likely that He spent these years in any dreamy mysticism, in any unpractical seclusion. Like any other youth, who was subject to his parents, Jesus would be early taught His father's trade. There is no hint that He stood apart from His own family in any respect until His hour came for beginning the work of His manhood. When that hour came, no thought of home or friends kept Him back

from duty, any more than the boy to-day, who comes to manhood, refuses to hear the call of the world's work and press forward to the life of business, which separates him from his former surroundings. In finally leaving His Nazarene home Jesus did nothing uncommon; nor is His future homelessness to be interpreted as a slight upon the domestic affections. It was only the reasonable course which every man pursues, each one heeding his own call, Christ going forth to His work; you, reader, going forth to yours.

The family at Nazareth doubtless was composed of Joseph and Mary, Jesus, and His younger brothers and sisters, as enumerated in the passage, Matt. xiii. 55, 56. Certainly the *prima facie* evidence of this passage and of others is, that these were the true brothers and sisters of Jesus, and not more distant relatives.<sup>1</sup> And if, as we have seen upon a former page, there is no need of claiming for Mary that perpetual virginity, which probably lies at the origin of the theories that would make these persons the cousins of Jesus, we find it easy and natural to take the record as it stands. These brothers were James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, but the sisters are not named in the Gospel. Tradition says they were two in number, named Esther and Tamar.

<sup>1</sup> This question, upon which volumes have been written, of course cannot receive extended treatment here. Nor is it necessary; for even if these brethren were the children of Joseph by a former marriage, they were still in the home of Jesus, and we are only obliged to think of them as older, rather than younger, than He. Again, if they were His cousins, it is generally admitted that their mother dwelt with the widowed Mary in her Nazarene home, and thus the children of the two families would grow up together. But I consider the great preponderance of evidence to be in favor of the position taken above, that they were brothers and sisters of Jesus.

It was a common home, then, in which Jesus lived. He was not the only son, living alone, in unusual seclusion, with plenty of time to dream dreams, saved from labor by the awed reverence of parents of whose half worshipful care He was the sole object. He was the eldest of seven children. As such, His own family cares could not have been small. If Joseph, the father, died at some time previous to Christ's baptism, the care of the whole family devolved upon Him. This is a probable conjecture, as Joseph is never mentioned in the Gospels after the Ministry began, while the others repeatedly appear. Biographers of Jesus love to anticipate the scenes of the Gospels and imagine the life of Jesus in these years as largely contemplative, much given to prayer, with lonely watchings and quiet perusal of the Scriptures. And we cannot for a moment believe that this period was prayerless, or that the later habit of His life was not forming already, so that He would often be found, when all the others had gone to rest, upon the hill-top above the village, keeping vigil beneath the stars. But doubtless, too, and quite as often, His prayer had to be snatched, as ours is, from the entanglements of the busiest life. The children playing in the shavings beneath His bench would mingle their cries of sport with His cry to Heaven. If the mother's health failed, His solicitude would not fail, nor His care be any less than that of the disciple John, to whom He committed her, when He could care for her no more on earth.<sup>1</sup> Discussions of business with Joseph, or of the distressing political situation with

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 25-27.

neighbors, probably took as much time as reading the ancient scrolls of Chronicles and Kings. If He sat thinking a few moments with the tools laid aside, no doubt little Jude or Simon toddled up to ask Him to whittle out a boat for him. We note these things only to make this part of the life of Jesus real to us, as it was. Such a son, such a brother, we may be sure, neglected no loving duty of the little home in Nazareth merely because there was a larger home awaiting Him, when His larger work should be done. We may question whether that larger work would have been possible, so that He could cry at last "It is finished," if this life of the home, with all its petty incidents, had not been lovingly and faithfully lived by Him. How could He have taught about a Heavenly Father, if in the sight of His fellow-men He had proved unfaithful to His reputed father, and shown disrespect to the duties and privileges of fatherhood? How could He have touched men's hearts with words of the "many mansions" in His Father's house, where they might be with Him, if He had shown in the only home that He had had on earth, that to be with Him was not to be desired? And what were brotherhood with Him, if He had lived in unbrotherly carelessness or strife in the home of Nazareth? Men do not so prepare to give their words weight, when in later life they take their place among men to teach them. We may rightly ask, therefore, if this lovely, meek, service-bearing aspect of Jesus is not the one reasonably to be expected, if His mission to earth was what He declared it to be. Not even in the seclusion of the family had He come to rule like an

Oriental despot ; not even there did a selfish withdrawal to meditation and mysticism make Him a useless clog upon the family's prosperity. In the Nazarene home He was Jesus, the Jesus presented to us with uniform consistency in the Gospels.

But His own happiness in His home could not have been perfect. I have intimated that all the common experiences were His ; and, if they were, of course He knew their outcome in anxiety, disappointment, sympathy, grief. But apart from these there was one great, overwhelming evil which finds express mention in the record : His brethren did not believe on Him.<sup>1</sup> Not even after His public work had begun and other men had come to Him, did His own brothers admit His claims and give Him their personal devotion. And yet they had seen more of Him than any others. From ten to a score of years they had been mature enough to take note of His holiness, and yet they did not believe. How many fathers and mothers have mourned because their children have not followed their own holy living ! How many brothers and sisters have spent years in patient striving, with the hope that their influence may lead younger members of the family to God ! And all the effort has seemed fruitless. Bitter questioning arises. Keenest introspection is compelled. Have I been true ? If faith and faithfulness are rewarded, then I have failed in my conceptions of truth, or have fallen short of attainment. The most bitter self-accusations often arise, because hope long deferred makes the heart sick. But — “neither did His brethren believe on Him.” They

<sup>1</sup> John vii. 3-5.

did not believe on Him even after the most emphatic confirmation by His wonderful public ministry had been given to the quiet holiness, that apparently had escaped their observation. The grief we feel, Jesus felt. Results have failed us? They failed Him. His mother believed. Of Joseph the father we know nothing, but can hardly doubt that if he had realized and believed in the Lordship of Jesus, some word would have been said concerning his faith. But Jesus saw the youth of His brethren drifting on through the easily impressible years without any marked success in directing its course heavenward. The soft clay doubtless felt His touch, and yielded unconsciously in lines of beauty beneath His moral power; but the statues were otherwise like the work of other artists,—they were not quickened, and love for the artist had not brought them living and ardent and believing to His side. And so we find a great sadness in that seemingly chance quotation of a proverb,<sup>1</sup> when His own countrymen, the people of the Nazarene district, said: “Whence hath this man this wisdom? Is He not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?” Then Jesus said with all the sadness, may we not say with more than the sadness, with which we would have said it: “A prophet is not without honor save in his own country and in his own house.” But patience must have its perfect work. Faith must be tested sometimes beyond all possibility of sight. The time came when the brothers of the Lord believed.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 57.

He did not see it. Not one of them stood by Him at the crucifixion, to whom He might give their mother for future care. John, the beloved disciple, was nearer than any of them then, and would be more likely to sympathize with Mary than any one of her children. But that dark hour for this family was the darkest. Dawn was at hand. Immediately, as we turn the page, we read of the little company gathered for prayer in Jerusalem: "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, *and with His brethren.*"<sup>1</sup> How obtuse, how hardened, how obstinate these brothers had been! But the death and the resurrection of Jesus and His departure to God had opened their eyes, and now they were His own. Soon we read of James and Jude so closely identified with the apostolic work that it is difficult to separate them from the eleven. And finally we have an Epistle of James, *this* James, the brother of the Lord; and it is noteworthy that it is pre-eminently the epistle of "good works," as if now the early impressions of the Nazarene home had returned to him with their full force, and the righteousness of that perfect Brother was now appreciated. Luther might call this Epistle of James "an epistle of straw," because its emphasis upon practical holiness seemed to strike across the great Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. But righteousness is not straw. It is the one imperishable foundation on which the superstructure may be safely built. It is the seed of imperishable life, sure to bear its fruits, though only after so long a time as elapsed between the

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 14.

quiet life in the Nazarene home and the writing of the General Epistle of James. Jude also wrote a general epistle, and says that he is the brother of James. Neither of these brothers in these letters claims to be brother of the Lord; they say they are His servants. The higher relationship, the spiritual fellowship into which they had entered, and possibly the humiliating remembrance that their brotherhood in the flesh had been so faulty, probably led them to this silence.

And this calls us to notice that Jesus always taught a higher claim even than that of the family. Does it seem reasonable that the family, established by God in nature, the foundation of society, the shrine of human affection, the chalice from which the sweetest draughts of happiness may be quaffed, should be made of secondary importance by Jesus Christ? But observe that He does not make it of secondary importance as compared with any other human relation or institution whatever. It is only when human ties are suffered to be stronger than the tie that should bind man to God, to right, to truth, that Jesus declares the supremacy of the latter. In His own case Jesus left His mother's home only when the hour had come for Him to enter openly upon His heavenly Father's business. The answer that He gave to His mother at Cana, when He rejected her authority but followed her suggestion, showed no lack of affection, but only that henceforth He was to regard the higher intimations of His mission, while it would be her part to follow and to serve Him. That Mary at once turned to the servants and bade them do His commands, showed that even in her heart there

was no sting, no feeling of rejection, resulting from His words. So when at a later time<sup>1</sup> His mother and brothers could not understand His course and thought Him the victim of some madness, He did not repulse them rudely, or with any repudiation of the natural ties that bound them together. It was rather an exaltation of those ties, when He spoke of the higher bond existing between those whose spiritual relationship found its origin in Himself as the Son of God. Just as fatherhood in the flesh was selected as the fittest type of the fatherhood of God, so here Jesus argued from the less to the greater indeed, but in direct testimony, on that very account, to the sanctity of the love and interest shown by these members of His own family. Are these, as ye say, My mother and brethren? Are they anxious, overburdened with responsibility about My course, willing to press forward here and own kinship with Me, whom ye oppose and reject? Is this human tie of love so strong? Verily greater even than this is the tie between Me and Mine in the spirit. Not these, but all who do the will of My Father in heaven, are My mother and brethren. And if a man made a vain excuse<sup>2</sup> that the burial of his father was a duty paramount to that of following Jesus, the claim could not be allowed only because it was a reversal of the proper order. However sacred might be the last tribute of respect to a dead father, it was less sacred than the service of the ever-living Father in heaven. In case of need, therefore, though that case must always be sad indeed, Jesus had come "to set a man at variance against

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 46-50.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ix. 59.

his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and to make a man's foes those of his own household." <sup>1</sup> Duty to God, to Christ as His Son, is to lead every other duty in its train. Whoso loves any one more than Christ is not worthy of Christ. Could He whose nature, whose love, whose sacrifice, whose purpose, were such as had been declared from the beginning, put His claim to the human heart below that of any other claim whatsoever? It would have been beyond reason, and impossible. But in all this there is no degradation of the family. Rather by the very choice of this extreme case for the comparison of duties, the family is exalted as that among all the relationships of men which comes nearest to the spiritual relationships of the heavenly world.

It is quite in accord with this estimate of the family and the home, that Jesus would admit no cause for the breaking of the marriage-tie except that one which in nature itself must be destructive of love as well as purity, of the rights of children as well as parents. It is inconceivable that Jesus should have allowed any of the other causes for divorce which have found recognition in modern sentiment and law. Live together until you discover an incompatibility of temper; or until one of you shall fall into some vice; or until cruel treatment shall cause one of you to sigh for release, or fear for the life! If one of you becomes a drunkard, the other may be free! It was for human authority to devise such limitations of the marriage-tie as these. Christ gave no such law. His word was more exacting than the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 35, 36.

law of Moses.<sup>1</sup> "The Pharisees came to him and asked Him, tempting Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? And He answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you? And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement and to put her away. And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh: so they are no more twain but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder." Any other law Jesus distinctly said had been given by Moses only on account of the hardness of heart of the people of that time. Would He not say of the laws of this time: They are but evidence of the hardness, the corruption, the selfishness, the sin of your hearts? According to Christ's word marriage is not to be broken for a fancy; the home is not to be destroyed for one evil or for many sorrows; the holiness of fatherhood and motherhood is not to be abrogated because it is found that the first choice of each other by the parents was a mistake. Only one sin shall strike across this most sacred institution,—that which debases it most of all and brings upon it the most awful and incurable evil. For all other excuses there is but one word: "The hardness of your hearts."

With all reverence we may answer the question: Why did not Jesus Himself make the family the medium of His own teaching, the scene of His own life, and sanc-

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 1-12; Matt. v. 31.

tify by His own example the founding of a home? The objection to His service has been urged, that in these closest and dearest respects it was defective; and therefore our purest joys and also our keenest sorrows lie beyond the experience which He had and in which we need His perfect sympathy. The answer is most evident. In His life of sacrifice this great joy was also offered up upon the altar of the Father's will. No single human being could claim so much of His heart, His care, His time. To Him there was but one thought,—to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. No home could shut Him in from men. No love could claim Him for a moment from the cry of need. No future disaster to a single soul must be made possible by the existence of any who owed their being to Him, and would therefore almost inevitably attract to themselves something of the holy regard which is due only to Him. The adoration that has been given to His mother shows what would surely have occurred if He had founded a family and had perpetuated His name thus among men. Even we can see that at least for some, who were yet to believe on Him, such a course would have proved fatal. No, this joy was not for Him. This sacrifice, too, was the offering of His perfect love for mankind. He was the Bridegroom of His Church;<sup>1</sup> she was to be named His Bride, and to be called The Lamb's Wife. For her sake He would leave all others. No selfish thought could come to Him, no human comfort could hedge His way. The necessity of being a bread-winner for others must not be laid upon Him

<sup>1</sup> Matt ix. 15.

who was the Bread that came down from Heaven for the hunger of all the world. Not even this righteous love and duty of home could delay His foot for one moment from seeking the lost.

But this sacrifice of the purest and greatest of our human privileges only shows to us the spirit that should fill us in our homes. The Epistle to the Ephesians<sup>1</sup> details the duties of fathers, mothers, children, servants, masters, and shows the Christian spirit which transmutes into daily life the life that our Lord would have lived in one of our homes. The man who would make himself a home with the thought that that home shall be only for his own selfish gratification and comfort, has none of the spirit of Christ. Self-sacrifice and not mere self-comfort, service and not mastery, love and not power, will make home what Christ would have it, — a true symbol of the Heavenly Father's house. How many men degrade their homes and banish happiness from them by making the wife a poor drudge, the victim of tyranny as despotic as a Turk's; the children mere slaves, fearing his displeasure more than glad of his love; the servants serving only from fear, with no example before them of heart-service, and with never a word of sympathy and kindness to cheer their lot! A home like this cannot reasonably expect happiness. A man like Christ will be unselfish, gentle, courteous, chivalrous. He will reverence his wife; he will honor the heart that has consented to share his fortunes; he will save her toil if possible; he will share with her his cares only because he thereby praises her wisdom and

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. and vi.

invites her faith and owns her right to a share in his affairs; he will suffer no harm to come to her, though he die in her defence. "Love your wives" is the word that will cover his duty and make his home a heaven. And the woman who presides over a home will make the same spirit her delight. She may rightly expect the same courtierlike attention from her husband that she had before their marriage, and he will give it to her if he is a true man; and she will render to him the same devotion, for, if she has not been a silly fool, even before marriage she will not have allowed her lover's care for her to be a whit greater than hers for him. In the home they are still lovers, and the wife is gentle, gracious, winning, careful, faithful to each day's demands, true to each growing duty; and as a mother she will know that her children are like a trust from Heaven, to be made men and women of God through Christ. So the children will be like those who found the smile of Jesus and His outstretched arms inviting and lovely; they will learn of Him; they will see His spirit in father and mother; they will be like them and Him; and in all courteous self-restraint and consideration for others, they will show as only children can show the Christlike life, for "of such is the kingdom of Heaven."

## V.

### THE TRIPLE TEMPTATION.

THAT Jesus "was not able to sin," or "was able not to sin," were disputes of scholastic origin, and we need have little to do with them. But so much is clear, — that if His temptations were not real, if indeed He did not have the power to sin, then the record may as well not have been given us at all, since the tempted Saviour is thus at once removed in infinite degree from our human experience. If Jesus was not able to sin, the word "temptation" in the Gospel has no meaning for us.

It is clear that the narrative of the temptation is not less, but somewhat more than history. There is a place named the wilderness of the Jordan; but there are also swift flights to the pinnacle of the Temple, and to such a mountain height that it commands a view of all the nations of the earth. In other words, though doubtless Jesus was in the wilderness of the Jordan all the time, that place did not confine the assaults of evil upon Him, and the real scene of trial was where it always must be, — in the soul. The field of life is the battle-plain of the forces of good and evil; and just as our own moral struggles are not to be bounded by flowing rivers or heights of mountains, so the temptation of Jesus was larger than could be measured by physical bounds, and more subtle

than retreats of cave or acacia-grove on the banks of the Jordan could foil. Armed bodies may clash together on well-defined fields, mere topography aiding or hindering the strife; but spirits fight under no such conditions, and the questions to be settled between right and wrong are greater than mere circumstance.

And yet the place in which Jesus met the spirit of evil is not without significance. The graphic word of Saint Mark adds this touch to the picture: "And He was with the wild beasts." Far apart from human habitation, where no sympathy from His brother-man could offer help; the cheering sound of human toil exchanged for the cry of the jackal, the laugh of childhood for the hideous howl of the hyena; with no doctor or scribe to whom He might appeal for the right; where no quick glance at altar, or mystic veil, or pillared porch, or vine-wreathed Beautiful Gate could strengthen Him with sacred impulse and bid Him defy the evil one,—alone, He met the great test of character, and conquered. The battle of spirits is always solitary, if the extreme of testing is to be applied. The desert is the fit type of the scene of conflict. A thronged city doubtless has its thronging temptations, and its offers of gain, its flash and glitter, its falsities, its sensualities, its fratricidal greed, appeal to the soul with wonderful power. But history has proved that none of these realities possess the devilish subtlety of imagination which in loneliness and idleness forms a world of its own,—a world crowded with sensual allurements. The peculiar holiness of monasticism found no safety in the dens of the desert. Isolation and introspection summoned more forms of evil than

fasting and the scourge could drive away. Outraged nature had her revenge in worse mental and moral aberrations than would have been the result even of a surfeit of indulgence. To try not to think of a matter is the surest way to keep it in mind, and healthy and constant preoccupation is the only prevention of an evil course. For him who walks in the Spirit it will be easy not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh. And so even for the Christ, whose human nature was our own, the wilderness offered the largest opportunity for Satan to do his worst.

We find the story told in such a way as to invite special attention to the order of events. It is given in detail by Matthew and Luke. Mark devotes only two brief verses to it. In the first Gospel the order is, first the appeal to hunger; then the attempt to destroy Him from the pinnacle of the Temple; and last the presentation of the power and glory of the world. The Gospel of Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations. The order is not essential, and was suggested, it is likely, by the different points of view from which the writers regarded the event, Luke emphasizing the progressive force of the temptations upon Christ, and Matthew showing the increment of sin involved in the tempter's plan. Both writers agree in putting the temptation of the flesh first. This is natural. The physical instincts are imperious. From the very nature of things the body, weak servant of the soul, can endure no deprivation, no delay. Its demands must be satisfied first, and its satisfaction affords the readiest avenue for temptation. "Make bread of these stones" was an appeal to the hunger of the flesh, and

the sin of yielding would have been distrust of God. Jesus would not take into His own hands the power of miracle, that merely His own satisfaction might be gained. The spirit that would pray and teach men so, "Give us this day our daily bread," would not deny itself by doubting God's care and hastening to turn these stones into food, a last and desperate resort in an apparent hour of need. To distrust God would be sin. But the next temptation was to a worse crime, — to tempt God, to have an over-trust, to dare the divine forbearance and appeal unduly to the divine interference; and Jesus so defined the sin when He responded, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Then the third temptation came, to the greatest sin of all, — the absolute forsaking of God for a reward: "Bow down and worship me, and I will give thee all these kingdoms and the glory of them." The increment of sin, therefore, is apparent in the order of the first Gospel: Distrust; Presumption; Forsaking: the lack of faith; a presuming pride in faith; betrayal and desertion, with sworn allegiance to God's foe. Luke, on the other hand, a physician, naturally emphasized the psychological force of the temptations: First, unquestionably, the appeal to the starving flesh; next, the somewhat loftier and more subtle test of worldly ambition, the strong mental pull toward the glittering evil of the world; and lastly, the spiritual pride, subtlest of all temptations, — to be exempt from mere human conditions, to be the special favorite of the heavenly world, to have cohorts of angels waiting to bear up the presuming heir of glory, who therefore can cast himself into any depth, if only the plunge

is taken from the very Temple. This is the peculiar danger of spiritual exaltation; and when the pure soul has reached its dizzyest height of spiritual joy it often hears the quick Satanic whisper, "Cast thyself down." Whether, therefore, we follow the order of the one Evangelist or the other, we find the account of this typical temptation of Jesus most natural.

The parallel is to be found in our common experience, and thus the temptation of Jesus is our own; and yet the result was far different from the issue of our temptations. We fall; Jesus stood firm. In Him was no sin. If Jesus was revealing in His life the real nature of God, and if He was showing to man what God would be and do in the conditions of our life, then He could not fail to be tempted and to conquer the temptation. If He came to save, then how could He show God's power to foil evil so plainly, as by meeting the direst test with success? Every condition of His ministry demanded such a trial as this in the wilderness of the Jordan, and that He should not be found wanting. If He was not what He claimed to be, success would have been inconceivable, and the moral failure would have been in accord with the lie of His whole being. If He was what He claimed to be, the narrative is consistent.

Lastly, is it credible and to be taken literally, that Jesus was led up into the wilderness *by the Spirit* to be thus tempted? Would it be a matter of God's holiness thus to present His Son to the vile companionship and the deadly danger of the prince of evil? But there must be no half-way work with this champion of right. This Captain of salvation must not be ignorant of the worst

wiles of the foe, from whom He is to deliver His own hosts of light. It will easily appear that He must suffer the utmost trial, if He is to be made perfect through suffering. Just because the Holy Spirit brooded over the Christ always to make Him perfect for His work, He must now lead Him where He could learn every condition of success. It must never be said of Jesus that He shunned and escaped any trial. Whatever may be spared other men, He must go to the very verge, stand undismayed upon the edge of the cliff, and fall not. Such necessity was laid upon Him from the very nature of His mission. Was it not, therefore, a work of holiness, a work for the Holy Spirit of God, to lead Him out into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil? If it was the part of God's holiness to sacrifice Himself in the salvation of man and send forth His Son into contact with sin, it was equally the part of holiness to make the sacrifice thorough and complete. He will never win a campaign who consents only to skirmishes with the enemy, and runs away from every display of his full force upon the battlefield. It is in the desperate and supreme encounter that the genius of the conqueror proves itself; and until the last great battle is fought and won, no one knows but the enemy's general may be the greater. It was not for Christ to shrink from the supreme danger. It was the part of the Holy Spirit, who ever watched His way, to bring Him to decisive conflict with Satan and perfect His character for His work.

The concluding words of the simple narrative are singularly significant. "The devil leaveth Him for a season," and "angels came and ministered unto Him."

No man ever yet conquered temptation without some glad reprieve from struggle, and that joyous spiritual rebound from the strain of conflict, which is the most heavenly reward. He needs no bodily food who knows that He has been feasting upon the word of God, and feels within Himself the great uplift of the divine life. The flush of a great moral victory leaves a man in an ecstasy in which he cares little for bread. It may be that this moment is just the time when he should have bread, and when the physical part of life should serve the spiritual by calming its ecstasies and restoring the normal balance between the earthly and the heavenly. But the fact remains the same that at such moments the soul takes little note of physical requirements. The rewards are from above. Angels come and minister.

## VI.

### LIFE AMONG MEN.

QUITE in accord with Christ's life in the home and His attitude with respect to the family, were His example and teachings with reference to the social life of men. His first public appearance after His baptism was at the wedding of a friend, perhaps a relative of His mother. He took occasion to show in the most marked way that so far from wishing His presence to be an obstacle to the festivity He desired to aid it. His first miracle was the fit initiative of all that followed.

Jesus was not an ascetic. The ascetic ideal could have no reasonable place in the scheme of His life. John the Baptist had come in the garb of a prophet, and with the habits of life which were consistent with his calling. The people of his day were the more easily attracted by the wildness, the severity, the startling nature of his bearing. John's appearance and methods were quite in keeping with his desire to produce an immediate impression. John's purpose was only to awaken the nation, bring it to repentance, and prepare the coming of Jesus, who was to appear immediately. From the day of Christ's baptism Jesus was to increase and John was to decrease.<sup>1</sup> Christ's work was to be

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 3.

of long duration, a work that would not end even with His death. It was to be age-long. John's work was of few days. He would have accomplished nothing if he had not been both ascetic and fanatic. He did not teach. He attempted to lay no broad foundations, as Jesus did. He came simply to introduce the Master. "He was not that Light."<sup>1</sup> It was not for him to light every man that cometh into the world. John's work was the work of a man; Christ's work was the work of Jesus, who was neither man alone nor God alone, but "that Holy Thing," Immanuel, "God with us." John's work, then, was naturally a quick work, definite in its scope, reaching its end when Jesus began His ministry. The imperious Voice crying in the wilderness fell upon the ears of the nation like a peal of thunder from the cloudy skies of their sinfulness. The stern prophet, shunning the common life of men, clad in skins, eating the food of the desert, bore upon his very visage the revelation that the time had come for a crisis: and that crisis was the dawn of a new era; that era began with Christ.

Jesus, therefore, was as different from John as His mission was different from John's mission both in character and time. Christ's work was to go on through ages of ages, and it was to be a work of life upon life. It was not merely one crisis. It was not a call to one duty; it was to lay hold on all duties and mould character after God's pattern. It was not the call of one generation to receive God's mercy; it was the declaration to the world and to all the generations of men of the truth of God. And this was to be done not merely

<sup>1</sup> John i. 8.

by word of mouth, not by preaching and writing. It was to be done by character, by spirit, by life. When Jesus came, ~~then~~ it was impossible that He should come as an ascetic. He must be among men, where life would touch life; He must be within call of every one who should need Him; He must be in view of the world, that all might be satisfied who would see Him; He must be surrounded by multitudes to whom He could cry, "Come unto Me;"<sup>1</sup> He must be in the midst of the world's labor, the world's sin, that He might show the way of rest. If this was His mission, then no joys of man, no sorrows, could be beyond His experience and sympathy. A gloomy ascetic, dwelling in a wilderness, secluded from others' joys and sorrows, could never have done the work of one who was appointed to show that God was not a far-off Being untouched by a feeling for man's infirmities, unsympathetic, and offering no hope and no help. It was the mission of Jesus to show that these false ideas of God that had been prevailing in the world must be given up. He was to show in His own person that God so loved the world that He was forever in contact with it; that He would not give up those who had wandered from Him. If Jesus had come as an ascetic, He would have shown exactly the contrary. Men would have been confirmed in their belief that God cared little for them, and that His own mysterious and eccentric holiness must be kept from contact with mankind. It was not reasonable, therefore, that Jesus should withdraw Himself from mankind. It was reasonable that He should dwell with them, mingle

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 28-30.

with them in their homes, at their feasts, in their shops and streets, in their places of worship, knowing their joys and sorrows, holding before them always the great truth that God was like Him, as He was the express image of God to them, and saying always, "He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, it was impossible that Jesus should be a fanatic. In John, in all the prophets of the old time, there was a mingling of asceticism and fanaticism. But Jesus could always await "His hour." There was no haste in His zeal, there was no violence in His methods. He did not strive nor cry.<sup>2</sup> Holy enthusiasm burned in every act of His life, but it never passed the bounds of wisdom. He had no lightning flash to use against those who were not of His way of thinking; He would not set matters right by calling "twelve legions of angels" to carry out His will. God's patience and justice were to be exhibited, and not merely His power. Affections were to be won, hearts conquered, character formed; and this could not be done in a moment. Fire, earthquake, wind,<sup>3</sup> might pass by and destroy, but they would have no power to construct. A still voice, persuasive, long-pleading, teaching, was needed to build up faith and hope, and bring human life, as of old in the case of Elijah when in despair, to its normal condition in union with the life of God. The kingdom of heaven was not comparable to an explosion; it was the leaven that by slow and hidden processes would change the character of the world.

Moreover it cannot be forgotten that Jesus was not

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xix. 12.

merely revealing the nature of God to men, but He was also inducing men to become like God, to follow His ways, to be what God would be, if the manifestations of His moral character were to be confined to flesh. The effort of Jesus, as we have seen in former pages, was not only to bring God to the world, but to bring the world to God, and to make the world's life truly like the life of heaven. In a word, He was an example to man; He was to show in His own life the product of perfect holiness in the flesh. Therefore He could be neither ascetic nor fanatic. Had He been the one or the other, the disciples would have been true only in following His footsteps. Christianity must have been either monasticism, or a great world-power with commission to destroy and slay. The ascetic ideal would have relegated the church to the wilderness, wholly apart from the needs of men. The fanatic spirit would have endowed the church with the fire of Elijah, and we should have had only one more religion, of which the world had already seen too many, in which the chief power would have been persecution, and the ruling element fear. Imagine, if possible, what the world would be to-day, if the followers of Jesus had been led by His example either to the ascetic or to the fanatic goal! Jesus lived in fact the only reasonable life. He "dwelt among men<sup>1</sup> and they beheld His glory," but it was the glory of one who was "full of grace and truth." Deceit and violence were not found in His mouth. No falsities of life were taught by Him. He gave the example of the common life of man redeemed

<sup>1</sup> John i. 14.

from evil but not removed from any of its natural and ordinary surroundings. "He was made like unto His brethren,"<sup>1</sup> so that it might be possible for them to follow Him, and in all the love and wisdom, which God would inspire within them, establish the realm of love and of right on earth. Thus we can follow His "example."<sup>2</sup>

We find, then, in the Gospels just that record of the life of Jesus that is most reasonable. It was a social life. He did not keep Himself separate from any class of men. There were no occasions from which He could not draw some opportunity for doing His work. Weddings and funerals called Him. The common street and the holy courts of the Temple were equally His resorts; wayside wells, robber-infested defiles, fishermen's boats, rocky tomb-haunts of madmen, were familiar to Him. Quiet homes where loving and near friendship could bless His retirement, and great feasts in His honor in the midst of promiscuous crowds and the glare and glitter of festivities, laid claim to Him alike, and found ready and courteous response. Sinners who were notorious, mere outcasts of society, came to Him with facility no less than that with which the Pharisees most renowned for righteousness could find Him. He would sit down and call little children to His arms and bless them, and He would go to the bed-sides of the sick and lift them up. He joined in the great religious services of the Temple, but did not hesitate also to teach His disciples to say without any ritual whatever, "Our Father, who art in Heaven." Wherever there were men; where

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xv. 5; 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22.

one soul or many souls could be touched by His life, there He would be. The individual was not lost from His view; the crowds never failed to excite His compassion. For mankind He lived.

This was the cause of great perplexity to some; it was made the occasion of obstinate opposition on the part of others. Criticism could as easily assail Him, as it assails His followers to-day, when their course runs counter to some ignorant person's prejudice, or some irreligious person's glad and carping hostility. There is even a hyper-religiosity, which might have complained as reasonably of Christ, as it does of His church, because the task of the world's salvation is not pursued with fanatical zeal. "These Christians have their pleasures; they are engaged in the world's pursuits; they are not without the emulations of the flesh; they take no special care to remove themselves from the evils of their time; the woes of the world cry to them, but they give their aid only slowly and in a niggardly way; they profess to have beliefs that are sublime, laying hold of eternity, and yet they live our commonplace life; they hold the fate of millions in their hands, but they stop to eat and drink and be merry, while the millions go on to destruction."

Such criticism was actually applied to Christ. There is only one exception, alas! that differentiates the course of Jesus from that of His disciples. With Him, there was no sin. Wisdom was the restraint upon Him, where sin is often the power that cripples us. The sight of God's will that He had, was indeed very different from the selfishness that too often confines us to doing

our own will. But we can only feel, as Christ did, that much of this criticism is wholly unwarranted and quite wicked. It is the spirit of the world that is unreasonable. Christ was reasonable. No course will please the foes of God. When John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if really He was the Messiah, Jesus returned a comforting, reassuring answer, and then He said to the multitude around Him, among whom stood many of His foes seeking to entrap Him: "This generation is like unto children sitting in the market-place and calling one to another and saying, We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept. For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children."<sup>1</sup> John had resorted to strange methods; they had captured the attention of the people but for a short time, and the foes of God had thought him only a mad fanatic, not for their serious attention and following. Such a man as that could never do much as a reformer of the world. Christ came, pursuing the opposite course. The same objectors said: "He is a common man, even a rioter and glutton; selfish ease is all He cares for; the world is perishing, when He might save it by a word, if indeed He is the Son of God. Away with Him for an impostor!" Christ's answer was simple: "Wisdom is justified of all her children." The world will not be satisfied any way; but wisdom's

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 31-35.

course justifies itself to all who are wise, to all who apprehend the real conditions under which truth and life can best come to their victory. Had Jesus been a mere fanatic He might have compelled instant attention and a very considerable following of the men of His day; but His hold upon life, His power for the ages, would have failed. It were better to lose one generation and gain a hundred, if the problem had been reduced to such an issue. But it was not. The criticism of Christ's course was superficial, the perishable fruit of an unreasoning hostility. The real wisdom of His course is evident to all men. He who came to reveal God to them, to show His mercy, to prove His Providence, to work out in flesh God's life, to mediate between God and man, atoning for sin and reconciling the world to God, could only accomplish the work by keeping in contact with man and living their own life in all respects. The only experience of man, which He could not know, was sin. Even temptation, as we have seen, had full power over His soul. The common life of mankind was His, and He brought God into it. Just as He taught, and was compelled to teach in the language of the people, slow and cumbrous and inadequate for One whose soul had been accustomed to the timeless flashes of intelligence of the heavenly world; just as His illustrations must all be taken from the familiar objects, birds, flowers, water, bread, because any others would have obscured His meaning instead of throwing light upon it, — so His life, itself the great object-lesson, itself the great illustration of God, must be made up of all the commonplace events of human experience. If it had not been thus lived, it

could not have been understood, and would have failed of its purpose.

Note, also, that though His life was of such a character, its very commonplace nature was a new thing in the world, a greater marvel, a sign and wonder more startling than any the world had ever seen, inasmuch as its essential purpose was to bring God near to men. The fact that the world is to be saved by taking God into *all* its life, the joyful as well as the sorrowful parts of it, was a revelation. The various religions of the world had emphasized the separation of God from men. God had been relegated to the skies, to some realm beyond a brazen firmament, to some mountain-top inaccessible and cloud-covered, to recesses of groves, or hollow-resounding caverns, or the veiled shrines of temples. Religion was everywhere a gloomy thing, reeking with sacrifices of expiation, with priesthoods barring the way to the deity, and with the best thoughts of immortality clouded by the shadows of a Hades or Under-world. The better faiths like Buddhism had only made life hard. The religion that had come nearest to this idea of taking God into all its life was that of Greece; but in this case the idea of the deity had become so grossly humanized that it had been fatal to morals: religion had degenerated on the one hand into sensuous observance, "gluttony and wine-bibbing" in very truth, gods feasting and drinking, lustful, and liars, while in practice they were invoked only with libations, and were expected to preside over every indulgence; and on the other hand the poetic sensibility that had peopled groves and streams, mountains and plains, cities and sea-shore with deities innumerable, ended in

absolute pantheism, the confounding of God with nature. No religion had ever taught what Jesus showed in the Incarnation and in His life in the flesh, — to see God in everything, to take Him into the common everyday living, to be filled with His Spirit at all times, to feel sure of His constant care, His sympathy, and love, to feel free to appeal to Him and talk with Him as with a dear friend at one's side, and yet to keep God in thought as One God, that personal Being to whom all reverence and fealty are due. This was a new thing, and there were souls who were ready to welcome such a revelation of God. Men who love sin will not welcome God; they wish to keep God as far away as possible. Men who have wearied of sin, men who hate sin, who are longing after God, will welcome Him into their common lives. They will receive the revelation of Him in Jesus Christ. They who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled, easily blessed because God Himself shall come and dwell in them as Jesus prophesied. With this prophecy and purpose the life of Christ coincided. He was man's Saviour not in extraordinary crises alone; He was in the life of every common day, near to every man, showing God in ordinary human life, God as neighbor and friend. As recluse, or as fanatic, Jesus could not have taught the great lesson of the common life, in which men are to be godly, as He was, full of grace and truth.

How great, how sweet, then, is our human life! That God has entered into it, that Christ is not far from any man in any experience, it is good to know. To make our common lives holy, and our service to each other the service of heaven, is to have the same mind that was in

Christ. God is in our homes,—not enthroned in solitary majesty on some far Olympus; God is in our shops— not merely outshining the sun in the far and dazzling skies; God is at our dinner-parties, though we need not set a plate for Him, but give Him only the chief place of honor in our hearts; God is in our schools, and we are suffered to “think His thoughts after Him,” while He opens before us the immeasurable realms of truth. There are no human conditions that are alien from God, except sin; for in Christ God was revealing to men that the infinite Sympathy is with them, and that Divine Love will not leave them out of its own life.

## VII.

### QUESTIONS OF THE TIME.

IT is more than interesting, it is of the very first importance, to ask how Jesus met the great problems of His day, which forced themselves upon His attention and sympathy as a member of society.

To a very extraordinary degree these problems must have appealed to Him, since He was not a mere private individual, one of a million, with only the ordinary capacities and the usual opportunities. His nature, His purpose, His claims, raised Him immeasurably above the crowd. He was singled out as the Lord, the Leader, the Saviour of life. To His sight would come views of human wrongs and misery that few other men could have; to His ear would plead the timid sigh, which for all other ears the clash of the world's noises would smother; to His garment's hem the mere touch would bring its mute prayer, which to all others would seem only an unmeaning part of the general bustle of the crowd; to his heart the impurity of a condemned soul would be a reason for condemning her accusers,<sup>1</sup> who seemed to all men to be pure, while the repentance of the confessed sinner would find forgiveness and love. He, as no man living, was aware of the world's woes; He, as no man who ever

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 1-11, margin.

lived, made it the purpose and effort of His life to cure those woes; and He, as no philanthropist the world has ever seen, laid the foundations for success in the great work of defining the rights of men and of securing them at last. It is for us to tread humbly in His footsteps, to apply broadly and fearlessly the principles that He taught, if we are to do our part as His disciples.

In studying the condition of Palestine in the time of Jesus, we have the footsteps of many scholars to lead us. Ewald, Hausrath, Delitzsch, Schürer, Edersheim, and many others give us abundant knowledge of the times.

The political condition is sufficiently well understood. Few countries of modern times are in the peculiar circumstances of suffering which made the Jewish nation long ardently for its deliverer. No wonder that the people were ready to flock to the standard of any pretended deliverer. During hundreds of years the Jews had been a subject people. Foreign armies had met in battle upon their fields. The great patriot family of the Maccabees had led in revolt against the oppressor. Rebellion of less magnitude had occurred even during the boyhood of Jesus. But still the enemy triumphed. His armies were in the land; his hirelings were in all the places of power; his tribute was exacted with merciless rigor; his hand was heavy upon almost every interest of the Jew's life. There was no such thing as personal representation in the government; there was no suffrage. The iron hand of a foreign despotism was over all the land, and the nation was a nation in slavery.

Taxation was so burdensome that we can have little idea of it. The religious laws of the Jews themselves

required nearly one third of their yearly income,<sup>1</sup> the tenth, or tithe, which Christians often set as the Biblical limit for their gifts to the Lord being far too small. No Jew would have murmured against this heavy but self-imposed burden. But we must remember this demand of his own religion on the Jew, when we go on to note the demands of the Roman state upon him. The fact of any tax at all in addition to this religious obligation would seem almost unbearable from an economic point of view; but when we add to this the teaching of the Rabbis that the very holiness of the land depended on its contributions to the Temple, it will be seen how the question of foreign taxation became a religious one, since the political revenue must also be gathered from the property consecrated by this Temple-gift to Jehovah. "Is it lawful to pay tribute unto Cæsar or not" was not a mere captious question of the moment; it was one of the burning religious questions of the times. The chief political taxes were two, — an income tax and a land tax. The income tax was one per cent; the land tax was paid by one tenth of all the grain and one fifth of the fruit and wine. But there were also extraordinary taxes, which might be levied very capriciously. For example, if the supply of corn in Italy ran short, the provinces, Syria among them, were called on to send additional supplies. Customs also were regularly levied, and tolls on bridges, roads, at town-gates, swelled the sum annually squeezed from the people. Even these items were not all, for the presence of garrisons in every town and of the hirelings of a corrupt provincial court,

<sup>1</sup> The Temple; Edersheim; page 334 sq.

gave rise to all forms of bribery, and often of semi-legalized robbery. It made the matter worse, that in most cases foreigners were the collectors of the taxes. Despising the conquered people, regarding them as the legitimate spoil of the stronger conquerors, and with no power of appeal to deter them from the unjust exercise of their functions, these tax-gatherers, or "publicans," found many ways to oppress those who were already oppressed beyond endurance. One way was to loan money at large interest to tax-payers, who could not raise enough cash to pay their taxes. Thus the tax-payer became the debtor of the tax-collector as a private individual, and we can readily imagine how that snare would soon strangle the debtor altogether. The general system of collection, too, was as corrupt as could have been planned. The government did not collect its own taxes; it farmed them out to men, who would guarantee and give bonds that their district should pay a certain amount, which was determined by an official census and valuation. Of course these farmers of the revenue got their pay from undue extortion. The government was satisfied with the prompt payment of the original sum agreed upon. There was no cause for investigation, if the collectors gathered fifty per cent too much, which went into their own pockets. Indeed, the whole plan was formed with the expectation that the farmers of the revenue would thus reward themselves. But this was not the limit of the wrong. We may think that combinations and trusts are of modern invention; but the farmers of the revenues in Palestine formed companies, joining their capital to take up all large contracts,

instead of entering into competition with each other. They thus had the field to themselves. Private capital, private enterprise, native industry, were driven to the wall, and the field for extortion and robbery was undisputed. Imagine the horror, therefore, with which the native Jew would be regarded who dared to assume the office of tax-gatherer! He was at once a foe of his people, a traitor to Israel. To be a Publican was to be guilty of the worst criminality. He was regarded as the fit companion of thieves, adulterers, murderers. He could not testify in a Jewish court. It was forbidden to eat with him. To take money from his hand even by way of making change was defiling. The Publicans as a class were thus the very scum of society, and Jesus never did a bolder thing than when He called a tax-gatherer to be an Apostle.

In religion the state of affairs was somewhat better; but even here the imperious domination of the pagan foreigner was felt. The Tower of Antonia overshadowed the courts of the Temple, and the garrison could look down into the sacred area. It is true, that the usual policy of the Romans with conquered peoples was followed with the Jews, and they were allowed to preserve their own religion; but the permission was like that given to a criminal to live, though under the restraints and discipline of a prison. For example, the religious taxes were protected, and special enactments decreed permission to the Temple to collect its moneys; but the exactions of money for the state were so burdensome, as we have seen, that the Temple taxes were paid only at the expense of the greatest suffering. As special favors to the Jews

synagogues were built in some of the towns and cities; and Augustus ordered a sacrifice to be offered at his expense in the Temple, and gave costly vessels for the service. But this toleration itself proved hateful to the Jews, who could ill brook permission to worship Jehovah from a pagan power. But this favor shown to religion was only superficial. In fact the faith of the Jew was always a mark for the contempt and insolence of the Roman. The general disquiet, the smothered excitement, were not allayed by formal protection offered to religion.

In speaking of taxation it was intimated that labor was at an entire disadvantage. Business was paralyzed, although the presence of many strangers created a demand for crops and all the necessaries of life. But the returns from agriculture and business were not secure. Confidence was shaken everywhere. Wages were due for debts before they were earned. It has been remarked by Edersheim how many of Christ's sayings presuppose a general state of bankruptcy as the only condition of the land with which His hearers were familiar: the treasure<sup>1</sup> hid in the field to keep it from robbers, or confiscation; the king<sup>2</sup> who would have sold his steward, with his wife and children and goods, for the payment of debts due him; and that unmerciful steward's course, when he was forgiven his debt, in going out and taking his own debtor by the throat and casting him into prison till he should pay the whole; the two debtors,<sup>3</sup> who had nothing to pay; the unjust steward;<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xviii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vii. 41.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xvi. 1.

the king who lacked money to carry on a war,<sup>1</sup> and the man who relinquished building a tower on the failure of his funds. Other instances will occur to the reader, in which such illustrations were used probably for the same reason that Jesus taught from lilies and birds and seeds, as things of the commonest observation.

The rate of wages and their purchasing power can be seen from the parable of the laborers in the vineyard,<sup>2</sup> who had to accept the arbitrary and unequal wages of the employer, and complained almost exactly as a modern wage-earner would do at the apparent injustice of the bargain. The wage of each laborer was a denarius a day, or about seventeen cents. The price of a bushel of wheat at this time was almost exactly seventeen cents. In America, at the time of writing this page, wheat is quoted at ninety cents. The wage of these laborers would therefore be somewhere near ninety cents in America to-day, reckoning the purchasing power of the money. Other necessaries of life as they are now considered were such luxuries then as to be practically beyond the means of the laboring class. They ate little or no meat,<sup>3</sup> and lived almost altogether on bread and vegetables. Yet the ground of complaint in the parable was not meagreness of wage, for in fact the denarius was liberal payment for a day's work: it was only the unequal labor by which the sum was earned. But it can be seen readily that the condition of the wage-earner in the time of Jesus was inferior, absolutely considered, to that of the average

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xx. 1-16.

<sup>3</sup> In the time of Diocletian the price of beef and mutton was fixed by law at about twelve cents a pound.

wage-earner now, though as compared with the demand for the luxuries of life, or even as compared with the increase in what are now deemed necessities, the laborers of Palestine had the advantage. They had little thought of demanding for themselves the greater comforts, the pleasures, and the higher culture of their wealthy employers.

The contrasts, however, between the condition of the poor and the vast accumulations of the rich were nearly, if not quite, as great as now; while the nefarious methods by which these fortunes were gathered were far more common than at present. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, no specific sin is charged to the former beyond excess of wealth and lack of mercy toward the beggar. To be a rich man was almost the same as being an extortioner, an oppressor; and the Lord's words about the difficulty of a rich man's entrance into the kingdom of heaven are thus explained. The salary of the President of the United States, a country of vast area, immense population, and inexhaustible resources, is \$50,000. The annual income of Archelaus, ruling a province about as large as Massachusetts and Connecticut, was over \$1,200,000; that of Herod Antipas was over \$400,000; that of his brother Philip was \$200,000; while Herod the Great, who was reigning at the time of Christ's birth, had about \$3,400,000. Agrippa II. received annually \$2,500,000. It does not help the matter that out of these sums the rulers paid a part of the expense of their armies, and built palaces and even cities. Even thus these vast sums were wrung from the people, not for their own benefit through good government, but for their

oppression; and the wealth thus placed at the disposal of these despots was in no sense public money, but it was altogether the private fortune of the ruler. The sums enumerated must also be considered only approximations, which may vary somewhat as the value of the Talent is reckoned; but the comparison will not be greatly changed.

We must remember that by the values which, as considered above, gave the day's wage of the laborer in the vineyard a present purchasing-power of ninety cents, these princely incomes show a far wider gulf between the poor and the rich than we see to-day, while the far greater ostentation, and the more cruel disregard of the poorer man's comfort, and even life itself, gave occasion for deeper murmurs of revolt than are justified to-day. These men whom we have named were governors and princes, it is true; but private persons followed close after them in amassing great wealth, and records are extant of the enormous extravagance of noble Romans, who would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single banquet or piece of furniture. Not only in Rome but everywhere rich men of private station generally caught the infection from those in public life, and in the scramble for wealth took little heed of the ever-increasing "great gulf fixed" even in this world between the rich and the poor. We can hardly wonder at the feeling of the young man<sup>1</sup> who had great possessions, when the Lord met his ambition for holiness with the heroic prescription of giving to the poor all that he had. And we can see the instant necessity that entered into the pur-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 21.

pose of Zaccheus,<sup>1</sup> when he was converted, to give half his goods to the poor and restore fourfold to all whom he had defrauded. Possibly Zaccheus was the first Christian rich man, first of the many who have since proved that Christ's word was true, and that with God it is possible for a man to be rich and yet good. However it may have seemed to the disappointed young man of the Gospel, it has been seen in multitudes of instances that with God's help it is much easier to gain riches and yet be truly Christian than for a camel to go through the needle's eye. "With God all things," even this, "are possible."

All these misfortunes seemed worse to the Jews because their own laws were singularly just and merciful, of rare economic value, and if allowed to work without interruption would have proved adequate to relieve a large part of the wrong and suffering. In fact, we can hardly help believing that the easiest solution, the most just and moral solution, of the modern difficulties between labor and capital would be found by a careful study of the Mosaic code, with such modifications and definitions as the Rabbis had appended to it. A few instances out of the multitude that might be cited, will show this.

The Rabbis appointed inspectors to go from market to market and inspect the quality of goods sold, and in many cases fix their prices.<sup>2</sup> All sorts of produce were sold at prices fixed by the community. The Talmudic laws against what now would be termed "a corner "

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 8.

<sup>2</sup> See Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*; also his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*; and *History of the Jewish Nation*.

in grain were very strict. Sixteen per cent was sometimes permitted upon loans, but anything more was stamped as a fraud. "The dust of the balance" is a Jewish phrase, and law compelled a wholesale dealer to cleanse his measures once a month, and the retailer twice a week, while all weights were to be washed once a week. The seller was always to give an ounce over in every ten pounds of fluids and half an ounce in solids. Purchases of corn could not be concluded till the legal price had been fixed.

It can be seen readily how, with such remedies within reach, the down-trodden and the oppressed of the people would find their hard lot all the harder to bear. In fact the complaints were loud and sometimes fierce. The old Jewish employers had the same troubles with their employees, that are demanding attention to-day. The differences between capital and labor were the same. There is extant an ancient warning: "Beware of eating fine bread and giving black bread to your workmen; beware of sleeping on feathers while they sleep on straw; remember that he who gets a Hebrew slave gets a Hebrew master." The law of competition in business and in labor was criticised even then. The Talmud permitted tradesmen to combine to work only one or two days in a week, so as to give enough employment to all workmen in a place; and the Rabbinical comment on the passage in Psalm 15, "He who doeth no evil to his neighbor," was, "This refers to one tradesman not interfering with the trade of another."

If we may yet delay a moment before we see how Jesus bore Himself in the midst of these evils of His

time, we may note briefly how the laws of marriage and divorce, and the relation of children and parents, had become of little force, so that a frightful condition of public morals had resulted. The Pharisees asked Christ, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"<sup>1</sup> and when He answered them and gave them His law, they said, "If that is so, a man would better not marry at all!" Their question and answer showed the fatal looseness of their opinions and practice. The very strictest moralist, even Shammai himself, whose school represented the highest standards, would not have adopted Christ's extreme position. Other schools, like those of Hillel and Akiba, were notoriously lax. In fact the prescribed conditions of the Mosaic code had been largely extended by the Rabbis, and now a wife could be divorced for such trivial offences as going about with loose hair, which was a sign of immodesty, for spinning in the street, for familiar talk with men, for ill-treating her husband's parents, for brawling, which was defined as "talking with her husband so loudly that the neighbors could hear her," for a general bad reputation, or for the discovery of any fraud before marriage. And a wife could procure a divorce if her husband were a leper, or affected with polyypus, or engaged in any disagreeable trade, such as that of a tanner or coppersmith. Divorce was obligatory, if one of the parties had become a heretic, or ceased to profess Judaism. It can be seen very easily how a slight desire on the part of either husband or wife for separation would find a legal excuse in one or

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 3.

more of these provisions. As for filial duties, the passage in Saint Matthew's Gospel (xv. 5) shows the relaxation that had come upon the severe Mosaic law, that punished dishonor to parents with death. "Why do ye transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, he shall not honor his father." That is to say, if a son was unwilling to help his parents in old age or sickness, he might make a vow of all that he possessed to God; then it became wicked for him to give to his parents: whatsoever they might have profited by their son was now devoted to God, and though the son might not really pay a penny of this amount to God, yet it was consecrated. Even if his heart was touched with pity or remorse later, he was not allowed to withdraw his word *Corban*; and so all obligation to his parents ceased.

It is plain that the wrongs and abuses of the day were so great as to tempt a reformer to the most extreme measures and the most fanatical zeal.

How, then, did Christ meet the demands upon Him as the Saviour of the world? How did He face these and the other evils of His own time and land? And what relation did these evils bear in His ministry to the needs of the greater world?

It would be reasonable to expect that Jesus would be profoundly stirred by the immediate appeals of the immediate evils, but that He would also never lose from

view the world-wide and age-long woes that must find correction and remedy in Himself. If He had cared for the local evil alone, He might have given all His attention to local legislation by which to cure it. If on the other hand He had lost sight of the present disease of the body politic, and had been sunk in holy trance, seeing the dim ages filled with wrong, oppression, poverty, ignorance, crime, disease, and death, He might have lived and taught wholly apart from his own times, and His word, unintelligible to the men about him, would have been luminous to the nineteenth century. In fact He pursued neither course to the exclusion of the other; but while He touched the wounds of His own people, He showed the great principles of healing, which would save the world. He planted the seed: the growth of that seed would fill the whole earth at last.

Probably the enunciation of the law of marriage is the only example of Christ's teaching in which He drew the exact line, which should apply to all cases. It was not unreasonable that He should make this exception, since the integrity of the family lies at the foundation of all the natural and formal society of man. To preserve this was to insure the essential safety of the structure in which human affections were to be like the cement binding together the various stones of the building. When we erect a house, the placing of the stakes outlining the plan upon the ground is a matter of the greatest accuracy, and the nature of the soil upon which the first stones are placed must be fully known. There must be no morass, no quicksand, no sliding clay. Define carefully the first steps in the process; the change afterward

of minor parts of the plan will signify little: windows here, doors there, pinnacles up yonder, may all be placed as need requires and as the house grows; but the lowest stones must remain the same. Nor is the single house a bad illustration of the position occupied by the family in the social body. What would a city be if no house in it had a stable foundation, if no dwelling had carefully marked bounds on which no other dwelling should trespass? The sanctity of the home, of each home, makes the sanctity of society. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jesus should most carefully define a Christian law of marriage, preserve it by stricter bonds than Moses gave, and declare it to be the holy ordinance of God Himself. It is not strange that this holiest of human relationships should be chosen by Him as a token and symbol of His own union with His followers, so that He called the Church His Bride.

But Jesus did not settle thus the exact course to be pursued in all matters in every land and every age by those who would be the subjects of His kingdom. The relation of men to each other in the State, in their business, even in their church, He indicated only in the most general way. He enunciated general principles, but left much freedom in particulars. No utterance of the Lord can be found in which the ideal of human government is represented either as republican or monarchical; but there is much to show that the character that is built upon His precepts and pattern will be eminently capable of self-government. Jesus nowhere taught a definite theory of political economy; but it is plain that many practices of His own day and of ours would melt away before His

words, as the frost on the window melts beneath the noonday sun until a clear view is obtained. Even in the church He was content to leave its polity untouched and variable, only making sure that its coherence should be attained by unity of spirit and fealty to Himself.

In the treatment of social problems He followed similar methods. He steadily refused the assumption of worldly power, which more than once would have been easily gained for Him by the enthusiastic people, who would take Him and make Him a king. We have noted that His temptation forcibly to accomplish the welfare of the world might have been great. But force is not so strong as principle. Force is variable, transmissible; principle is steadfast and universal. Force is only for a time; principle is eternal. Force is limited to place; principle knows no boundary lines. Or we may term principles spiritual forces, and say that Jesus simply laid hold upon eternal and universal spiritual forces; He appealed to the moral nature of men; He laid before the intelligence of the world the great laws of ethical life, which He knew the experience of each soul, and in the end the experience of all people, would prove to be the only resource of welfare and happiness. While His own finger touched the eyes of the blind and opened them to the light of day; while His ear listened to the cry for help; while His lips spoke the definite and quick answer to the individual sinner and bade him believe in the forgiveness of God,— Jesus yet reached onward and spoke as never man spoke concerning life in general, and the great laws for its welfare. He saw the oppression of His nation by the Romans; but His foes could entrap Him in no

treason, and He was content to say to his disciples: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's,"—knowing well that if the latter command were obeyed, the subjects of the heavenly kingdom would care little about the oppression by Cæsar's government. What was the protection of property, what even the security of life itself, to the man whose only wish should be that God's will might be done, and that the heavenly treasure of sonship to God might be his own? Jesus saw the poor suffering and begging at the gate of the rich, and it is inconceivable that His heart did not bleed with their woes; but while His words were unsparing against the pitiless rich, He sought no sudden political or economic revolution, but taught with dauntless faith the great principles by which in the end all greed and fraud and oppression would disappear. He knew and taught that the remedy lay in character, and that both the rich and the poor must be prepared for mutual helpfulness.

On one occasion<sup>1</sup> an appeal was made to Him to divide an inheritance between two brothers, one of whom refused the other his rightful share. But He answered, "Man, who made me a judge, or a divider, over you?" He refused to interfere in this specific case; but He used the incident to suggest the great lesson against covetousness, and showed that a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things he possesses. It was an example of His general course. The principle at stake was the great matter, not the fortune. His work was not to divide or judge in one case, but to declare the law governing all

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 13.

cases whatever. He bade, indeed, to give the cloak also, if one had been robbed of the coat; and if you are compelled to go a mile by your oppressor, go with him twain. But Jesus never said a word to justify the violence that first seized the coat, or compelled the journey to the first milestone. Jesus never could have said, on the one hand, what one of the founders of the system of combinations in coal is reputed to have said: "Business means to get my competitor into a hole if I can, and then keep him there;" nor, on the other hand, could Jesus have said what Lawrence Grönlund says in his "Exposition of Modern Socialism," in illustration of the proposition that "Every one who pockets gains without rendering an equivalent to society is a criminal," — "Every millionaire is a criminal; every one who amasses a hundred thousand dollars is a criminal; every president of a company with nominal duties, if his salary is but a thousand dollars, is a criminal; every one who loans his neighbor \$100, and exacts \$106 in return, is a criminal." Jesus never resorted to unfeeling cruelty on the one hand, or to rabid nonsense on the other, to favor either rich or poor. The violence of oppression, the unrightful greed, the overwhelming ambition, Jesus always rebuked, as He also rebuked the same violent, grasping, selfish retention of one's own rights. He Himself was a living example of the sacrifice of rights, — a sacrifice made from voluntary love, and not in recognition of any clamor that the world brought demanding it of Him.

All experience has proved that such sacrifice lies at the foundation of human welfare. But the principle that governed Christ, reasonable to the core, is usually

the last to find acceptance with men. Self-sacrifice is not a worldly characteristic. Men are always declaring their "rights." Capital demands its rights, labor demands its rights. But the world has gained pitifully little in these two thousand years by forcible attempts to secure these same rights, while we have learned what is perhaps the most emphatic lesson of the ages, — that concession, peaceful conference even with surrender of what we have honestly believed our own, arbitration with faithful adherence to its results, gracious if not rightful profit-sharing in business, is for the best welfare of all, because it really makes for righteousness. Jesus can never be quoted by the anarchist. As little can He be quoted by the man who has no care for his neighbor while he pulls down his own barns and builds larger, wherein to dispose his goods. We cannot conceive of Jesus playing the part of indifferentism in our day of the discussion of social questions; but we can just as little conceive of Him as espousing one side or the other in any strife. Strife He would seek to allay. He would show the truth, but He would teach the way of love, and would seek to reconcile the divided. Above all He would not subvert wrong by violence. In no case did He appeal to force. "Come unto Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart" was His quiet word by which He would unite all hearts by centring them upon His own. The tax-gatherer of His day, worst oppressor of all, had only to come to Christ's heart, when his own was broken, and its selfishness and cruelty melted away, and the stream of love flowed out in restitution and charity. The Pharisee, who came to Him by night for fear of

his fellows, learned that in his own heart, regenerate or not, lay the issues of life, and not in his official place. The fishermen were taught to place such estimate upon character and duty, that they need not care for caste and station. Outcasts of society were shown the way into a self-respect and a fellowship with God, which the richest and most respectable often failed to have. The discontented were not inflamed by incendiary speech until the fabric of society was in danger of destruction. Rather did Jesus insist upon lowliness of mind, esteeming other better than oneself, and being content with the things that we have.

With all His knowledge of the evils of caste, He never sought to degrade the high to the low by any sudden and violent method; nor did any of His teachings indicate that differences of condition must not of necessity follow differences of intrinsic worth in mind and character. He would have thought as soon of declaring that health must degenerate into disease without regard to the infraction of physical laws, and without reference to the relations of cause and effect. We nowhere hear Him bidding the poor to demand the riches that they have not earned, and that, if they thus possessed them, would be a damning snare to their souls. Never did He lay hand, either for Himself or others, on the accumulations of toil or inheritance. Never did He declare the right of the commune to such wealth. But we do see that He brought together the representatives of all classes in service to Himself and in self-sacrificing love to each other. His cradle was the centre of a common worship for magi and shepherds. His cross was the

common sacrifice for all who gathered about Him,—peasants and tradesmen and rich rulers. Joseph of Arimathæa, of wealth and station, became so one in heart with the fishermen, that he went and begged (strange beggar!) the body of Christ for burial. “Love one another;” “seek not for yourselves;” “your neighbor is every distressed one;” “forgive;” “judge not;” “hate not;” “I pray that they all may be one even as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee,”—words like these were sure to enter into the life of this day of ours, as well as into the affairs of the men about Him, for they taught the universal brotherhood of all those who follow the Son of God and confess themselves to be the children of the one Father. The Old Testament had shown the individual in his relations to the family, the clan, the nation. Christ carried out the idea to its farthest issue in the brotherhood of the race. Still would the individual find very special bonds in the family, the tribe, and the nation. Jesus broke none of these bonds by violent and revolutionary act. He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. But in all these smaller circles of life the Christian would be the better man, if henceforth he recognized that in God’s world there were no “walls of partition” between man and man, or between God and man. That one magic word, LOVE, should be the word to conjure by, so that hearts and lives, classes and interests, should continually approach each other until the old prophecy of Isaiah should come true in all the earth: “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my Holy Mountain.”<sup>1</sup>

And we cannot conclude this part of our study con-

<sup>1</sup> Is. xi. 9.

cerning Christ in the social life of men without noting that He sought to purify society thus only by purifying each component part of it, each individual as the unit upon which the world's life is built. "Are there *few* that be saved?"<sup>1</sup> Few or many, the question was premature. "Strive *thou* to enter in at the strait gate."<sup>2</sup> "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup> "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."<sup>4</sup> Such words as these, such deeds as those by which He singled out individuals for the forgiveness of sins, never pronouncing absolution to a multitude; such calls as came to Peter and Andrew, James and John, whereby the beginnings of the kingdom of God were made in the choice of a few attendant spirits that at the most did not exceed twelve, show that the vastness of the work which He had to do in the regeneration of society never diverted His attention from its thoroughness. The whole could be no better than its parts. The individual must be saved, if at last the kingdoms of this world were to become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> John iii. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. xi. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiii. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 8.

## VIII.

### DOCTRINE.

**I**F Jesus pursued the reasonable course in contact with the common life of men which we have seen, and which seems to be quite in accord with a purpose of God to reveal Himself in human life, we should reasonably look for a similar course in Christ's teaching.

First, it is not surprising that we find Him adapting His language and illustrating His thought according to the intelligences of His time. Though His doctrine would be for all men in all time, yet the men who flocked around Him in Palestine were to be saved first; to them and to future generations through them in natural course, the truth was to be revealed, and it could not have been revealed to them if the unhistoric course had been pursued,—if Jesus had spoken to the thought of the nineteenth century instead of to the thought of His own countrymen and contemporaries. In terms of the time, with localisms and idioms that could be interpreted by later generations, but needed no interpretation by His own, Jesus spoke as never man spoke.

These adaptations to His own people did not prevent them from recognizing that His doctrine was different from any of their own religious schools in its authority and scope. They confessed at once that it rose above

their own needs and the needs of their time. They saw that it reached beyond their sight into limitless future. But they saw, too, that it was meant for them, even if this was a Rabbi who had come from God.<sup>1</sup> It may seem needless to call attention to this primary simplicity and adaptation of the words of Christ. But there has been hardly any source of error more prolific than the interpretation that overlooks this very fact, and reduces to bald literalism or explains by modern parallelisms that rich Eastern coloring which the Gospels everywhere present. No Jew to whom Jesus spoke could think of the exact literalism with which theologians of the last century interpreted His awful words about the ever-burning fires of the Valley of Hinnom; nor, on the other hand, could they explain their force away into the attenuated reasonings by which future punishment is made wholly remedial and restorative. His own generation, from the very figures employed, would think only of a spiritual counterpart to the destruction of all worthless material in the great garbage-heaps of the city offal, which were always burning with ever-ascending smoke even then visible from the place where they stood listening to His words. Baptism, as we have seen, could mean for the Jew of that day no literal washing and no magic regeneration from the touch of the water on the flesh; the deeper spiritual change, of which baptism was the age-long accepted symbol, was the inevitable lesson. And so it always was. Modern thought is to be guided by the terms of Christ's speech; those terms are not to be pressed into the moulds of modern speculation.

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 2.

Christ's aim was to establish a new life in the individual and in society, and He was to do this by revealing God. His teachings, therefore, would hardly be those of a mere legalist, whose completed code would be at once perfect, its details admitting of no expansion, and its provisions taking no account of growth. The effort of Moses had been quite different. The "pattern in the Mount" had demanded that all things should be made and done in exact accord with itself; but Christ's teaching was of a different sort from that which took account of bowls and candlesticks, knops and fringes, nor did he care to define in detail even the weightier questions of morals as judged by a legal standard. Judgment was to be removed from earth to heaven. "There is one that judgeth,"<sup>1</sup> and "he that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day."<sup>2</sup> Only by the standard of His own words and His own life would Jesus teach men to measure their lives. He was not founding a nation; He was not defining rights and liberties; He was not legislating upon the possession and transfer of property; He was not establishing even a religious ritual, the outer and formal lines by which men have formed, or thought it necessary to guard, their faith. These things were for Moses to care for and arrange. Christ was for all life. "The Life was the light of men."<sup>3</sup> What He taught could not be limited to details, which would surely in the onward sweep of human life need frequent changes in proportion as the details were multiplied. Principles govern details; details do not and cannot under all cir-

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 50.

<sup>2</sup> John xii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 4.

cumstances govern principles. If Jesus, then, were what He claimed to be, Immanuel, "God with us," seeking the world's salvation, the Gospels present only the reasonable method of instruction from His lips. Large declarations of truth; germs that would grow, and like the sap of a tree throw their life out into the farthest ramifications of life, and be found adequate equally for the main stem and the minutest twig and leaf; searching definitions, laying bare the heart of morality; declarations going to the very core of motive; the tables of Sinai not abrogated but replaced by the Sermon on the Mount, which revealed the very soul of the Mosaic commandments, — such were the sayings of Jesus, and such were the laws that no elaborate system of legal machinery would need to enforce, for they would be written upon the hearts and the minds of His followers by the Spirit of God.

The relation of Christ's doctrine to the teaching of Moses and the Prophets is that of the wide sea to the waters of the land-locked bay, the boundless expanse of the air to the atmosphere set apart and bounded by the walls of a dwelling. If God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began,<sup>1</sup> and if He had never left any people without a witness of Himself,<sup>2</sup> when at last He spoke His Word in Flesh, He would certainly speak nothing contrary to His former revelations. Truth would still be truth, and it would not be truth merely because Jesus should declare it; but Jesus would speak it because it was truth. Some have thought to detract from the glory of Christ as the Revealer of God, because others had uttered before His

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 70.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 17.

day many sayings of similar import to His own. But the greater marvel, inexplicable indeed, it would have been, if He had contradicted truth by whomsoever uttered. When therefore Jesus taught, He did not contradict aught of the essentials of the Mosaic teachings. He removed the limits; He led the people out of the dwelling into the open air; the life that was at last in danger of being stifled was given the freedom of the universe. Mosaism in its externals was done away, but its spirit and life were exposed and quickened, its essential truths were emphasized, and the benefits of the "peculiar people" of God were given to the world.

Moreover Christ's teaching was not philosophical, nor was it in the main dogmatic. It was principally ethical. His concern was to save from sin, by giving a true conception of God indeed, but such a conception as could be gained mainly from regarding Himself, who an Apostle afterward declared was "the express image of God's person"<sup>1</sup> and had in Him "all the fulness of the Godhead."<sup>2</sup> He entered into no such disquisition concerning His own nature, as men have sometimes thought themselves qualified to undertake. Even in the assertion of that nature, repeated and persistent, as we shall soon note, His words were the furthest from any metaphysical explanation of His unique being. And even in meeting the sins of the people, His teachings were simple and authoritative, never wasting a moment in useless words. When tempted to argument by hostile Scribes and Pharisees, He leaped to their confutation in few sentences,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 9.

nor deigned to admit their hair-splitting casuistries to the tests of mere logic. "Forgiveness" was a word that always lay ready on His lips. "Sin no more" was the brief warning, "lest a worse evil come upon thee." His silence is a marvel to our longing hearts, when we dream of the heavenly world and wish for its bright mysteries. But He said that we might learn even from His silence! "In My Father's house are many mansions; *if it were not so I would have told you.*"<sup>1</sup> His mere silence was eloquent, a confirmation of their faith and hope. It was like saying that man's general longing for immortality was a proof of immortality, in the absence of any actual denial of it from God. But He never sought to explain heaven, or to enter into the question of its intelligences, the nature of spirit and of eternal life. Yet He did speak of them plainly. He declared His power over the spiritual world. The dead rose to life at His bidding, the grave opened to let Him go. He showed enough for His followers to develop; but He left the development to the Spirit-guided souls of those who should come after Him. The very diversity of human opinion concerning the development of His doctrine, as one part of it is emphasized by one Christian and another by another, shows the simplicity and purity of His teaching; as it is the white light of the sun that can be broken up into the varied colors of the spectrum with the widest variation and the greatest brilliancy for each prismatic color.

There was one exception to the rule, which was specially in accord with His main purpose to redeem the world

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 2.

by revealing God. His assertions of His own nature were frequent and insistent; but it is to be noted that His assertions of His humanity were more frequent and emphatic than those of His divinity. That He was true Son of God, Only Begotten of the Father, He openly declared, and that He was not misunderstood is plain from the unrelenting persecution which the declaration induced. But far more frequently He called Himself the Son of Man. It was apparently His one effort to keep before the minds of men that He was human as well as divine; that God had come in flesh; that God was so near to every man that He had taken humanity upon Him, and that henceforth humanity was to be a part of His nature. That He was really man, was the great wonder, not that He was the Son of God. The people about Him, if they would not believe His words, would be compelled to believe Him from the works that He did, which were plainly beyond man's works. His claim to being the Son of God was proved by the divinity of His works. Happy, if word and work could always be so nearly identical! But that He was man, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, would be the hard thing to believe in view of His manifest deity, and it would become more difficult as time would go on, so that really the earliest great heresy would be upon this point, and Saint John would be obliged to write,<sup>1</sup> ere the first century closed, "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ." It was left for a much later time to deny

<sup>1</sup> 2 John i. 7; also 1 John i. 1-3; iv. 2.

Christ's deity. It is no wonder, therefore, that Jesus repeatedly emphasized His participation in the nature of man, declaring Himself again and again The Son of Man, the great *Representative* of redeemed humanity, the ideal man, as He was the Representative of God on earth. His doctrine in this respect was naturally consequent to the Incarnation itself, wholly consistent with its purpose and necessary to faith in every other teaching and event of Christ's life on earth. It was merely the doctrinal reassertion of the fact of Bethlehem, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."

If this foundation was laid, the whole superstructure of religious truth would rise naturally upon it, just as the whole life of Christ would follow naturally and be at every point consistent with the birth of Jesus. To produce God's life in men, to bring new heavens and new earth in the reformation of society, to redeem from evil and make good, — this was the purpose to be worked out. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." How many men would have been saved by hair-splitting discussion of philosophical schemes? How many would have been saved to the loftiest possibilities of human righteousness by a propounding of a system of theology? Christ went straight to the need. He taught the sinfulness of man indeed by going to each man, the inquiring ruler of the Jews as well as the penitent thief, for it was for such that He had come; and He spoke such parables as the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son. He showed that God had the desire to forgive sin by pronouncing absolution Himself and initiating a new life of righteousness, as a fact that was patent and could not be

gainsaid in the forgiven person. He declared this new life to be eternal, in no sense different in its essential character from the life of God and heaven. He who had not this life would suffer loss, and eternity would have nothing for him but the inevitable and natural results of such separation from God. The judgment of God upon the unrepentant sinner would be only according to the perfect character of God. It would not be the judgment of an unjust judge, nor the unreasoning hate and fiendish torment inflicted by a demon. God was what men saw in Christ; "he who hath seen Me hath seen the Father,"<sup>1</sup> and Christ judged no man wrongly. "He knew what was in man."<sup>2</sup> So God would judge according to each man's works,<sup>3</sup> according to the light that he had had, with *perfect* justice. But with all His words about the eternal future, He never divorced it from these earthly years. The present was always the key to the situation. This life is the school of character, and the moment in which He stood face to face with the sinner was that man's opportunity to begin life anew. Instant conversion and instant righteousness were the paramount duty; even the burial of a father could wait for that, and for that all other things, houses, lands, friends, must be left.

But however He taught this change of being in a man, He gave but rare utterance to its philosophy. God's part of the great crisis was left unuttered, except when some man with overweening and unusual confidence needed to have the props of his false faith in himself cut away, that he might be launched upon the all-sustaining mercy of God, just as a ship upon the sea's margin cannot move an

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 9.

<sup>2</sup> John ii. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvi. 27.

inch until the restraints on which it has stood erect — things of its own nature — shall be removed, when it shall leap into the waves and become a thing of life. To Nicodemus<sup>1</sup> Christ would talk of regeneration by the Spirit, beyond the control of man, lodged in the sovereignty of God; but to scores of others there was no word of this, for the poor souls knew well enough that they had no help in themselves. “In Him was Life, and the life was the light of men.”<sup>2</sup> Life was greater even than truth. He declared Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life.<sup>3</sup> Men needed to know God and so come to Him; but Christ was the way to this knowledge. “How can we know the way?” But He Himself was the Truth: “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” He was the Truth, only because He was the Life of God, God incarnate, Truth produced in Life, wrought out in the common experience of man. Mathematics are as true in the dead moon as upon the warm and living earth; but transmuted into life here the great truths of science find their best meaning and their highest use. A lifeless universe must still be the work of God, showing the marvellous combination of laws by which alone it can subsist; but life is the supreme end of law, and so even a dust-speck in the universe like our little globe may be dignified beyond the myriad suns, if they have not life, but only contribute to the support and delight of life in the human race. No mere mass of matter; no universal combination of material bodies, can so speak of God as the cry of an infant, or the reasoning word of a man, or the mutual love of human hearts. Therefore did Jesus

<sup>1</sup> John iii.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 6.

live, and therefore His words were all of life. To bring life to God's life was the whole purpose of His life and doctrine. Every word revealed man to himself, revealed God to man, showed the great gulf between them, bridged that gulf with the divine love, sought to lead the trembling sinner out upon that love. Every word taught us that the issues of life are in ourselves, as we shall turn toward God or not. The old, age-long questions were thus answered, and men found satisfaction from Him who spoke as never man spoke, from Him who had "the words of Eternal Life."

One thing more we must note, that Jesus distinctly recognized that further revelation, or at least development of doctrine, would be given to His disciples at a later time, when they should be better prepared for it. He said plainly: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."<sup>1</sup> It was in accord with His constant care for them, for it is recorded that early in His ministry He "spake the word unto them with many such parables, *as they were able to hear it.*"<sup>2</sup> That He intended to withhold certain phases of truth and the development of His doctrine until His death and resurrection had led His disciples on to a higher point in their education, is wholly natural. How could they have received Saint Paul's doctrine of the atonement before Christ's death had occurred, when the full and perfect determination of that doctrine itself is yet a point of disagreement among devout Christians, who have made Saint Paul's words the study of a lifetime? How could they have gloried in the resurrection of Jesus,

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Mark iv. 33.

giving it its true place as the sign and promise of their own future life, before they saw it as a fact, and by renewed intercourse with Him knew that the same Lord who had died on the cross, had risen from the dead and been "justified" by that glory by His Father? His method in revealing truth was exactly that which God had always pursued with the people of Israel and with the world. It was that of a kind and wise teacher, who educated truly, who *led forth* the understanding of the pupil until it could grasp the meaning of events. An unwise teacher of abundant knowledge might have forced a certain amount of learning into the minds of the Jews, and Christ might have done it with His disciples, giving them a parrot-knowledge of events yet to come, and of their profound significance, so that they could have recited, like an unwitting school-boy, the doctrines of a later time; but that would not have been wise teaching, as all the history of pedagogics has shown. It would not have strengthened the minds, enlarged the spiritual perceptions, given facility in self-effort, and led out the character of the disciples. The weary, lifeless, machine-like muttering of the Rabbinical laws might be good enough for the disciples of the Jewish schools. But Christ would not teach in that way. He was too wise, too good, to dwarf and maim the intellects of His followers by any such process. "They were to be led into all truth,"<sup>1</sup> indeed, but they could have been led into very little truth, if the free and natural expansion of their own minds and hearts had not been patiently fostered.

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 13.

In this connection Christ's charity in doctrine was forever a rebuke and an example to the hatreds of polemics in the field of Christian creeds. He was patient to the utmost with the Twelve, who understood so little of what He taught them, and was content to lay the foundations of the future developments of faith. But it was not only with His immediate followers that His loving forbearance welcomed a mere partial acquisition of truth. There came to Him one day the tidings that a certain man was casting out devils and doing many wonderful works in His name, and yet the man did not join himself to the disciples.<sup>1</sup> They forbade him on that account. But Jesus said, Forbid him not, for there is no man who shall do a miracle in My name who can lightly speak evil of Me. And He added that if one should only give a cup of cold water to them in His name it would be a deed for reward rather than blame. "For he who is not against us is on our part." What Christ would answer now to the strife of tongues waged by the adherents of opposing creeds, may well be imagined. What if He should still rebuke the whole *odium theologicum* of His followers by this one word, as in the old time: "If this or that creed is giving to the thirsty a single cup of cold water in My name, forbid it not!" It seems as if He was content to let the one correct article of this wonder-worker's creed, a belief in His name as a sign of power for good, cancel all the errors of it in His judgment of the case, sure that that one truth would in reality cancel all error in the end. Men may refuse, and perhaps must refuse, to go counter to their conscience in acknowledging

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 38.

fellowship with any error; but in the general lack of perfect knowledge, it were well that the Master's spirit of patience and welcome to all that is good should be remembered. "He who is not against us, is for us." It is a better saying than the bitter assertion that He who is not of our own little company must be forbidden to use the name of Christ at all. Jesus made no concession of His own faith to this mistaken man; but He approved instantly of the use of what truth the man did have, and He lent Him the power of His name for the blessing of mankind, though every other article of the man's faith was wrong. There is a weakness of faith that can tolerate nothing outside of its own stronghold. There is a strength of faith that can trust itself to walk with a foe, secure from attack, and knowing that divine strength and beauty shall overcome human error. But Jesus went even farther than this. He would not recognize the man who walked not with them as His enemy. If he was blessing men through the power of Christ's name, he was Christ's friend.

But with His charity Jesus did not lower the standard of His doctrine to fit the moral condition of His hearers. Every word presented an ideal. It may seem that the Sermon on the Mount presents a standard of morals impossible of attainment; but Jesus could have set no standard but the highest, if His word, in the least as well as the greatest, was to be consistent with His life, and if both were to be the exposition of God to men. If Jesus was to lead men back to God, He could not have gone before them only a part of the way, or given them directions that would have failed to cover their whole journey. As the Son of God, as the Son of Man, knowing God and

saving man, He could give no command other than that men should be perfect, even as the Father in heaven is perfect.<sup>1</sup> Any other command would have been practically a command to sin. Moral perfection must be set before man as the goal of his desire and effort, if Christ was what He claimed to be and what the world needed. Had He not given the command to ideal holiness, He would have sinned Himself as leading men astray; He would have been the deceiver that unbelievers have sometimes declared Him to be. But as His doctrine stands, it fails not in one jot or tittle of absolute rightness; there is not a shade of discrepance between it and His nature, His character, His mission. If it seems to any man impossible of attainment, that very dazzling whiteness of it, even if we reach it not ourselves, shall be its own best testimony to the purity and fulness of the everlasting streams that come down to us for our refreshing. Not yet, perhaps, may man reach the fountain-head of the water of life; but his faith in Christ may give him many draughts, which shall quicken his life and sustain it until he shall be pure and so see God. There is the name of no other teacher given among men, whereby they must be saved. If we go not to Christ for knowledge of God and heaven, to whom shall we go? It is the question that Saint Peter asked, and it was his answer to the Lord's pathetic appeal to the Twelve, when all others seemed deserting Him. "Will ye also go away?"<sup>2</sup> "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 48.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 68.

## IX.

### CHRIST IN MIRACLE.

*I*T was as natural for Christ to do miracles, as it was for Him to breathe. If the Incarnation is credible, as we have seen, then He *must* show some of the special attributes of Deity as well as those of Humanity. It was not necessary that *all* of the attributes of Deity should appear, and we have already seen how He made Himself poor in such glory for the sake of those whom He came to serve. He surrendered voluntarily omniscience, for it was not necessary that He should know all things at all times of His earthly career; and yet He often knew more than men could know, if the occasion demanded and the perfection of His service made it necessary. In like manner His omnipotence was in abeyance, and yet He often did greater works than any man could do, when the occasion required. He was Son of God and Son of Man, and His mission would have failed if He had not lived the common life of man on the one hand, yet that life lifted to an ideal; and on the other the common life of God, yet that life subordinated and shorn of some of its infinite glory, that it might be manifested in the flesh. Miracle was not the only phase of the divine glory that appeared in Jesus. His love was above that of men, and His knowledge and wisdom

were not limited to the ordinary range of human observation. His word of forgiveness was itself a word of power, that revealed God every time that He spoke it with authority. We find great force in the saying of the Scribes: "Why doth this man thus speak? He blasphemeth! Who can forgive sins but God only?"<sup>1</sup> It was one of many instances in which their hatred bore unconscious testimony to Christ's truth. Again there are many hints as to the personal appearance of Jesus, that indicate a certain majesty of demeanor before which men feared greatly, and either shrunk from Him or were irresistibly drawn to Him, as His mien was one of anger, or sorrow, or winning love. Surely it is not strange that among all these indications of the heavenly nature in Him should be found also traces of the divine power over nature, proving Him as superior to the material universe as the Creator of it. We repeat, that if it was natural to Him to eat and drink and sleep, to think and talk, to be a manifest sharer in the human life about Him, it was just as natural for Him to be a manifest sharer in the life of God, whether by the exhibition of power or any other attribute, which the success of His mission demanded. *It was as natural for Him to do miracles as it was to breathe.*

But an objector may ask, why the miracles of Christ indicate His deity any more than those which are ascribed to Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, show the deity of those men. We answer that if the miracles of Christ be considered alone, they do not prove His deity, although they do have an evidential value beyond

<sup>1</sup> Mark ii. 7.

that of all other miracles, as we shall point out later. If compared with the miracles done by Moses and the others, their evidential character is exactly the same so far as it affords an indorsement, easily legible by all who saw it, of the claims which were made by those prophets and messengers of God. They did not claim to be more than man, but Jesus did claim to be the Son of God. Miracle in the hands of Moses was good for nothing except to substantiate to Pharaoh that Moses spoke as the accredited representative of God. It was so, too, when the same lesson must be taught to the Israelites, for whom it was vastly more important that they should not be rebellious against Moses than that their physical desires should be satisfied by water out of the flinty rock. Moses proved to the men of His day that He had authority from God, by giving them an object-lesson of God's peculiar prerogative resident in his hands for that purpose. Christ showed the men of His day the same thing in the same way, only His claim for Himself was larger than the claim of Moses; His claim was that He was Son of God as well as Son of Man. It was inconceivable that God would approve a deceiver by the gift of His own seal: He would not by the writing of His own hand indorse a fraudulent claim, whether it was made by Moses or by Christ. If the water of the Nile obeyed Moses, or the water of Gennessereth obeyed Christ, the same thing was shown to all who saw: not necessarily either that Christ or Moses was divine; but that the divine favor was a pledge of their truth and that they were what they claimed to be as servants of God. Thus indirectly would be proved the divinity of Jesus, for

He claimed it; while the very opposite would be proved for Moses, namely, — that he was *not* divine, for he claimed only to be the human leader of Israel.

But there is an evidential value of miracles as done by Christ, which reaches over to the spiritual realm, and by virtue of the visible power in them leads the faith onward to an acceptance of the same authority in the invisible realms of the soul. A remarkable instance, in which this is the main force of Christ's deed and argument, is recorded by Saint Matthew in the ninth chapter: —

“And, behold, they brought unto Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And behold certain of the Scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said: Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine own house. And he arose and departed to his own house.”

Now Christ's own course of thought is here perfectly plain, and it is clear that His hearers understood Him. If they had given any answer to His question: Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? they would have answered as we should: It is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven, for no man can see whether they are forgiven or not; the saying cannot be put to proof; it may or may not be true, and you venture little in saying it. But if you say to this palsied

man, Arise and walk, we can see at once whether your word has any power or not. Plainly it is much harder to command him to walk than to promise him forgiveness. "Very well then," was the Lord's answer in effect, "I will do the harder thing, and to your own eyes I will prove this authority and give you the test that you can see and will accept." So He healed the man. They were silenced. His miracle in the realm of their vision had cast its power over into the realms where their vision was lost, and they had no excuse for refusing to believe that the man's sins were forgiven. The charge of blasphemy had fallen to the ground. And this was a constant force of miracle. It was an object-lesson to the people. It secured faith in the immediate and visible, that it might lead belief on to the invisible. He who was thus the ruler of destiny in the physical world could well be trusted as the arbiter of the soul's destiny in the heavenly world.

But beyond all these considerations to show the nature and place of miracles in the economy of redemption, the following are to be added as of special force in this connection. They are well stated by Charles Gore in the Bampton Lectures for 1891, "The Incarnation of the Son of God," though the view in question is ancient.

First, *miracle indicates Personality*. Mind and will and power behind Nature are shown. Orderly arrangement and unbroken continuity would certainly tend to establish the wrong belief that matter and its phenomena are eternal, the universe a machine self-existent and quite independent of personal care or interference. Or if the creation of the universe by Omnipotence were granted,

all the evidence of uninterrupted law would be to lead men — some men if not all — to the conclusion that God's work was completed in creation, and that, practically at least, He had withdrawn into inaccessible realms. Atheism on the one hand, pantheism on the other, would be the result. We do not say that such conclusions would be logically necessary; we do not believe that they would be: but they would be almost certain to follow, and as a matter of fact the world had gone far in those directions. Men must be taught "that God is, and that He is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him."<sup>1</sup> That God is, that He is greater than His creation, that He may still create and legislate, revealing His mind and declaring purpose, could be shown with no more emphasis than by bending laws that were inflexible to all other minds and wills to His own Will; by causing these otherwise invariable arrangements to vary under the visible guidance of His hand. Christ must prove the personality of God before He could demand fealty and love for God. "If God is personal, if His being is better expressed in human will and character than in mechanical motion and unconscious life, miracles with adequate cause are neither impossible nor unnatural. It is blind instinct which works on in monotonous uniformity where conditions are exceptional. It is rational character which from time to time will violate uniformity in the interest of rational consistency."<sup>2</sup> And this is all that we plead for here. If Christ was to reveal personality, if the Incarnation was to show God as present and real in the affairs of men, then rational consistency required some form of miracle

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Gore, p. 51.

done by Christ's hand, which should be in accord with His own nature and work.

But a second necessity for miracle appears in the fact that God was not only a living, acting person, but also one who loved, and whose love was no less a law of His being, and a fount of His action, than any other characteristic of deity. There is no forgiveness in Nature. If Nature be accepted as the only, or the complete expression of the Creator's character, then God must be deemed inflexible,—hard and stern and unforgiving. Whoever contracts a debt to Nature, must pay the uttermost farthing. But Christ knew a law of God that went beyond this inflexibility, and it was especially to show this that He came into the world. "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." The grace that Nature knew nothing of, must be shown as greater than any law of physics. Love combined with wisdom saw the opportunity when the need appeared, and Christ came to show that God was not the inexorable and far-off Being that men had been led to believe in, but that Infinite Love could command law and make it work for men.

It is quite in accord with these thoughts that Jesus never wrought any miracles for His own benefit, and often called openly upon His Father, as within hearing and actually supplying the power, before He proceeded to any mighty work. He did this expressly for the sake of the witnesses, who needed to be taught these great lessons of God. As He said in His discourse recorded by Saint John (xii. 30): "This voice came not for My sake, but for your sakes," so also at the tomb of Lazarus He prayed, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me,

and I knew that Thou hearest Me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”<sup>1</sup> Christ’s mighty works were always done in the service of men, were never selfish, but always the works of love and helpfulness, and always indicated that it was no mere wish of His own even thus to act, but that God’s will and God’s love were thus shown to men. Back of all the observed course of nature, overruling its inexorable forces, teaching lessons that it could never teach, proving that a higher power than mechanical law, or even blind but life-endowed instinct, is at work in the affairs of men, God’s personality and God’s love thrust themselves into view through the life and works of Jesus. The veil of material things that hides the Holy Place of God’s dwelling was more than once rent in twain; or rather, once for all in the Incarnation, and by all the sacrifice that such an Incarnation meant, that veil of matter-tissue, of universe-law, was drawn aside, so that we know and are sure that God is, and that He is the rewarder with His own ineffable love of all those who diligently seek Him.

If this be so, a further and definite force of miracle is seen, as we regard its place in the service that Jesus did for man. What was the atonement that He made? We shall make the attempt upon a future page to define what we conceive to be the reasonable doctrine of the atonement as it is developed fully in the New Testament. It will be enough here to consider that phase of it which exhibits the sacrifice of the divine love. The very term “sacrifice” implies the giving up of rights, the

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 41, 42.

abnegation of privilege, the offering to the demand of need what otherwise would have been retained. It is thus understood that "God gave His Son," because God so loved the world in its sin and distress, that He would break over what would otherwise have been the divine order, what *had been the divine order*, indeed, from eternity, since "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."<sup>1</sup> It was a break upon the divine order for Christ to come forth at all. It was a sacrifice made necessary by sin, an "emptying"<sup>2</sup> Himself of "the glory that He had with the Father before the world was,"<sup>3</sup> for Him to take upon Himself the limitations of flesh and be found in fashion as a man, and being so found to further humble Himself, and become obedient even unto the death of the cross.<sup>4</sup> The Incarnation was miracle, and it was sacrifice; it was the sacrifice of atonement as truly as the death of Jesus was the culmination, the supreme moment of that sacrifice and of the atonement. If then the birth of Jesus was miraculous, as we have seen; if the death was miraculous, as we shall see; if both were necessary diversions of the divine order that must have prevailed, if sin had not been in the world, — then every deed that Jesus did, which in its turn broke across the usual order of nature, was also a part of the same atonement, the giving up of what under all ordinary circumstances should have continued immovable forever. God so loved the world, that He would save it even at the expense of the death of His Son. The death of His

<sup>1</sup> John i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> John xvii. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 8.

Son could only be possible, as that Son should assume mortal conditions. Mortality for the Immortal was as vast a suspension of the usual and rightful order, as for a liquid wave to bear up feet of flesh, or for a few barley loaves to suffice for a multitude's hunger, — *as vast*, but perhaps *no vaster*, since either condition required God to will it and to bring it to pass for love's sake. When, therefore, Jesus stilled the storm on Galilee, or caused the fig-tree to wither under His curse, or opened the eyes of the blind, the deed was not isolated from the whole purpose of His life, nor was it for any mere evidential value such as availed in the case of Moses; but it was *a true sacrifice* of God's nature, it was evidence of His willingness to bear for man's sake the infraction of His own order and His own right. If God had created, and had seen that the work of His hand "was good," then the suspension or change for an instant of the usual order of law must have been with pain to Him; it was as true a sign that He was suffering for the good of man, as the birth or death of Jesus was a sign of the same great truth. And we can well understand how Jesus, who knew God, and to whom right and order were as necessarily sacred as to the Father Himself, would experience personal suffering when He did His mighty works. "I perceive that power has gone forth from Me,"<sup>1</sup> He said when a woman's faith had laid hold upon the fringe of His robe to her own healing. He did many of these unconscious miracles, if we may call them so; for we read that "all the multitude sought to touch Him, for power came forth from Him and healed them all."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mark v. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vi. 19.

Divine Love could heal even at the expense of the natural order of law. What was this but the working of atonement by the assumption of pain in the divine nature for the sake of man's salvation? As it is written,<sup>1</sup> "He healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah<sup>2</sup> the Prophet, saying: Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases." A miracle, therefore, altering by divine power the usual order of the world for the necessities of salvation and at the behest of love, was a direct sacrifice of the divine nature. It was the voluntary self-crucifixion of that Will, which had created the world and set the stars in their courses. No one of all Christ's mighty works was without its force as a part of that atonement, that sacrificial suffering, by which God sought to bring sinners to Himself. Again therefore we find that *for Christ*, in the pursuance of His mission and in the accomplishment of sacrificial atonement, it was as natural to work miracles as it was for Him to breathe.

But though this change of natural law was a real denial of self, so far as God had revealed His will in the observed order of Nature, it does not follow that this denial was such as to show lack of foreknowledge, and to prove vacillation, change, and infraction of the whole law of His being on God's part. That definition of miracle which is content with making it mere infraction of physical law, is not sufficient. Such a definition as depends merely upon our observation of natural phenomena is not adequate, because no miracle was done, as we have seen, without reference to the spirit. The

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah liii. 4.

occasion for the Incarnation was the actual breaking of law in the spiritual realm by man, sin entailing spiritual misery. Man's soul was imperilled; in sin man's soul was lost. But it is inconceivable that God should not have provided for this awful emergency. His own eternal nature included provision for redemption. *Love was law* with Him, and love would redeem by reserving to itself the power to save as a law superior to every other law. A father secures the life of his family only by a regular order in which he wins its bread, and the mother keeps the house, and the children are at school; and the whole course of the family is preserved perhaps for years unbroken, and the most regular and perfect development is manifested in its growth in body and in mind. If illness were an unknown thing, this would be deemed the inflexible order of the family. But when a child is smitten with fever, and the life ebbs, and the piteous need for an extra service knocks at the door of each anxious heart, then the father's own orderly life is broken across, and the order of the whole family is disturbed; and even the most trivial matter, such as the hours for meals or the time for sleep, is a testimony to the overwhelming law of the family love, that is now supreme. *It is the hour to save*; in that hour all formerly observed order yields and testifies to the superior law. The illustration is of course imperfect, since it compares the human with the divine. Yet we may truly say, that any definition of nature, or any definition of miracle, which leaves out the consideration of the spiritual world and the specific need of a diseased spiritual order, is unscientific. Sin is as truly a fact as the sun-rising.

God, if we believe on Him at all as having the attributes generally ascribed to Him; if He is not of demoniac nature, — God must be affected by the cry of His world in distress. The Father, if indeed He is a Father, will interfere to save. *This interference itself is miracle.* This act of redemption is a breaking in upon the natural, that is, the usually observed order of sin and death. A law superior to any heretofore seen in action becomes active, and God comes more within ken. "The moon and the stars which He ordained were the work of His fingers:"<sup>1</sup> in salvation "He makes bare His holy arm;"<sup>2</sup> in redemption miracles have their own law.

Even a study of the material universe alone should show that observed phenomena, which fully establish the fact that there is law, must nevertheless make way for unobserved and untabulated causes, to which alone unexpected events can be referred. Earthquakes, which we believe beyond question to be wholly regular and inevitable consequences of certain conditions, are yet deemed irregular and sporadic because these conditions are imperfectly known. Astronomers first saw Biela's comet in 1772. It was observed again in 1805. In 1826 its orbit was calculated. Again and again it was seen, or its hiding-place actually computed when it was not seen. But this comet suddenly broke in two. After another six years the parts were more than a million miles from each other. Since 1852 it has not been seen at all, and probably never will be seen again, having been dissipated into meteoric dust. This comet thus refused to obey all known cometary laws after a

<sup>1</sup> Ps. viii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Is. lii. 10; lix. 65; and many passages.

certain time ; but no astronomer has ever doubted its existence, or that it played its part so long as it was needed in space. A law hitherto unobserved, and that is even yet unknown, struck across all previously observed cometary order, and here was irregularity, as men would call it. Indeed, when a law has once been determined, science is generally more interested in studying aberrations than in simply adding data to confirm regularity. If this be true in the physical realm, how shall any one say that personality and love and moral purpose, that mind and character desiring to produce upon other mind and character inestimable results, may not act in ways wholly unobserved before, and yet entirely in accord with the law of that personality under certain conditions? He must be a bold reasoner who will say this. For us it is quite *natural*, wholly logical, to believe that the Infinite Soul, or even that such a Being as man can conceive, could and would hold within Himself even at the time of creation a purpose to redeem, cherishing a law of love and sacrifice as inviolable as His own Being. Hence there would be from the first a law of redemption, a power of life sent forth to undo the power of sin, and, itself extraordinary, to employ every method of love, that could impress a lost world with the reality of that love. Thus was Christ "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." <sup>1</sup>

Thus the divine dignity of the miracles of Jesus appears. To many minds it has seemed unworthy of Him that He should have resorted to apparent thaumaturgy. Men have seen an incongruity between Christ's simple purity,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xiii. 8.

matchless wisdom, God-like love, and this working of wonders, as if He had joined the magicians, and would mystify His disciples, and try to substantiate, by a show of what they could not understand, that which needed no substantiation, so clearly did its own essential character speak for it. Why, it is asked, should the reversal or suspension of a law of nature be needed to show that the golden rule is the utterance of the purest soul, or that manhood in Jesus was ideal? The answer is that miracle was not for this purpose, nor was it in this sense mere reversal of law. The *whole law* of God's being required the yielding of nature for moral ends, just as my love may demand the relinquishment even of my rights. The story of spiritual affections and moral struggle illustrates even within human experience this law of sacrifice on God's part. To rectify the realm of man's spiritual world, God suffered the material world to do its part. The physical universe, as well as Heaven, bowed to redemption when the Word became flesh. The sacrifice of law in nature occupied only its own place in the great sacrifice of God for man. The sacrifice of nature was in accord with the sacrifice of nature's Creator. Had there been no miracle of Incarnation, and no miracle in the subsequent life of Jesus on earth, *then Nature had been out of accord with God in that time of redemption, and its very uniformity would have been at odds with God's sacrifice in the gift of His Son.*

For such reasons it is plain that the same circumstances, and only those, would demand miracles to-day. These circumstances do not exist. The great change in the spiritual world has been wrought. The spiritual con-

dition of believers now fulfils the word of Jesus, "Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed."<sup>1</sup> The former relations of miracle to faith have now been reversed. The course of thought once was from miracle to faith; now it is from faith to miracle; that is, believing on Christ as the revelation of God, we find it possible to believe in the works that He is said to have done, and to see their place in the economy of redemption. To-day alleged miracle produces revulsion of faith: its first fruit now is doubt; and this result is quite legitimate. The life of man has attained such spiritual height, intellect has become so sanctified, that its clear view merely of the spiritual evidences in the character of Jesus would be enough to secure faith in God. "Jesus is the great miracle." Once men turned from His deeds to Him. Having Him we need no physical proofs, but though we see not, we exclaim with faith equal to that of Thomas, when he saw the print of the nails: "MY LORD AND MY GOD."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 29.

<sup>2</sup> The thought of the eighth chapter to the Romans seems to confirm this argument. Creation (v. 19) is represented as sharing in the sufferings necessary to the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected (v. 20) to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself shall be delivered. Men suffer, and nature suffers, and the Spirit of God groans, while intercession goes on. All things (v. 28) work together for good to them who love God, the called according to His purpose to glorify them. Therefore we may even say this (v. 31): He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? There is nothing past, present, or to come, nothing in life or death, nothing in all creation, that shall frustrate God's saving love, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## X.

### SOLITUDE AND PRAYER.

ALTHOUGH Jesus was not an ascetic, but lived in the centre of busy and thronging life, He loved to go apart from men and seek quiet and rest, with meditation and prayer. Many passages in the Gospels tell of such retirement, and we find in them only the natural record of the experience of every man whose life is earnest and devoted with intensity of application to a great purpose.

The principal difference between this experience of Jesus and that of most men lies in the exceptional purpose of Christ's life with the perfect and easeful adaptation of His rest to the recuperation of power. Where few men would be able to cast off such burdens as they have in order to regain their strength of body and soul; where fewer still would be able to keep the burden ever heavy upon their consciousness, and yet with unhampered soul seek refreshment, Jesus found it possible to go away from the world which He was serving and saving, to build Himself up in all the bodily and spiritual forces of which He had been depleted by His toil.

Once He spoke of His burden, but declared that in bearing it He had help which made it easy. The "yoke" that He bore was the yoke that He urged men to take

upon themselves: "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."<sup>1</sup> His meek and lowly heart, rebellious in nothing, and trustful as a child's, knowing surely that His Heavenly Father, of whom he had just spoken, would do nothing with Him and require nothing of Him save what was best, gave Him the only adequate aid in bearing His load of life, so much greater than any that His followers could ever bear. The water-carriers of Palestine, the porters, all who carried heavy loads, knew well enough the value of a yoke across the shoulders, well-fitted, with no chafing, by which they could carry burdens, not half of which could be borne with unaided hands. The yoke to them was no burden, though perhaps it did add a few pounds to their gross weight; but these few pounds distributed the weight of many pounds so evenly, that the yoke was an easeful comfort and not a curse. The yoke was more a part of the man than of the burden; it gave more power than weight. Let no man talk of the yoke that Christ wore and that He recommends to weary men as if it were a burden added to those we already have to bear. "My yoke is easy and My burden is light;" Christ's means of carrying His dreadful load will suffice in proportionate degree for any man who will faithfully use it for his own load. So, too, Jesus spoke of having meat to eat that His disciples knew not of; "My meat is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."<sup>2</sup> The same "meekness and lowliness" of spirit, patent in both utterances, show that the perfect oneness

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

<sup>2</sup> John iv. 32-34.

of will between the Father and the Son gave to Jesus the refection, the sustaining power, necessary to accomplish His work. But to keep this power for His spirit it was as needful that He should have some repose as it was that physical rest or material food should restore the depleted energies of His body. He who "grew in stature and in favor with God and man" in His youth, could only keep the health of manhood in body and soul by constant recuperation. He loved mankind; but because He loved and served men He must withdraw from men, and in the silence of desert spaces find rest to body and soul.

Hardly a word is needed to show why the physical need of rest was His as well as ours. If He was what we have seen Him to be, He would require quiet and rest as truly as food and drink. And to the greatest degree would this need lie heavy on Him, because, even if judged by the measure of any man's daily toil, the work of Jesus was most severe. The physician, the minister, know how the appeal to their sympathy is a constant drain upon their life. Every one engaged in public teaching has learned that the nervous strain of such work is unequalled. Jesus was teaching, preaching, healing from morning till night. He was the centre of throngs who pressed upon Him to hear His word. Strength was going out of Him all the time as He healed diseases. As it is written, He said that He perceived "virtue," power, had left Him, when one invalid sought His help and got it, though the appeal was made in secret. The frequent records of His bodily weariness are pathetic and eloquent testimonies as to the results upon Himself of His toils for men. In His

journey through Samaria He was wearied, and sat "thus" on the well; in the disciples' boat He slept so soundly on the pillow in the stern that the storm in which they feared for their lives could not awake Him. Numberless instances will be recalled of similar records, and we find that none of them are surprising, if we rightly consider the limitations of the body in any man, and remember the extreme drain upon Christ by each day's life.

But just because we find His life so laborious and exhausting, we may find it strange that so often, instead of sleeping, He was watching and praying. And yet, if He was the Son of God as well as Son of Man, why should He not find it as necessary to draw from the heavenly fountains of repose the draughts of rest which should recreate His spiritual powers, as it was needful to seek physical restoration from "nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep"?

"Cold mountains and the midnight air  
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer,"

because the night and the desert-places alone gave Him immunity from care and the immediate pressure of service. So long as men were awake, they thronged Him. If He tried to put the sea between Himself and them, they either took boats and pursued Him, or journeyed far around the lake-shore to see Him again.<sup>1</sup> It was only when the wearied world, thinking less of spiritual sustenance than He did, was buried in unconsciousness, that He could hold intercourse with Heaven unhindered. We must remember that if His physical need was great, His spiritual need must have been even more commanding,

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 24; Matt. xiv. 13.

since by the very act of Incarnation He had suffered loss of glory, loss of power, and had voluntarily subjected Himself to the limitations which of themselves must have been to His soul what thirst is to the parched mouth, hunger to the starving, cold to the frozen. His nature demanded Heaven; He lived "not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." If He must eat and drink with His disciples, it was even more necessary to the nature that He had with God "before the world was" that He should hold constant converse with His Father. This itself was rest to Him.

We do not recall an instance in which it is said that He went apart for meditation simply. He had no abstract propositions to think out. The only syllogism in His thought was one whose major was God, whose minor was Himself, and whose conclusion was man's salvation.<sup>1</sup> His intuitions needed no help from rational processes. One thing only was needful, — He must commune with the Father. Since He was now living under human conditions, He would go apart, bow down to the ground, worship as men worship; but since He was still Son of God, His mere thought was prayer; His communion with Himself was looking unto God; His "will was to do the will of Him who sent Him." Therefore He prayed always, when He went apart for spiritual refaction. Men need meditation, and get very little of it in our modern days; men need to pray, and doubtless pray too little; men must look in upon themselves, and they must look away to God. But for Christ to look in was to look upward; to see Himself was to see the express image of

<sup>1</sup> Compare John iii. 14.

the Father, and "the fulness of the Godhead bodily." For Christ meditation was prayer, and His own need was itself an appeal, a cry sure to find instant response from the Father.

We shall see this the more clearly as we consider the nature of the petitions of Christ's solitude, of which we have any record, and as we note how He taught His disciples to pray. The popular conceptions of prayer may well bring us into all sorts of perplexity either when we pray ourselves, or think of Christ's petitions. But surely it would seem reasonable to define Christian prayer as such prayer as Christ offered or taught. Such a definition sends us at once to the Gospels. What were the prayers of Jesus? What was the answer of Jesus, when the disciples asked Him to teach them to pray? We need to make an exhaustive analysis neither of the Lord's Prayer, nor of the prayers of the Lord, to distinguish the main characteristics of true prayer; and these characteristics will reveal to us the secret of all communion with God, when the soul withdraws from the world to seek Him in secret.

"Lord, teach us to pray."

"When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him."

At once, then, prayer is shown not to be a demand upon God, or even a petition for aught that is against His will, nor is it a request of such doubtful issue as to require useless repetition. This does not mean, that

we should never pray twice for the same blessing ; but it does mean, that God already has a greater love toward His children than to leave them helpless in time of need, or to require importunate pleading from them. The parable of the unjust judge,<sup>1</sup> indeed, teaches that men should keep their faith even in delay ; but it teaches most of all that the just Judge will not do as the unjust judge did, who said : “ I will avenge her *lest by her continual coming she wear me out.*” God will avenge His elect, who are crying to Him day and night, and He will “ avenge them speedily.” This is the main thought of the parable. We cannot wear God out ! We cannot emphasize with Him our real need by repetitions that weary our lips and bruise our spirits, repetitions that are “ vain ” because they show a lack of confidence in God’s love. He knows before we ask that we have need of His help. He teaches, however, that very often He will not give until we ask ; but He teaches nowhere that man shall be heard for his repetitions, and especially for his wilful asking.

Now this is very conspicuous in what we call the Lord’s Prayer. It is also true of all the prayers of our Lord, even when He prayed again and again for the same blessing ; for in such instances, while the repetition comforted the heart of Him who prayed, it did not gain the specific end sought by the prayer. “ Our Father,” we are Thy children, and Thy loving authority we confess and appeal to at once ; we desire Thy Kingdom, we pray that Thy will may be done ! Do we ? Have we ever stopped to think that unless that Divine Will is some-

<sup>1</sup> Luke xviii. 1-8.

times seen to run counter to our wills, it will be very difficult for us to believe in it? Have we realized that a *denial of our prayer for any special object may become even a help to faith*, as showing that there is such a thing as a better will, a profounder purpose, a diviner mind than our own? This great earth revolves upon its axis, and man whirls with it; and so long as he looks upon himself alone and does not see the sun or stars, he is not conscious of a universe outside of his own little habitat. It is only as he lifts his eyes and sees that there are worlds that do not move just as his world moves, that he becomes aware of the immensity and beauty of the whole. So if my mind knows no action except its own, if my will knows no will except that which is in consonance with itself, it will soon cease to believe in any other, and there will be no appeal to God, no prayer. If God were to give me every prayer, I should soon come to believe my will infallible, and I should acknowledge no other. "Thy will be done" lies, therefore, at the basis of every prayer, and is the guaranty of its right.

Only one petition for material things is in the Lord's Prayer, and very plainly this petition involves nothing contrary to what we know is God's will: the sustenance of the body, that He has made, by the working of all the laws that He has ordained for that purpose. "Give us our daily bread!" Here is no miracle of food for a lifetime at once; here is no seizing upon the universe to demand that for my sustenance drought shall disappear, or the eddies of the wind be stayed. Feed me! Let God do it in His own way, which I, too, for the most

part clearly understand ; and if I do not, He knows all. But even if the time has come for me to die, and bread must fail my lips, have I not prefaced this very cry with the words equally of the Saviour's teaching : "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" ? In this petition for daily bread the supremacy of Him who suffers not a sparrow to fall to the ground without His notice, is fully confessed. Men are taught to trust in God *each day*, more than in their wealth hoarded up and their bolts upon their safes. God is continually showing men that they cannot make very sure the future. There are always conditions, in which the food for ten years from now cannot be assured by the most provident human measures. God sets the time-locks on our vaults. We never know whether we shall be able to open them and draw forth our money at a certain hour or not, unless we know all the combinations of God. A prayer for the "*daily bread*" is therefore as truly a recognition of God's will and of our spiritual need of reliance on Him, as is the petition that precedes it in the Lord's Prayer. But on the other hand this prayer for physical blessing does not preclude human participation to secure its fulfilment any more than the words that follow for a spiritual blessing preclude the human condition of forgiveness upon which the divine forgiveness of our sins depends. Alike in the supply of daily bread and of the forgiveness of sins, our humility of soul, our meekness and lowliness of heart, are at the very foundation of that piety, which may expect answer from God. "Our Father," "Thy Kingdom," "Thy will," "Give us," "Forgive us," "Deliver us from evil," — all these appeals are to the

Sovereignty, the supreme love of God. This is the Lord's Prayer.

But there are other utterances of Jesus about prayer, which touch upon the general principles of the act, and therefore show what all Christian prayer must be, and how solitary communion with God can alone be of any value. We find these utterances in the last discourse of Jesus before the crucifixion. In the parable of the vine and the branches<sup>1</sup> are these words: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." And the glory of the Father is described as depending on the fruit borne by the disciples, who thus abide in Christ. Now plainly this word concerning prayer is only what Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer. "Thy will be done" is the same as this: "If ye abide in Me." "If My words abide in you" is a condition of prayer that means nothing, if it does not mean that remembrance and obedience, the spirit that will ask nothing that is not prompted by union of desires between God and man, alone can give one the right to pray. Such a spirit in man will have no wish for aught against the right and good, the things necessary to the fulfilment of God's purposes. No petition will rise from consecrated lips that will be contrary to the one petition, "Thy will be done." No kingdom of evil in the heart of him who prays will stand out in opposition to the Kingdom of God and the will of the Supreme. The same is to be said of the words that come later in the same discourse.<sup>2</sup> The time will come when Jesus will be gone away. These men who have depended on His personal presence, and

<sup>1</sup> John xv. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 23.

have rarely hesitated to bring their requests to Him, shall turn to the Father and pray in Jesus' name. IN HIS NAME! Is this very different from the condition "If ye abide in Me"? Who can pray "in His name" any prayer contrary to His spirit and will? Christ's name can never give force or authority to any petition that is not divine in its character. Surely these few words, "In Christ's Name," are not a mere talisman to conjure by, nor a seal put to a document that is fraudulent. They are not the signature of the Prince to a conspiracy against His Father's kingdom and will. In them lies no warrant at all for the caprice of a selfish heart, or even for the lack of wisdom, which admits no height of wisdom above its own. Not thus could Jesus guard at once the need of His disciples and the glory of His Father. The whole situation is shown to be one in which the real disciple, filled with the spirit of Jesus, having the same mind that was in Him, meek, lowly, dependent, loving, longing, shall cast himself on God's love and mercy, with absolute faith in His care, and believing fully that whatsoever is asked in such wise God will grant. So far as the teachings of Christ are concerned, this is Christian prayer.

Was the example of Christ consistent with His teaching? To ask the question is to answer it. When was His prayer aught but the pleading of the divine will, of which He Himself was the embodied expression? The only instance that could ever occur to the mind of an objector is itself the strongest affirmation in the Gospels of His submission to God's will. The prayer of Gethsemane finds its sole purpose in that "*Nevertheless* not My will, but Thine be done." The cup of suffering was,

pressed to the Saviour's lips. It was a draught that had more bitterness than any human woe, for it was the cup prepared for Immanuel, "God with us." As He had been tempted at the beginning in the desert of the Jordan, so now was He tried to the utmost; but that *utmost* with Him never swept beyond God. If God was with Him, who could be against Him? If God's will was to be done, what was any other will in opposition? He had no will in opposition. His prayer in Gethsemane was only, "Let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless not My will but Thine be done." As He had taught His disciples to pray, so He would pray always. If the poison of pain was pressed to His lips, the only antidote was ready too,—the will of God. By every word of God He lived; no draught of woe could destroy Him so long as that word of God was in Him. By that word He had lived victoriously through Satan's tempting; by that word He could drink the cup of suffering at the last. The example of Jesus in prayer is exactly in accord with His teaching.

The reasonableness of such prayer is manifest. It is not the province of these pages to enter into a full discussion of the theory of prayer; but it is necessary to show, in a word, that the power of prayer with Christ was like that of miracle in His hands. No seeming difficulty that assails our faith in prayer is beyond the answer that has been given in the consideration of miracles. Can it be reasonable to pray on the one hand for what we know will be done any way, — God's will, — or on the other hand for any change in God's will, itself an absurdity? Was Christ reasonable when He prayed thus, and so taught men? He may have been meek, humble,

devout, loving, trusting, obedient, when He prayed; He may have found delight in the mere unobstructed intercourse of His soul with Heaven. But was He pursuing a rational course in praying? The only answer is in Himself. If we do not know it, He knew that all things are in the hand of God, and that the most common laws inhere in that Mind, which has had its purposes from eternity unto eternity. If Jesus knew that the law of saving love, established from the beginning, had its place in the economy of the universe, and that nature could be made to serve that law in miracle, as we have seen, He also knew that the same law of saving love included a law of prayer, invited an appeal to God by which events might be brought to pass, that otherwise might never occur. He knew, what we know as yet so little of, the power of mind upon mind and of mind upon matter, and that surely God could be as strong at least as man is, to change, combine, rearrange the relations of forces to each other to produce certain effects even within the realm of the physical world. Jesus was not staggered in His divine intuitions by man's weak reasoning. He saw that prevailing prayer did not involve a change of will on the part of Him, who from the beginning had had the purpose of redeeming love, the very object of that redemption being the "binding back" of men to Himself in a perfect and eternal communion. The renewed intercourse of man with God was to be, must be in the very nature of the case, a life of asking and giving, just as the stream can flow only as it draws without ceasing upon the mountain-springs. "Your life is hid with Christ in God," was a later utterance of

an Apostle ; but Jesus said it in effect, when He declared that by prayer, itself a natural result of abiding in Him, as the branch abides in the vine, the human life should produce such fruit as would be indisputable evidence of God's glory poured out upon man. It was most reasonable that Jesus should fill His solitude with the company of God, and teach men to seek that fellowship.

Finally, then, Jesus would have contradicted Himself if He had not prayed. The Incarnation itself showed that God was at hand, not far off ; immanent in nature, not extraneous ; above nature indeed, transcendent, yet feeling the life of a sparrow, and present in the whiteness of a lily or the sparkle of the dew. We have noted how miracle showed the personality and the love of God present to help and save, to heal and forgive. Now if Jesus had not prayed ; if He had not talked with God ; if there had been no communion of Father and Son to which the disciples were awed witnesses at one time, or sleepy and dull witnesses at another, Jesus would have been inconsistent with Himself, with His teaching, and with all His mighty signs. " God is with you " was the message of His birth and of every miracle. " God is with you, as He is with Me " was the unspoken lesson of every prayer. " He looked up to heaven," when He prayed in one place ; at another time He bowed in the dust ; but God did not fail Him, whether He gazed into the stellar spaces, or saw nothing but the ground. The present Father, present for the call of His children, " a very present help in time of trouble," was the revelation of Christ's prayer in solitude, as it was of His busiest life among men.

It was chiefly in this communion of Christ with the Father that His solitude was spent. Thus His refreshment and rest came to Him. Apart from the world, but with God, Jesus gained His power to "finish His work."

And thus He elucidated for all who follow Him the nature of prayer. If the many popular and erroneous ideas of prayer are to obtain, we find innumerable perplexities; but going to Christ for our definition of Christian prayer, which is certainly our reasonable course, we find this intercourse with God wholly consistent with our Lord's nature, and with the needs of all those who seek to follow Him.

## XI.

### THE MAN OF SORROWS.

THE mystery of pain has always baffled the human mind. Some of its laws have been understood, some benefits from it have been discerned; but a large remainder of mystery always obtains, no matter what philosophy approaches the subject. We can only accept what we must. Causes often lie clean out of sight of their results, and we stand in the shadow of the latter, wondering, but powerless to escape. It is thus with the problem of pain. Pain is. It is a heritage of all conscious life. It is not peculiar to man; it was before man was, and we read its awful records far back in the geologic ages. Whole orders of being yielded to the agony of violent death inflicted by superior orders or by changes of environment. Pain cannot be regarded, therefore, as merely a result of moral failure on the part of man. It was necessary in the economy of progress in the making of a world, and the earth to-day is what it is only by reason of the survival of the stronger over the weaker forms of life until the age of man could find place. The first page of the Book of Genesis connects death with moral failure on the part of the human race. Experience shows the justice of this record. That certain inevitable and deadly results come from a failure

to attain and keep a perfect moral nature, is as patent as that darkness follows the sunset. But that this explanation covers the whole problem of pain can hardly be granted; nor is it necessary that we should know all of this mystery, in order to see how Christ, being Son of Man, and Son of God, should share in this common experience of the world to which He came.

If it were only that He might know pain as the heritage of dumb and irrational creation, it would not be strange to find Him, the express image of God the Creator, Himself the Word by which the worlds were made, entering into the experience of suffering. Should He withhold Himself from that which the meanest creature of His hand was called upon to endure? Would it be Godlike to stand apart from woe, which was an inevitable attendant upon life? If it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might share perfectly in their experience and be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, would it not be of the same essential godliness to enter in some way into the experience of the inferior things of His creation and be in sympathy with the pain of the creation, that "groaneth"<sup>1</sup> even until now? We cannot believe that God would have held Himself aloof from the pain of this world even if man had never been created. He would in some way open Himself to this experience of the creatures of His handiwork, with a sympathy in their distresses, which would be worthy of His own nature of love and mercy.

But that Christ should share the pain of man is necessary to any conception of God's perfect love shown in

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 22.

Christ's redeeming mission. It is of this sympathy that the New Testament speaks almost exclusively, since its message is to man, and has little to do with inferior orders. We have seen that Jesus was Revealer, Redeemer, Example. As Revealer of God He showed God's sympathy with man in his pain; as Redeemer, He declared by His mediatorial suffering the atonement; as Example, He showed how men should live in a world of pain, and make it an agency for their own development in a divine life. We propose to speak of these three offices of Christ as they were related to the suffering of the world. He was Prophet, Priest, King, and as such He suffered for the good of man.

As Prophet, Jesus spoke of God and showed His nature. All that has been said of this revelation, which proved God to be near, a God of love, ready to forgive and save, listening for the cry of the needy soul, longing for the redemption of the world from its evils, may be urged also with reference to His participation in pain. Even in this respect Jesus revealed God, and "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." If the old, erroneous views of God held by heathen and idolaters — that He was a selfish despot, dwelling utterly apart from men and often glad in the tortures which humanity suffered; welcoming the blood and death of sacrifices even when those sacrifices were human — were to go without correction, how could the false idea have been emphasized better than by the revelation of a deity, who though interested in man and demanding fealty from him, would nevertheless hold Himself wholly apart from everything in man's lot that partook of suffering? How, on the other

hand, could the false ideas of God be corrected better than by showing that even into man's pain God would enter, not withholding Himself from the worst that man could suffer, and showing that when men had the most need of Him, He would not fail them by standing apart in unapproachable felicity? As the Prophet of God, Jesus showed this in His own person in every possible way. He suffered; the stripes were heavy upon Him; He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; He not only suffered, but He taught that it must be so. The shepherd seeks the lost sheep only by following it into the wilderness, daring the perils of forest and cliff and stream with it, and then bearing it homeward in his protecting arms. The father runs to meet the returning prodigal, his deep sorrow and yearning more eloquently depicted in the tearful joy of that moment than by any long descriptions of parental feelings over an ungrateful son. The fall of a sparrow is not so overclouded by the great death-pall of a universal mortality as to escape the Father's notice. With the sisters of the dead Lazarus "Jesus wept." "I have a baptism to be baptized with; a cup to drink, that ye know not of; can ye drink it with me and be so baptized?" And when Peter and James answered with all the boldness of ignorance, "We can," He said to them, as He looked down the years and saw their martyrdom, "Ye shall indeed thus share with me my baptism and my cup." But in all this wealth of His experience and teaching we are to see God. And why should we accept all else, and stagger at this? It is a child's view of God to think that He must know nothing of suffering. Even we can see that it is not an essential part of happiness

that we should never know pain. The mother loves her child the more that she has suffered for it; the father is the happier in his family and home, because he has toiled early and late. The intense labor of acquisition is one of the greatest joys of the true student. We value human life and count each day blessed by the human love in it all the more, if we have realized the awful blight of death and have suffered the pang of the sundering of hearts. Unbroken bliss is not, then, essential to the best and highest happiness. Why, then, must it be ascribed to God? If, on the other hand, the most perfect joy is to give one's self to others, to share even in their sorrows and give comfort to their pain, then there is reason enough for our ready faith in the Christ as the Prophet of God even in His sufferings.

And so it is plain how this revelation itself brings help to man. If the necessity of pain is such that even God must share it, then I can better accept the mystery and bear my little part in it without complaint. It is as Godlike to suffer as to rejoice. The wonder of suffering is not decreased by the divine participation in it; but the great fact shall be grasped, with boundless comfort to human pain, that "God was in Christ," in suffering "reconciling the world unto Himself."

But there was still another prevalent error to be corrected. In the universal perplexity concerning the existence of suffering in the world, it had come to be believed that pain was always punitive, itself the evidence of sin in the afflicted person. The sacred books of the Jews are full of the recognition of this fact. Adam's sin met prompt retribution. It is the constant lesson of the Old

Testament, a lesson as true as that the sun shines, that penalty must follow transgression. And perhaps it is not strange that men leaped to the conclusion that all pain was penalty, and that its mere existence proved the fact of sin in the sufferer. But they were not long in finding even greater perplexities from this belief. The book of Malachi leaves the men of his day asking, "Of what use is it to serve God, when the wicked are allowed to prosper and the good are cast down?" Judging from their circumstances it was often hard "to discern between the righteous and the wicked." In the great drama of the Old Testament Job refutes the assumption of his friends that his sufferings are due to his sin; and the Preacher in Ecclesiastes fights the old field over again with many conclusions of "vanity," taking refuge at last in the one indisputable fact that "the whole of man" is in duty toward God quite irrespective of the joys or sorrows of life. So firmly rooted is the idea that suffering must be punitive, that even to-day men hasten to the conclusion that any evil falling upon the ungodly man is "a judgment" upon him, whether they can trace the connection between crime and penalty or not.

Now Jesus took special pains to rebuke such judgments. He taught explicitly that pain is not always an infliction from God. He did not suffer the men on whom the tower in Siloam<sup>1</sup> fell to be so judged. It was not because the men whose blood had been mingled with sacrifices by Pilate were wicked above all other men that they suffered such a peculiar fate. And Jesus not only taught this in word; every pang of His own suffering showed

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiii. 2-5.

the same great lesson. He suffered because He was righteous; because He had done no violence, and no deceit was in His mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Certainly His passion could never be ascribed to His desert, for He was without sin. "Blessed are ye if ye suffer for righteousness' sake" was His word to His disciples; and in His own example He showed that so far from being a sinner a man may be nearest to God just when the waves of his trouble overwhelm him. And so if we suffer loving Him and His righteousness, we shall not wonder as if a blow had missed its mark and fallen on us undeserved, for it is not thus that we any more than Jesus are "smitten of God and afflicted." Nor shall we argue that "it is vain to serve God," and that wrong triumphs over good in God's universe. We shall not consider our case a malignant exception, nor even a part of the unreasonable torment of a world forsaken by God. We are saved from all such awful conclusions by the great fact that has been shown us by God in Jesus Christ: that suffering is a necessary part of a soul's life; that for one reason or another, seen or unseen, our life and the Infinite Life are equally bound together in the necessity of pain. It makes no difference that one cause may be assigned for the passion of Jesus, and another may be the probable cause of mine; I accept what even Jesus could not escape, sure that nothing, whether life or death, can separate me from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as Priest no less than as Prophet, endured the anguish of life in the flesh. We reserve for the next chapter a consideration of the atoning work of Jesus upon Calvary. He Himself was there laid upon the altar, and

by His death completed the mediatorial suffering that He was called upon to bear. Upon the cross He is our great High Priest making atonement for the sins of the people; but He was there also the Lamb of God, the Sacrifice itself. His priestly suffering cannot be separated, therefore, from His sacrificial pain. But in few words now we may merely call attention to the fact that this priestly suffering was quite in the usual order of human experience. It was no strange thing, in its essential character, that a superior Being with special endowment for the blessing of others should subject Himself to pain in order to fulfil the one special purpose of bringing men to God. Even so far as the elevation of man is due to the efforts of his fellows, the end is gained by substitution; and the one who stands nearer God and more in the open light of heaven than his fellows do, leads them on to the blessings that are to be gained only by his sacrifice. The man who has nothing but gladness in his life, never accomplishes the martyr-victories of him whose blood is spent in the service of his race. Unbroken joys enervate the heart and lead to no heroic struggles through which mankind shall rise to heights before unknown. But pangs of body and soul, that may actually slay the one who suffers them, lead the world upward to fulness of life. The phenomenon of human birth might show us this. And what substantial advance in science, law, literature, morals, social conditions and customs, or religion, has ever been made except by the enduring toil and the positive sacrifice of some one's body and mind? Each generation dies to leave a rich legacy to the next generation, which in its turn, standing one step higher on the stairway of

God, bends down to lift at the cost of its life its successor to a better and higher grade than itself has occupied. So do we serve each other, if we are true. So, if we are worthy the name of men, do we present ourselves as priests mediating between the lower and the higher, the worse and the better, the failure and the ideal, and making sacrifice of toil, or comfort, or money, or blood, to bring the lower to the higher. In fact we observe this great principle of priestly suffering even in the most common deeds of our lives, by which we subject ourselves to deprivation of any sort for the sake of those who are dependent on us. How then should the Priest, who was bringing human life to the Highest, be exempt from the one great law of attainment? This we may say of Him without any reference to that which must be said later of the Lamb, simply as the offerer of sacrifice, as the toiler who bestows blessing on those who toil not. As the High Priest of our salvation, no less than as the Lamb slain on God's altar, does Jesus present Himself as our Substitute, in the line of the universal law of substitution, whereby the benefactor and the beneficiary become mutually possible.

But more than this as Priest Jesus must suffer that we might be sure of His sympathy, given to us not merely as showing the love of God, but also as proving His priestly power, His ability rightly to present the nature of suffering humanity to God. "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them who are tempted."<sup>1</sup> Surely it is reasonable that He who is to present my cause to God should know my case most

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 18; iv. 15, 16.

perfectly; that He who shall offer sacrifice for sin shall know the measure of the need and shall pray for boundless pity to cover sin. If He knew the wiles of evil; if He knew the weaknesses of the flesh; if He had even been tempted, though He had not sinned, He could the better inspire faith in us, that He is able to succor them who are tempted.

But also as our King Jesus suffered pain; and seeing Him in His agony we may know how the servant should bear the cross in following the same path. This *via dolorosa* that opens before the feet of every man has been made holy by the feet that were nailed to the cross. Jesus came to earth as the Revealer of God, but also as the Teacher, the Example, the Lord of men. How shall man live? The answer is in Him who was the Life, which was the Light of men. Shall He not be the Light of men in the sufferings incident to life, as in all else? Regard Him, then, "who, for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, . . . and consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."<sup>1</sup>

We said above that one cause might possibly be assigned for human suffering, and another for Christ's pain; but that difference of cause could not invalidate either the fact or the comfort to be drawn from it. So there may be many causes for human pain, and many ends to be gained by it, though the sufferer may be so blinded by his tears that he cannot see the shining purpose in the distance. Human pain may be punitive, and so have its

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2, 3.

place in the administration of justice and the vindication of government. It may also be purgatorial, and the vine of God's own planting may be pruned and purged to make it bear the richer vintage, and in this pain the punitive element is wholly wanting. And it is a matter of the most common observation that pain may be simply preventive, a warning against greater suffering, as the touch of a finger-tip upon a flame may save the whole body from fiery death. Perhaps in Christ we see none of these purposes of suffering. He could not be punished, for He had not sinned; He needed not to be purged, for He was pure and perfect; and yet, as we shall see, He must be tested to the utmost in order that He might be perfect. And He needed no warning who lived only by every word that proceeded from God. Other reasons brought suffering to Jesus. But pain is pain, from whatever cause it come and to whatever purpose it proceeds. The great fact remains, that in pain we have our Example and our Lord. He who showed us the right uses of joy, showed us also how to endure evil. He lost no faith in His Father when the cup of agony could not be allowed to pass from His lips. "I am He," He said with calmest soul when they came to lead Him away to the last tortures. "Put up thy sword into the sheath," He said, when Peter would stretch forth a human weapon against God's will; "the cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"<sup>1</sup> He would brook no delay; He would allow no rebellion; He would be obedient, even unto the death of the cross.

Some would have looked out upon the world from that

<sup>1</sup> John xviii. 5, 11.

place of betrayal on the Mount of Olives, and believed that evil ruled triumphant; that the world was all wrong, becoming worse and worse, the last ray of its hope fading out! The disciples might well have been the most confirmed pessimists at that hour, just as those who have suffered, or sympathized with suffering most keenly, have felt it almost impossible to believe that God reigns and that He is good. But Christ never had a doubt, and He never uttered one hopeless syllable or one word of rebellion. Now He suffered silently and with a soul of supernal beauty; in a few days He was to lead those same disciples out to this same Mount Olivet, and make the place where He had suffered the place of His ascension to His Father. He could wait. He knew that He would be glorified. "For the joy that was set before Him He endured."

Such faith conquers. God pity the man who meets the inevitable pain of this life with nothing but rebellion in his heart, and with that short-sighted vision that can see only so far as the earthly horizon! Poor indeed is he who must suffer, believing that it is a godless world, forsaken of mercy, devoid of love, given over to remediless evil. But blessed is he who suffers as Christ did. He shall be comforted; he shall inherit all the promises of the beatitudes; he shall grow Christ-like, God-like. Beauty and strength shall increase in him. In drinking the cup that no prayer can dash away from his lips; in draining the dregs that are every man's inevitable portion, he shall become aware of an angel from heaven strengthening him. The faithless, drinking the same cup, cannot see the good that lies beyond the rim of the chalice of pain. But the disciple of Jesus knows that the Father, to whom

he cries submissively for help, has not forgotten him, suffers with him in his trial, and prepares the soul for its glory with Himself.

Strange indeed would it have been if Jesus, the Son of Man, had held aloof from pain, this common lot of man in which he needs the help of a Saviour at least as much as in the hours of peace and joy. Christ did not fail mankind even in this respect. For our sakes, as well as for His own, He was "made perfect through sufferings."

## XII.

### CALVARY.

WE have thought of Christ as the great Sufferer, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," even before we have seen Him brought to the Cross. But now the Lamb of God is dying, crucified by the rage of the Jews and the weak permission of Pilate. A thief hangs upon either side, one of whom rails upon Him, while the other turns to Him with repentant faith and receives His promise of Paradise. It is a presentation of the world's life. Jesus, the crucified Redeemer; on the one hand a repentant sinner, and on the other the representative of the unrepenting souls; to the former forgiveness and Paradise with the Saviour, to the latter his own choice and place. This was the scene of Calvary.

The heart at first revolts. The lips at first utter the anguished remonstrance of Peter: "Be it far from Thee, Lord! This shall not be done unto Thee!" Shall ignominy and torment come to such a Lord? Shall death, can death smite that Holy Thing, who was born of the Virgin Mary and begotten by the Holy Ghost? That He should be the Lord of life, knowing all its delights and all its sorrows too, and suffering no part of life to escape His experience, can well be understood. But

that He should die, give up life, suffer even to this extreme the lot of those who are in the flesh, seems incredible. His incarnation, His miracles, His wisdom, holiness, love, His doctrine, have seemed reasonable to us; but just because His life and power were such, we ask the question with the more shrinking and awe, "Can He die?" What is the need of His dying? What awful necessity was laid upon Him to pass thus from the life that He had glorified?

The answer comes in His own words. Seven times He spoke on the Cross before He died. As the torture fell upon Him, He prayed for His murderers, who indeed little realized their own part in this awful tragedy: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" To the penitent thief He spoke the old divine word of forgiveness, that had so often passed His lips, and gave the promise of the eternal life: "*Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.*" To His mother He spoke, giving her lovingly to the care of John. Then came the cry of bodily anguish: "*I thirst.*" Here were words that we should expect, for thus far all these utterances are quite in the line of His daily life, betraying bodily need and the loftiest qualities of divine thought and love. Suddenly He spoke again. It was not a petition to Heaven for relief. The Garden of Gethsemane had ended such prayers for Him. It was a cry, an exclamation of such horror, that no other lips ever uttered the like: "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!*" This was a new experience. This came to Him like a black surprise. "Forsaken! Why!" But even this He soon saw to be necessary to His redeem-

ing work, and He spoke again: "*It is finished.*" Then, at last, with the whole will of the Father made clear to Him, with faith unshaken though that cry of despair had been wrung from His lips, with gladness unspeakable that all was done, with a radiant foregleam of the eternal home, to which He could now go, He said: "*Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.*"

Plainly the words on the Cross are those of that Holy Thing, that was born in Bethlehem, Son of Man and Son of God. They are words of human life; they are words of divine life. When all the work for man is finished, He turns to His Father, and gives Himself to Him. Son of Man He still is, Son of God too; and thus He dies.

But as we look on Him as He hangs upon the Cross, we remember. What were His own declarations of His purpose in coming into the world and assuming human life? What were His predictions of this hour? What were the probable requirements of God and of the world, whom He was bringing together in peace that should last forever? We have heard His declarations of the purpose of His Advent: "For this cause was I born, that I might bear witness unto the truth." What that truth was is patent from His other words and from His life: the truth of God's nature; the power of His love; His resolve to save; His detestation of sin and desire for man to share His own life. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." "God so loved the world that He gave His Son." And Jesus repeatedly declared that to accomplish this work He must die. With growing frequency He impressed it upon His disciples that no end but this must be expected. "His

hour" was ever in His sight, and He did all that He could to teach His followers to expect it with Him. If they could not, if they would not believe that He could thus die, we are hardly surprised.

But in all these prophecies of the end He showed something of the divine reason in the sacrifice yet to be made. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; <sup>1</sup> "the Son of Man came to minister and to give His life a ransom for many;" <sup>2</sup> "from that time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day;" <sup>3</sup> "and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me; this He said, signifying what death He should die." <sup>4</sup> These direct words concerning His death on the Cross are multiplied in many passages that we need not quote. Enough to say that He plainly foresaw that it must be as true of Him as of any life, that "except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." <sup>5</sup> And it was in this respect, that He laid down His life of His own accord, and "no man took it from Him," <sup>6</sup> though He was slain by treachery and fraud and violence. The death of Jesus was in the direct line of heavenly purpose, the fit and necessary completion of His earthly service, without which that service would have been forever vain.

What was this necessity, then, and why did Jesus

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvi. 21.

<sup>5</sup> John xii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xx. 28.

<sup>4</sup> John xii. 33.

<sup>6</sup> John x. 18.

speak thus of "His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem"? Why was this the theme of surpassing interest chosen for the discourse upon the Mount of Transfiguration,<sup>1</sup> when Moses and Elijah, who had long been dwellers in the realm of spirits, were joined with Peter, James, and John, in wondering audience? If we regard simply the elements of the question, as they have already appeared to us, we shall not fail of answer. And the answer will be seen to affect each of the three persons of the great work,—God, man, and the Mediator Himself.

1. With reference to Jesus, it was necessary to show that to the very last possible trial He was true and sinless. If He was not sinless up to the very last, it would be easy to believe that He was smitten of God for His own sins, not for the sins of the world. But how could we know that He was perfect Himself, if He had not endured even the death of the Cross? If He had not endured to the end, and to such an end as this, He would have fallen short of perfection; and if the supreme test had not been applied, there would always have been room for doubt. The writer to the Hebrews notes this:<sup>2</sup> "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, for both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren;" and "He offered up

<sup>1</sup> Luke ix. 28-36.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 9-11; v. 7-10; xii. 3, 4.

prayer and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect He became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey Him." The third passage appeals to Christ's followers to do as He did: "Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin," as if, until that end is reached, there should be no relaxing of effort, for even the extreme suffering is to be accounted as chastening from God, by which the soul is made pure. The celebrated passage in Plato's "Republic"<sup>1</sup> describing the just man, who is "entirely just," is to the same effect:

"At the side of the unjust man let us place the just man in his nobleness and simplicity, being, as Æschylus says, and not seeming. There must be no seeming, for if he seem to be just he will be honored and rewarded, and then we shall not know whether he is just for the sake of justice or for the sake of honors and rewards; therefore let him be clothed in justice only, and have no other covering; and he must be imagined in a state of life very different from that of the unjust man. Let him be the best of men, and be esteemed to be the worst; then let us see whether his virtue is proof against infamy and its consequences. And let him continue thus to the hour of his death, till he has reached the uttermost extreme. . . . The just man will be scourged, racked, bound, will have his eyes burnt out; and at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled."

The last suffering of all, the extreme penalty of human nature, must be endured before we can be sure that there is no "seeming," no pretence, no sham, but that all is true; before we can be sure that even if deceit be want-

<sup>1</sup> Book II. Jowett's Translation.

ing, yet that strength and grace are sufficient to endure the trial without falling into sin. To die as the ideal man of Plato's vision died, or to perish as Jesus of the Gospels suffered, is necessary to show that obedience is perfect. "Obedience unto death;" "He became obedient even unto the death of the Cross;" "He was made perfect by the things which He suffered;" He "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," — such words as these find their full significance only as we see Christ up to the very last moment "learning obedience,"<sup>1</sup> and so made "perfect" and ready to become "the author of salvation to all them who obey Him." His true disciples "obey Him." It may be objected that very few of them are subjected to any test of holiness comparable to the sufferings of Christ. This is very true. By God's grace we are not put to the severest tests. We are accepted of Him before we are perfected. For us there is a place for grace and absolute forgiveness of sin; but for Christ there could be left no place for forgiveness. He must need no forgiveness, for in Him must be no sin. And that there might be no sin in Him, He must be perfectly tested and manifested to all men as the guiltless Son of God. As a fact God demanded more of Jesus than He exacts of men. Their experience falls short of what He suffered. In them is sin even under the stress of the less temptation to which they are subjected. It is not necessary to put them to the worst trial, for they fail in the least temptation. But in them the promise of perfection at last as the work of grace is accepted through Christ. Christ, however, must be proved per-

<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 8, 9.

fect. He must be so manifested to the world, for thus only could He be our Saviour.

2. We see this, too, in the relation which the Mediator bore to God as He hung upon Calvary. If He was Mediator on the cross, as at all other times in His life, then that supreme sacrifice must have had its effect upon God no less than upon Christ and the world that He was saving. We repeat here that key-passage: "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Here, as elsewhere, we would keep the Incarnation before our eyes. We shall not fear to reiterate, therefore, as so often before, that "God was in Christ," even when He hung upon the Cross.

What does this mean? Plainly it means *that so far as God dwelt in the flesh and tabernacled among men for the purpose of salvation*, God suffered in that salvation. Why hesitate to say, The Immortal took up into itself mortality? God did not die; but Christ died. God was greater than Christ, as He said: "My Father is greater than I." The eternal Father did not die; the eternal Spirit did not die. But so far as the divine nature dwelt really in Christ, that eternal nature experienced the pangs of death; the deathless learned what it was to die. Just as truly as the divine life had learned, through the Incarnation, the human life, and had taken into itself all the common experiences of man's being, and yet had been all the time greater than man's life, — so now, through the Incarnation also, death had been taken into the divine consciousness and "was swallowed up of life."<sup>1</sup>

How this was done no man can say, just exactly as no

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 4.

man can say *how* the divine nature took upon itself flesh in the womb of the Virgin ; but the fact is as reasonable and as credible as the Incarnation, or, for that matter, as any of the mysterious phenomena of human life itself, — birth or death, the union of soul and body, the structure of mind, the very principle of life. It may be a paradox to say that the Immortal tasted of mortality ; but the paradox is relieved if we go farther, and, adhering closely to the words of Jesus, still remember that His Father was greater than He ; so that it is as sure that the cross did not slay God, as that in the cradle of Bethlehem there was a renunciation of the infinity that Christ had with God before the world was. Thus, though God learned mortality, by the cross, too, God proved Himself greater than death. There “ death was swallowed up in victory ; ” and though Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, died, yet, as the *Te Deum* sings, He “ overcame the sharpness of death,” and did “ open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.”<sup>1</sup>

Accepting the revelation of the Cross, then, as the suffering of God on account of man’s sin and in behalf of man’s salvation, the atonement thus effected is at once relieved of any imputation of unrighteousness, of injustice, in laying upon an innocent substitute, by any arbitrary decree whatever, the sufferings of the guilty. “ God was in Christ.” “ God was reconciling the world unto Himself.” What a righteous God could not do ;

<sup>1</sup> This is no denial of the distinction of persons in the Trinity, like that involved in the ancient Patripassianism of the West and the Sabellianism of the East. It is simply the reassertion of the Scriptural teaching that the divine nature by its incarnation voluntarily rendered itself capable of suffering, even to the extent of what human beings know as death.

what no true government would ever attempt, — the preservation of the guilty by laying his penalty upon an innocent third person, — this was not done on Calvary; but God did there what could be done with perfect righteousness: He Himself suffered the consequences of the world's transgression. Even in faulty human governments a place is always reserved by law in which clemency and grace may act. And in given circumstances such forgiveness is righteous. But never can forgiveness come by laying penalty upon the innocent, even though the innocent voluntarily offer to assume it. Righteousness revolts from the substitution of an innocent third person for the transgressor, and no conceivable righteous government would allow it. But the very righteousness of government demands a place for mercy *upon its own assumption of responsibility*; and it provides for the freest pardon, when the wisdom and benevolence of the government itself will assume all risk that may follow from the remission of penalty. The government itself assumes the penalty; takes up the sentence of the pardoned man; by its own inherent life and by the power of its own righteousness overcomes the consequences of remission, and keeps its own law by its substitution of grace.

It is wholly in accord with this truth that Jesus is always called the Lamb of God, never the Lamb of man. He is of God's nature,<sup>1</sup> of God's appointing,<sup>2</sup> of God's providing,<sup>3</sup> of God's offering,<sup>4</sup> of God's acceptance,<sup>5</sup> of God's justifying,<sup>6</sup> of God's glorifying.<sup>7</sup> Although men

<sup>1</sup> John i. 1.<sup>3</sup> John iii. 16.<sup>5</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 4-6.<sup>7</sup> Phil. ii. 9.<sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 25.<sup>4</sup> Rom. viii. 32.<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

had been sinners through all generations, and had offered up their fellow human-beings to placate the gods, God had never revealed any satisfaction with such a price for sin. The instructed Jewish race had a great array of sacrifices for ceremonial cleansing, but not a man dreamed of offering up a fellow Jew; nor would a single sinner have dared to take the Son of God, when at last revealed as such and as a Lamb without blemish and without spot, as an offering to be slain as the price of forgiveness. It was not so that Christ died. He died the victim of men's sins; but "no man took His life from Him;" He laid it down of Himself. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." From the beginning God had His law of forgiveness, and so Christ was the Lamb slain, and in Him men were redeemed from the foundation of the world. He was God's Offering; He was God's Offering of Himself; He was the Exposition, the Revelation, the Word, which declared that GOD suffered "even unto death" that man might be redeemed.

It will thus be seen that Christ was true Substitute for man, but substitute for man *only* because "God was in Christ." If my son has sinned against me, I cannot lay his punishment on his guiltless brother, for that would be a great moral wrong. I cannot even accept that brother's offer of himself, and pour out wrath upon him, though he offer himself spontaneously and out of purest love to His brother: still I should be unjust and wrong. But I can myself suffer, if my son's sin has been wholly against me; I can assume all the evil resulting from the crime, provided I injure no other member of my family, or of the world, by my clemency. I can lay

my heart bare ; I can forego my rights ; I can bow myself in untold sorrow and open not my mouth in complaint ; and I can forgive freely my erring child, provided I do him no harm by so doing, and inflict no wrong upon any other. If I had the power to insure all these conditions, I could save my son thus with perfect right. *If I had the power !* But in me resides no mystery of the Trinity. In me is no power of extrusion, which at the same time is retention of the qualities of my nature and the experiences of my being, such as God could show in Jesus Christ. I can never save, as God saves, but only in a far-off and imperfect imitation of the divine sorrow, that redeems. God's Son was so truly His own, Only Begotten for the very necessity of self-revelation, that in Him, *and not without Him*, could God suffer on account of man's sin, and so suffering could forgive. Such forgiveness showed no fiction and simulation of wrath laid upon Jesus ; it brought no moral ruin upon the world, that would argue by immunity from penalty that sin was favored of God and might be freely indulged. On the other hand the sinner himself, as we shall see, was saved from sin at the same time that he was delivered from wrath. All conditions of right and justice, as well as of grace, were secured, and so God could forgive. He could not have forgiven otherwise. He could not have been just and yet the justifier of them who are in Jesus, unless Jesus had thus made it possible for God to suffer in the sinner's stead. But by the power of the Incarnation ; by all His sacrificial life ; by the act of death at last, Jesus wrought the only possible atonement that could please God, or satisfy man. So only

could Jesus cry at last, "It is finished!" When His blood was shed, there was remission of sin.

In this way we catch a glimpse of the awful agony in the cry: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" Christ's very life was oneness with the Father. But we have seen that in a sense there was separation from the Father even in the Incarnation itself, a laying aside of divine attributes, a necessity of prayer, a limitation within the conditions of human life, so that He was constantly bearing the sins of the world in the sense that He was suffering for them. But now was the moment of supreme limitation, of utter renunciation. Now He sank wholly beneath the wave of mortality. It now seemed as if the heritage that He had received from His human birth was about to triumph. He could not cry: "Death is swallowed up in victory," but only, "Victory is swallowed up in death." As it seemed to His poor disciples, so for one moment it seemed to Him, that it was all over with His mission itself. Death was upon Him. The wrong was triumphing. And in the depths of His own Being it was the God in Him retiring before the last demands of the human. God was in Christ. But Christ was dying. Death for Him could not be, it seemed, without the departure of God. *It seemed so.* It was worse than the rending apart of soul and body; it was the rending apart of Christ, the unspeakable contradiction of mortality and immortality, with the apparent victory of the former. Jesus felt His immortality going. "O God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" If God left Him,<sup>1</sup> then He would

<sup>1</sup> See a beautiful passage in a sermon on this text in Passions-und Osterfeier, by Dr. L. T. Schulze, Professor of Theology at Königsberg.

be indeed only human in death; all His mission would be vain; the world was lost; and God — The thought staggers and reels before the possibilities resulting to God. This was the supreme pang of the Cross; this was the price of our redemption in His blood. We are reunited to God, because Jesus felt Himself forsaken of God.

Thus could God “be just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.” In this sense was Jesus “set forth of God [*still of God*], to be a propitiation through faith in His blood,” for without Him God could not have taken into Himself the results of transgression, and could not have offered Himself the victim of sin. He would still have been “angry with the sinner every day;” still the old law would have prevailed, “The soul that sinneth it shall die.” There would have been no substitution possible had not Christ been the Lamb of God, in whom God suffered and through whom He could forgive. But when the inevitable penalty of sin was thus borne by God Himself in the person of Jesus, then was justice satisfied at the very source of law, and God could forgive. Sin paid its penalty in God’s suffering. Love was shown to be consistent with right. God would have been just if He had not accepted suffering in Himself to save man; but, doing that, He was equally just and loving, and His love wrapped itself round His justice, as one garment of immaculate purity may infold another. His “robe of righteousness” was thus as a “garment of salvation” to every one who believes.

3. To every one who believes! This reference to the faith of man placed in the Redeemer, leads us to the further thought plainly taught in the Scriptures, — that

because God was in Christ, a great moral result was effected in the nature of man, by which Jesus was also truly "a propitiation" of God. God could forgive sin, as He never could have done righteously under other conditions, because Jesus was Son of Man, as well as Son of God. We saw in our vision of Christ in the Cradle that the Incarnation does not teach that Jesus took into His being a human nature that had already been purified from all human sinfulness. He was born of a virgin, but not because that virgin knew no sin. The profoundest significance of the Incarnation must include the taking of *sinful* nature into union with the *divine and sinless* nature, to the purification of the former. So was Jesus from the beginning "without sin," though He had as truly come from man as from God. This same truth He showed all through His life. It appears equally in His death. To the end He was sinless. "Even unto the death of the cross" He endured. Was it not proved, then, that by God's gracious union of Himself, of His own Spirit with sinful humanity, that not for a moment could that humanity remain sinful? Was not redemption as a possibility forever demonstrated? Was it not shown on the cross, as it never could have been shown short of the cross, that humanity in conjunction with God could and would triumph in the end? Was it not shown that as Christ led the captivity of all deadly things captive, so to Christians also in due time would be given the victory over death? We shall see, that the heritage that Christ sent to His followers in the Spirit after His departure, was the sure development to its perfect consummation of this redemption of man's life by the commu-

nion of God's life. But Jesus was Himself the first fruits of the great harvest of the perfected and deathless humanity. And thus prospectively Jesus was set forth as a propitiation. God could not have been just, and yet the justifier of any sinner, concerning whom there was doubt as to his turning away from sin actually and forever. Until it had become a fact demonstrated, that God in human life could create in that life such positive cleansing, as to bring about moral perfection under every test, it would not have been just to forgive and set the seal of favor on him, who had sinned. But in Christ was the promise, the pledge of the perfected humanity. He went through the ordeal of redemption. He showed that depraved human nature would not fail when brought into oneness with the divine. "I in them and Thou in Me," would be the all-powerful secret whereby successful redemption would be wrought, even as He prayed for His disciples before He died.

But the death of Jesus not only showed this as the final result of man's living in contact with God. It showed that humanity was willing to be sacrificed; that redeemed life would lay itself down in bloodiest death for the sake of doing the will of God. The death of Jesus was the death of the Son of Man. The Son of Man was the ideal man. He represented the supreme, consummate flower of the redeemed children of God. Therefore the cross was the altar on which every man, who would be turned to God, offered himself in the person of Christ a sacrifice for sin and in the service of the righteous will of God. On the cross we see ourselves righteous with the righteousness that is through faith in

Christ, but dying nevertheless, willing offerings for the purpose of overcoming the sins of the world.

It was in this sense that Saint Paul said, in support of his assertion that he was constrained by the love of Christ to sacrifice himself to the utmost in behalf of the Corinthian Christians: "Because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and that He died for all that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again."<sup>1</sup> Paul saw himself crucified in Jesus. Why? He says that he died, and all disciples died, in Christ, in the sense that the old selfish life was slain; sin was slain; and sin is perpetually slain in Paul and every believer who now gives himself to unselfish service in the salvation of men. Selfishness, self-will, were crucified in Christ forever, and the believer sees himself slain on the cross with Jesus. Self dies; the new being comes forth, and immortal love lives after the cross has been endured. It is not merely, therefore, an artificial and arbitrary decree that repentance of sin shall be a condition of forgiveness, a condition on which the sacrifice of Christ shall avail for the sinner. It is rather an essential part of Christ's sacrifice that as it is shared by the disciple that disciple dies to selfish sin, and the old self really meets its condemnation and is slain, while a new life of right comes forth.

No man can turn with faith to the crucified Jesus without being overcome. Our sin is crucified within us. We are conquered by such love. We are conquered, too, by the awful revelation of the malignant sin that killed

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

such a Christ. The moral effect of the crucifixion upon man is no less than the effect it had, if we may so speak, upon the mind of God. If Christ's sacrifice disposed God to forgive, it also disposed man to be forgiven. And so Jesus, dying upon Calvary, brought to its consummation His work of redemption, and became the perfect Mediator between God and man.

### XIII.

#### THE RISEN LORD.

COULD death prevail? Could Jesus be finally overcome by "the sharpness of death" and remain its victim forever? It is almost inconceivable. It is wholly inconsistent and unreasonable. We stand by the sealed tomb in the Garden and look back over the Life that was the Light of men. If that life had been commonplace, then this commonplace ending in death might seem appropriate, and perhaps we should expect nothing more than what men have always experienced. We might have dreamed of the same general future for Christ that we dream of for ourselves, as the result of worthy living; what the ancients groped after in their philosophies; what the most barbarous and insignificant tribes have imagined; what science and the wisdom of the world have reasoned toward, and from the analogies of the physical world have judged possible, — *another life beyond the grave*; but a present and visible resurrection from the dead for Christ would not have been likely on the hypothesis that He was nought but man. But as we look back, and glance up and down this Holy Land that His feet trod with such wonderful blessing, the case becomes very different. The manger-cradle at Bethlehem was different from the little crib in your house.

You say, "This is my baby;" but Mary treasured in her heart angelic words, and could only say, "This Holy Thing!" She could only remember the fatherhood of the Holy Ghost. The one scene of Christ's boyhood, where He went about His Father's business in the Temple and astonished the Rabbis with His wisdom, shows the difference between Him and your boy. And yet that boyhood, in its general trend and its blessed, homelike subjection to parental power, shows a true likeness to your boy; it was your boy, *plus*. And when Cana opens its significant ministry; when the joys of men begin to grow deep and pure under the hand of Jesus; when life takes on new forms of health and beauty, and evil in human souls acknowledges its conqueror in the glance of His eye; when in home and family, in society, in the church of His day, in the doing of miracles, in times of temptation, in the direst suffering, and last of all in death, we find Him ever the same, evident Son of God as well as Son of Man, — then this sealed tomb in the Garden becomes to us a miserable contradiction, a palpable impertinence, an interference altogether unworthy and wholly incredible, if its seal is to remain unbroken and its darkness and silence be undisturbed. I am human, subject solely to human conditions, born as all men are born, and to die as all men die, with at least no apparent and immediate resurrection from the grave. But the very law of consistency that demands this end of life on earth for me demands quite another for Jesus. His birth was different from mine; it is not unreasonable to expect that His exit from this life shall be equally strange. The God-Man, the Holy

Thing, whose sole mission has been to reveal the life of God, born for this purpose as no other man was ever born, shall certainly not die as any other man ever died.

Moreover, unless Christ's mission as the Revealer of God was to be defective at its highest point, Jesus must show that God is greater than death and that right is diviner than wrong. Men may say to us: The reputed resurrection from the dead of any man is such a marvelous exception to the rule, that it must be substantiated by indisputable evidence, by evidence far greater than that demanded in support of any alleged but more common fact. We may answer: You are right; and we may agree that if Jesus died as an ordinary man, there may be reason to wish for more, and more consistent, evidence, than the New Testament affords. But we may better claim, that, if Jesus Christ has any right to serious consideration at all, He was more than man, the conditions of His Being were different in essential points from the conditions of our being, and that therefore an ordinary end for His life upon earth would be in need of more extraordinary evidential support than is His resurrection from the dead. It will be remembered *that antecedent probabilities, together with admitted facts which may find an adequate explanation in an alleged fact as their cause, are more potent evidence for a belief in that fact, than that of any eye-witnesses might be.* Science, as we have seen, is constantly basing its conclusions upon such evidence. Indeed some very slight induction has often led to wild flights of imagination, out of which have come important demonstrations of law. Given certain facts, we reason that some other facts are likely, and we search

for them. If they answer to our search, or if they anticipate it and are seen to be in accord with the observed phenomena, they are assigned their place in the law of the universe. In the realm of our present discussion the same validity of reasoning obtains. Our whole study of the life of Jesus has proceeded upon this same scientific method. Why should we depart from it with reference to the resurrection from the sealed tomb? It is child's play to say that the disciples were deceived; that they stole Him away; that credulous and hysterical women were the first to make the great assertion. It is almost equally vain to say, that the testimony of the Evangelists is inadequate, and that evidence from eye-witnesses should be so complete and of such high character that no shred of doubt can be left. It is a case that hardly needs witnesses at all, though it has many of them. The antecedent probability that such a Being as Jesus Christ would break away from death, and the subsequent phenomena of Christianity finding adequate explanation in the fact of the resurrection, give us all the reasonable grounds for faith that we need; and he who disbelieves is the unreasonable and unscientific man. Let not him who asks me to believe in a nebular origin of the starry skies, or in never-seen molecules in which reside the secrets of chemical forces, or in an all-pervading ether that accounts for light and heat and electricity, ask me to doubt for one moment either God, or the resurrection from the dead of the Son of God, whose whole pre-existence up to the resurrection morn and whose whole influence since that hour are consistent without fault with that great and glorious fact. His whole

life-story, from the annunciation of the angels to Mary to the tomb in the garden, and the new moral and spiritual world that came into being after death had come to him and despair to His disciples, conspire to fix our faith on some such adequate explanation as His resurrection from the grave.

And now we face the fact that Jesus appeared after His resurrection to His disciples only. Why should He not? To them He had spoken words, given direct promises, that such an appearance would explain. So often had He prophesied this event, that we wonder at their despair at His death, not at their ready belief in His rising from the dead. And He had taught them this not only verbally; He had shown them His power to change the body of flesh into a body whose fabric was more ethereal and glorious than their own. They had seen Him transfigured with the kindred forms of Moses and Elias, long-time inhabitants of the spirit-world. They had looked upon Him with awe, when He had come to them walking upon the sea, and had said: "It is a ghost." But they had learned that it was not a mere ghost to mock them with a phantom offer of help, but their real Master and Friend, coming to them in a body lighter than flesh and disdaining the gulfs that would have swallowed the disciples down. They had been taught in this school until they had now long passed the time for believing in ghosts, and had come to the time when they could believe in a body substantial indeed, yet superior to the conditions of mere matter, and quite independent of mortality. No other men had had this training; and for Christ to have appeared to His foes,

dull, unbelieving, untaught, would have been a breach of all the laws of mind and of spiritual affinities. Was the training of the disciples to go for nothing? Was their companionship with Jesus to be of no avail in opening to them a knowledge of the new world, to which they were to lead on their fellows to wonderful discoveries of spiritual things,—things which could only be “spiritually discerned”? As well might Columbus have gained nothing from all his observation and study to make him the natural leader of the more dull and yet adventurous men, who were to be the first to tread the soil of this western continent. Fruits had fallen from the trees in the sight of men for ages before the prepared and sympathetic mind of Newton deduced from the same common occurrence the law of gravitation. Knowledge is very rarely thrown away. The laws of mind are as imperative as those of matter. It would be unreasonable, if Jesus should show to scoffing Scribe and hardened Pharisee the same clear and tender testimony of His resurrection-life that He would delight to show to the disciple whom He loved, or to that Peter whom He had destined to be the Rock on which His church should be built. These men were the Columbus, the Newton of new realms of thought, prepared to discover new worlds. Was it not enough for those foolish men, who had put impotent seals upon the door of His tomb, that they should know their efforts to have been vain, defeated,—their seals broken, their soldiers confounded, His body gone? But for the disciples more than this must be given. They must see Him. To one of them He might say, “Touch me not;” to another, “Thrust your hand

into my side," as each of these disciples might need the lesson; but to all alike He would give the sight of His risen form. The Master whom they had known, would not withhold Himself from them, when He had come back from "the shadow of death."

This was reasonable. Faith always has her visions that the world knows not of; and the destinies of the world have ever been swayed by the men who have had visions in which God has revealed to them their appointed way. To these first men of faith in Christ, therefore, who were to go onward as the pioneers of the world's advance in faith and morals, and not to others who had "no eyes to see and no ears to hear," was the glory of the risen Lord revealed. But we can see more than this. Further, it was to these men, and such as these, that the future life, of which the resurrection of Jesus was at once the revelation and the promise, was to be given. Whatever future is taught or to be imagined for the wicked, it must be, in the very nature of things, a different life from that into which Jesus came forth from the grave. If Jesus in His resurrection showed that God ever liveth, that divine right conquers wrong, that a spiritual life of power and of joy is the heritage of such as He, then He showed also that the wicked, the impenitent, unspiritual, and selfish, have an "outer darkness" for their portion. For the children of light the resurrection meant renewed fellowship with Christ and God; for the children of darkness it meant at least the lack of that fellowship. Why then should the risen Lord reveal Himself to any but His own? The very lack of such an appearance to others was an elo-

quent testimony to their self-imposed doom of separation from God. During all the days of His flesh He had been seeking sinners in the realm of their own visual and tactual world, and even thus had been rejected of them; now when He had passed the bound of that world, and had begun to withdraw forever in order that the "Other Comforter," the Spirit, might come, it would have been inconsistent for Him to have gone back and shown Himself to His foes. Not only does faith have its privileges and its rights; unbelief also has its necessary conditions of loss and woe. If the day of Resurrection was to the disciples a day of such glory that they observed it as a special festival ever afterward, it was to the common Scribe and Pharisee, and to the mob that had chosen Barabbas to be released unto them, nothing but a common day, in which they saw nothing divine. Of course it must be so: they had chosen Barabbas; they had killed the Christ. If at their choice the prison had opened its door to give them the wicked for their fellowship, it was right that when the tomb opened its door the glorious Lord, the ever-righteous Victor, should seek only the company of the righteous, who loved Him, and had chosen Him, and would now receive Him to their hearts forever.

But if Jesus had thus proved to His own people that their "faith was not vain," and that God had brought to nought the malice of His foes; if He had shown them on this resurrection morning a new light of hope and a new surety for His words to them, — "If I live, ye shall live also," — He had yet to teach them something about their future life and work in this world; and the resur-

rection of Jesus misses its full significance for us if we do not note that He had yet commands to give that He could not well have given before this supreme testimony of the Father's glory in Him had been shown. The new life of the world beyond the grave was not the only new life assured by Christ's resurrection to His disciples. They were to receive "power" for this life. He referred to this, and not to their eternal felicity in Heaven, when he said in the discourse written in the fourteenth chapter of John's gospel: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come unto you. Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me: because I live ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He who hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." No doubt he was speaking here of the time when the Spirit would be in the Church, while He Himself would be gone forever from bodily sight into the heavens. But the new life for His disciples, of which He was speaking, was on earth, "keeping the commandments" and being conscious of the divine Presence. For this life a preparation was necessary; for this life a faith was to be created that would have been impossible had He not been seen again after the door of the tomb had shut Him in. For this life He had yet words to speak of encouragement and command, which would prepare the disciples to understand the inspiration to be given them in the future.

The Twelve had obeyed His word and forsaken all when He said, "Follow Me." Now His hand, and no

other, was to set them in the path of duty which they were to tread without His visible presence. His lips, and no strange impulse, although heaven-born, were to say, "Go ye into all the world and disciple the nations,"— which would have been almost a cruel command if He had not also said, with the proof of the resurrection behind the words: "Lo, all power in heaven and in earth is given unto Me." The repeated appearances to the disciples; the tender encouragement to their faith; such words of instruction as He spoke to Peter by the lake-shore, showing that patient shepherd-work was better than impulsive jumping overboard to worship Him; the loving hint about John's wonderful but weary future; the walk with the two to Emmaus; the repeated "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God;" this command first "to wait" and then "to go," clothed with the authority of His omnipotence, — all these were like the mutation of that dull stairway by which they reached the upper room of the Spirit's out-pouring into a stairway of glory for their soul's approach to the coming spiritual kingdom. Then only, after He had taught them thus through forty days and had been lifted up irrevocably beyond even the Transfiguration glory by the Ascension, could they come together and "tarry" in Jerusalem, and be "endued with power from on high." Then only could the new life in the Spirit really begin for them, for it was only then that their spiritual education was complete. Jesus had not ceased to be merciful when the tomb closed upon Him. He would not ask His poor disciples with bruised faith to leap at once from the joy of His bodily Presence into the new and untried life

of the Invisible Spirit. There was a half-way stage for them. They could have Him yet, but all the time see that He could not stay; was indeed already half gone; His body now flesh and blood, now more like a veil, almost a spirit; and His familiar voice speaking of the unfamiliar spiritual companionship soon to come.

And what a life it turned out to be into which the resurrection of Jesus inducted them! What a life it is that "all who have believed on Jesus through their word" can live to-day, as the result of Christ's triumph over the grave. "Because I live ye shall live also." The resurrection-life even in this world is the only life worthy of the name. It exalted the Apostles at once from the obscure fishing-boat to the first place as the world's teachers. Before the resurrection they had found nothing better than to go back to their nets; after the resurrection they were counted worthy to suffer as their Master had suffered, to be reviled and imprisoned and slain; and it is only great men that can be important enough thus to suffer for righteousness sake. The busy, self-seeking world cannot stop to pay attention to weak souls having only some little idea to propound. The martyrs are those whose lives are so great, whose faith and hope are so compelling, that the world must stop and listen, and either be convinced or crush out the offender of whom the world is not worthy. Resurrection-lives are the pure, sweet, self-sacrificing, hopeful lives that can show men how to live indeed. From such lives sin flees away and sorrow gathers smiles. From such lives pours forth the "living water," that is like that river that is from the throne of God. Even in this world life is thus ennobled.

But the resurrection gives reasonable faith for more than this. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die," were words singularly consonant with that other promise: "I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also." This word, too, must be kept if Jesus was not wholly false. If the cradle at Bethlehem was true; if the life in Palestine was what it claimed to be; if in Him was no sin; if He was obedient even to the death of the Cross, — then His rising from the grave confirmed this word: "Where I am ye shall be also." No need more for Philip to ask, "Show us the way"! The only answer is in Jesus Himself: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." He who goes with Jesus in the life that now is, even though his faith and faithful service may lead him to some Calvary, shall surely go with Jesus past all the power of death, and be received up out of all bodily sight with Him. So shall he be ever with the Lord. It is a plain way indeed: Christ is the essence and sum of it all; resurrection and ascension are with Him; and as He led His disciples out from Jerusalem at last, over the old, familiar path on Olivet, past Gethsemane as far as to Bethany, so will He lead His Own past every scene of trial until they shall be received up, as He was, out of sight of earth.

## XIV.

### CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH.

WHEN Jesus first called His disciples He said to those who had been fishermen, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." His last words confirmed this call, and emphasized all that He had showed them concerning the purpose He had in them. They were to be a church; but they were to be banded together, not that they might profit by the world,—they were to serve the world. "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." By teaching; by declaring Him; by giving the reasons for faith and so producing faith in Him; by doing as He had done in reaching men's affections and judgments,—they were to win men and consecrate them by the same act of baptism by which He had sought at the beginning of His ministry "to fulfil all righteousness." Men were thus to be brought into contact with Him in the future. No longer could the diseased come to Him in throngs and touch the hem of His garment to be healed. The bodily service was over. But now mind upon mind, spirit upon spirit, would touch, and the healing of the soul would be effected, and men

would enter spiritually into the family of God, "into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

The work of the Apostles, therefore, was to be one of teaching. For a time, lest the contrast should be too sharp and the loss of the body's beneficent presence too great; lest, too, the transition from physical to spiritual evidences alone should be too abrupt,—the power of healing bodily diseases still remained with the Apostles. But they did not depend on this even for the physical need of those about them, but at once instituted holy almsgiving, and provided by the most natural methods of ministration for the welfare of the sick and poor. Henceforth the appeal to miracle would grow less and less frequent; the appeal to teaching, with its illustration in the beauty and beneficence of the common human life, would grow more and more invariable. The transfer from the body to the soul, from the physical to the spiritual, as the prime sphere of Christianity, was necessary and to be expected. The mind rules the body and its fortunes; matter is but the tool of soul. Christ had showed this by His own miracles; He had showed it yet more by His insistence upon the spiritual health, which should go and sin no more lest a worse evil come than bodily disease. To teach, therefore, was now the prime duty. To minister to the body still remained, but only as the natural and beautiful service of a soul that should imitate Jesus, a life that should be governed "by the same mind that was in Him" when He made Himself of no reputation and suffered in the service of mankind.

Accordingly the Church of Christ came into existence,

to live as He had lived with this one purpose in view, namely: To show God's nature, God's mind, in human life; to reveal Him by life and teaching; to help and beautify and save life by bringing to men everywhere the great truths that would bring about their moral well-being, and make their bodily life what it should be. The Church was to be a secondary incarnation of God, as Jesus had prayed it might be: "I in them and Thou in Me;" "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world;" "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." A spiritual union with God and Christ was to be the new life of men, and the words and works proceeding from this new life were to be for the healing of the nations.

Was it strange then, that some marked phenomenon like that observed on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in the Book of the Acts, should indicate the beginning of the new era, the birth of this Church on earth? As the Holy Ghost had descended upon Mary, the virgin of Nazareth, and Jesus had been thus the Son of God and the Son of Man, so now the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, mingling no longer Spirit with body but Spirit with spirit, to introduce into the world the new spiritual life. It was appropriate that such a manifestation should be given. As its result there was no change in the flesh, and no new bodily lives were originated; but new spirits were created, old souls were regenerated, and thousands of new men, believers, disciples,

Sons of God, were born that day. The Church was born into the world, and the perpetuation of the Life of God among men was assured. The Apostles had "waited in Jerusalem" to be endued with power from on high. Now they could "go into all the world and preach." Everywhere men would believe on their word. It would be caught up and repeated in every tongue. Tribe after tribe would learn the good news, and become in turn the living exponents of God. The new worship, the pure and beautiful lives, the mute but constant protest against all the old heathen ideas and practices, and the positive declaration of the Christ and the "great mystery of godliness" revealed in Him, could not fail to win men from fruitless idolatry, in which the hopes of the world had been lost. What Christ had showed to the Apostles, they showed to all men,— that God was not far from any of them, but waiting to be called upon, willing to forgive sin freely, and present in their time of need.

Moreover the Church of Jesus was to be of universal extent. It was to be Catholic. "All nations" were to be benefited by the Gospel. Neither Jew nor Gentile was to stand in a preferred place before God. As Jesus had been the Son of Man, the Church was to come to all the sons of men, and the Kingdom could not be complete until every tribe had heard the message of life. The Church could not cease its endeavor, until the last command of the Master had been kept, and the farthest heathen upon the globe had learned the name of the Saviour and been inspired by His love to turn to Him.

But if this new Society was to be of universal extent, the conditions of entrance into it and of membership must

be only such as could be complied with by all people. Simple, significant, without local peculiarity, sufficient, the rites and ceremonies, if any, must be adapted to all climes and tribes, to all ages and to each sex. When men have sought to form societies for any purpose whatever, they have generally thought it necessary to draw up a strictly formulated constitution, and to institute rites of initiation, and to levy taxes or assessments to meet the needs of the case. In many instances imposing rituals have been assumed, and the strictest bonds of secrecy have been laid upon members to aid by means of mystery the feelings of obligation to the body. It was not so with Christ in His Church. He demanded one condition of spiritual nature: a turning to God and the acceptance of Himself as Prophet, Priest, and King. He must declare God; He must mediate between God and man; He must rule in man's life. This condition can be complied with in every clime, and the soul can find its best estate only by conformity to this law. Beyond this, baptism was commanded as the outward symbol of the inward change. Any one who would, could be baptized as Jesus was. The requirement was perhaps the simplest as well as the most significant rite that could be chosen. And it was the most sacred from its place in the consecration of Christ Himself. Then the breaking of bread and the drinking of wine together in serious and worshipful way, as He gave them the example before the crucifixion, would be a sign, constantly repeated, of their life in Christ. "This do," He said, "as often as ye do it, in remembrance of Me." That was all. With undefined frequency, with perfect

freedom from any additional conventionalism, the Church is to do these simple deeds, as He said. No others would be appropriate in a catholic church.

The religious books of the first Christians were those that they inherited from Judaism. These books were the product of the needs of the old time. They had grown into a magnificent body of literature, endeared to the nation, believed to be the word of God, and found adequate to meet such a claim by their lofty religious import and their power upon human life. That these books had testified of a Messiah could not be doubted; that that Messiah had come, was now the belief of the Christian Church. While, therefore, the books of the Old Covenant were still fondly cherished and devoutly consulted, the fulfilment of their predictions and culmination of their hopes in Jesus were naturally the theme of constant discourse, as the Apostles, and all who knew the facts, preached the new faith to the world. Nor was it only in the line of new *facts* that the common Christian speech naturally made additions to the stock of knowledge inherited from the Old Testament. A development of doctrine naturally arose. Preachers to their congregations, parents to their children, friends to friends, would undertake to show how truth long hid in seed was now growing up into the light and ripening to glad harvests. New heavens of thought as well as a new earth of experience were unfolding. And thus from year to year a very considerable body of tradition came into existence, naturally developed under the leadership and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, in whom, as we have seen, the infant Church had all its being. It was only

a repetition of the phenomena of the Jewish Church itself, by which its traditions, holy and emanating from the word of God Himself, were through a long time coming to that volume, which was finally perpetuated in writing by the holy men of old, and given from time to time to be the priceless treasure of the people.

It was thus that the New Testament came into being as the Sacred Scriptures of the new Church. As the books of the Old Testament had been the product of religious life under the Mosaic order, so the various Christian books were written naturally, the product of Christian life and needs, every book bearing the stamp of personality, locality, and circumstance, and showing the way in which the divine spirit of Christ would meet the want. And yet the nature of the documents proves beyond cavil that their contents were to be useful in all times and places and in all circumstances, in which similar conditions and wants should appear. If the first letters to the churches, addressed especially to the Thesalonians, were for the purpose of allaying doubts, and calming strifes, and teaching about the relations of the dead and the living at the crisis of the world, which was generally believed to be near,— then the same letters, because they meet the issue and teach what is also of universal interest and value, will be of the first importance to all Christians in all time. If the Gospel of Matthew gave to men a written statement of what the writer had seen and known of the Life of Jesus, and if the Gospels of Mark and Luke brought into definite and permanent shape the current traditions, or the remembrances of apostles, of the same marvellous life, these

gospels were the natural and reasonable outgrowth of the life and needs of the Church in the time in which they were written, as they are also the historic sources of knowledge for all the generations since that day. As the life of the Church was a growth, so the literature of the Church was a growth; and it was not until the middle of the fourth century, that it became generally evident that the need of the Church was wholly met in this respect. During two hundred and fifty years no book had been produced that was deemed worthy to stand with those of the New Testament as we now have it, and the canon was considered complete. The books adjudged canonical were all believed to have emanated from Apostolic sources, and to have been the product of the first century of the Christian era.

But if this was the natural evolution of the Christian Scriptures, what shall be said of their inspiration? Can a reasonable belief in their inspiration be compatible with such a growth? We are not concerned to define the nature of inspiration or to defend any theory that has been advanced, since these pages are not at all for the proof of dogma, but only to inquire into the reasonableness of the alleged facts of Christ's life and works. But indirectly the question receives legitimate answer. Is God's direct influence shut out from all that is natural? We have seen that Christian life itself, however dependent upon secondary causes for its inception and growth, can be referred only in the last issue to the Spirit of God in fellowship with the human soul. The Church, not before known as a factor in human affairs, came into being at the touch of the Holy Ghost, yet through the

very natural means of human preaching and the contagious enthusiasm of the first disciples. Now if these same followers of Christ, led by His spirit in the formation of the Church, found the need arising to write tender exhortations, or doctrinal treatises, or biographies of Jesus, or a history of the actions of the Apostles in the first few years; if they did so write, and produced books the like of which the world has never seen for the expression of truth, for religious fervor, for instruction in morals, and for inspiring a lofty hope; if these writers, with but two exceptions, claimed no literary training and are known to have been plain men; if in addition to all these circumstances they claimed divine help, and that a promise made to them by Jesus before He died had been fulfilled, to the effect that they should be led into all truth by the Holy Ghost, — then the presumption is reasonable, even if the conclusion is not irresistible, that the claim is true, and that they wrote as they were inspired. Just as the life of Jesus is consistent with the origin claimed for it, so the nature of the New Testament is wholly consistent with the doctrine of inspiration. It is quite reasonable to believe that under such circumstances, for such a purpose, and with such results, the Holy Spirit gave His aid to these holy men to produce a literature, that should henceforth rank the highest among all the literature of the world; thus laying hold of the most powerful and permanent means known to mankind, the expression of thought in the written page, to accomplish the moral and religious instruction of the race.

The New Testament was thus most reasonably produced. It came not without the mind of God; but it

came through man, the outgrowth of the need of the times, the product of life rather than the miraculous origin of life. The Saviour Himself had marked this natural progress when He called Himself "The Way, the Truth, and the Life." The way is shown by the truth; but there is something better and greater even than truth; it is that for which truth exists, — life. So the Christian life was not meant to be the product of books; but books, the truth recorded by the inspired Christian life, were to serve the life from which they sprung. Life knowing the truth, having applied it to life's need and found it adequate, shaped the tool into best and permanent form for the carving of its own destiny and the destiny of the world. That these Holy Writings were thus the product of life, instead of being a completed volume flung down from flaming skies, from which life itself should be born and fostered, is at least as compatible with any reasonable theory of inspiration as if they had been given complete and by one act, as Moses received the commandments on Mount Sinai. And that such an origin for these books of the New Testament is most natural is plain, and thus they are received by the Church as the authority for its faith and practice. And if, as in the case of the Roman Church, a body of tradition extraneous to Scripture is admitted as authoritative, even this body of tradition can but appeal to the same origin as that of the Scriptures themselves, with the preponderance of simplicity and safety forever on the side of the written word, since the sources of this written word were limited to the apostolic times.

The Protestant appeal to the New Testament, there-

fore, may be admitted to be reasonable and right. Life may now be shaped by its teachings, although it first was the product of life itself, as redeemed and taught of God. We do not appeal to the Bible because it originates any truth for us ; we appeal to it because it contains the truth, — truth already proved in human experience, revelations to men and in men of God and of Jesus Christ His Son. These revelations were facts ; upon these facts Christian lives were built ; and from these Christian lives, from them and for them, were produced by the promptings of the Holy Ghost the Scriptures of the faith.

The Scriptures of the New Testament are therefore safe historic documents for the determination of the kind of life that Christ created in His Church : they set before the world an ideal, but they also show the practical results upon life by the acceptance of that ideal. The little Christian community does not appear perfect all at once ; it exhibits an immeasurable advance not only upon the surrounding heathenism, but also upon the Jewish life of the day. There was no violent break with Judaism at first ; but that break surely came as time went on, and the questions of circumcision and the observance of ceremonial in general became important with the dispersion of the Christians and the reception and mingling of Jewish and Gentile converts in one body. But these questions were from the first secondary to the life. The earliest demonstration of difference between the Church and all the rest of the world appeared in its abounding love. Self was no longer the centre of life. God and fellow-man came into the place of self. It is a common mistake to suppose that this spirit showed itself in a

communism either enforced or voluntary on the part of the first Christians. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles draws no such picture. "*As every man had need*" in the Church he found that need met by loving gift, even at the expense on the part of the richer of selling land or house. But no man was compelled to sell his possessions for the sake of a common purse, and the case of Ananias distinctly shows that every man was free to do what he would with his own. Even if he sold his lands the money was still his, and he could give it in part or whole, or retain all at his own will. It was just such communism as may be observed to-day under the better circumstances of life in almost any church. Poverty is amply relieved, distress is quickly and lovingly averted by prompt service and glad self-sacrifice; and that instance is rare indeed in which known suffering goes an hour without pity and actual relief. Doubtless the Apostolic Church in Jerusalem at first carried this practice of relief farther than any other church has ever done, and attendant evils arose. It was natural for the first impulse to send the pendulum of the new love to an extreme; but it were rash to assume that such was meant to be the normal motion of that Christian love forever. In fact the regulating force of the life of the Church soon came to its even poise, and from that hour to this it has never ceased to govern that life after the reasonable example of the Lord Himself.

But although the poverty of later phases of Christian life and the communism sought by some for the world's weal were not to be found in the early Church, it is plain that therein appeared that new grace of charity,

of love to all men, but especially to those of the household of faith, which was to be the special mark of Christianity. This love and mutual helpfulness was chiefly confined at first to the Church itself, and naturally, since no large thought is of instantaneous growth, and also because the sympathies of the first Christians were chiefly shut in upon themselves by the persecution to which the new faith was subject. Jesus had taught such large truth upon this subject as that embodied in the second great commandment of the Christian law, and in the parable of the Good Samaritan; and His word was destined surely to be fulfilled in the life of His people. The earliest conception of Christian duty, however, was satisfied with ministering to the needs of the Christians themselves; and at many later periods the Church wrapped itself in selfishness, and by just so much lapsed from Christ; but from a very early time, and always with increasing force, from age to age the love of the Church has laid hold upon all mankind, and the larger conception of Christian duty has prevailed. Nothing human is alien to the loving sympathy of the Church, and the ideal is constantly approached in which "the same mind that was in Christ" shall appear perfectly in His disciples. While it was never meant that the Church should arrogate to itself the prerogatives of government, or look to any human power for patronage, it was the divine purpose to send forth its influence in every direction, to leaven all the affairs of men, to teach and control by moral forces, and to mould human society in accordance with the truth taught by Jesus. In His conception religion was never a thing of mere form;

it was never to be divorced from ethics ; it was to be a thing of life.

The Church, moreover, was to be one. But as we have already seen there was little thought of formal unity. A church for which no government was dictated ; whose ordinances were reduced to the least number and greatest simplicity ; and whose thought was presented even in its own earliest Scriptures with the greatest variety, could hardly be held to a unity of outward body. The greatest dogmatic writer of the New Testament declared faith and hope and charity to be of abiding force ; but where faith might wander and hope waver, love was declared greatest of all. Why has not the unity of the Church been sought always in this love rather than in credal statements ? Creeds have been and are of vast usefulness in the service of exact thinking ; but so long as men exist and think it will be impossible for perfect Christian unity to find its statement in a creed. But charity is possible to all. Love abides. God is love. This is a statement of primal truth. To love Him and to love man are the two great commandments of the Christian law, and on these two hang all law and the prophets. Prophecy is hope ; law is formulated belief ; but greater than these is charity. If Saint Paul could say this, it would seem that no other Christian would care to place unity of creed in the first place, or fail to see that there can be no hope for the world apart from the primacy of love.

Statements of belief, confessions of faith, find their reasonable place, therefore, only as watchwords of life, rallying cries of brotherhood, standards for the practical

grouping of the great Christian hosts for the most efficient work. A trellis is not a bad thing for a vine unless some one conceives the idea that the vine gets its life from the trellis, and cuts off the branches from the stock to graft them into the painted wood of the frame. Faith helps growth; confessions should not hinder it. Christ was reasonable; He blessed Peter's impulsive declaration of belief in Him; He taught a faith so clear that it never could be confounded with any other; but He showed life and love to be greater than words, and exalted the spirit above any slavery to the letter.

A personal and loving devotion to Christ is the one bond of the Church; a spirit of love to each other must unite all in Him. A church committed forever to one phase of doctrine, to one system of thought, which a certain age or leader has formulated, must be a church without progress, unfitted to cope with the needs of all the ages as they come. But a church open to the continual leadership of the Holy Spirit, with brain alert though consecrated, and hand ready for every good work because unfettered, will be the best exponent of the Christ, since it is committed to growth in knowledge, and to the unity of love toward God and man.

It follows almost of necessity that the Church must live in the common life of the world, not exalting itself beyond the easy approach of men, nor withdrawing into a holy seclusion, from which it shall sally forth upon errands of beneficence as need may call and love impel. As Christ was in the world His Church is to be in the world, sharing its common secular life, touching all men at all points of human experience. No classes are to be

omitted, no customs are to be ignored. At a very early date saints were found in Cæsar's household at Rome. It was natural that such a religion should dominate at last the throne itself, and drive out the paganism of the empire. But it was also natural, that during all that early time "not many mighty" should be called, but that peasants, slaves, common people, should receive most gladly the faith of the Christ, who had lived their life in humility and suffering. In this day we see the same thing, and the effort of the Church is properly the effort of Jesus. The common people follow Christ in the largest numbers ; but the rich and great are not excluded. Christ is for the beggar by the wayside ; for the prosperous business-man ; for the delicate and the rich ; for the monarch. And in coming to all of these, the follower of Christ is to pursue the reasonable course that he finds in the example of Jesus. He is not to demand that all distinctions shall be leveled or the customs of society fashioned to his own needs, before he can seek the companionship of the lofty or the lowly. A bigoted, condemning, narrow spirit is not to shut the Christian away from the world's feasting, but when he shares in such pleasures the spirit of Jesus must go in his bosom. Jesus was always courteous. We remember that he defended the woman who was kneeling at His feet, by contrasting her loving service with the lack of the ordinary courtesies of Oriental hospitality with which His host had received Him.<sup>1</sup> At no wedding, at no feast, did He mar the enjoyment of the occasion by a diatribe against natural mirthfulness. On the contrary His first miracle, which

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 44.

perhaps He meant to be typical of the whole course of His ministry, was done for the purpose of saving embarrassment and adding to the joys of a festal hour. It is not the part of the Church of Christ to withdraw from ordinary social pleasures any more than to withhold itself from a neighbor's poverty or grief, or to turn unheeding away from the perils that may be threatening society.

The Church can reach the world by no moroseness, by no asceticism, by no artificial lines of a mock and shallow righteousness, by no repellent eccentricities of speech, or dress, or custom. If Jesus taught anything by His life, it was that the life of God is to be domesticated in human life. God's kingdom is to come by our doing as Jesus did. By living in the midst of men, by having no assumed but a real and hearty sympathy with its joys, by helping its sorrows and aiding it to solve its great problems that from age to age call for the best and holiest thought, by trying to deliver it from its crime and its degradation as well as from its enthrallment to folly,—by such exalted life the Christian shall best follow Christ. So doing, the Church may preserve a calm confidence in itself and its mission. However it pipes to the merry or mourns with the lamenting, the world will find fault with it, as the children in the marketplace of Christ's parable<sup>1</sup> did with their fellows. But if it is wise, its wisdom will surely be justified at last. It must be patient; it must be calm; it must be courageous. The Church is bound to be conservative, since it is a teacher, and dares not forsake what it has believed to be

<sup>1</sup> Luke vii. 32.

the truth until its positions have been proved wrong beyond any doubt. But its conservatism is equally bound to welcome all light, from whatever quarter, and to receive as truth that which has borne the test of every reasonable investigation. Jesus grew in knowledge as in stature; and the Church of Christ in like manner shall find itself growing in favor with God and man only as it grows in knowledge, and advances to fill the whole earth. "To have the same mind that was in Christ," to live as He lived, is the reasonable part of His Church, as He indicated by comparing Himself and it to a vine with its branches. His Spirit is in His Church, and so His last word to His disciples ere His bodily presence was taken from them is fulfilled: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

THE END.





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