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Rev. Dr. John DeWitt  
with regards of  
T. J. Coffey -



# SERMONS

PREACHED IN ST. JOHN'S CHURCH,

WASHINGTON, D.C.

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM DOUGLAS, S.T.D.

NEW YORK :

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TO  
MY FRIENDS AND PARISHIONERS  
OF  
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH,  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

THESE SERMONS, PREACHED IN THEIR MIDST AND PUBLISHED AT  
THEIR REQUEST,  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.



## PREFATORY NOTE.

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WHEN I resigned my cure of St. John's Parish last autumn, so many of my kind parishioners expressed a wish for a volume of my sermons that I felt bound to comply with their request. It seemed that at least the volume would be likely to subserve the only purpose for which I could desire to publish it, namely, that of securing to some earnest souls for continual reference the thoughts which, when originally uttered, had by God's blessing proved helpful. Some of my people expressed a desire for particular sermons; and these I have put into this volume as far as possible; but as most of my papers had been boxed and packed away before this publication was decided on, I regret that it has been out of my power to include herein all the sermons that were thus particularly asked for. Knowing the circumstances, those kind friends who are hereby disappointed will not infer that I have slighted their expressed wish, or that I am lacking in gratitude for their assurance that words of mine, which were never intended for publication, have by them been thought worthy of it.

For myself this volume will be a memento of three happy years in an unique parish, and of friendships which I shall never forget.

I could have wished to indicate accurately the sources to which I am consciously indebted for thoughts and illustrations throughout this volume ; but as I have been obliged to publish the book while separated from my own library by three thousand miles, and with no other library at hand, it has been impossible to do this, except in a few cases where footnotes have been added to some of the sermons. In general I desire to acknowledge my great indebtedness to the sermons of Dr. Liddon, Dean Church, Canon Mozley, Canon Scott Holland, Phillips Brooks, M. Bersier, and Schleiermaecher ; to various volumes of Martineau and R. H. Hutton ; to Lotze's " Mikrokosmos ;" to the volume entitled " What is Reality," by F. H. Johnson ; and to articles published throughout many years in the columns of the London " Spectator."

HOTEL RAYMOND, East Pasadena, California.

Epiphany, 1893.

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# S E R M O N S.



## I.

### OVERCOMING THE WORLD.<sup>1</sup>

These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye might have peace. . . . Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.—*ST. JOHN* xvi. 33.

**T**Hese words were spoken before Christ's death; yet they did not anticipate, they actually expressed Christ's victory over death. For these words indicate the underlying fact of Christ's being, which alone made His Resurrection possible. No single, isolated act of any person's career is significant apart from the whole being of the person. The act is but the sign and outcome of the personality that finds expression in the act. The thing that seems decisive in any man's career—the event that lifts him into prominence or sinks him in oblivion—is the manifestation of what was in the man beforehand. Even so our Lord and Saviour was not so much prophesying the future as expressing the present when, during that discourse to His disciples in the upper chamber

<sup>1</sup> First Sermon preached in St. John's Church, Nov. 3, 1889.

at Jerusalem, He declared to them in advance of His Passion, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." In the actual hidden fact of His being and character, Christ even there and then had conquered the world; and His enduring the Cross and the triumph of His Resurrection were but outward proofs of this.

It was not easy, that night of the Last Supper, to perceive that Jesus had overcome the world. It looked rather as if the world had overcome him. How then shall we explain that unseen victory? How is it that Jesus, even at the moment of his apparent shame and overthrow by the world, was really so superior to it? We must understand first what Jesus in these words intended by "the world."

Of all the terms employed in Holy Scripture, none is more various, more elusive in its meaning, than this. The term is elusive because the thing is so. "The world" is not the material universe only, nor brute nature only, nor man only. It may be each and all of these; it may be none of them. Its capacity of transformation is marvellous. Why, this world that Christ calls sinful oftentimes punishes sin for the reason that sin is not respectable; and constantly the world helps to build churches, to endow hospitals, and further Christian missions, to disseminate the Bible, to uphold good morals, because these things are respectable. Nevertheless, Saint James tells us that the friendship of the world is enmity

with God. Again, the world is not the devil, though the devil is the prince of this world. It is not the flesh, though fleshly lusts thrive in the world. It is not so much sin — this or that sin — as the atmosphere, the arena, the hothouse of sin.

All this is vague, but it is the vagueness of the fact, — the vagueness that characterizes even our Lord's language when speaking of the world. For example, Christ says, on the one hand: "I am the Light of the world." "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son." "God sent not His son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." On the other hand, Christ says: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee." "I pray not for the world." "Those whom Thou hast given Me are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "I have overcome the world." Yet every docile reader of the Bible feels after a while that these apparently conflicting terms are true to life. The reason why our Saviour's language is so elusive in this regard is that the world is only the world when man regards it as such. There is no one thing, no honest trade or profession, no style of living, on which you can lay your finger and say certainly, "That is the world; to have that, to do that, to be there, is to be worldly." Lazarus may be quite as worldly as Dives. The same thing may or may not be the world, according to the point of view.

The world is the temporal when mistaken for the eternal; the creature when regarded apart from the Creator. To overcome the world, as Christ did, is to realize in feeling, thought, and action that the world cannot stand of itself; is to recognize, in other words, that all which man sees and possesses and rests upon, as he moves across this earthly stage, is not only a gift from God, but could not exist without God, — that it is but the instrument of God's activity, the screen of God's Presence, the token of God's Love. To say this, and to mean it, is to overcome the world. The moment that the travelling soul mistakes the inn for the home, that moment the soul is worldly. "Man, thou hast forgotten thine object. Thy journey is not *to* this, but *through* it." <sup>1</sup>

And it cannot be too much insisted on that the mistake in the worldling's choice is not between this world and the next, but between any world and God, — between the creature and the Creator. Independence of God is worldliness, or rather the fancy that we can be independent of Him. It does not take long for thoughtful, conscientious men to be weaned from dependence on this world, for they see how it changes and palls and passes under their very eyes; but the man who simply exchanges his hopes of this present state of being for hopes of some vaguely expected other state of being to follow after it is a worldly man still; and this worldliness is so

<sup>1</sup> Epictetus.

subtle, so persistent, that some persons who fancy themselves full of the spirit of Jesus never cease to be worldly. To give up depending on the things of this life, and then to depend on the things of another life, is but to exchange one form of worldliness for another. The right course is to recognize in both worlds that God is all in all. The yearning for the unseen and the eternal is not necessarily the true Christian yearning for God; it is too ignorant, too selfish a yearning, — a yearning that has missed the lesson which this life was intended to convey. The contrast between the sufferings of this present world and the glories of the next is a contrast that finds no support in Scripture, unless it be further perceived that the essential glory of heaven is the soul's apprehension of its God, its direct conscious leaning upon God, — that and nothing else; and if this be perceived, then it will be furthermore acknowledged, as Christ and His Apostles constantly insisted, that the true Christian's conversation is even now in heaven, that even now he can overcome the world, because now he can rise with Christ into the consciousness of the eternal God and Father, in whom he lives and moves and has his being.

How full the prophets of the Old Testament are of expostulations on God's part with the human soul for not recognizing Him as the only ground of its stability; and our own daily experience is a present prophecy to the same effect. First, God gives the

helpless infant food, raiment, and a home; but as the child grows up he finds home lovely for its own sake, and depends on it as if it belonged to him outright. So God breaks up the home. Then comes a second lesson, to be learned no better. The youth, set adrift in society, chooses some business or profession; and by this God grants him self-support, and new-made friends, and perhaps some measure of fair fame. But here again the young man takes the gifts and forgets the Giver. Then trials come, and reverses, and bereavement, and loneliness, and ill-health; yet far from recognizing that God is simply taking back what God had given, the man still clings convulsively to what God leaves him, instead of clinging to God; and when he confronts death he thinks himself religious, a true Christian, if he merely shifts his avarice from things here to things beyond the grave. It is like the farewell visit of David Cox to the room where his aquarelles were hanging, when he felt that death's hand was touching him, and said, "Dear pictures, I shall never see you more!" It is like Walter Scott in his last days, when they wheeled him about the rooms at Abbotsford, and he looked at his antique armor and the bindings of his books, and said, "Give me one turn more." It is very natural; it is exquisitely pathetic; but it is not what Christ meant when He said as He was dying, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The aim and attitude of the man are not

yet really Christianized. His momentary possession of the creature intoxicates him into ignoring the Creator. His vision of things temporal blinds him to the presence and the efficiency and the beauty of Him by whom alone things temporal or things eternal are sustained. Sooner or later in the providential process of its education the human soul becomes conscious, on the one hand, of its own indomitable desire for stability, — for something to which the soul can cling and be attached — and, on the other hand, of the actual instability of each successive thing which it attempts to cling to. “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.” How many persons suppose that the Christian antidote for the discouragement of this experience is the Bible promise of a better world to come, — of new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; where we shall find again, transfigured and spiritualized, all that we here have tried to rest upon and could not, all that we have aimed at and missed, all that we have loved and lost; and where our faculties of mind, that here waxed faint, shall revive and find everlasting scope. But although the Bible promises this, it makes the promise on one condition: that the man who enters heaven shall recognize that God is all in all, — that heaven itself is only heaven because God is there. The Creator put man in Eden and made him master of every thing save one; one forbidden tree must

stand to him as a reminder that nothing was really his, but only lent him by God and by God maintained in being. It was Corban, a gift, that man might be profited thereby. Man lost Eden because he forgot this; he shall never get back to Eden without admitting it, and the time to admit is during this life on earth. "Now it is high time that we awake out of sleep." In any world, — this or another, — of God and to God and through God are all things, and by God all things consist. That which makes this earth to some men little better than an anteroom of hell — that which makes it full of their greed and impatience, of lust and crime and envy and disobedience to laws — is their failure to have faith in this immanence of the Almighty in the world. "My soul hangeth upon Thee." "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is nothing upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." "Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for." All my "fresh springs are in Thee." And, on the contrary, this honest realization of God's immanence and providence is what gathers up and simplifies all else that we know of life here or hereafter: it is the great fact by which all the lesser facts are focussed, — the fact on which to pin the persistent optimism of man, his courage in destitution and in death, his hope of immortality, his confidence that the heart-ties snapped by the grave shall be renewed beyond, his determination to work on and on and on always so long as life

shall last. The essential bliss of paradise to the blest is not the things God gives them, but God who gives the things, — their perpetual consciousness that any phase of man's being can only last because God lasts ; that the created soul itself could not exist for a moment unless underneath it were the everlasting arms — that all our intellectual ideals and moral standards, all the forms and friendships so precious to our hearts, are but so many guises and vehicles of the Divine Father's presence, and manifestations of His love. This natural eagerness of man to acquire things and persons is not radically wrong, but it is worldly until we acknowledge that nothing can be really acquired except God and that which God vouchsafes. He alone is our Shield and our exceeding great Reward. I suppose that after the awful ordeal of death, when the human personality has felt to its very core the shock and shiver of parting from everything earthly, even from the flesh — I suppose that thereafter not heaven itself could bring any peace to us unless we could know and feel that the creature's only permanence is permanence in God. There is but one *I AM*.

Cardinal Borromeo was one day playing ball with his schoolboys, when there came a man who wished to see him because the Cardinal was famous for his sanctity. The visitor was scandalized to find a saint engaged in sport, and said to him : “ Sir, if this were the Judgment Day what would you do ? ” “ Why,”

said the Cardinal, "this is the hour for sport. I am doing my duty. I should go on playing." To have that spirit is to overcome the world.

It is a picturesque moment when the youth, in the full enthusiasm of his natural vigor, looks out upon the world, determined to subdue it and to weld it to his will. But it is a more beautiful moment when the youth perceives that the true way to that victory is to lean in strong humility on God who made the world. There are occasions in every youth's life when he realizes that only God sustains him, — that his books are nothing, his companions nothing, his best friend nothing; occasions when in his struggle with temptation, in his yearning to know, in his efforts to succeed, he feels profoundly that unless it be true that God is under him there is and could be none to uphold. And there are later occasions in the full-grown man's life when in his thinking, his affections, his acts, in his endeavors to bear the burden and to master the mystery of all this unintelligible world the man feels, to the centre of his soul, "My soul hangeth upon God." But the important thing is that we should realize this not now and then in crises, but daily and hourly, — that whatever our calling, our station, opportunities, difficulties, hopes, we should be "kept in the secret of God's presence," — that we should dare to take all these plans and efforts, these loves and lives of ours up into the Divine presence, consciously into that presence,

there to be winnowed and purified of all that is bad and false and temporary, and adjusted to the true.

Men and brethren, it is with a deep sense of responsibility and of privilege that I have chosen this as the theme of my first sermon as your rector. Following in the steps of him who for more than eight years ministered to you so faithfully, and with such distinguished success, — one who had won your hearts as well as your respect; appreciating as I do the singular importance of the trust which this central parish of our national capital entails; feeling keenly that I am unequal to this thing unless Christ my Master be behind and before me with His enlightening grace, — considering all this, I have wished to choose some helpful motto for my work among you in the years to come, — to strike the keynote, to indicate the ideal purpose of the Christian pastor and priest of souls here in this sanctuary of the Most High. Have I not found it? Is there any other object in your devotions or in my ministrations, any other purpose in this building, than that therein and thereby we all should learn to overcome the world? — first, to discriminate truly what the bad world is, where we really touch it and by it are touched, and then, by the grace and power of Jesus Christ, to rise out of it forever? — to separate forever the false and fleeting from the abiding and the true? God grant that we may all of us, priest and people alike, keep this one end in view: to real-

ize His eternal Presence in the things of earth and humanity. In all our schemes of administration, in our efforts to enlarge and unify and intensify our work and influence, in our methods of Divine service in prayer and praise and almsgiving and sacrament,— God grant that our one aim may be to help each other to grasp the eternal aspect of everything in time. That truth well grasped will render this sanctuary in fact God's House to us, — the consecrated avenue to His presence, and so the gate of heaven.

## II.

### FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF AMERICAN HISTORY AS TESTIMONY TO CHRISTIANITY.<sup>1</sup>

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years . . . that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. — DEUTERONOMY viii. 2, 3.

IT is the custom of Thanksgiving Day that the discourse from the pulpit should take a wider range than at other times is usual in God's house. Ordinarily when we come to church we try to leave the secular world behind us. This visible sphere of men and things presses us so hard that in self-defence we endeavor, once a week at any rate, to get out of it for a few hours, and to feel the stress of the sphere invisible, whose claims, if less vociferous for the time being, are known to be equally constraining in the end. Heaven and Hell, Sin and Judgment, Conscience and Immortality, God and the Soul, Christ and Redemption, — these are the themes to which our attention is oftenest directed here. But on Thanksgiving Day it is otherwise. The life of this

<sup>1</sup> Thanksgiving Day sermon delivered in St. John's Church, Washington, November 28, 1889.

earth, with its physical wants and pleasures, with its food for the body, its stimulus for the mind, is now laid open to our contemplation in the presence of the Eternal Being whose fatherly hand has prepared it bounteously for our use. We are bidden, not so much to escape to God out of the world, as to find Him in it, and to thank Him for it. And forasmuch as this service of Thanksgiving is made by the President's proclamation a distinctive part of the national holiday, we shall miss the whole purpose of the day unless we take our actual secular daily life as citizens of this great republic, and scrutinizing it in the heavenly light of God's providential Fatherhood, give thanks for those present results of it which are plainly the outcome of God's care for us.

Taking my clue, then, from this circumstance, I ask you to consider with me this morning, my friends, What have we as a nation, — as part and parcel of this eager, temporal, earthly human race, spreading so marvellously and rapidly athwart the wide reaches of land and ocean, — what have we as a nation especially to be thankful for here at the ending of this nineteenth century of the era since Christ was born? In a little more than two years we shall be celebrating the fourth centenary of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus, and already the machinery for that jubilee is getting under way. There will be a great blowing of horns, and hissing of steam-whis-

bles, and waving of banners on that notable occasion. Many fine orations will be uttered, many astounding monuments displayed of the material progress and the secular ingenuity which America has manifested since first to the eyes of his exhausted crew, that were ready to mutiny and turn backward, the strenuous Genoese pointed out exultantly the far, faint features of the western continent just brightening to the morn. Nay, in addition to all these natural incentives to the production of panegyrics on our national success, there is a special and positive one. The Duke of Veragua, a lineal descendant of Christopher Columbus, is offering, from motives of family pride, and as president of an association formed for the purpose, a prize of six thousand dollars for the best literary work written in any of the principal European languages, to celebrate the fourth centenary of the discovery of America.<sup>1</sup> This international competition is intended, in true Horatian spirit, to produce a literary monument more lasting than bronze, in honor at once of the great seaman's enterprise and of the country that he discovered: and those to whom will fall the duty of awarding this unexampled prize will doubtless have their hands full of magniloquent effusions, vast in bulk and copious in adjectives. It would be idle to protest against either the one or the other. America has achieved

<sup>1</sup> And in our own country the Phi Beta Kappa Society proposes to offer two prizes of three thousand dollars for a similar purpose.

enough in these four centuries to make the record of it bulky, no matter how terse the style, how nice the taste of the recorder; and high-sounding adjectives are, to say the least, pardonable when the spirit of self-esteem is wearing the mask of esteem for one's fatherland. Certainly, too, the history of our last dreadful war has sufficiently attested that our national proneness to bombast in patriotic talk is tempered when necessary by the downright earnestness of patriotic action. When our English cousins twit us with our leaning to conceited loquacity whenever American ideas and American achievements are the theme of conversation, we can point with unconcern to the steadiness and brevity of American action, both Northern and Southern, when action was required. Nor do I think that even this much of apology is necessary for the flood of encomium which our approaching anniversary is likely to produce. Even if the scrutiny be keen, and the tests severe, few students of history will deny that our national achievements in politics, in economics, in mechanics, in science, and in literature furnish abundant materials for a panegyric that would be both enthusiastic and true.

But as we observe our national custom of Thanksgiving Day in the spirit that brings us here; as we survey our past history and measure our present progress in the pure light of God's eternal Being and Christ's perfect Humanity; as we suffer the ideas of conscience and duty — of the personal soul, its sal-

vation and immortality, of the church on earth and the church in heaven — to meet and mingle with our ideas of secular achievement and visible prosperity; as we review our records and examine our consciences in somewhat the same spirit, with somewhat of the same purpose as actuated Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, from which my text is taken, remembering all the way which the Lord our God has led our nation these four hundred years, to humble us and to prove us, to know what was in our hearts, whether we would keep His commandments or no, — then I think that questions will be asked and answers will be given different from any that are likely to appear in the essay that wins the prize of the Duke of Veragua. Not that this higher standpoint will deprive our survey of its causes for rejoicing. On the contrary, I believe that it will disclose to thoughtful Christian minds causes for thanksgiving far deeper and more lasting than appear from any other standpoint whatsoever; but unquestionably the nature of them will be surprising to many whose ears are tingling with the story of our national advancement and of our material success. I believe that that which the history of these United States has proved and is proving to the minds of men who are really thoughtful and really conscientious is this above all else, — the absolute necessity of spiritual ideals and religious methods to meet the conditions of mankind as man.

The discovery of America seemed for a while to give to non-religious ideals and to the standards of materialism a new chance and a better field. Materialism in the old world had proved a failure, but might it not prove a success in the new world, where it would be free from the trammels and unhampered by the problems of an effete civilization? "Meat for the belly and the belly for meats" had not been exactly a workable maxim where there was not meat enough to go round. But what if it should be acted upon in a land so large, so rich, so unoccupied that the whole problem could be worked out *de novo*? Certainly, the men of faith in God and sin and immortality could have no objection to having the experiment tried, and the Almighty Himself seemed favorable. The ideas of the extremists of the French Revolution could not be fairly tested, it was claimed, in the worn-out soil of Europe. Let them be tested in America, then, where undoubtedly there was space for them and a virgin soil; where they would have all that their advocates desire, — a fair field and no favor. To-day that problem is nearing its conclusion, and the theme of all themes on Christian lips at our national Thanksgiving Day should be, that the only answer to it turns out to be a religious answer. The word of Moses to the Israelites long centuries before Christ, the word of Christ Himself to the devil during His temptation in the wilderness, is the only word which any conscientious

man and thorough thinker will have to say to the hungry mouths and hungrier hearts that look up by millions in our country to their teachers and their guides: "The Lord hath humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Is it not a notable circumstance that this demonstration of the soul should be the final outcome of our new-world experience, even as it had been of the old? — that mankind should be forced to see that even the most favored nation in the whole course of history cannot shirk the religious problem, — that those who run away from it in the old world will meet it inevitably in the new? And to men who believe in Jesus and care for the true welfare of mankind, is there not here a reason for thanksgiving profounder than any other? It is on this simplicity of history that we may build our higher hopes for our nation. The nation's ideals cannot continue to be merely material and temporal, for its actual history is ending as history has always ended. Human history, always and everywhere, is a demonstration of the futility of things material, and of the supremacy of soul.

My contention is that the new era of these past four hundred years of American history turns out to

be identical in essentials with the old-world eras ; that its burdens are the old burdens, its riddles the old riddles ; and that when those of the New World who now are trying to do without Christ find themselves side by side with those who tried in the Old World to do without Christ, and see the helplessness of their plight, then the upright minds among them, who have hitherto been beguiled by the false promises of materialism, will come over to the spiritual side. If the New World had developed communities peculiarly just, or peculiarly happy, or peculiarly wise ;<sup>1</sup> if human society transplanted hither had shown itself in forms nobler, stronger, saner, more graceful, more intelligent than Europe had produced ; if the old vices did not spring up here just as readily as they do there whenever there is occasion for them ; if the history of Egypt, Greece, and Rome before Christ,<sup>2</sup> and the history of early and mediæval and modern Europe after Christ had not anticipated in substance every phase of thought and feeling and aspiration and endeavor that mankind have manifested lately on this side the ocean in their attempt to solve the difficulties, and to reap the joys, and to

<sup>1</sup> I am here indebted to an article which appeared in the London "Spectator" some months ago.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. in this connection the very remarkable discovery of clay tablets at Tel-El-Amarna on the banks of the Nile, as recently published by Prof. A. H. Sayce, in his address on "Letters from Syria and Palestine before the Age of Moses." This address of Professor Sayce was delivered at a *conversazione* of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society.

master the mysteries of all this unintelligible world, then, perhaps, there might have been some plausible ground for the claim of irreligion that in this country, unspoiled beforehand and free, there was to be something new under the sun, — that now at last it would be shown to us that man can live without God in the world; that he can control himself, and frame wise laws and keep them, and be generally comfortable on earth without regard to heaven or hell. But so it has not been. The discovery of America has indeed doubled the theatre of men's struggles, giving them a wider domain and freer scope to begin the struggle anew; but not only has it failed to contribute a single fresh ray of ideality to man's lot, but it has not lifted from his back a single one of the old essential burdens. The civilization of the New World, tested by results, is no better, if it be no worse, than that of the old. On each side of the Atlantic certain characteristics are, doubtless, specially developed; but if you strike an average, all that can be truly maintained is that, on the whole, the fundamental aspects of European society have been reproduced here. When civilized man had once put foot upon his Eldorado, he could only contrive to make the new materials into the familiar features of his ancient home. There was the same good side of life, with its pleasures and hopes; the bad side, with its misery and despair. It is claimed that at any rate the struggle for existence is lightened

among us ; but even this is at bottom a mistake. This struggle is indeed made orderly among us ; it is given for a few years more room ; the police let men have a certain amount of tether before they clap them into prison ; the laws lay down clearly the rules and limits of the game, and these laws are made by the people themselves, instead of by a privileged class. But, if you examine it narrowly, the real heart of the struggle for existence is just as bitter and as keen as of old. There are the same heartburnings, the same unsatisfied desires. Legislators and political economists and philosophers have visited us with expectant eyes ; but they have found here no new medicine for the Old-World pain ; only the same ignorance in the poor man of the things of this world ; only the same ignorance in the rich man of the things of the next world ; only the same persistent effort on the part of both rich and poor to

“ Build themselves they know not what  
Of other life they know not where.”

Vexed and disappointed, such visitors could only agree with our own wiser observers, echoing the words of King Solomon : “ Vanity of vanities, all is vanity ! What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun ? The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be ; and that which is done is that which shall be done. Is there anything of which it may be said, See, this is new ? ”

Does this seem to you a gloomy conclusion? Nay, I say that to the Christian there is ground in it for profoundest thanksgiving. Mankind has indeed tried every possible recipe for its ills save one, and that is no longer new, even the gospel of Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I say that the history of the world so far has been a *reductio ad absurdum* in proof of Christianity. The world is bound to find out that what Christ said is true, — that there is no help for it but spiritual help; that even the problem of man's earthly being is at bottom not merely a financial problem, nor an educational problem, nor a social problem; that it is also a religious problem, a question of the Golden Rule, as amplified in the Gospel of this morning's service. No man ever has obeyed or ever will obey consistently that rule, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you," except from religious motives; and the only sufficient religious motive wherewith to meet the difficulties and the dangers of our nineteenth-century civilization is the motive that Christ presented for the similar conditions of civilization when ancient paganism was waning. And when of our modern pagans the nobler, devouter spirits shall recognize this at last, will they not hasten to join with us in our national Thanksgiving Day? Will they not count it worth all their travail and all their disappointment that it should have been thus driven into their souls by sheer exhaustion of all other methods, that the reason why

we cannot make a better thing of life is, not that the world is too small or life too short, but that we are too bad? that if our nation had twenty times as much room, and never so many fresh starts, we should still fail to reconstruct society on a better plan unless we should adopt a better process? Only by spiritual measures can true human progress be; and for such measures one hemisphere is as good as the other, one age as good as any other. I am glad that all our problems are fast resolving themselves into the social problem, for that is always a religious problem at the last. Pessimism or Christianity is the only alternative then. Even the greatest happiness of the greatest number is found to be a mean and miserable ideal, unless the idea of happiness blend with the idea of eternal duty to the Eternal Father, by whose grace we are saved. Christianity is the absolute religion. The Agnosticism of to-day is but the classic Stoicism in another guise; the Positivism of to-day is but a new version of the older Pyrrhonism;<sup>1</sup> and over against them stands the religion of "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

My brethren, have our thoughts to-day been too far away from the lines of our personal religion; too far away for thanksgiving, which is only real when it is personal? To me it seems not so. For can any

<sup>1</sup> See *Encycl. Brit.*, articles *Stoicism*, *Scepticism*.

man be really patriotic and really Christian without sitting down sometimes, like Daniel in captivity, and pondering on the welfare of his people? Especially in this capital of our country, does not the thought of our nation become to all of us more or less a part of our personal concern? And if in the providential issues of our national history we can see causes for hope that the spiritual and the Christian side of things must in time get a stronger and stronger hold upon the national soul, shall we not find in this true cause for personal rejoicing?

And there is another reason which seems to me to give to our theme a direct bearing on our individual soul-life. In this result of our national history have we not a parallel to the personal history of most Christian souls? In every generation there are indeed a few who at no period of their life get far away from God; but most of us, as we look into our hearts, know only too well that we did not put our present faith in God until we had first put faith in many things beside God. Only when our rash experiments proved unsuccessful; only when we found the world's pleasures to be unsatisfying, and the world's supports untrustworthy, did we come to say with Saint Augustin, "Thou has made us for Thyself, O God; and the heart is restless until it rests in Thee." Hence I am sure that for us this morning to have dwelt upon the issues of our national history was also to verify the course of each man's secret

soul-life ; so that the springs of our national thanksgiving will blend insensibly with those deeper springs of joy that belong to our hopes of personal salvation, — to our faith in a personal God and a personal Saviour that grows clearer and clearer as the years go by.

### III.

#### THE END OF HUMAN LIFE.<sup>1</sup>

Then cometh the end. . . . that God may be all in all. —  
1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

**D**URING this season of Advent, according to the ancient custom of the Church, the preacher is expected to present to his people the subject of the Four Last Things : Death, Judgment, Heaven, Hell. We who are so occupied by present visible activities and engagements, and by obvious enjoyments and sorrows, are called upon, once a year at any rate, to consider the results of our activity, to notice whither we are tending, to think of our latter end and the real object of our being.

And surely this call is in strict accord with the demands of our better being. Every man of light and leading who has fairly settled into life puts before himself some end, — a certain aim and object of existence. Life is too short, too various, too full of chance and change for strong and strenuous men and women to be willing merely to drift. Nor is it simply an aim that man needs : he requires also a

<sup>1</sup> Advent sermon.

limit. We finite creatures must not only be content to be bounded in our faculties : our labors must likewise be bounded. To attempt too much is almost as bad as to attempt nothing. Just as each day is rounded off, so that when we rise in the morning we are sure that the day will terminate, and its cares, its pleasures stop, even so our lives as a whole could be neither healthy nor hearty unless we could carry about with us the constant conviction : "This state of things will not last forever. By and by cometh the end."

Now as the Bible is the Book of Life it is natural that we should turn to it for information on this very important matter, as to what is the end of human existence. And it is very striking that the answer to this question is both definite and indefinite according to our point of view. Looking at things from a physical standpoint, the reply is indefinite ; whereas from the spiritual standpoint it is definite and clear. If we indulge ourselves in curiosity as to the duration of this earth, or the course of human events on it, although the Scriptures do contain some hints and indications, still all is so ambiguous that we cannot be sure of our interpretation of the prophecy until after the event. But whereas the Word of God leaves us thus in the dark as to the end of human life looked at from the physical standpoint, from the spiritual standpoint its answers to our inquiry are often startling in their definiteness. And if we were

to search the Scriptures through, noting carefully the replies to this oft-repeated query of anxious souls, "What is the spiritual end and limit of human being and endeavor?" we should find that they may be all summed up in our text this morning from Saint Paul: "Then cometh the end. . . . that God may be all in all."

You will recognize it as part of that magnificent chapter from which is taken the Lesson in our Prayer-Book Office for the Dead. At that solemn moment when we gather about the coffin of the departed, ere yet decay's effacing fingers have swept the lines of beauty, although we know that all the dear one had of visible bodily being is snapped and shivered; at that moment, when the most reckless of us must feel the littleness and the shortness of earthly aims, and when even the serious and devout are tempted to find the consolations of God small with them as they try to say submissively "the last and long good-bye," — at this moment of all others the Church, by the word of the apostle Paul, beckons us away from all selfish and temporal considerations up into a higher plane, where in the calm light of eternity we perceive the end, the goal, the limit of every creature, whether of things in heaven or of things in earth, namely, the simple and uncompromising fulfilling of the Creator's will. The law which holds together the natural world is what we call the law of gravitation; and the law which holds the supernatural

world together is the gravitation of the created will to the Creator's will. That is the mystery of this world ; that is the purpose of your life and of mine, yea, and of our Divine Brother Christ's life also, — "that God may be all in all." "But," as the context explains, "every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits ; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He [Christ] shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For Christ must reign till He hath put all things under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He [the Father] hath put all things under Him [the Son]. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him [the Son], then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him [the Father] that put all things under Him [the Son], that God may be all in all."

And what I wish especially to think of with you to-day, my friends, is this: how strangely and closely this view of the end of things bears on the present process of things, on our life from hour to hour. I suppose there was never a period in history when so many clever and practical people were in doubt as to what they were really meant for. In earlier times human life was not so complicated, nor nearly so self-conscious and introspective. A great many more things were taken for granted. It was

“Like father, like son,” -- one person being quite contented to receive on his shoulders his predecessor's mantle and to go on with his predecessor's tasks. There was not so much intellectual and moral hair-splitting. Just as there was less subdivision of labour, so also there was less anxiety as to special vocations and as to the final significance of life. But now civilization is telling on the masses. We are painfully self-conscious and self-important. We find it as hard to be simple in our thinking and feeling as we do to be simple in our living. Yet if once we accept this strong and healthy message of Saint Paul, what a counteractive we shall have to these morbid tendencies; what an open, simple thing all human life is seen to be; how frank and unfettered its ideal. A person may be in doubt as to whether he has scope for his best talents; he may even be sure that, if circumstances had been different, he might have done something else much better than he now is doing what happens to be his task. But what of it? If Saint Paul's view be accepted, what difference does it make if, in the mingled maze of human endeavors, a man has not quite hit it off as he intended? At any rate he can “do the next thing.” At any rate he can turn his hand willingly and healthfully to what he now finds to do, in the certain faith that God is back of all, and all in all. God does not need us for what we might have done; He will arrange otherwise for that. God needs us for what we now can

do; and by thus humbly complying with His present will we are not only doing that which now is best for us, but we are doing essentially what under any circumstances would always have been best for us, and we are actually lifting our souls towards the final consummation of all things. "Then cometh the end. . . that God may be all in all."

In one of the Sacred Books of the East a great Muslim teacher relates this parable: —

"One knocked at the door of the Beloved, and a voice from within said, 'Who is there?' Then he answered, 'It is I.' The voice replied, 'This house will not hold *me* and *thee!*' So the door remained shut. The lover retired to a wilderness, and spent some time in solitude, fasting, and prayer. One year elapsed, when he again returned, and knocked at the door. 'Who is there?' said the voice. The lover answered, 'It is *thou.*' Then the door opened."

In his quaint but subtile imagery the Oriental teacher was but enforcing the very lesson of our text. In Heaven is no room for divers wills, unless all by love are one. Christianity has indeed revealed to us the dignity and the inestimable value of the single soul, and that truth was the starting-point of our modern civilization; but let us not misunderstand the truth, nor twist it from its bearings. Each soul is only valuable because Almighty God is great enough and good enough to understand and care for innumerable finite creatures; and any particular creature

can only realize its value by realizing God's will for it. As the chisel is powerless by itself to carve the statue, but is fraught with power and genius when wielded by the sculptor's hand; so man, by putting himself into the hand of God, becomes more and more filled with His strength, till God is all in all. My brethren, the students of natural science have taught us many things for which we Christians should be thankful, for they have helped to make manifest how closely our religion is in touch with natural life, "all things working together for good to them that love God." Lately by independent methods these investigators have brought us round to the old Mosaic dogma of the unity of nature. At present all forms of force and all departments of physical life, as science touches them, seem to show forth the ideality of their law. And the revelation of our text takes up the thread, and carries it farther. Here we have the law whereby all forms and phases of spiritual being are identical in their relation to God. This gives spiritual oneness to our conception of human life, as natural science gives it physical oneness. We know, for example, that almost everywhere we are treading on the traces of extinct civilizations. The pioneer of our western prairies, the settler in Australia, the daring discoverer in arctic seas, used to fancy in his ignorant enthusiasm that he was the first to bring the torch of human enlightenment to these benighted places. Such self-impor-

tant dreams are now dispelled. We know that torrid and temperate zones are shifting, and long ago have shifted ; that what is now an ice-bound coast was once balmy and splendid with tropical luxuriance ; and if we do but scratch the soil, we find marks and skeletons and tombs of by-gone civilizations. Intelligence and will and personality — the brain that ponders, the hand that executes, and the heart that loves — are very ancient. They had left their traces here before we, and all that we have record of, had begun to be. So much we learn from science. But the Bible tells us more. The Bible reveals to us the spiritual side of the spectacle, and the spiritual identity of all conscious created being, — “the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together until now.” Wherever and whenever it may be ; passing and repassing, emerging and vanishing ; one race succeeding another, one civilization rising up out of the ruins of another, and destined, like the other, itself to pass away, — howsoever the created spirit may vary in its accidents and superficial phases, as it lies wide open to the view of its Creator, the substantial aspect of it never varies. Its end is always the same. Time has nothing to do with it. The cycles and vicissitudes of history do not change it. The success of one creature, the failure of another ; the celebrity of one, the obscurity of another ; this spirit’s joy, that spirit’s sorrow, — all these do not interfere with the underlying law. The point of the

spectacle, the clue to the mystery, lies elsewhere ; and when once we grasp that clue, then there is such unity in all the multiplicity that even time and eternity are seen to be as one. Each passing moment is in touch with eternity. For the end of all things is always at hand ; that God may be all in all,— that each created being should do the Creator's will, precisely that, nothing else but that, from moment to moment. Failing that, the creature misses its goal ; so far forth as it arrives at that, it rises out of time into eternity, for the end is come. It is not easy. For sinners it cannot be easy, as the Christ-life shows. The only perfect Man that ever walked this earth had, for our sakes, to go through an agony in order to accomplish it ; and Christ's disciples must also agonize in their effort to imitate Him. But believe me, that cry which to Jesus was for our sakes agony as he uttered it in the gloom and sweat of Gethsemane, will in Heaven be transformed into the joyful hymn of the redeemed : " Father, not My will, but Thine be done."

O my brothers, we often find it hard to realize the scenery of Heaven ; and because we cannot make actual to ourselves the allegories of Scripture we sometimes become almost sceptical as to paradise, and the world to come, and the Beatific Vision of the Almighty, our Eternal Father. Yet if the allegories of the Bible do not help us in this unimaginative age, why do we take no heed of the downright statements

of the Bible, shorn of all allegory? If the language of the Apocalypse estranges us, why may we not take comfort in the language of Saint Paul? If we cannot see in a vision, as Saint John saw it, the new heavens and the new earth and the new Jerusalem, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; if we cannot imagine ourselves like harpers harping with their harps; if we fear we should grow weary if called upon to rest not day and night saying, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" — if, I say, all these prophetic visions seem to us too unlikelike to be practically a helpful forecast of that eternal existence for which we humbly hope, why, then, do we not at least take notice of such plain and positive statements as this one of our text, — statements which sweep away the notion that heaven will be essentially so different from earth; statements which attest that the life of faithful souls hereafter will be identical with that of faithful souls here, varying only in the perfection of its service and the consciousness thereof? For according to the doctrine of Saint Paul, there is an eternal aspect to every whit of time, because the fundamental relation of the soul to God is the same here as hereafter. Other features of our present being are but the accidents of life, its methods, tools, opportunities. These vary for us. But the substance of our being hath no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Each one of us stands simply before God,

as creature before Creator, our one duty being to feel the play and counterplay of the human will in us with the Divine will of our Father; and the intention, the limit of our being is to yield up our own will to God's wiser, stronger will. Until we do this, the end will not have come. In proportion as we do it, even though He slays us, still trusting in Him, our life on earth approximates to heaven. The present flies from me; the past does not belong to me; the future is not in my power; but in the past, in the present, in the future *is* my God, — mine to know, mine to love, mine to cling to, mine to rest upon. Towards Him I gravitate always. And in that act whereby, with the whole force of my God-given personality, I rise and bow my will to God's will, recognizing Him, adoring Him, performing His present behest, — in that one act I go beyond the changes and chances of time into the steadfastness of eternity. I am doing now that which, by my Saviour's mercy, I shall do forever and ever. "Then cometh the end. . . . that God may be all in all."

#### IV.

#### ALL SAINTS' DAY SERMON.

These all died in faith, . . . and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. — HEBREWS xi. 13.

THIS is All Saints' Day, and my text is taken from Saint Paul's account of the character of the saints. Like a great artist who portrays by a few brilliant strokes of his brush the salient features of his model, the Apostle presents to us, unconfused by elaborate details, a magnificent series of portraits of the Old Testament worthies. There is Abel, with the smoke of his sacrifice going up Godward under the blue sky in the earliest age of the world. There is Noah, prudently building his ark years before there were signs in the visible heavens of the gathering flood. There is Abraham, turning his back on his earthly fatherland, and going in quest of God. There is Moses, refusing to be a prince in Egypt, and choosing rather to lead an ignoble race of slaves into the desert that should render them freemen. These and many like figures rise before us in this striking chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. As we stand musingly in this strange portrait-gallery, the Apostle's statement

that we and those men are brothers seems to us impossible. Is not our guide carried away by a fantastic enthusiasm? Where is the likeness between us and those august heroes of an earlier world? What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse. We are doing, we can do no such deeds as did these saints of old. We raise no altars under the open sky, and slay no firstlings of the flock. No voice calls us to any ark-building; no message of self-exile do we hear, that we may find ourselves and find our God in some unknown Palestine; no choice between the palace and the wilderness is laid on us. And yet if we look longer at our portrait-gallery, if we hearken to our inspired instructor's explanation of the meaning and the motives of character of those old-time heroes, we cannot but recognize some traces of affinity between ourselves and them. Amidst our commonplace surroundings and our different duties there are crises of the soul not unlike theirs; and in studying their lives we may derive apposite suggestions as to how to run our race, to render our service, and to fill our places in this modern world. Such is our privilege this morning. Such is the opportunity of All Saints' Day. And we are drawn to it by the strongest stress that this earth knows, — by the ties of heart and home. As I look over your faces, my brothers, in this house of God to-day, I know that we are all thinking of one thing, all feeling the drawing of one cord, all standing in

one line before the same mysterious veil, and trying to peer beyond it, — the veil that has fallen between ourselves and the beloved ones that have passed into paradise. We are thinking of our dead, — no, not of the dead, but of those who are asleep while their heart waketh, as our hearts also wake and watch for them. And as we think of them, we think of others beyond them and before them. The gallery of the dead is very long. Our gaze begins with one and another of the faces that we ourselves have known and loved; but anon our eye is drawn on to other kindred spirits of the society that they have joined. The thought of *all* saints merges into the thought of *our* saints, — transmutes it, lifts it up, makes us ready for such contemplations as my text to-day presents to us: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

It seems at first sight singular that it should require saints to confess what everybody knows, — that it should be an essential mark of sainthood to confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. Here we are, all eye-witnesses to the perpetual procession of mankind, to the transitoriness of everything earthly. We see it, we suffer from it, we ourselves partake of it; but the western world, at any rate, does not confess it; that is, does not admit it in such wise that the admission becomes a genuine principle of our

ordinary activity, a vital motive of our character. Genuine confession is a matter not merely of the lips, but of the life. To appreciate what the Apostle meant when he said that the saints "confessed" that they were pilgrims, we must recall the meaning which the primitive Christians put upon this word "confessor." A confessor was a martyr in all except the deed. He stood up before the heathen inquisitor and told him the whole story,—acted out his faith completely; only the inquisitor, for whatever reason, did not care to go all lengths with him, did not make the Christian pay for his faith with his life, whatever other sufferings short of this he might undergo. Nevertheless, so far as the Christian himself was concerned, so far as his own will reached, he was a martyr. He acted out his faith. Now when we are told that the saints all "confessed" that they were strangers and pilgrims on this earth, the term connotes a similar thoroughness of action. They did not simply admit, as all of us do, theoretically and in the abstract, the transitoriness of human life; they lived up to this admission, accepted the consequences of it, allowed it to mould their character and to modify their daily life.

I have just remarked that the Western world in general does not make this confession. In a measure and after a fashion the Eastern world does so. We are all more or less familiar with the stolidity of the Oriental character; but have you ever sought to

ascertain the cause of that stolidity? What makes the Oriental, in contrast to the Westerner, so singularly impassive? The Russian on the borders of China, the Englishman in India, recognizes this quality of the Eastern civilization at once. He feels as if he had been brought up against a high, blank wall. And all Europe talks about the "inscrutable Turk." What makes the Turk "inscrutable" to men of Occidental mould?

I think we can best understand it by drawing an illustrative parallel. All of us in our impetuous youth have had the experience of being confronted with the cool and the calm of older men. We have rushed forward full of theories and expedients and enthusiasms, ready to accomplish wonders off-hand. There were certain magic watchwords always on our lips, — such as "Progress," "Enlightenment," "Reform;" and we had no hesitation in upsetting things generally in the name of such ideas. I am not saying that we were all wrong. On the contrary, I am sure that we were half right, and that the world is in constant need of just such as we were, and that in every generation there are abundant proofs that youth with its ideals can, not only mar, but mend. Alas for the youth who is not full of ideals, and whose bravery does not verge on rashness. Napoleon used to say that no field-marshal of his ever won a great charge after thirty, which was but an epigrammatic way of emphasizing the importance of

zeal, and the necessity that maturer men should recognize that they require for their own prosperity the assistance which youth alone can yield. But all this is aside from my present point. What, I ask you, is it that makes mature age seem cold and stolid to the young? Is it not that in many ways old age knows better what you can get out of a given life; what human life and personality amount to; what can be done and cannot be done by any one of us, or by any single generation of us, before we go hence and are no more seen? It is not merely that old age has slacker sinews and chillier blood; it is partly because the maturer man's view of things is deeper and longer and wider. Youth has seen so little happen; old age has seen so much.

Somewhat such is the attitude of the East in general towards the enthusiastic and more enterprising Western world. The Oriental civilization is so old. For ages upon ages it has witnessed the rise and fall and outcome of just such dreams and hopes and efforts and experiments as the West is now so eager about, supposing them to be new,—experiments in industry and commerce, in mechanics and architecture and art, in politics and in religion. It is inborn and inbred in the Oriental, as a result of all that vanished life behind him, that “there is nothing new under the sun.” This is the strain of thought that tinges and prevails throughout those marvellous books Ecclesiastes and the Wisdom of Solomon,

which the Church has incorporated into the Old Testament ; though here you find the Spirit of Almighty God wrestling with the discouraged intellect of the wise man, and trying to modify his fatalism by the power of a nobler and robuster faith. It is because of this evident battle between faith and unfaith in a personal, beneficent God, and in the vital personality of responsible manhood, that these strange books have been sanctioned as part of Holy Scripture. The struggle is therein so depicted as to be true to the facts of natural human soul-life, and yet at the same time to point onward to the New Testament revelation of the Christ who should afterwards supernaturally appear to end the struggle. We read Ecclesiastes in the light and under the influence of Jesus, the strong Son of God, Immortal Love ; and so to us its pages are robbed of bane. But if you wish to see a complete expression of the influences which, apart from the Christian Revelation, have produced in the Oriental civilization its cast of strong stolidity, read the Rubaiyat of Omar Kayyáhm. "Think," says the Persian poet, —

"Think, in this batter'd Caravanseraï  
Whose portals are alternate night and day,  
How Sultan after Sultan with his pomp  
Abode his destin'd hour, and went his way.

"We are no other than a moving row  
Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go  
Round with this sun-illumin'd lantern held  
In midnight by the Master of the Show.

“ Impotent pieces of the game He plays  
 Upon this checker-board of nights and days ;  
 Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,  
 And one by one back in the closet lays.

“ The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,  
 But right or left as strikes the Player goes ;  
 And He that tossed you down into the field,  
*He* knows about it all — *He* knows — *He* knows.

“ And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,  
 Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,  
 Lift not your hands to *It* for help — for *It*  
 As impotently rolls as you or I.”

But stolidity is not saintliness. Intellectual and spiritual impassiveness was not the mark of those whose roll is called so grandly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. When the Apostle says of them, that they too, like Omar Kayyáhm, confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, he qualifies their confession by the statement that “ these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but were persuaded of them and embraced them. . . . For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country—a better country, that is, an heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for He hath prepared for them a city.” The saints of Western Christendom, have faced the transitoriness of earthly things with quite as much impassiveness, in one sense, nay with even more impassiveness than the Oriental pagans ; yet the key to their character is not fatalism, but the profoundest

and most masterful confidence, — confidence in God Almighty, confidence in this world while it lasts, confidence in their own selves. And if you and I, my brothers, are to enter into the true secret of our All Saints' Day, we must first acquire the clue to Christian sainthood.

What, then, is lacking to the Oriental temper, — to the temper which is no longer Oriental only, but which, alas! is more and more pervading our Western civilization, also outside the pale of Christianity? How does the saint, while recognizing as fully as the most stolid of pagans, the fleetingness of all things temporal, contrive notwithstanding to find therein materials for permanent enthusiasm and an indomitable hope?

The answer is very simple. The saint looks at this earth as a school; and to his view the important matter is not the perishableness of the school-building, but the lastingness of the scholar. The key to the saint's position is not the school, but the schooling, and the immortal soul that here is put to school. Some shrewd observers of human character have remarked that there is a certain resemblance between the saints and true artists and men of science and members of some of the other higher professions; and in a certain sense this is so. There is in all these a similar absence of sordidness, a similar aloofness from fashionable concerns, a similar independence of the changes and difficulties of our ordinary

earthly being, a similar interior joyfulness. But granting this gladly, and accounting for it by the fact that all such persons, like the saints, are so absorbed in a single elevated pursuit that they make light of matters which to the rest of us are weighty, it is surely unnecessary to say that to such intellectual aloofness from the world there must be superadded something different and higher before the note of sainthood is truly attained. This additional quality is the insistence that this earthly life of ours is a school for the eternal life, and that God our Father is the Schoolmaster; and that it makes no matter whether we outgrow our textbooks, whether we despise our prizes as soon as we have won them, whether we acquire outwardly and objectively anything whatever that will stand, whether even the place and structure in which we do our tasks is not crumbling under our feet, inasmuch as the important matter is simply what we ourselves are becoming in the process, — what the individual scholars get out of their schooling in the way of personal character. Personal character is the essential thing, the immortal thing, and that alone is the saint's concern, — that and the Holy God in whom and from whom we live and move and have our being. Pilgrims we all are and strangers in this beautiful but passing scene; yet the passingness of the scene does not discourage the saintly traveller, — does not prevent him from eschewing that counterfeit of true sainthood, the im-

passive Oriental stolidity, which is the proud stoical admission of the truth as to *this world*, without the supplementary admission as to the truth of the *next world* which Christ reveals to faithful souls. It is often urged by unbelievers that the saints are impractical persons, — that “otherworldliness” blinds them to the facts and issues of this world; and that in consequence it is quite as bad to be a Western saint as to be an Eastern stoic, since the enthusiasm of the one is fully as unhelpful here and now as the stolidity of the other. But the unbelievers misconceive the quality of true sainthood. Faith in eternity and the eternal personal God, and the constant vision of these, impart in the saint’s view a new and positive interest to all the things of time. Nay, eternity not only gives to time a new value, but gives it its only value. Once admit, as all downright honest souls must admit, the fleetingness of time, and time loses its whole value except as the prelude of the eternity into which it is forever fleeting. It is eternity, and eternity alone, that imparts to time its dignity. The Oriental considers that nothing temporal is worth making a fuss about; the saint of Christendom goes thus far with him, that he too esteems earthly matters trivial in and for themselves; but the saint insists that nevertheless there is real and inestimable worth in them because of the relation that this world bears to Heaven, — that finite beings bear to God Almighty.

Men and brethren, such is the ideal that is set before you and me. And it is the power and privilege of Christianity that it draws us toward this ideal by that very earthly tie that is strongest and most enduring, — the tie of pure human affection. It is this which All Saints' Day expresses to us. In the great Coliseum at Rome eighty thousand spectators lined the galleries, while a small score of combatants waged gladiatorial contests on the ground below. And Saint Paul assures us that somewhat such a theatre is the human race, dead and living, save that the audience in the galleries is made up largely of those who beforehand were on the floor. They have fought their battle with the beasts, they have run their race patiently, and then they have gone out of the arena into the gallery. You and I have taken their places, and they are watching to see how we will profit by the lesson which their lives convey to us. Oh! if our eyes would but look at this life as they used to look at it, as they are looking at it still! If the father, immersed in worldly affairs yet still loving the child that death has taken from him, would but understand why his little one is tugging at his heart-strings! If the widowed husband would but understand what his vanished wife is trying to whisper to him in the lonely night-watches! If the orphan would but hear what his mother is praying for him in the earnest patience of Paradise, — not that he may make nought of this life, or make light of it, but that he may use

this life as not abusing it. This earth is not substantial; the things of earth are not to be clutched and kept, for they are sure to slip away; but *they* are passing, not *we*, — not the immortal souls of our beloved, not God the High and Holy One which inhabiteth eternity, not Jesus our Elder Brother, our Pattern and our Stay. So into all these transitory objects and occasions of our life, into our riches or our poverty, into our work or profession whatever they may be, into the ties of family and friendship, into life's sadness and its gladness, into its most evanescent beauty, we can throw ourselves with courage and zest and passion, because by all these we ourselves and our fellow-men are becoming what we shall hereafter be, — because God is here, and we can find Him here, and follow Him forever. Let us too live in that faith and die in it, confessing that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

## V.

### A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all they that heard it wondered. — ST. LUKE, ii. 16, 17.

CHRISTMAS is the great day of joyful wonderment. All birth is wonderful. In all the world the genesis of life is marvellous. It is the crux of science, the riddle of philosophy, the mystery of religion. Neither of the three can explain it; they can but acknowledge their utter amazement at it. The supreme mystery of our existence is not death; it is that we should ever have begun to be. And by common confession Christmas is the birthday of the most extraordinary Person that this world has known in the whole course of its history. It is but to be expected, therefore, that man's sense of the marvellous in all birth, as such, should be intensified at the birth of Jesus Christ. The miraculous conception, the star-led Magi, the heralding by Angels, the manger at the inn, — all these marvels seem to the philosophic, no less than to the poetic eye, to be

in thorough keeping with the fact that we are celebrating — in thorough keeping with any birth of any being — if we do but consider what birth is, to say nothing of His birth whose personality and achievements and transcendent influence have transformed the history of mankind.

It seems hard that on Christmas Day, of all days, we should have to stop and consider objections. But alas, it is so. The doubts are there. They are in the hearts of some of you, my brothers, who will turn away from the Lord's table this morning because you cannot still your doubts, — doubts, too, not of your own making, but inspired by persons that you respect. Woe be to the preachers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ if they refrain, for any reasons of sentiment or supposed propriety, from contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to us. The days are gone by when it will do to treat our Christianity as a delicate matter, a sentiment, an affair of fine feeling. Hard-headed thinkers all about us decline to treat it in that way any longer; and if we so treat it, we may haply find ourselves, as Renan says "living on the perfume of a broken vase." To-day, then, and on a subsequent Sunday I shall consider two of the most modern and prevalent objections to the miraculous birth of Jesus Christ. On a subsequent occasion we shall take up the objection to our Christian creed which comes from the supposition that the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ is a scien-

tific impossibility : and we shall show that our most modern science declares the exact opposite of this ; that science has recently discovered actual cases of virgin birth in the lower animal kingdom in special emergencies. But the objection to which I ask your attention to-day comes not so much from physical, as from historical science ; and I choose it now because it can be handled more briefly, as befits the special services of Christmas Day. Many serious persons, well aware that there is no longer a valid scientific objection to the dogma of the Virgin Birth of Christ, are nevertheless troubled from another side. They notice this strange circumstance : that the general impression which is produced on us by the religious history of mankind is that all religions, no matter what, present us in their origins with a series of miracles. If then the miracle is universal, is it not thereby evacuated of all its weight ? Is it aught more than an indication of that proneness to aberration which always characterizes the human imagination when over-excited by the religious ideal ?<sup>1</sup> Why, then, should the Christian theologian, who recoils instinctively from the miracles of the mythologies, insist on making an exception in favor of the Gospel story of the birth of Jesus ?

The objection is a specious one, but the history of natural science furnishes us with a sufficient answer to it. Natural science has now resolved itself into

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bersier, *Sermons*, tome vii. p. 185, seq.

a sort of expert commission to investigate the testimony for the miracles that fall within its province. All nature is full of the supernatural, because the Infinite Energy in nature is Itself above nature, — super-natural. Nature is a convenient term for what we already know of this Infinite Energy; the supernatural is our term for what has not yet come exactly within our range. Nature is so marvellous, the frontiers of what has hitherto been regarded, because of our ignorance, as the supernatural are being so continually pushed back by our new knowledge of the natural, that scientific inquiry is now become one vast research into whatsoever it may please the Infinite Energy behind nature to perform; and whenever a fresh revelation of the operations of the Eternal Energy is made to some observer more than ordinarily on the alert, his testimony is not discredited beforehand because of the careless observations or the rash inferences of other observers. Good testimony is not invalidated by bad. It is the business of the expert to sift the testimony. And if in any particular case the phenomenon is obscure or the testimony inadequate, the true man of science will neither affirm nor deny, — he simply suspends his judgment, and passes on to the consideration of other scientific phenomena as to which the testimony is not doubtful. The astronomer would be a fool who should refuse to bring his telescope to bear upon the moon because, forsooth, his glass is not

powerful enough to solve the secrets of the star-dust that veils the Milky Way. Now, I assert without fear of contradiction that, so far as testimony is concerned, the proof of the accuracy and sufficiency of the Gospel history of Jesus Christ is incomparably superior to the best attainable testimony as to the supposed facts of the history of other religions ; and simply on scientific and historic grounds, and on grounds of pure reason, — to say nothing of the rules of ordinary living, — it is sheer madness to shut your eyes to the testimony for Jesus Christ for the reason that you must have doubts as to some of the testimony for Bouddha or Mohammed or the miracles of Mormonism. The wise and upright course to pursue — the only course that is consistent with the methods of true manliness — is to fix your mind on the adequate testimony that is available for Christianity, and not to waver as you look at it for the reason that you must waver, that at best you must be in suspense, with regard to the testimony for some other religion ; above all, since the records of the Christ-life are more numerous and various and authentic than the records which we possess of any one of the great personages of ancient history, and of most modern history, — since to doubt them would compel us to give up our knowledge of Alexander and Julius Cæsar, of Socrates and Marcus Aurelius, and even of the first Napoleon. Sift the testimony to the miraculous claims of various religions

by all means, but do not in your sifting apply a canon which would rule out all the testimony to all history.

But there is yet more to be said on this subject. The position of Christianity is still stronger. For when you compare the heroes or central figures of these other religions with the central Figure of the Christian religion, you notice at once the essential difference in their characters. Christ's undisputed historic character is *the* miracle of mankind. To men who know what ordinary human lives are, His birth is far less miraculous than His life. Compare, for example, the personality of Bouddha with the personality of Jesus Christ. Bouddha is essentially human; Christ is more than human: Bouddha requires no miraculous birth to account for him; Christ does. Like Confucius, like Socrates, like Mohammed, Bouddha is a sinner and acknowledges it, and tries his best to overcome his sin. The received story of him begins by describing the vanities and sensualities of his youth, from which his whole after-life is an effort to recover. According to their own records, all these other teachers of mankind cannot stand the test of perfect holiness, which they must stand if you are to compare them to Jesus Christ. "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God?" was the cry of one possessed with devils at Capernaum; and it has been the instinctive cry of every human being without exception, whensoever

the universal sinfulness of men has been confronted with the unique purity of Jesus, and with his own unique and avowed consciousness of that purity. This is why the repeated endeavors of the sceptical human reason to account for Jesus Christ on merely natural grounds have all broken down. His majestic personality cannot be thus accounted for; and each successive endeavor to do so, after easily exploding the fallacies of previous endeavors, has itself fared no better. The miraculous element in the origin of Christ is required by the attested historic character of Christ; whereas His rivals in the other religions of the world manifest no such personality as to demand a miraculous origin. No, what we may properly and certainly conclude from these stories of a wonderful birth that have gathered about the founders of other religions than the Christian is this: that they are signs and foretastes of the profound conviction of the universal human soul, that if ever the Almighty and the All-Holy should intervene in the destiny of mankind, this intervention would be supernatural from the start. To dismiss the supernatural in Jesus because men looked for it before Jesus, is as unscientific as it is irreligious. On the contrary, their position is vastly more rational who, expecting the Christ, have anticipated him in the Bouddha, than is the position of those who, disappointed in the Bouddha, for that cause reject the Christ.

The study of this earth as it actually is, and of man as history reveals him, makes manifest in all creation an ascending series of being.<sup>1</sup> At the bottom is what we call matter, regulated apparently by purely mechanical laws. Next comes the vegetable life, soon passing into the animal, where there is spontaneous movement, instinct, — a confused self-consciousness that lifts itself by little and little into intelligence and morality. Without entering now into the present explanation of men of science, who account for all this by their theory of evolution, it is sufficient to notice at each stage of this progress the manifestation of a life which, in relation to the preceding, is *super-natural*, because it is attested by phenomena which the previous phase of being did not produce. The lowest form of animal life works miracles to the vegetable, and man works miracles with both. Man by his will suspends the law of gravitation, arresting the stone as it falls; by his reason he so manipulates the forces and faculties beneath him as to convert the lightning into the telegraph; as to graft into a tree the branch that it never would have borne; as to create among animals and flowers new types by the crossing of species. Thus the reign of man is recognizable everywhere by signs that would be supernatural to an observer who was only acquainted with the lower phenomena of mechanics and of vegetable and ani-

<sup>1</sup> See Maccoll's "Christianity in relation to Science and Morals."

mal existence. If, then, we admit that above the reign of man there is the reign of God, — the infinite, immanent Energy of the world, — it is not merely likely, it is inevitable, that when that Divine Authority shows itself to man, and in man, this will be by signs that unto man are supernatural. This is the irresistible analogy of the evolution of the world. As we bow with the adoring angels at the cradle in Bethlehem; as we confess our faith in the Gospel history of our Saviour's miraculous birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are pushed to our conviction by the whole momentum of the constitution and being of the world. It is our rational apprehension of what this universe of being is — of what nature is to us, and what we are to nature — that impels us to expect at the Incarnation of the God-Man the signs of God's Power and Love.

My brethren, I have been speaking to-day of some theoretical difficulties of our faith in the great Christian verity of the Incarnation of the Son of God. I have done so with deep reluctance, but I had to do so. No earnest preacher of the Gospel can fail to feel the obligation that lies on him in this regard by reason of the thinking of this age. When books and brochures and even newspapers are scattering broadcast in our homes the crude speculations and rash statements of men who are not even serious sceptics, but rather the retailers of other people's scepticism, — penny-a-liners who wish to turn to their

own profit the sensations of the hour, — something is certainly due to those more earnest Christians whose faith is thereby troubled. It is not so much that their faith is destroyed, as that they suddenly awake to the fact that they are not sufficiently informed as to the reasons for their faith. With no suitable books at hand, with no competent advisers whom they can consult, — in some cases also without those habits of strict intellectual discipline which would fit them to cope with these difficulties suggested to them from without, — many such earnest Christians find these crude sceptical suggestions sticking unanswered in their minds. And they are troubled by them, — troubled but silent. Their Christian faith is so true that they are most reluctant to give tongue to the difficulties of it. So they go their ways, feeling the subtle chill that rests upon their spirits. If the minister of the Gospel does not help them, no man will ; and he often is peculiarly able to help them, because his address is impersonal to them, — because, amidst the upturned faces of his audience, he does not even know precisely which the troubled ones are. It is in this view, with this aim, in this spirit, that I have tried to address you to-day. May the blessing of the Holy Ghost follow my brief words.

But I cannot close without one word of a different kind. This truth of the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is too wide, too intimate,

too practical, to be handled simply so. Let us never forget that it is revealed not only for our learning, but for our living. It is a matter of our life and death, — a matter to be dealt with not only in our studies, but on our knees. The Incarnation is the very substance of the Christian's prayers. "Through Christ we all have access by one Spirit unto the Father." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Are not all our prayers finished in His Name? To be sure that this same human nature of ours is actually in touch with God, — has been taken by the Son of God into personal union with His Holy and Eternal Being, — is not that feeling, that certainty more than enough to fill our souls with hopes and fears, with aspirations and endeavors, with searchings of heart and impulses of will that must needs bring us to our knees? It is to this aspect of our religious life that we must address ourselves during the remainder of this Christmas season, and especially as we turn this morning to our service of Holy Communion at the altar of our God and Saviour.

## VI.

### THE CHRIST AS WONDERFUL.

Unto us a child is born . . . and His Name shall be called Wonderful. — ISAIAH, ix. 6.

**I**N the Hebrew the name of a person was intended to be indicative of his personality, and in many of the books of Holy Scripture we notice the endeavor to attach men's names to their nature. Indeed there is no denying, however we may try to account for it, that we have in the Hebrew history a series of names which really express the characters of those that bore them. *Nomen est omen*. The name is historically a sign.

It is according to this usage that our text from the Old Testament lesson of this Christmas morning must be understood. When Isaiah in this prophesy of the Messiah attached to Him the name "Wonderful," he meant hereby to indicate what should be an essential note of the character of the Christ that was to be born. Christ's personal Being is foretold to be such as shall of itself elicit the wonder, the awe of mankind. He is to be not merely great, noble, helpful, powerful; His influence in the world is to be due

to a peculiar quality in Him which compels the attention of human souls for the reason that He astonishes them. Jesus Christ, apart from His circumstances and the peculiar conditions of His time, is to be in Himself for all time unique and marvellous.

It is of this fact in its bearing on the evidences of Christianity that I desire to speak to-day. My brethren, the evidences of Christianity are as manifold as human nature is; for evidence is always relative. Proof is not cogent in the air; it is cogent when it strikes an individual mind, meeting that mind's difficulties, appealing to that mind's sympathies, expressing the circumstances, the conditions, the atmosphere in which that mind has thriven. And since men's minds are as various as their characters and conditions, some arguments which are a proof to one man are not proof to another man, because of the difference in the men. The man that is blind and the man that sees, the man that is familiar with the methods of natural science and the man that knows nothing of them, the lawyer and the poet, the young man and the old, must be met by different arguments if the pressure, the cogency of the arguments is to be equally felt by all. Truth is absolute, but the arguments for truth are relative to the truth-seeker. On this account the aspect of Christian controversy has varied from age to age. Superficial students sometimes fancy that this change of face in the controversy about Christianity implies that Chris-

tianity itself is shifting and uncertain ; whereas that which actually alters is not the revelation of Jesus Christ but the point of view of the human minds that controvert that revelation.

Nevertheless there are elements in the evidence for Christianity which are independent of the varying characteristics and conditions of mankind ; and for this reason, that they appeal to what is universal and stable in mankind. Man is not various in everything, — in some things he is always the same ; and there are some aspects of Christianity which strike squarely at that which is permanent in man. When God sent down to men their Saviour, God knew what was in the men that He desired to save ; and forasmuch as man had been once for all created in God's image, the Creator knew that there would always be in man one instinct at least that would open invariably to the eternal truth ; and that is the instinct of admiration for holiness. And when Isaiah, foretelling Christ's advent, named Him the "Wonderful," Isaiah was indicating this quality in our Saviour : that by the sheer power of His absolute holiness, by the simple presentation of Himself, our Saviour should elicit the instinctive awe of human souls in every age.

And it is with her usual genius for selection that the Church has chosen this passage of Isaiah for the Epistle of to-day ; for it is this wonderfulness of Jesus that the Christian consciousness has specially

apprehended in His miraculous birth at Bethlehem. The birth is really no more wonderful than the rest of the life of Jesus ; but to the average human imagination the Birth appears to be more wonderful than the life. Yet to the mature Christian consciousness, aware of what this life of ours is actually from birth to death, it is the character of the Christ, the Holiness of the Man Christ, that makes Him most marvellous ; and in our time perhaps more than in any previous age there is a helpful lesson here, — a lesson that clears up certain difficulties of our modern speculations as to the faith of Christendom in Christ. Ours is an age of laborious investigation as to the historic origins of Christianity : it is an age, too, of much painful scrutiny as to the credentials and the mutual relations of Science and Revelation. We are determined to be both devout and rational ; and this requires a suspension of judgment, a humility of spirit, and a thoroughness of will which are very trying. Sometimes the best of us grow befogged and tired and discouraged while we wait for the solution of these riddles ; for our “ vision,” like Daniel’s, “ is yet for many days.” Now it is one thing to be in suspense, towards some or all the *human explanations* as to how Christ came to be what He is, and to say what He has said, and to do what He has done ; it is quite another thing for the Christian soul to be in suspense toward Christ Himself. There is awful risk in that : there will be forfeits to pay in

the Resurrection morning. For time is passing, and our earthly existence is waning to its close ; and for human souls to be living here without Christ's companionship, when that companionship is offered them, is to impoverish life of an inestimable privilege. To postpone the hour when we shall open our hearts and wills to Jesus until the hour when our conflicting historic and scientific questions about Jesus have been completely settled, will be an indefinite postponement ; for in this world that hour of settlement will never come. The arcana of history, the secrets of science can never be probed to the bottom, nor can the eager queries of the restless human intellect be ever entirely estopped. On earth, at any rate, we know but in part, and see through a glass darkly. Meanwhile we must work while it is called to-day ; and to have worked without Christ on earth when He was ready to work with us — to sustain us by His power, to draw us by His love — will be to have lost the best part of life. And in the faces of many earnest men and women in our midst, born of Christian parents and themselves bearing the Christian name, you can see the embarrassment, the perplexity, the pathos which must have been in Philip's face at that moment of the Gospel story when the Lord turned to him and said : " Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip ? " And it is in moments such as that, my brothers, that the argument before us is most prevailing. For if

there be anything whatsoever that you can rely on in the nature of man as man, — anything of firm validity in man's reason or his heart; anything which man carries with him always, in periods of ignorance and in periods of knowledge, in childhood and in old age, when the mind and will are clear and strong, and when they are weak and blinded, — it is this: the faculty whereby man recognizes directly that holiness is holy, and that perfect holiness is God.

My brethren, there are in man various faculties of direct apprehension. We have faculties whereby we apprehend the things of sense and time. We have also higher faculties whereby we apprehend the abstract truths of logic and mathematics. And we have still other faculties, through which music, painting, poetry appeal to us. These faculties are certain: if man is, they are. Subtile, delicate, energetic, absolute, these various faculties of man are each supreme in their own sphere; and they are impatient of the criteria and the methods that avail in different spheres. The mathematician may be color-blind; the artist may know little of logic; the chemist may have a poor ear for music; but in each of their respective realms the musician, the logician, the chemist is absolute. He *knows*. And there is also in mankind another — man's highest — faculty (call it what you will, conscience, soul, spirit) whereby we perceive holiness, whereby we recognize God. Akin to that mysterious power through which we discern

persons from things, and through which we love some persons and dislike others, this faculty enables us, when we awake to God's likeness, to be satisfied with it. And this spiritual faculty is the most universal, the most spontaneous of all in man. It may lie dormant; it may for a while be misdirected; it may be warped by wrong education, or clouded by wilful sin. But the history of all human civilization bears testimony to this: that God has never left Himself without a witness in any nation under heaven. To this innate spiritual faculty of ours the Christ appeals. He shows Himself as absolutely holy; and He knows that we know that "there is none holy but One, that is God." Hence independently of all questions of anatomy and of origin, — whether we can explain what produced Him, or how the story of Him was told originally and preserved until to-day, — when we confront the Person and character of Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament and proclaimed by the Christian Church, that character speaks for itself, as it has always spoken. That is what we mean by holy, that is what we mean by God. The Babe at Bethlehem is Wonderful. We are in awe of Him.

And to-day I desire to join with you in looking for a few moments steadily at that vision. When Leonardo da Vinci was painting a picture of the Nativity, he made it in the first instance full of detail and crowded with subordinate personages. But when,

on showing the picture, he found that people were admiring the microscopic details for their own sake and staying too long at the subordinate figures, he daubed these all out, so that attention might be riveted on the Divine Face alone. Let us make this morning a similar endeavor. Apart from our unending debates about Christ, let us try to have some vision of the absolute Holiness of Jesus Christ Himself, and to realize its separate and sufficient power as evidence for the truth that is to save our souls. There are times and places when no man can speak out. There are some men and some women who never speak out, — who carry their religious difficulties shut tight within their souls, and suffer, and make no sign. Two friends may be passing through the same trial; on every other topic they talk freely, but on this they hold their peace. They cannot give their whole confidence to each other, and the half they will not give. But there is one person who ought to understand them almost beforehand; one place where the very atmosphere is soothing and clarifying. The preacher of the Gospel in the house of God, for the reason that his particular message to such troubled souls is veiled and softened and shorn of many personal disabilities by the fact that it is part and parcel of his general message to all souls within his range — the preacher of the Gospel can sometimes utter to these persons a winged word that will reach them and help them. God grant it may be so this morning.

Christianity, the religion of Jesus Christ, the organization of the Christian Church are facts in the world. The inhabitants of this city and country, irrespective of personal choice, are witnesses to their existence and their power. You yourselves are all of you called Christians because your fathers were, and few would repudiate the title. This organization, this religion did not spring out of nothing. They are actual, they represent facts. This religion had a Founder, and His Name, His country, His date, His career, are topics of universal discussion. The very enemies of Christianity have, in one view, done most to bring out the actuality of Christ as a Personage of history that must be reckoned with. His biographies exist, and the manuscript copies of these biographies of Christ are more numerous and independent and manifold, and go closer to the time when Christ Himself lived, than do the extant manuscripts of the lives of any other classic personage. As historic evidence goes, we have to-day more evidence for the data of the life of Christ than for those of the lives of any one even of the emperors of Rome. Unless we are to admit a measure of incredulity — one had better say of credulity, for oftentimes nothing is more credulous than incredulity — unless we are to admit a measure of incredulity as to the Gospel history which no one would admit for a moment in matters of secular history, then we can leave it not merely to the scholars, but to the general con-

sciousness of civilized men, whether or no we do not and must not gather from the New Testament a clear, a consistent, and an authentic impression of the historic personality of Jesus. Men used to believe this on the authority of the Church alone. Now we can believe it also on the strength of a close, scholarly, and critical evidence so wide and full that it has no parallel in the case of any other ancient documents that have been transmitted to us in the whole range of literature. If the story of Christ were not miraculous it would be universally admitted. There are certain superficial discrepancies in the books of the New Testament that tell the story of Jesus, but these discrepancies only make assurance doubly sure. They are what every judge and jury in our courts to-day are perfectly familiar with in cases that are under our own eyes; they are inevitable where the witnesses are both independent and honest, for no four men ever see or hear the whole of anything, or remember precisely what they saw and heard. And when you have threshed out thoroughly these apparent discrepancies of the New Testament, and compared the evidences together, — when you have realized in your mind so much of the story as is historically irrefragable, — there rises before you a unique and consistent character that speaks for itself. By one process and one only can you evacuate this personality of Jesus of its significance: by begging the whole question and denying beforehand the general

possibility of the supernatural and miraculous. Yet even this presupposition does not relieve you of your dilemma: for if you refuse to explain Christ's Being from the standpoint of the miraculous, there stands before you still the actual Christ of history; and if you will not account for Him divinely you must account for Him humanly; and this is precisely what nineteen centuries of persistent sceptical criticism have never once succeeded in accomplishing. Not only have the sceptics failed to account for Christ in a manner satisfactory to Christians, but they have failed to account for Him so as to satisfy themselves. To follow the course of the anti-miraculous criticism of the New Testament is to see one long series of theories each of which in turn has upset the other. The critics admit this themselves. They each start out by assuming that the *Christian* explanation of Christ as God is incredible; but they always end by showing that any *human* explanation of Christ is incredible. There are incontestable features of the historic narrative which refuse to be either explained or explained away by any theory that denies the supernatural. The historic Christ is as compact as He is unique.

Now here arises the special point before us. Many persons, in saying that they deny the possibility of the supernatural and the miraculous, mean really that they are unable to account for the miraculous, — unable to explain how the miraculous is miraculous.

But that is not the point. No Christian undertakes to do that. The real point is this. All the much vaunted advances of human civilization, all the discoveries and the progress of the human intellect and will, have been made from this starting-point and on this basis: that, speaking broadly, the human mind is trustworthy; that its judgments are valid for itself. For obviously if you and I cannot trust the judgments of our own minds there is nothing that we can trust, for we cannot get behind our own mind. We must see with our own eyes, if we see at all; and to claim that we are all blind leaders of the blind is to throw up the cards. In that case our boasted civilization is a delusion and a sham; which no sane mind will or can admit, for it would be equivalent to intellectual suicide. So then, unless the human intellect has gone backward instead of forward; unless our direct intellectual judgments are no longer to be depended on, and the foundations of our whole rational life are crumbling, — then it must be admitted that when the human mind confronts honestly the historic character of Jesus Christ it can recognize Him for what He is. It may not be able to *explain* Him, but it can *know* Him. The miraculous *is* miraculous, and that is the end of it; and if Christ is miraculous, He can be recognized as such. When Isaiah called Christ “the Wonderful,” he was alluding to this fact: that the miraculous speaks for itself, — that, if it appears to man, it is knowable by

man. Now I claim that the spectacle of Christianity in the world, to-day as always, is precisely that, and the very attitude of its hostile critics attests it. The Christ of the Gospels defies criticism to do anything else than wonder at Him. It is just as Isaiah said it would be ; so much so, that in this "age of reason," this "era of scientific research," when philosophers insist that they will not touch anything that is not "positive," there is scarcely an author or thinker of note in all our most modern literature who is able to keep Jesus Christ out of his pages. Christ is so positive, so actual, so persistent, that He draws all men unto Him. People who think thoroughly must think about Him. Men cannot either explain Him or explain Him away. They simply stand in awe of Him.

And why? Because of His absolute holiness. There have been plenty of miracles in history that made no lasting impression on the civilized world. The world could not explain them but it passed them by. They did not permanently appeal to the world, nor exact its obeisance. This is what Christ and His apostles seem to have meant by the false signs and false prophets which should arise in the world, deceiving, if it were possible, the very elect. But it was not possible. These signs were miraculous, but there was no absolute holiness in them ; and it is holiness that the elect are looking for. On the other hand, that which makes the wonderfulness of Christ unique is that He is both wonderful and

holy. It is possible that many of the miracles of history were not, in the absolute sense, superhuman at all. They may have been only miracles to the then stage of man's intellectual ignorance of the natural forces of this world. Whether actually so or not, it is conceivable that our Lord's own miracles of healing were due to a combination of natural laws that we know with others that we do not know, or to the overruling of a lower by a higher law ; but it is inconceivable that the historic character of Jesus Christ is natural to man. Say what you will, there is in man an instinct of holiness, an inveterate conviction that somehow, somewhere holiness exists, that God is holy. And coupled with this there is also in man the profound conviction that perfect holiness is not human, not possible for man as he is. Hence if perfect holiness appears historically to man, it is bound to be forever a miracle to him. He must wonder at it as superhuman. When Jesus stood before the Jews and asked them quietly, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" He was manifesting Himself as the miracle of history. As He Himself said elsewhere, "There is none holy but One, that is God." There is no arguing about holiness. We know it when we see it, and we know that perfect holiness is God.

Bear with me, my brothers, while I look at this point with you more closely still ; for believe me, we are now at the very shrine and bulwark of our faith,

and the man who would walk unharmed through the perplexities of our modern speculation must see this and grasp it exactly as it is. It is Christ's last word to men. Other religions of the world, and some of them older than Christianity and possessing more disciples, have enounced great doctrines, have emphasized great duties, have urged men to some law of holiness, — to a grand ideal ; but the religion of Jesus Christ is alone in this : that its Founder embodies the ideal. The Doctrine is the Doctor ; Christ is himself the All-Holy. It is admitted on all hands that there is no influence comparable to personality. It is the one substantial force of human affairs. It is not measures but men that move the world. Now in the case of the founders of every other religion, the personality of the founder has been inadequate to the religion that he founded. They set ideals before men, but were not themselves ideal. "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither to be already perfect ; but I press toward the mark," is not only what they all say of themselves, but what we feel about them. Even Sakyia Mouni, the Bouddha, perhaps the noblest of them all, presents in his life a struggle with evil desire, — a struggle upward towards better things. He began with the consciousness of his own sinfulness, and tried to climb out of it, to overcome his sin. But Christ did no climbing. He was always at the summit. He was indeed a conqueror of the

sin He found in the world, but in Himself He found no sin to conquer. His life is not an evolution from imperfection to perfection, but a revelation, an exhibition of the Perfect Life. Here is the clue to the singular influence of the New Testament of Jesus Christ. It is not a book about holiness, but about the Holy One.

But may not this Perfect Man be only man after all? Must He be the God-Man? Must perfect holiness be very God? My brethren, I leave that question to your own minds and consciences, — to that absolute spiritual faculty in you of which I spoke before. But as if to render that question impossible from the start, there is an item in the character of Jesus Christ which I have not yet mentioned and which shows conclusively that He is not mere man. I mean Christ's own consciousness that He is the Holy One, — His bold and plain assertion of His absolute perfection. "Never man spake like this Man." This is what has staggered the critics; this unexampled, this inimitable, this otherwise inconceivable self-assertion of the Christ. "I am the Truth. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Which of you convinceth Me of sin? I have power to forgive sins." There have been many myths in many religions gathering about the personage of their founders; but when scrutinized and compared, the myths of all religions have been found, in the first place, to be all similar

at the root ; and, secondly, to be projections of the mind and character and history of the myth-makers, of the peoples from which they sprang. Invention has always built on precedent. But for this self-assertion of absolute personal holiness there is no precedent under heaven. There is no slightest premonition of it anywhere before ; no shadow of it, no approach to it, since. In particular it is utterly contrary both to the character of the early Christians, whether Jew or Gentile, and to the special conditions of the age when Christianity appeared. It may be just conceivable that God might have made a perfect man who was also a mere man. But that any mere man should be at once perfect and assertively conscious of it, is contrary to our very conception of a perfect man. When God in the Bible announces His holiness, we feel that it is becoming in Him to do so, because He is God and we are His creatures ; but the moment that any creature of God lays claim to absolute goodness, we feel instinctively, to repeat Christ's words once more, that " there is none good but One, that is God."

And take notice, finally, that this impression of Christ's combined holiness and self-assertion of holiness is not made on us by the Gospel biographies of Him only. The undisputed Epistles of the New Testament, which are admitted on all hands to be independent in their witness to Christ and to have antedated the four Gospels, are full of the same im-

pression. It is clear that Christ made on the authors of these letters, who knew Him face to face, the identical impression that the Gospel story of Him makes on us to-day. And the marvel of it is that neither they nor we have been shocked in our sense of His holiness by His own assertion of it. He, then, be it said in all reverence, is the solitary instance in the whole range of human literature and character in which men have for one moment put up with such extraordinary claims while admitting the justice of them. We cannot deny the holiness; we are not shocked by his own assertion of it. And if this be not a proof of Christ's unique reality, then there is nothing in man's claim to any knowledge of himself or of this world. In this case certainly the miraculous attests itself. It could not have been conceived as happening unless it had happened.

And to-day we are celebrating Christ's Birth. It was on Christmas that the Most High visited us as a little Child, *Oriens ex alto*, as the old anthem tells. Come, let us adore Him. Come, bow at His feet.

## VII.

### MODERN HUMANITARIANISM DEPENDS ON CHRIST.

Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake. —ST. JOHN xiv. 11.

OUR Saviour offers here two reasons why men should believe in Him; and thereby He foreshadows that some men will adopt the one, and some the other. Both are good reasons, because both are true to the actual nature of man as man. These reasons appeal to different grades of human feeling, to different phases of human experience, and to different stages of human speculation. "Believe," says our Saviour, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." This is an appeal to man's spiritual faculty, innate and absolute, whereby man knows holiness when he sees it, and knows that perfect holiness is God. There is no doubt that the historic Christ of the Gospels was what we mean by holy. If only you will open your souls wide and steadily to the vision of My holiness, says Christ, you will recognize Me as God. This, my brethren, was the topic

of our discourse together on Christmas Day. But our Saviour also indicates an alternative course of thought, which may lead men to believe in Him. "Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake." It is on this second line of thought that I wish to dwell to-day.

The works of Christ are both manifold and constant. They have never ceased to this hour. We often speak as if all we can know of Christ's works is what we can gather from the New Testament, — the signs and miracles that He wrought while Himself was visible in the flesh. But that is a profound mistake, and runs counter to Christ's own declaration. Christ's works in the New Testament story are not easy for us to get at across the interval of the years. This is a step which, strictly speaking, only scholars can take thoroughly; it involves the whole question of historic origins, and a deal of antiquarianism; whereas most of us are neither antiquarians nor scholars. I am not saying that there need be any misgiving as to the outcome of such investigations. On the contrary, as I said on Christmas Day, I assert without fear of contradiction that in the whole domain of human history there is no ancient history of which we are so sure as of the history of Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity. The records are so impregnable historically that those who impugn them are obliged to do so on other than historic grounds,

— on metaphysical grounds. It is the miraculous that troubles these doubters, for Christ is undoubtedly the miracle of history ; and it is to their line of thought that we addressed ourselves on Christmas Day. But the rank and file of men have neither the education, the insight, nor the apparatus to be either metaphysicians or accurate historians. Hence if we to-day are to be appealed to cogently by the works of Jesus Christ, it must be by Christ's works in our own generation. If we are going to put ourselves in the attitude of Saint Thomas, — and remember that our Lord had a blessing for Saint Thomas, even though our Lord hinted that there is a better way than Saint Thomas's of arriving at the truth, — if we are going to put ourselves into the attitude of Saint Thomas, then most of us must have something of Christ to see with our own eyes and touch with our own hands, since Christ's works in far Judæa are faint to us. And it is because many earnest folk, feeling that they can hardly reach those works of Christ, are supposing that there are no other works of Christ which they can reach, that I desire this morning to emphasize one aspect of the perpetual work of Christ which is close to us, if only we will recognize it. I refer to the very groundwork of our most modern civilization, to the principle that makes society in its practical, tangible operations and aims what it is to-day, as distinguished from what it used to be, — to the modern spirit of universal brotherhood ; to what is called,

by those who forget Jesus, Humanitarianism. Let us briefly consider, first, what this is and amounts to ; and secondly, where it comes from, and whether it can possibly be separated from its source.

No one who observes the signs of the times can fail to be struck by the aspect of the civilized world in this matter of humanitarianism, — of the general disposition to bear one another's burdens, to help them that are down, to heal the broken-hearted, to make easier the lot of the poor and ignorant. A woman writes a novel against slavery, and next to the Bible and two other books, it has a wider circulation than any other book in the world. A recent traveller writes a book against the Russian atrocities in Siberia, and anon civilized nations are not only horrified, but take practical steps to make that horror effective. An Englishman tells of the misery of the lower classes in London, and all England thrills with responsive charity, to be measured not only in pounds sterling, but in the efforts of hundreds of people to mend matters by their personal self-devotion. Capital and Labor fall once more into their immemorial quarrel ; but to-day what are they both most afraid of? — of the iron arm of the law? Not at all, but of the general public opinion that neither Capital nor Labor has been brotherly. If once you can prove that either Capital or Labor has been lacking in real humanitarianism, they wince and back down ; and the whole power of arbitration rests there. Such are

a few of the more conspicuous signs, evident to all men ; yet these are but signs. There are thousands upon thousands of institutions all over the known world, managed by persons who are determined to alleviate the sorrows and sufferings of mankind. Nay, this sentiment is so pervading that every one of us has caught it more or less. It is in us. Unless we resist the motion of our own souls, when we ourselves come across cases of distress, whether physical, mental, or moral, we pity them and try to help them.

Now whose work is this ? I say that it is Christ's work, — an historic miracle of Jesus Christ wrought under our own eyes. There is no doubt of this to the comparative historian. You can lay your finger on the epoch when this spirit began to be, and that epoch is the Christian era. And you can show that those who first acquired this spirit acquired it from Christ, and said so openly. Before Christ there is none of it. Without Christ there is none of it, except where the contagion of it has spread to some who know not whence they caught it, and the contagion never lingers long apart from the germ that brought it. Even now, in China and India, which have not yet as nations accepted Christ, it is foreign, not indigenous ; just as once it was foreign everywhere. For, mark you, we are not now speaking of that natural sympathy which man has for his fellow, even as beasts for beasts. Such sympathy is clan-nish. It is shown only to fellows by natural affinity,

whether of blood or of general congeniality. Clan-nish benevolence is selfish, and full of subtile pride. But this is not what we moderns mean by benevolence and brotherhood. This is not what Christian civilization signifies by humanity. We are referring now to the spirit that brooks no barriers, no privilege of race or clan. What has the leper in the far Pacific island to do with me? What claim has the belated civilization of Africa or of China upon us of the western world? None whatever, unless to be a man is to be the brother of every other man, bound to share with him of one's best. This common brotherhood is recognized now by us; but it was not recognized by the best of the world before Christ came, nor dreamed of in their laws. Not Confucius or Bouddha, not Solon or Pericles, not Plato or Epictetus, not Cicero or Seneca or Marcus Aurelius ever said what Paul of Tarsus said: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one;" and they said not this because they could not say that other word of Paul, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." It is unnecessary to dwell on this fact, as it is quite familiar.

But before we can appreciate the gravity of our subject there is another point to dwell on. This spirit of broad humanitarianism is not merely distinctive of our modern civilization; it is essential to it, it has made it what it is. Take it away, and you

take our very civilization away. My brethren, the more that the secrets of antiquity are opened up, the more clearly does it appear that that which truly distinguishes our civilization from those that went before is not its art, nor its prowess, nor its commerce, nor its varieties of government, nor even its intellectuality. For example, some monuments of Egypt, lately exhumed and deciphered, prove that thousands of years before Christ the Egyptian monarch had intercourse of the closest and most intelligent kind with the utmost dependencies of his enormous empire. We can read to-day diplomatic despatches between him and the governors of distant provinces, which for accuracy of insight and breadth of statesmanship are equal to anything in the diplomacy of a Bismarck or a Disraeli. It is likewise with the arts, and with literature and philosophy. Long before the Christian era the ultimate conclusions of the wise men of Persia and Egypt and China and Greece as to the problems of our purely human knowledge, present astonishing parallels to the latest conclusions of the wise men of our age. Almost all these things are double, the one against the other. No; the thing which is peculiar to our civilization, which has so modified our institutions and methods of social government as to make them essentially different from what went before, is our faith in the broad brotherhood of man. This is the one original feature even in our theory of democratic government. There

was a democracy at Athens, but it covered only a small clan, even of the Athenians, the great body of whom were slaves of their own race. It was not humanitarian, but exclusive. It did not recognize any rights to man as man. Our democracy, in aim at least, is humanitarian ; and if ever it cease to be so it will fall, as every other form of society has fallen.

To see how true this is, let us draw out the contrast that I have already hinted. All the main theories, principles, usages of the ancient world were gathered up and organized in the vast empire of Rome. Rome was the heir of all the ages, the survival of their fittest. Roman hardihood and patience, Roman sagacity and ability to rule, Roman comprehensiveness and loftiness of heart had made of heathendom the best that could be made of it. All that the powers of this world alone mean by "imperial" was realized in Rome. Yet even Rome failed. Weighed in the balances through many a lingering age, she was finally found wanting. Even masterful governors like Trajan and the Antonines, even scientific legislators like Justinian, even heroes like Belisarius, could not save her. And the whole enlightened world despaired to see her perish. The wreck was so complete, the disorder so intense, the catastrophe so astonishing, that the end of all social order seemed to have arrived. The human cosmos was thought to have reverted to chaos. But in the heart of that gloom and desolation a new principle of

ordered life was working. The barbarians guessed not that in abolishing the old order they were themselves making the ways straight for the new. The principle of force had failed, as it must always fail; for force without love is devilish, and the devil has been from the beginning a destroyer. But where force had failed, brotherly kindness could prevail; for brotherly kindness is humanitarian, — takes man for what he is, is independent of the shifting surfaces of human usage, goes deeper than any exterior form of government, any local type of society, and “maketh all things new.” In the long run you cannot treat any portion of human society as slaves or dummies or chattels; all we have rights, all we are brothers, children of our Father which is in heaven. The cohesive force of our modern society is the force of fact; for love is the fact of life, wherever life has thriven; it is grounded in the nature of things. So long as this world stands, and man stands on it, there is but one rule that can permanently control him and advance him, — the rule of thorough, comprehensive love. Love recognizes man for what he is, recognizes the inalienable brotherhood of man. That is humanitarianism. There were empires of old, as to-day; there were oligarchies and democracies of old, as to-day; but these were none of them thoroughly humanitarian, and on that rock they fell. They were one and all exclusive, selfish. Except within a narrow range, they shut their eyes to the

fundamental fact of human society. They were blind leaders of the blind, and so both governors and governed fell into the ditch.

To-day it is otherwise. Society has got the clue to its own life. Society may drop its clue, and has done so from time to time, and has come to grief in so doing. Again and again in the Christian era there have been setbacks, disasters, revolutions, reigns of terror. But the clue to the labyrinth, the word of the enigma, has been once for all declared; and in each successive period of modern revolution it has been this one clue only that hitherto has wrought salvation. It may well be that every existing form of civilized government is destined to go to pieces again for its sins. Sin and penalty go always close together. Just so far as the modern methods of society are not saturated with the principles of Christian brotherhood, they are bound to give place to better ones. It may be that autocratic Russia, and bureaucratic Germany, and republican America are to experience the wreck of all their present institutions; that our systems of capital and labor, of taxation and the tenure of property, of popular representation and the government by united States are to be upset entirely. But if it be so, that which is destined to upset them is no longer blind barbarism, but this very instinct of broad brotherhood which has become part and parcel of the soul-power of mankind, and is forever impatient of tyranny. And the

principle that wrecks will be also the principle that rebuilds. Foreboding pessimists foretell that the Nihilists and Anarchists will subvert our latter-day civilization, even as the older was subverted; but have the pessimists no eyes to see that the *principle* of the subversion will be different? that whereas the old barbarians were yearning for sheer force, there is working at the heart of our modern revolutionists another principle, — a creative principle, a real humanitarian principle? However blindly it may at first be working, the idea of wide human brotherhood is at the heart of these moving multitudes; and it is only because the upper classes have so far forgotten themselves as to be selfish, and have outraged their own standards in their treatment of their humbler fellows, that now they are quaking on their thrones. That which makes our upper classes tremble is not so much their lack of power as their consciousness that they have been lacking in love. Their own consciences are pricking them, because they cannot forget what Christ has taught them. But the old Roman conscience was not aware of its lack of love. The revelation of Jesus Christ had not yet reached it then. Our revolutionists may be powerful against renegade Christians, but they have no power against the truth of Christ. Once revealed, humanitarianism is impregnable, because man is man. When “the tyranny is over-past,” be it a tyranny of the classes or the masses, the law of love will prevail again and again, because God is love.

The beginnings of this new gospel were scarcely noticed when Rome was tottering to her fall. In the vicissitude of their fortunes and the complexity of affairs even those who did accept it at that time did not perceive that it would work any change in *this* world. They thought it was so other-worldly that it had nought to do with this world, — that it was a pure gospel of eternity and heaven, out of touch with earth and time. Those early disciples of the law of human brotherhood fled from the prevailing anarchy to the desert and the cloister. But they found their mistake, and soon came back again. For the essence of their own gospel was that the God of the next world is also the God of this world; that the true principles of time are one with the principles of eternity; that human morality is eternal morality, because it is simply the expression of God's character as approximated to by man; that mankind must succeed if handled as brothers, because God is the Father of us all. God is the one tie that really binds us, and if we recognize that tie we live.

If, then, you want to see some work of Jesus Christ whereby to believe on Him; if you want to feel the actual pressure of His miraculous power, you are not relegated to the dim wonders of the New Testament. This work of Jesus is before your very eyes, it is in your very heart. The one cohesive and expansive power of our modern civilization, the one thing that differentiates it essentially from all previous civiliza-

tions, is this same humanitarianism ; this grand, progressive echo of the Sermon on the Mount, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." And it is because Christ not only proclaimed this gospel, but realized it in Himself, that He is the most modern man. *He is* what the humanitarians *want to be*. All that is most vital in our recent society is realized in Him, completely realized in Him alone. The service of man by man is perfected in Him. All the other great figures that cross the stage of ancient history *are ancient* to us. In much of their life and aims and views even a Plato and a Cæsar are out of touch with us. But Jesus is never antiquated. He breathes our language ; our hearts and wills are fired by His ideal. Familiarity, which scorches and shrivels so many reputations in the estimate of those who are admitted to close intimacy, leaves the estimate of this Person undamaged. To-day more than ever before, — to-day, when amidst the dry and drastic years of laborious inquiry it appears as if the scientific historians were merciless, spoiling the fair seeming of so many of our old-time heroes and dissolving their virtues into myths, — to-day there is left to us this one Figure before whom the sharpest criticism is reverent, not merely because it cannot dispose of Him as aught else than historic fact, but also because the fact of His actual life agrees with the best facts of ours. He is the Rock whence we are hewn. Now more than ever before ; now, at this moment in

the progress of mankind, when the effort to achieve and make vivid our common manhood and to carry out into the lowest strata of society the principle of humanitarianism is nearest to success ; now, when even the ties of nationality are being blended and transfigured in the larger bonds of a world-wide being ; now, when touches of human tenderness, even more than human enterprise, are making the whole world kin ; now when the story of the Christ life is being read more generally than ever before, until copies of it have penetrated to the workman's hovel and the miner's cabin and the Siberian exile's prison ; now, when the very revolutionists will tell you, in their wild but earnest accents, that in spite of their ignorant extravagance they are recognizing in that gracious human Figure of the Gospels the ideal of their hearts, the very sort of Manhood which is in closest touch with their imperfect manhood, even as It has been the aim of our more conservative legislation and the object of our better regulated schooling, — now is a poor time to persuade us that in realizing the example we can repudiate the Exemplar ; that behind this work of Christ there stands no present Worker who is Christ ; that our inadequate portrait has no original ; that the historic life of Christ is immaterial to the Christian idea. If our wills are not yet strong enough, our hearts not yet pure enough, our consciences not yet so peremptory as to compel us to believe that Christ is in the Father, and the Father

in Him, we can yet believe Him for His very works' sake. For if history shows anything, it shows this: that whenever men cease allegiance to the actual Jesus of history, they lose sooner or later their ability to imitate His example. This spring must be drunk at its source. We cannot be philanthropists for long without vital faith in the one complete Philanthropist. Now philanthropy is the secret of our modern life; if it should pass out of our institutions, our institutions themselves must cease to be. They would rot with the rubbish of the ages. And it is the mystery of Christianity that you cannot lean on Christianity without leaning upon Christ, our Elder Brother. It is He who, as He Himself prophesied to St. John on Patmos, forever "maketh all things new."

My brothers, I have not dwelt on this subject because I doubt that you believe in Jesus. I know that you do; that nearly all of us do; that nearly all of us can at least say honestly, "Lord I believe; help thou mine unbelief." But is it not well that every one of us should see the issue; should be aware how closely it is bound up with this modern secular life of ours, that sometimes tempts us away from Christ; that in proportion as we believe intensely in the historic Saviour, and persuade our children and our friends to do so, we do most to assure that very civilization on which mankind depends? Sometimes as we contemplate the immen-

sity of the problems of mankind, the risks that men are running, the importunacy of their wants, it seems as if we, with our meagre resources, our small leisure, were powerless to meet them. Like the first disciples among the Galilean multitude, we have a little bread ; but what is that among so many? Is it not well, then, in such moments of despondency, that we should recollect that the most essential help to be rendered to mankind is help that each one of us can render ; to cherish in ourselves, and to spread by our example that personal devotion to Jesus which is the first cause, and the final cause, of that principle of brotherhood on which society depends? Therein, at any rate, we can be workers together with Christ.

## VIII.

### POSSESSING ALL THINGS BECAUSE POSSESSED OF CHRIST.

Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. — DANIEL xii. 4.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men: for all things are yours; . . . and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. — 1 COR. iii. 19, 20, 21, 23.

I HAVE put together these two widely sundered passages of Scripture, because in a real sense they belong together. The Old Testament prophesies a fact; the New Testament shows what the Christian can make of the fact when it comes. In the Book of Daniel visions of this world's last days are told to us; but before the very last days there is to be another important epoch, and of that too Daniel has a vision; and this is what he says of it: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be multiplied." Speed and publicity, these are the marks of the time that goes before the very last time. When an artist paints a portrait, he essays to seize what is typical in the person who sits to him. Many other

faces have been before him with features which in general were like these ; but in these features there is a certain something which renders them peculiar. What is the characteristic of this face ? the artist asks himself. And if we ask ourselves, What are the characteristics of our time ? can we deny that in this passage of my text Daniel foresaw them exactly ? When did mankind ever speed so thoroughly to and fro across the earth as they are speeding now ? When was knowledge ever so multiplied as now ? Speed and publicity are the signs of these times. It is literally true that the spread of human discovery in this one past century has been as great as in the previous twenty-five centuries. Steam, wire, tube, spark,<sup>1</sup> — these are the methods and the engines in our hands ; and the peculiar advantages that we reap from them are rapidity of intercourse and universality of knowledge. The whole earth is opened up to the survey of all with greater and greater security. The powers of civilization, the treasures of art, the implements of business, the discoveries of science, the theories of the wise, the vagaries of the foolish, and the experience of all, are scattered broadcast at the disposal of all mankind. The resources of the entire world, hitherto confined and divided, are now transferred into a common stock, and the swiftness of our new

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is borrowed from one of Canon Scott Holland's sermons ; but at this distance from my library I cannot make the reference more definite.

information is as marvellous as the abundance of it. Men run to and fro, and knowledge is increased. Daniel's vision is fulfilled.

And Saint Paul foresaw the same thing. With fine prophetic eye, looking out on the progress of Christianity among the Gentiles, he wrote to the Corinthians, "All things are yours." Yet along with the advantages of the situation, Saint Paul had the insight to perceive also its disadvantages, and the only cure for them. It is one thing to have the world at one's disposal, quite another to possess the world; and in order actually to possess the world, one must be one's self possessed by Christ, and through Christ by God. All things are yours, he says, provided ye are possessed of Christ. Otherwise the wisdom of this world confuses and exhausts itself, and defeats itself. The wisdom of those who are without God in the world is foolishness after all. They are taken in their own craftiness.

Is not Saint Paul's view of the situation true? and has not the truth of it come right home to you and me, my brothers? The spectacle of our day is the spectacle of men of great ability and most varied attainments giving themselves with zeal to the task of widening the area of knowledge, and rendering the avenues to it accessible. The impulse of our wise men is no longer, as in the middle ages, to store up their knowledge in the hidden hive and keep it as the perquisite of the few. The very best and newest

information shall be offered to the humblest, the youngest, the most ignorant. Knowledge shall have no privileges, no fear, no favour. It is a noble ambition. God's own word justifies it; and superficially it has had great success. To-day knowledge covers the world as the waters cover the sea. Here is one decisive indication of this: the statistics of a prominent circulating library show that the books for which the demand among working men is most constant and most keen, are the following: Darwin's "Descent of Man," Huxley's "Physiography," Herbert Spencer's "Sociology," Carl Marx's "Capital," Sir Henry Maine's "Essays" and "Popular Government," Bax's "Religion of Socialism," Proctor's "Other Worlds than Ours," Sir John Lubbock's "Ants, Bees, and Wasps," the "International Scientific Series," the "Men of Letters" series, "History of England," "History of the United States," Henry George's "Progress and Poverty." Now these books are not novels. They are solid, stiff reading,—books by teachers who have trained themselves to give simplicity and polish and clearness to the learning that has been won with difficulty by the author, and cannot without close attention be acquired by the reader. And this is the stuff that our artisans are reading,—the young men and the young women in our tenements, who see in education the physician that shall heal their sicknesses and open out the possibilities of life. God bless them! They are on the

right track, — the track that has been already sanctioned by their Saviour, when he said: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Whatever the mistakes of some of their teachers may be, these men and women are impelled by an impulse straight from God Most High. They may not know it in their present restlessness and crudeness, but although they oftentimes rush in where wiser men refrain, their inmost souls are saying to their Heavenly Father what Moses of old said to Him: “Show me Thy glory.”

But I must not linger to talk of these. I must speak of ourselves. We in our different stations are also on the same quest. The rush of the new knowledge, its multiplicity and apparent incongruity, has affected you and me. We have been at one and the same time stimulated and staggered by it; and in our confusion we have been tempted to conclude that all wisdom is vain, whereas it is only the wisdom of the world that is vain. All things are ours *if* we are Christ's. We call ourselves Christians. We bear Christ's sign on our foreheads. We partake of Christ's Body and Blood at the altar. What will Christ do for us, if we allow Him really to possess us? How will he enlighten us, and steady us, and give us a clue, as we are hurried onward on the rushing stream of knowledge that floods the world to-day?

This is a great subject, and there are many sides to it. In a single sermon I can but touch it at two

or three points, leaving much unsaid that ought to be said and to be felt, by thorough Christian thinkers. But the little actually expressed may, by the Holy Spirit's blessing, lead us in our private reflections to perceive much more.

1. Let us dwell first on the matter of our personal independence, our sense of rational and spiritual individuality. Unquestionably the first effect of all this flood of quick and various information is to intensify our consciousness of our own individuality. To hear and read all these discoveries and speculations and achievements of countless other people is like being in a great crowd. And the excitement of it has this singular effect: contrary to what might have been expected, the crowd, so far from lessening the individual in his own eyes, magnifies him. He does not append himself to the crowd, but the crowd to himself. The patriot or the soldier, for example, does not feel himself a smaller man for being one of a great army; on the contrary, he takes into himself all the thrill of their impulses and the spectacle of their splendid action, and is bigger and braver on account of them. Their will is his will; their exploits and their self-sacrifice are focussed in him; all their patriotism is his. In a similar way our modern consciousness, as individuals, of what the whole world is thinking and endeavoring — this new rapidity with which the speculations of the many become the property of each one — intensifies each separate person's

sense of individuality. That is the first effect. But a different effect soon follows. These sudden speculations that sweep up to us from all sides are full of contradictions. The inferences of them seem to lead us different ways; and to sift them thoroughly would require years on years and an equipment that very few of us have, a faculty of discrimination and insight that special training alone can furnish. So our first exhilaration is succeeded by discouragement. Who is equal to these things, to this superabundance of knowledge? "He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

But here our faith in Jesus Christ, the influence of His education, comes in to counteract this result. Christianity intensifies once more, and from a different side, our personal independence and our intellectual courage. The whole stress of Christ's message is to the individual soul, to the one lost sheep, to the units in the mass. Mankind is all mass to the modern human eye, but it is all individual to the Divine Eye: and the Christian is taught to feel that Eye always upon him, about his path, about his bed, spying out all his ways. And the influence of this feeling, moral to begin with, ends by being intellectual also. Christianity does not merely develop man's sense of personal accountability for his acts and thoughts as right or wrong, but also as false or true. All this mass of apparently discordant knowledge and speculation that overwhelms the individual from

without, — all this, the Christian says to himself, is of no avail, of no value, of no sense, except as the apprehension and the achievement of so many single minds, of so many distinct and personal thinkers. The whole mass of this knowledge sprang from the steady thinking of single minds. Each one of those discoverers and philosophers has done, or ought to have done, what I must do, — has had to use his own eyes and ears, to ponder by his own reason, to test by his own conscience and experience of life the various data of knowledge that have come to him, and to feel the loneliness of it all. The intellectual conscience speaks clearly and constantly in the Christian soul. The appeal of the great Demosthenes to the Greeks of Attica in a trying moment of their history was, “In God’s name, I beg you to think!” And it is with a keener interest, a truer sympathy, and an authority infinitely superior, that Christ appeals to all Christians of to-day, to think each for himself. There is no such thing as real knowledge except it be personal knowledge. All this information that comes to me from the wide, wide world, when reduced to its elements, is nothing, is mere rumor, except in so far as it is the veritable acquisition of just such single minds as mine; and it never is knowledge to me unless and until I have made it mine; and I cannot make it mine, except by testing, scrutinizing and comparing it with all else that I know. To ask a personal soul to doubt or recklessly

to throw away what he by his own life has come to know, for the sake of a second-hand report of what other souls like his claim that they know, is to ask him to commit intellectual suicide. What shall a man give in exchange for his own soul? There is nothing in all this superabundant report of other people's knowledge to abash or worry me, for their knowledge is not my knowledge until by patient reflection and experience my mind has grasped it and digested it. Until I know it in this, the only way that anything can be really known by anybody, this general mass of other people's knowledge is to me mere rumor; and no sane man, no independent personal thinker will allow himself to be upset by rumor. My mind has a being of its own; has had a history of its own; my intellectual integrity, no less than my moral integrity, has been sanctioned by God who made me, and by Christ who cared for me enough to save me, — me, by myself alone. Into this actual life of mine, — into the limits of my mental and moral powers, must come and be appropriated all the information of the vaster world, before it means much to me, before I have any reason to allow it to disquiet me. This is what steadies me in the speed and publicity of modern civilization. Human knowledge is a continuous personal product, a conscientious product, an individual product; and, so far as you and I are concerned, the only meaning of it is precisely due to that fundamental fact which Jesus

Christ revealed : the independent personality of your soul and my soul.

Nay, we have not yet touched the bottom of the matter, for there the Incarnation comes in. It is a mystery no man can fathom, but the Christian knows and believes to his soul's health that in the eternal Person of Jesus Christ the mind of man became united to the Divine Mind, even as Saint Paul says in the Epistle to the Colossians : " Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." There is the final guarantee of the integrity of each man's mind, in the face of all the pressure of the confusing information and speculation of mankind : that God Almighty and All-Wise regards the human mind as capable of communion and of union with His mind. Thus the Incarnation guarantees to each and every man the integrity of his mind. If true to God and true to myself, I have all eternity before me in which to master all there is to know. Truth at large and in the mass, as it comes to each of us so swiftly by the myriad voices of fallible mankind, is indeed bewildering ; but the God of Truth is a still small Voice speaking in each man's soul, and He will lead us slowly but eternally into all that belongs to Him. " All things are yours ; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

2. Closely connected with this is the second point on which we ought to dwell. It is the temptation of the natural man to suppose that truth comes to

man by one method alone. These world-wide rumors of knowledge that float to us and past us in these rapid days, — we are too apt to fancy that there is but one way in which we can test them, — the way of pure reason ; and reason is soon fatigued. As all these data of modern knowledge are presented to us in their richness and complexity, we are tempted to suppose that there is nothing for us to do with them but to speculate about them, — to lie back and think, and think, — and that if we could only get time to think long enough and deep enough, we, or some very clever person, might master them, — might form a judgment about them which would be quite true. But this is a disastrous mistake. Pure intellectual speculation is not only a practical impossibility, but if it were possible, such speculation would never be complete and thorough knowledge. To think in such wise is to make an unreal isolation of the speculative intellect. Knowledge, real knowledge, is a view and an experience of life as a whole, — in its hopes and fears, in its duties and actions, — along with the analysis of the more abstract impressions of the reason. To use the recent illustration of a brilliant writer :<sup>1</sup> If a man were to sit still and sketch a landscape from one point of view, he might indeed be

<sup>1</sup> I am here indebted to an essay by Mr. Ward, son of the author of "The Ideal Church," published last winter in one of the magazines, — I think it was "The Nineteenth Century ;" but being now at a distance from my library, I cannot verify the quotation.

exact in his picture from that point, but he could not know all there was to be known of the country without using his faculty of locomotion. Nor could he tell by mere sight the nature of the soil, the botany of the plants that he jots down as patches of color, the nature and the history of the flying birds that to him are but dots upon the sky. Nay, the very proportions that things take from the artist's point of view are not the real proportions. To him the tall hill in the distance measures a less angle than the house in the foreground. Change your standpoint, vary your methods of observation, and these half truths are gradually corrected: sit down, and measure reality by the picture, and you go far wrong. In some ways, perhaps, the artist is more striking and more industrious and technically more accurate; but his actual all-round knowledge of the realities before him is not to be compared with that of many a man who has bestirred himself more widely and more thoroughly in the field.

Now, in a similar way no knowledge is adequate for human souls that is not the knowledge of the whole man, — intellect and conscience and spirit. The sceptical mind falls into the very relativity and partiality against which it protests, and viewing our capacities for knowledge as identical and co-extensive with our capacities for speculation, refrains from the spiritual movement and the moral activity which are the natural and the necessary corrective to the one-

sidedness and relativity of purely intellectual views. And this is where the influence of Jesus intervenes. Christ appeals to the whole man. To listen to Him and to follow Him is to feel our entire being roused into symmetrical action, — to ask ourselves not merely, What can I know? but also, What ought I to do? and, What may I hope? What must I fear? According to Christ, spiritual narrowness or blindness is as stultifying as intellectual narrowness; and moral dispositions and genuine moral experience are required for the very recognition of the first principles of knowledge. “He that doeth God’s will shall know of the doctrine.” As you confront the speed and the publicity of modern knowledge you must remember these two facts: first, that all real knowledge is personal, individual knowledge, and that no rumor of other people’s knowledge can lawfully sway you until you know it; secondly, that for you, in your God-given individuality, to know anything really, you must know it with your whole being, not speculatively alone. And it is to these two facts that you commit yourself when you call yourself a Christian. Christ knows this world as a world of inviolable single souls; and in saving your soul and appealing to it He is appealing to the whole of you, — intellect and spirit and conscience and will. He is come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly.

3. I cannot close without mentioning one thought

more. I should be doing wrong to you and wrong to the truth before us to pass it wholly by. I know, my brethren, what experiences many of you — men and women, young and old — are passing through in the secret of your soul-life. No person of sane and open mind can see and hear what you and I do, can read day by day, and year by year, what this great modern world is learning and speculating about from east to west, from pole to pole; can notice the astonishment, the fluctuations, the frequent discouragement, the occasional despair, of very many gifted thinkers who try to cope with the materials and the information that overtask them, — no one, no matter how true to Christ he may be, can move in this modern atmosphere without keen trial. There is a call in our day for *intellectual martyrdom* on the part of Christians, and many such martyrs there are.<sup>1</sup> In the earlier days the martyrs were, for the most part, martyrs of the flesh and of the heart; to-day they are martyrs of the mind. To suffer in the affections, or in the bodily senses, was the first Christian's task; to suffer in the intellect is ours. The temptation to shrink from physical pain, to devote one's self to sensual pleasure, — that was the main temptation of the average man in the days when paganism was fighting its last fight in ancient Rome that Christ was claiming. And the martyrdom, the "witness,"

<sup>1</sup> I am here indebted again to the author mentioned in the previous footnote.

that was needed in those days was the witness of the saints, to whom pleasure and pain were as nothing in comparison with Christ and His righteousness. As the pagan sensualist looked down upon the arena and saw the frail woman and the strenuous man confront the lions, it was their power to bear the sheer physical agony, wincing, writhing, but not flinching, hopeful and faithful to the end, — this was what convinced those pagans that there must be a great reality in Jesus who could work such marvels among men. Our modern witness is to be somewhat different, though in substance still the same. To feel the fine darts of modern criticism, to appreciate the contradictions of the schools, to perceive the force of the objections, to state them quite as clearly and fully as the most sceptical person can, and yet not to be abashed by them ; to realize the power of the agnostic position, and notwithstanding to rest assured that no amount of difficulties need necessitate positive doubt ; to endure intellectual torture, — this is the task for us Christians of to-day. Hereby we wield our power.

And need I tell you that while our martyrdom is different in kind, the source of it is identical with that of the earlier age? The early martyrs were witnesses to Jesus, and so must we be. It is the constant vision of Him which alone can nerve us to our task ; and the influence of the Christian Church, the whole stress of her authority, is designed to this

great end,—to keep the Person of Jesus Christ vividly and vitally before us. It is through the Church that Christ fulfils His promise, “I will not leave you comfortless, I will come unto you.” Stephen saw Him when he dared the infuriated Jewish mob. Ignatius saw Him when the teeth of the lions were setting on his bones. You and I must see Him, if we are to rest assured that the whole cloud of modern scepticism, and the multiplicity, the vastness of modern information, do not justify the slightest flinching of our faith. It is wonderful what a power there is in reading constantly what Jesus said, recalling what He did, realizing what He is ; somewhat as the young man, tried by the temptations of impetuous youth, finds himself purified and steadied by the vivid recollection of his mother, by the irrefragable argument of her purity. Feuerbach, Strauss, Matthew Arnold, Huxley, Renan,—with all their forcibleness, their learning, their frequent beauty, their singular subtlety,—are in the end nothing in a clear view of the personality of Jesus. No matter *how* He is, *there* He is ; just as no matter *how* I am, *here* I am. In any fair view of the ultimate difficulties of scientific and historic explanation, it is just as hard (and no harder) to explain how man is as to explain how Christ is ; and for the same reason that I have faith in myself, I have it in Jesus Christ. Given the fact of you and me, Christ corresponds to you and me. Christ speaks for Himself.

If humanity means anything, He is the pattern Man. If there is any sense in human life, He is the Way of Life. If there is any clue to the labyrinth of knowledge, He is the Light of the world. If there is any rest for us, it is under the shadow of His hand. It is only when we forget Him, or draw away from Him, that we get confused. In Him, with Him, the clue is clear. Nothing can be true as to this life which would make Christ untrue. Men run to and fro, and knowledge is multiplied ; but all things are yours, — all real things, — for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

## IX.

### HOW CHRIST MANIFESTED HELPS HUMAN FAITH.<sup>1</sup>

Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. — SAINT MARK, ix. 24.

THIS is the Epiphany season, when we are called to consider the manifestation of Jesus to the world; and in this view I desire to continue this morning the line of thought of my last two sermons. We shall go over the same general ground, but from a somewhat different stand-point. Hitherto we have considered some of the reasons for believing in Christ: first, because of what He is in Himself, — because of the appeal which His evident and perfect holiness makes to our own spiritual faculty, that knows holiness when it sees it, and knows that perfect holiness is God; secondly, we have seen reasons for believing in Jesus not only for what He is, but for what He has done, — for His actual works, and in particular for His present work in our modern civilization, which depends peculiarly on Christ's revelation of the essential brotherhood of men. These considerations are cogent; but they require a

<sup>1</sup> An Epiphany sermon.

more personal application. So to-day I desire, by God's help, to make them personal, — to show how this faith in Jesus works in the intimate soul-life of the true Christian. In this connection no text could be more suggestive than that which I have chosen, — “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

This was said in one of those rare moments of human life when the depths of our being are opened up. Such moments come to all of us, — times when we surprise ourselves and others by the unpremeditated frankness of our acts and words, by their profound reality, by their disclosure of those springs of our being which seldom come to the surface. All of us live for the most part on the surface of ourselves; we move in shifts and disguises; we act by partial signs, and speak in parables. We are conventional; conventions are the clothes by which we at once protect ourselves and respect ourselves. A man would be a fool to wear his heart on his sleeve; yet all the while the unregarded current of our being pursues its way within us, and once in a while, when a great joy or a great sorrow strikes us, or when an arch enemy puts us to our last defence, or some friend subdues us unawares with keen sympathy, then —

“A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
 And what we mean we say, and what we would we know;  
 A man becomes aware of his life's flow, —  
 The hills where his life rose,  
 And the sea where it goes.”

And certainly, if moments of such self-disclosure occur to all of us, even in the dealings of men with men, they were still likelier to occur in the personal intercourse of men face to face with Christ their Saviour. Again and again in the Gospel story we have mention of this effect of Jesus Christ upon those with whom He was conversing. "Never man spake like this Man;" "Come see a Man which told me all things that ever I did;" "The people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes;" "Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said,"—these and other like passages indicate how our Saviour penetrated below the surface of men's characters and induced them to reveal themselves to Him. But the passage of our text is a capital instance of this. It is the father of the lunatic child who speaks. Influenced by the mysterious work and words of Jesus, this man had brought to Him his suffering son, feeling dimly that Christ could heal the child. But Jesus has designs not merely on the child but on the father; Jesus wishes to convince the man that he too has need of the Divine touch, and that on his willingness to admit this need hangs the welfare even of his child. So as the man stands there, absorbed in his son's utter need, Christ throws the man back upon himself,—upon his own character and motives. "Master," said the father to Jesus, "I have brought unto Thee my son. . . . If Thou canst

do anything, have compassion on us and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

That disclosure was not individual only; it is typical of all men. Every soul, as man lives and struggles on from birth to death in the ways of this troublesome world, stands towards the things and creatures about him, towards the events in which he takes part, towards the problems that confront him and the principles that actuate him, towards his own inborn faculties and powers whereby he thinks and acts, in precisely this same twofold attitude of soul, belief and unbelief. This is a great subject; let us think of it to-day.

Men often speak of faith as if it were optional to man; as if a man may believe or not believe according as he pleases, — as if faith, for example, and reason were two separable conditions of mind; but faith is not optional; faith and reason are not separable. Where there is life there must be faith; and faith is the first step of reason, — the first and also the last. To believe is the condition of reason, the substance of reason; reason is but the tool and the analysis of faith. Reasoning is a personal act; so that before you can reason about anything whatsoever you must first believe in yourself, in the au-

thority and the validity of your own soul-powers. Before you can accept the processes of your reasoning or the results of it you must first believe in your reason ; and before you reason about the world you must believe that the world is there, and that you are. The objects of our faith, the things and persons that we believe, vary ; but without some belief not even life itself is possible. To live as man lives is an act ; and there is no such life without belief, nor will there ever be, not even in heaven itself. From Saint Paul's famous chapter on charity in the First Epistle to the Corinthians it is often rashly concluded that in magnifying charity, and assigning to it the pre-eminence, and declaring that it is eternal, Saint Paul thereby implies that hereafter faith will cease to be, — that there will be no place nor scope for faith in heaven ; but Saint Paul says no such thing ; on the contrary, he states expressly that faith, like hope, like charity, abideth. It must abide, it must be immortal, if the soul is, if reason is, if love, if life is ; for faith is the foundation, always and everywhere, of reason and love and life. When I see God as He is, I must still believe in Him, and in myself, if I am to know Him and to love Him. The heavenly life will be the rectification and the extension of our faith, by no means the extinction of it. The closer we get to God the more we shall believe in Him, and in ourselves as belonging to Him. No one has such entire faith in himself and in the world

as the man who believes absolutely that he is God's child.

But I am anticipating a little. Before we can follow the Bible in its hints as to the function of religious faith here and hereafter, we must first apprehend what faith in general is here, — how it belongs to man as man, how it makes him what he is ; how true it is that visible things require just as much faith on man's part as invisible things do. Consider, then, more fully for a moment how faith is the tissue of our natural life as reasonable creatures. Look back and see how the first step forward in your rational life was the individual's faith in himself. We were able to eat and live because we instinctively trusted our mouths and stomachs, to walk because we trusted our eyes and legs ; we were able to acquire knowledge because first we had confidence in our faculties of mind, and confidence also in the world that supplied objects of knowledge to the mind.

Thus far we have been looking at man as an individual ; but it is the same when we look at him in society. The child's first social act is an act of faith in his parents ; then as his little life enlarges, the area of his social faith widens with his social life. His life in society depends upon his faith in it. — upon his confidence in his playmates, friends, teachers, in his employers and dependents. Without these constant acts of trust in our fellows, in their

words and works, we could not buy our food for fear of poison, nor do our business for fear of being cheated. The whole commerce of mankind is one colossal act of faith in mankind; by this our fortunes are made, our States are governed, our votes are cast. Faith in ourselves, in our fellows, in our own past and the world's past, in the facts and forces of the natural universe, — this is the very atmosphere of our existence, the substance of our mental and moral operations, the spring of all our deeds. When Saint Paul said that faith is the substance of things hoped for he was alluding particularly to our religious hopes; but the remark is equally applicable to hopes of every kind. Faith is the substance of wealth, the substance of culture, the substance of government, the substance of human affection, the substance of science and of law. People constantly talk as if faith and the difficulties of faith, scepticism and the motives to scepticism, were purely a matter of religion; whereas most arguments against religious faith as a principle of action bear just as hard upon social faith, and commercial faith, and intellectual and scientific faith. You can say just as much about the mistakes of faith and the perversions of it, its lack of grounds, its uncertain evidences, the intangibility of its object, — you can say just as much about this in the one case as you can in the other. And the wreck of private fortunes and of national governments, the law's delays and

time-serving, the cruel disappointments of sincere affection, the revolutions of scientific principles, — all go to show that human faith in earthly affairs is quite as difficult, quite as open not merely to theoretical objections but to objections based on the results of experience, as is religious faith. Faith is so truly an elementary energy of the human personality that it enters into all the forms and phases of man's activity. To say that it is difficult to believe rightly is no more than to say that it is difficult to live rightly. This is why the Bible presupposes faith. The purpose of the Bible is not to create faith in man, but to direct man's faith, — to make man see whereon, above all things, he must pin his faith if it is to be really well with him now and always. The world directs man's faith to the man himself and to this visible frame of men and things; the Bible directs man's faith to God through Christ. This ought we to do, and not to leave the other undone. The question that faces us to-day, my friends, is not between faith and reason, or between faith and sight, or between faith and proof, or between faith and actual experience, and let no man persuade you that it can be treated so; it is a question between faith in the temporal and faith in the eternal, — between faith in the Spirit and in the Father of all spirits and faith only in this visible order of the world. It is a question not of faith, but of fact and of recognizing the fact, — not *whether* you shall believe, but

*what* you shall believe, *whom* you shall believe in. Like the distracted father of the maniac boy, we all of us believe ; what we want is direction for our belief, help for our unbelief. The reason that most of us are but partial and half-hearted in our religious faith is that such faith *seems less necessary* than the other. We put confidence in the men and things of this world because we have got to if we mean to live in this world ; but the next world, as we call it, seems far away ; we do not realize it as a practical issue. Even death, which happens all about us and before our eyes, — so far as each of us is himself concerned, though we know death, how few of us believe it ! The difficulties of faith in the visible present do not stagger us because we have no time to be staggered by them, — because we have to rush right through them in order to exist. The difficulties are metaphysical ; but the wish to exist is physical. We cannot be blind to the temporal things in this world, so we cannot avoid faith in them ; we can be blind to the eternal things in this world, and so we find it harder to exercise our faith upon them.

Now, a great many Christians fancy that the best way to reinforce their faith in the spiritual life is to think of it first as the life to come, and then to insist that the life to come is more important than the life which now is ; in other words, that eternity is something future. That is a profound mistake. Saint Paul does, indeed, remark that the things seen are

temporal, while the things unseen are eternal; but he is far from saying that the things unseen are only future things, that they are not also present things. On the contrary, again and again he urges that the things unseen are just as present as the things seen; that we are compassed about by a great cloud of witnesses; that even now we are in the spiritual world; that the temporal element in things and persons would be trivial were it not for the eternal element that is also in them; and that it is because every whit of time is in touch with eternity that "Behold, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." "O man of God," he writes to Timothy, "lay hold on eternal life," — that is, do not look forward to it merely; grasp it now.

This, then, is the power of Christianity: not that it inspires men to sacrifice the known present to an unknown future, but that it gives them the insight and the will to discern eternity in time, the spirit in the flesh, God in the world. Other religions had done this to a certain extent; but Christianity does it in a new and peculiar, in an absolute, way. As that anxious father stood before Jesus Christ, and in the persuasive influence of Christ's presence opened his soul to Him, the father exclaimed, "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Let me try briefly, ere I close, to show how Christ answers that prayer for all of us that offer it to Him out of a humble heart. He deals with us now precisely as He dealt with

that man in my text. We shall go over some of the same ground that we reviewed in one of my recent sermons; but it will be with a more personal application, even as this interview between the maniac boy's father and Jesus was strictly personal. The outside world was quite forgotten then.

First, by His mere presence and character Christ wakes up our inner perception of spiritual things, our faculties of spirit. Christ makes each of us alive to our personal conscience. All along conscience has been witnessing in every man to things unseen, insisting on the religious faith,—that is, directing faith through and beyond what is visible to the invisible God. But this visible world has been continually drowning the voice of conscience, continually occupying man's faith with visible things alone. So Christ first of all makes space for conscience. To come in contact with Christ at all, to perceive His character, to listen to His words, is to hear our own conscience speaking out whether we will or no. That is the first way in which the Saviour helps us,—by His mere presence and language and demeanor He wakes up our spiritual faculties. But Christ does more than this; not only does He quicken the eye of our soul, but He gives it something to see,—He presents us with an actual vision. Our trouble has been that while temporal things are so visible that we cannot help directing our faith to them, the eternal things were invisible;

they did not force themselves on us as temporal things do. Conscience had been all along telling us of the perfect Truth and the perfect Goodness; but we did not anywhere find this realized. It had come to us as an inner ideal of our souls; but we had not met it as an actual fact in earthly life, vivid and vital in this world. As neither you nor I nor any mere man that ever lived had been able to be true to his conscience, — to live up to and achieve it, — what was there to show positively, objectively, out there in the tangible world, that our idea of God and goodness was more than a noble dream? What you and I require is not only to be alive to the dictates of goodness and truth within us, but to have this God of ours realized outside of us. If we could see the Perfect Life realized on earth, then we could direct our faith to it as we do to the things of earth; then eternity and spirit and God Himself would be realized to us. We have the idea of eternity, and when we think of it we always find eternity to be in the last resort unthinkable except as the eternity of God, — of the high and holy One which inhabiteth eternity. But what we want is to see this holy One also inhabiting time; for it is not the faith in God that is so difficult; it is the realizing God, the setting God always before us as men are before us, the feeling the presence of God outside of us, and vivid as is the pressure of the world.

And when we come to Jesus, and say to Him,

“Lord, I believe ; help Thou my unbelief,” our prayer is not in vain. Part of our Saviour’s errand is just this, to make “God manifest in the flesh.” Oh, how that word of one of the first apostles rings joyfully down the ages ! — “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life ; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you, that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us ;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us : and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.” “Philip saith unto Jesus, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father.” Age after age a voice within man had been urging upon him that truth and goodness, the perfect character, is the only key to knowledge, the only basis of things ; that it is all that makes temporal things valuable, all that shall not vanish when these heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and when their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine. And now once for all, in the fulness of the times, in the actual life of Jesus Christ on earth we see what we know God is, — we meet our God. In Christ God finds us,

confronts us as the world confronts us, enables us to put our faith in Him even as we do in the world because He inhabiteth this world ; and so Christ directs our faith and helps our unbelief. If you shut your eyes to Christ, if you neglect his words, if you decline to follow your conscience's instinctive approval of Him, then you will find it hard and harder to believe in God, because nowhere else than in Christ is God's Being made so visible to you.

Time, the ruthless destroyer, weakens the influence and damages the prestige of the greatest that were mere mankind. The world outgrows its heroes. But Jesus Christ the Master is never outgrown. He stands to-day, as ever, "holiest among the mighty, mightiest among the holy, lifting with His pierced hands empires off their hinges, turning the stream of centuries into a better channel, and still governing the ages."<sup>1</sup> "He, lifted up from the earth, draws all men unto Him," because He makes God real to them, and manifests God's love. Long before God had appeared to man in conscience as a code of Duty ; but in Christ God is a lovely Life, and lovable as Life. Long before men's reason had presupposed God as an End, an Ideal, and a Cause ; but in Christ God is beheld as a Fact, human, historic, imperative, to be reckoned with as persons on this earth are to be reckoned with. He still makes demands on our

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from an unmentioned author in Dr. D. H. Greer's Bedell Lecture, p. 43.

faith, for all visible and historic things do that. But Christ makes even less demands on our faith than other persons do for the reason that, by the common confession of all, He alone is perfectly good, corresponding entirely to our presentiment of what the great God must be. He is the revelation of God; "my Lord and my God!" If you cherish His memory as the fact of history in your mind and heart; if you read constantly the Gospel story of Him; if you let the Church by prayer and sacrament bring close to you His presence and His power, then Christ will make God more objective to you, more real, more necessary, than anything else in this world. Come to Christ to-day. Listen to Him now. Lay your whole being open to Him. And then see if you cannot say to Him, as that sick boy's father said, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

## X.

### THE MANIFESTATION OF LIFE.<sup>1</sup>

The Life was manifested, and we have seen it. — 1 JOHN 1, 2.

The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. — ROMANS viii. 19.

WE pass to-day out of Epiphany season on towards the season of Lent. Hereby the life of Christ, manifested to us, is seen to exact a similar manifestation of life in us; that is to say, there is a two-fold manifestation of the Christ-life: the manifestation of Christ to man, and the manifestation of Christ in man. The life of Christ exhibited to us exacts a similar exhibition of life in us, by us. Let us try before this season passes to grasp the two-fold lesson.

One of the first things which every true student learns, one of the most necessary steps to real wisdom is this: that the truth of things, which is, on the one side, a discovery by man, is also, on the other side, a manifestation to man. The student discovers the truth, but he does not make it; the truth was there beforehand. The truth is independent of you and me and every man; but it rests with us to look for

<sup>1</sup> Septuagesima sermon.

the truth and to see it whenever it is shown. There are men who, having eyes, see not ; who, having ears, hear not. Their blindness and deafness does not annihilate the truth, nor alter it one whit. The truth is there all the same ; it is being manifested all the same, if not to these men, then to others. He that hath eyes, let him see ; he that hath ears, let him hear.

This is self-evident, when once we state it ; yet there is nothing that we more easily forget. The conceited scholar is one of the commonest objects in cultivated society ; and what is he ? Simply the man who is so puffed up by the consciousness that he has discovered some item of the truth that he quite forgets that he could never have discovered it unless it had been first manifested to him. He goes about bragging as if he had made the truth, whereas all that he did was to open his eyes to it.

Now in the two passages of my text, this all-important aspect of truth as a manifestation is emphasized. Saint John in his first Epistle speaks of Jesus Christ as the manifestation of God's life, which was from the beginning. The soul of man wants to know God, to see God : Look at Jesus, Saint John says ; in Him God is unveiled. In Christ mankind can see the character of God. On the other hand, in the Epistle to the Romans, Saint Paul declares that in the earthly life of true Christians there is an unveiling of the sons of God ; and he hints mysteriously that

the whole wide world of created being is looking on eagerly as this disclosure progresses ; that “ the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Have we not here, my brothers, a theme worthy of our thought ? It is the ambition of every noble man and woman to know the truth and to be true : only in the light of Christ as manifested can we ever know the truth ; only by the life of Christ imitated in ourselves can we be true. Nor in this great effort do we struggle on unnoticed. To the tired runner for a prize it is a distinct stimulus and encouragement when he feels the thousand eyes of the spectators watching his course ; and Saint Paul hints that the men who in every age are striving to imitate Jesus Christ are observed by the whole created universe of being, waiting to see what this wonderful manifestation of human soul-life will be, — these faithful sons of God. Let us try then briefly this morning to enter into this great, inspiring theme, suggested by our text.

All human life is an unveiling of things hidden ; history is the record of this gradual disclosure. It is so in knowledge. The geometer does not invent his fascinating theorems ; by painful thinking he merely helps us to perceive the relations of things in space which would be self-evident, evident at once, to minds more powerful. The astronomer’s telescope does not make the star-dust ; it makes it manifest to men. The moralist does not create conscience ; he

only discloses more accurately the contents of conscience, and registers its voice.

It is the same in sociology and politics. History is the disclosure of mankind to man. The history of a nation in State and Church is the record of the weaving into one connected fabric of the principles, characters, talents, passions, that worked themselves out from epoch to epoch. The Greek, the Roman, the Englishman, and the American have been distinctly manifested in their institutions and arts and annals.

It is the same in the life of individuals. "What man," saith the Scripture, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?" That is true to begin with; but when the man has lived his life right out he puts himself on record, he shows himself up. By his deeds he is justified; by his deeds he is condemned; angels and men take the measure of him. Be the man never so desirous to pass for something else, in the very effort to do so he is but exhibiting the more effectually what he really is. This constitutes the interest of biography; it is the manifestation, conscious or unconscious, of a man. The tongue of judgment may be tied for the present; but it has patent grounds for a decision, and will utter its decision by and by. A man's character is not always brought home to him; but it is disclosed to others. His brain-power, his will-power, his affections, his con-

scientiousness or unscientiousness, are registered before he dies. The life reveals the man. The judgment of him may be mute, but it is real.

Yet human life and history are not only an apocalypse of man to man, but also of God to man. In individual life, in social life, in the life of nations and of races, there is a slow but steady manifestation of Deity. "Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you," is the motto of human history. History proves God, and then reveals Him. It first proves God; for it shows that the idea of God is fastened to man, — so wrapped up in the very being of man and in the annals of mankind, that, if man is a reality, God must be. History shows that God is not simply an indispensable item or factor in man's thinking, but that He is also indispensable in man's living; for man has never been able to live without God, — without recognizing God. Go where you will in the records, in the most ancient times or in the most modern times, wherever a nation has forgotten God, or tried for long to do without Him, that nation has been doomed; swiftly or slowly, but surely always, it has gone down, down, dwindling to decay. A godless nation has been and is a doomed nation. If man is to be, God must be. This is not now a matter of mere theory or conjecture; it is the manifestation of history.

But so far the manifestation was not definite

enough, not close enough, not winning enough, for man. History had proved God, but it had not yet revealed him. God is; the world, the individual soul, cannot be without God,—cannot either do without Him or think without Him. But what sort of a God is He,—a God to fear, or a God to love; a God to believe in and tremble, as the devils do, or a God to adore and love and serve as children with a Father, as the sons of God? So, then, God, who in man's general history and personal life was hitherto making Himself known by many portions and in many manners, hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son. As the Saviour Himself expressed it in His great high-priestly prayer, the seventeenth chapter of Saint John's Gospel, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; . . . I have manifested Thy Name [that is, Thy real Being and Nature] unto the men which Thou gavest Me." To know God Himself,—not merely what men have found out about Him, or felt about Him, or thought about Him, or realized in separation from Him, but to know *Him*, to see His will, His thought, His purpose, expressed, realized, achieved, made visible and tangible in an actual human Person, living as we live, human as we are human, only better, perfect and complete,—this was the want of the human soul; and this want was satisfied in the Incarnation of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom dwelt all

the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Christ disclosed both God's will for man and God's will in man. "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." When you and I, my brothers, open our New Testament to-day, and read what Christ said, and see what Christ was, what Christ is, we have at last the mind of Christ, which is the manifestation, the revelation, of the Almighty Father of us all. It is an awful thought, and yet it may be to any of us a most consoling and inspiring thought, that when with our fingers we turn the pages of the Gospels, our minds, our hearts, our wills, are in very contact with the Will, the Mind, the Heart, of Him who made us, in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Just as when you and I speak face to face, it is mind speaking to mind, soul addressing soul, personality touching personality, so in and through the utterances of Jesus Christ, the Mind and Heart of our Heavenly Father are opened to us. The Life is manifested, and we have seen it; that is the miracle of the New Testament, — that in either one of those four Gospels, no longer, the whole of it, than a

single chapter of an ordinary modern biography, there stands out to our vision, marvellous but clear, the very character of God, of God made man. It is a foretaste of the Beatific Vision. In strict Scripture phrase, the character of Jesus Christ is the image of God. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ;" and the note of all notes, the characteristic of all characteristics, enveloping, enlightening all the others, interpreting, complementing, mellowing, and softening them, is the note of love. In Christ we are assured that God is Love, — "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son."

Yet so far we have but one half of our text, but one half of the manifestation. The earnest expectation of the creature had waited for the manifestation of God, but it waiteth also for the manifestation of the sons of God. For man is God's child, and to exhibit what God is, is to exhibit what men, God's children, ought to be. Christ is not only the revelation of God, He is also the pattern of man. "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them," is His prayer for His disciples. Christ is not alone the truth for the human reason; He is the truth for the human will; He is our Life, our Way. And in the second passage of our text, Saint Paul implies that this disclosure of what Chris-

tians can do and be in the way of the imitation of Christ, in the way of actually achieving in their own several individualities the character of sons of God — Saint Paul implies that this disclosure is of the greatest interest to the whole created universe. We are a spectacle to angels and to men. It is as if we should witness some great and gifted artist instructing a class of pupils, and then should watch earnestly to see in the pupils the fruits of the master's teaching, — to see how far and in what manifold developments his principles and methods, his nameless power and secret, should be reproduced in his disciples. It is as if, of a summer morning, we should stand on some mountain-top at dawn, and as the sun rose strong and glorious in the sky, should look about us to observe how the various objects of the earth, each according to its constitution and individuality, should reflect his radiance; what the tones and tints of local color would be, as the one pure white light of the central luminary was scattered and absorbed in the myriad different bodies of the world. In some such way, yet more spiritual, more mystical, there is an earnest expectation of the creature waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. The history of Christianity is the record of various specimens of achieved Christian sonship. With all its lights and shadows, its imperfections, its unfaithfulnesses and inadequacies, its travesties and caricatures and perversions of the one only perfect Model, there is such

a thing as the history of the saints, which he who runs may read. No age has been without them, no climate, no conditions too hard for them. In the most unexpected places, in the most unforeseen costumes, these saints, these sons of God appear: in the poor man's rags, but also in the rich man's splendor; in the silence of the desert, but also in the rush and din of the market-place; among men unlearned and ignorant, but also where human letters and human thinking have stretched to their utmost capacity of tension the most versatile intellects; at the centre of European civilization, and also far away where iron traditions and antiquated standards hold fast in fetters the singular Chinese. Sainthood has proved itself to be universally possible, because all mankind are children of the one Father which is in Heaven, and brothers all of Him in whom, as the Son of Mary, was manifested the ideal Man. In the Father's house are many mansions, — a place for every type. Christianity is a character, not a system of local rules. The thing for vigorous and real disciples of Jesus to do is, not to try to copy certain specific gestures and temporary incidents of the earthly life of their Master, as He lived it long ago, a carpenter in Palestine, but to rise up to an appreciation of the *mind* of Christ, the central, universal principle and motive, applicable to all men and to every age. That is what shines out unmistakable in the Gospel story. It requires some study of antiquities to make vivid to one's

imagination the scenery and setting and the local color of the life of Jesus, the Nazarene. But in order to grasp Christ's mind, there is no need of dabbling in antiquities. Better to read the Gospels attentively on one's knees. This should we do by all means, if haply it be also wise not to leave the other undone.

My brothers, I think that few of us can have failed to feel, some time or other, the silent, subtle pressure of the world without us, waiting for the manifestation in us of the Christian character. At certain moments, welcome or unwelcome, it has seemed as if a thousand eyes were resting on us and watching. We are sealed with the sign of the cross on our foreheads, and all around us there is an expectation of some sign of it in our hearts. Ignorant souls, who have heard Christ's name, but no more, are looking to learn of Him from us who know Him; wavering souls, who would fain be true to Him, watch to see whether we are true; yes, and the dear, dead faces of those who first brought us to Jesus, these from behind the veil still follow us with faithful eyes. "Wherefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus." When Nelson wished to inspire his sailors with bravery at the battle of Trafalgar, his message was, "England expects every man to do his duty."

And when our spirits flag and falter in the more serious battle of the soul, — if the stress and strain of this workaday world begin to tell on us, and the original impulse to righteousness begins to fail in us; if ever our prayers grow few and far between, and the thought of God and Heaven loses its attractiveness, its strange compelling power, — then this message of Saint Paul may constrain us to new effort: “the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”

## XI.

### LEANNESS OF SOUL.<sup>1</sup>

He gave them their desire : and sent leanness withal into their soul. — PSALM cvi. 15 (P. B. version).

THE Gospel of to-day calls our attention to the unfruitfulness of most men's lives. The sower sows good seed in the field, but the yield is for the most part disappointing ; and our text from the one hundred and sixth psalm gives a different but equally vivid expression to the same idea. This psalm and that which precedes it are among the latest in the Psalter ; they belong together, and were composed far on in the history of the Jews, after the return of Judah and Benjamin from captivity in Babylon. Probably these two psalms were written by the prophet Haggai to be sung at the dedication of the second temple by Zerrubbabel. This origin would account for the serious, didactic tone which pervades them. They begin and end, indeed, with joyful expressions of praise to God, the King and strong Deliverer of Israel through all the eventful centuries which they commemorate ; but interspersed between

<sup>1</sup> Sexagesima sermon.

these accents of gratitude there are long passages of self-rebuke for unused opportunities, — of repentance for Israel's failures and shame and sin. Very different had been the psalm that David composed for Asaph to sing at that earlier service of dedication when the ark of God was first brought up from the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, into Jerusalem, the new capital of the kingdom. That psalm, as given to us in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of the Chronicles, is the hymn of a young man and a young nation, bright in their anticipations, and conscious of their strength. The note of self-reproach, the sober scanning of a bungled past, is quite left out. But in this hymn from which my text comes the sadder note prevails. The joy is real still ; but it is the maturer joy of the soul and of the nation that has lived long enough to measure not only the goodness and power of the God that guides it, but also its own weakness and perversity.

There is something very noble and touching in the use which the Jews made of this psalm ; for they did not sing it on that one occasion alone of the dedication of their second temple ; it was incorporated into the psalter which was chanted regularly month by month in the services of their synagogues. Again and again and again did they make for themselves occasions to recall the chequered story of their national career, and thereby to mingle with their moments of just rejoicing more frequent memories of painful punish-

ment and of hopes unharvested. "Praise ye the Lord," our psalm begins. "Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth forever. Who can express the noble acts of the Lord, or shew forth all His praise? Blessed are they that always keep judgment and do righteousness. Remember me, O Lord, according to the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people; O visit me with Thy salvation; that I may see the felicity of Thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of Thy people: O visit me with Thy salvation." But here the note of sadness strikes in: "*We have sinned with our fathers; we have done amiss and dealt wickedly. Our fathers regarded not Thy wonders in Egypt, neither kept they Thy great goodness in remembrance; but were disobedient at the sea, even at the Red Sea. Nevertheless He helped them for His Name's sake, that He might make His power to be known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the deep, as through a wilderness. And He saved them from the adversary's hand, and delivered them from the hand of the enemy. . . . Then believed they His words, and sang praise unto Him. But within a while they forgot His works, and would not abide His counsel. But lust came upon them in the wilderness, and they tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their desire: and sent leanness withal into their soul.*"

1. How truly those brief words picture the whole history of the Jewish people! In the want and thralldom of Egypt they had longed for the land that was very far off, — the land of freedom and plenty and peace. So God brought them to that promised land; but when they got there, instead of continuing to serve and worship the God that gave it them, they bowed down their souls to the empty idols of the people that were there before them. Thus, though the land was flowing with milk and honey, it brought but leanness into their soul.

By and by they set their hearts on having a visible, earthly king; and God gave them their desire. But their kings were faithless to their God; they labored for selfish and unrighteous ends; they split the kingdom in twain, and raised rival altars to the Most High, until Isaiah the prophet, describing the condition of his people, exclaimed thus: “The haughty people of the earth do languish, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate. The city of confusion is broken down: every house is shut up, that no man may come in. . . . I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me!”

Not to linger longer on the illustrations of our text which occurred shortly after this psalm was written, let us pass at once to the advent of the

Messiah. For centuries upon centuries the Jews had looked forward to Christ. Beginning in darkling surmises of what He should be and do for them; little by little their vision of Him enlarged, each prophet supplying now one aspect and now another of the whole rounded character that was to be. At last the Christ came; God gave the Jews their desire. But so little did they know their own needs, so little did they understand "the thought beyond their thought," so lean were they of soul, that when the Messiah Himself "beheld their city He wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

2. This actual history is also a parable; it was as a parable that the Jews used it in their services of prayer and praise. "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done." As you and I read that psalm of Haggai in our devotions to-day, we are not telling a story alien to ourselves; we are making a confession of ourselves. "He gave them their desire: and sent leanness withal into their soul." Cynics speak often of human life as a spectacle of unsatisfied desire; it is quite as often a spectacle of desire satisfied, but yet unfruitful.

What are the five main nobler desires of mankind? the desires that men can cherish in regard to this

earthly life with some prospect that God will grant them? They are Knowledge, Wealth, Social Prestige, Political Power, Family Happiness. Around these five pivots, towards one or more of these five points, the lawful earthly desires of most men are turned. And everywhere about us we witness the granting of these desires.

Some men, and they originally are among the noblest, wish above all things to exercise their minds, to fill them full, to master all there is to know of this strange, inexplicable world. To them books and monuments and the arts, men and their manners, insects and animals, rocks and trees and stars, and all the elements of the physical universe, are so many symbols of a rational system; and into this system these men are minded to penetrate. Of such, the late Professor Pattison, of Oxford, furnishes a notable specimen, — a specimen of which the author of "Robert Elsmere" availed herself for her character of the Oxford tutor in that well-known novel. What is the matter with this man? Learning was the set object of this man's desire, and he is learned. His mind is well-furnished, his tastes are cultivated and sincere. His very heart's desire has been given to him. But his soul has had leanness sent into it. His very learning seems to have emasculated him; he is but a shadow of a man. What is the matter with him?

Other men, the great majority, seek Wealth. Do

not numbers of them get it? Is there not an abundance of rich men all about us? The idea of it is entirely lawful, — it might be even noble; so God realizes it constantly. He lets men try their hand at riches. The genius of money-making is as distinctly conferred by God upon some men as are the artistic talent, the social talent, the political talent, upon other men. But what a botch most men make of it! How futile their wealth is! how little that is real comes of it! How they impress us as one who wears a garment that must soon be put off. How instinctively every unspoiled conscience applies to them the stinging words of the Apocalypse to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans: “I know thy works. . . . Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.” And of such men also we inquire, What is the matter with them? What makes them lean?

Another of our lawful earthly desires is that for Social Prestige; to shine in the world and lead the world: to be the observed of all observers, and to set the pace that others follow; to hold the many mingled threads of society's efforts and likings and fashions in one's own hand, and to wield them according to one's own will; so to put upon the forms of

our contemporaries the impress of our own personality that our contemporaries value in themselves that which they reflect from us, — this in every age is the heart's desire of many a strong man and gifted woman. And again and again their desire is granted them. But when they have, as they think, succeeded, how disappointing the result too often is! how melancholy the outcome of so vast an enterprise! You hear of these social leaders from afar. You know that their power is actual. You feel in your own self, in your own manners and endeavors, their subtle, pervasive influence. You desire, therefore, to know them personally; and you expect great things, not merely of them, but in them. They stand for so much in the world's arena that you fancy naturally that they themselves must be as exceptional as their position is. But how often, when you have come actually into their presence, you are disenchanted: your expectations are dashed. There is a singular blight upon them. The fig-tree is there with its brave show of leaves; but there is no ripe fruit behind the leaves. These persons are really leaders of society; there is no denying that; but their very leadership has spoiled them. There is no solidity of noble character to substantiate the nobility of their position. God has given them their desire; but alas! their souls are lean. What is the matter with them?

So likewise with Political Achievement. There is much of luck in this, but originally there is almost

always much of genuine power, much that is valuable. It is an aim worthy of any man to represent the people; to realize their unspoken wishes; to satisfy their growing needs; to frame new laws for them to meet new exigencies; to relieve their inward difficulties and guard them from outward dangers; in short, to reveal the people to themselves, and then to lead and lift them onward to larger issues and to higher aims, — this, I say, is an ideal worthy of the nation's best men. We require such "public souls," as Plato called them. But who of us has not been saddened and mortified to witness in many a leader, both of Church and State, a certain indescribable but unmistakable lowering of tone, so soon as the position of leadership had been reached? The people themselves, mute but keen, notice this change in their representatives, and thereby is lost to them that inimitable charm of moral suasion and of personal respect, which is the fine flower of true statesmanship. From that moment the people *use* their leaders; avail themselves of them for lack of better; but they are no longer swayed by their leaders in spite of themselves. The leaders are poor puppets, soon dropped or pushed aside, and for this reason: that though they achieved their desire, leanness withal has entered into their soul. What is the matter with them?

So too with Family Happiness. This, I suppose, is the most general ideal of all: a happy home. And to thousands upon thousands Almighty God accords

all the means for the achievement of this ideal, — health, wealth, friends, occupation, a true wife, a kind husband, children, a suitable residence. Until you enter that family you admire them. You say that they have everything that anybody could wish for. But when you have crossed the threshold, when you have peered behind the screen, you feel that something is lacking. What is it?

And alas! with our Religion itself it is even so. Many an honest soul grows up with the desire to be religious, — not merely because other people are so, but because the secret soul itself demands it. And, so far as the forms and means of religion are concerned, this desire is granted. The stress of ancestral example, the attractions of friendship, the use of family prayer, the customs of the Prayer Book, the strange other-world persuasions of the House of God, with prayers and hymns and sermons and sacraments and almsgiving, — all these are present to the soul. The form of godliness is there. But the soul gets no further. Its morality just lacks the note of real religion. There is something narrow and niggardly and cold about it. Such persons remind us of that stern description by Dante, in the third canto of the *Inferno*, of that motley, miserable crowd who moan and are buffeted in the vestibule of the Pit, mingled with the fallen angels who dared neither to rebel nor to be faithful, but “were for themselves,” — God has sent leanness into these souls. What is the matter with them?

3. Are you not ready with the answer? Is not the disappointing story its own answer? If the Old Testament history of the Jews is a parable of human life; if these old psalms, as we repeat them, are a true confession also out of our own hearts, is it not plain what is lacking to all of these various characters of mankind, where the heart's desire has been satisfied and still the soul is lean?

On the whole the Jewish people in the Bible history are the impersonation of selfishness. They reserved for themselves what was meant for mankind. The final reason why they rejected their own Messiah was because they would not admit that He was "the Desire of all nations," — they wished to have Him alone as their private and particular Desire. And when Christianity began to spread, and to reach by its own momentum over the barriers of Judaism into the broad Gentile world, — when a Peter had to learn by a vision that God counts nothing common or unclean; when a Paul had to hear that ringing command, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," — then it cost even the Christian Jews many years of debate and self-conquest before they would admit that their Saviour could be the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. He who twists God's gifts to his own self-worship will lose what they were intended to produce in him. The desire of his heart may be given him, but himself will be unfruitful. The man who hoards his money gets

naught with it. Each man, each family, each nation must recognize this essential reciprocity of life ; that each of us is part of a great brotherhood, of a suffering and needy brotherhood ; that these desires of our single hearts are also the desires of all hearts, so that all have rights in them if even to one heart the desire be granted. " Give up, and you shall have ; empty self, and all is yours, even God. We are heirs of God. In devoting ourselves emphatically we possess ourselves, we are. So Christ's self-sacrifice for us ; so God's self-sacrifice in creation. It is no loss. Even ordinary men say, ' I live in that which I love, that to which I have given my being, my soul.' " <sup>1</sup>

So long as our desires are still unsatisfied there is wide room for self-deception in this regard. While the man who desires knowledge is still learning ; while the man who desires wealth is amassing riches ; while the man who desires social prestige is mounting the rounds of the ladder ; while the man who desires political power is working for his office, — the man, to achieve his own ends, is obliged to think so much of others, and to do so much for others, that there is a semblance of unselfishness in his demeanor. But when we have climbed the pinnacle and acquired our heart's desire, then comes the supreme test of character. To have your riches and not hoard them, nor use them for mere selfish ends ; to have the social

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from an anonymous quotation in Thorold's " Claim of Christ on the Young," p. 16.

power or the political power, and then to wield these as a sacred trust ; to know more than most men, and not to be sated by one's knowledge, nor tired of it, nor cynical, nor superior ; to be the head of a happy home, and not to yield to the temptation which lures one to regard one's home as self-contained and self-sufficient, as in itself an end ; to have all the helps and safeguards of religion, and not to hug them as if it were no matter that others perish provided we ourselves be saved ; not to have the consolations of God small with us for the reason that we have made them small,—in short, to be like Israel, to whom pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises ; whose were the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,—to be like Israel in such things, but withal unlike Israel in this : that we do not, as Israel did, make the word of God of none effect for our own selves because, being ignorant of God's righteousness, we go about to establish our own righteousness,<sup>1</sup> — that will be the final standard of judgment, when the souls that on earth were satisfied meet the scrutiny of the Most High.

And believe me, my brothers, nothing but the reality of our relation to God, persistently recognized by the soul, will enable us to stand that test. Why should you, when you have got your desire, still go

<sup>1</sup> Romans ix. 1-5.

on expending yourself? There is no sufficient reason except one: that God's Being is one perpetual expenditure for you, and so yours should be for Him, for your fellows in Him. As Christ said, "My Father worketh hitherto, as I work." To feel that the life of unselfishness is not a waste of self, or an obliteration of self, or a disappointment of self, but rather a devotion, a free dedication, a realization of one's best self, because self is nothing without God who made it, and on whom, as God's creature, it depends, — this is the one preventive of that practical abortion of self, that miserable self-destruction in the very moment of self-satisfaction which is indicated so pathetically in this refrain of Haggai's psalm: "He gave them their desire: and sent leanness withal into their soul."

It is the consciousness of this utter need of the soul that has been blessed by God to hold fast to God in the blessing, which pervades that other psalm which David composed ere going out to battle and victory: "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble: the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion. Remember all thy offerings: and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Grant thee thy heart's desire: and fulfil all thy mind. Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God."

Let us too have a lively remembrance of that Name.

Not merely in our hours of effort and of painful conquest, but in the day of achievement and success, let us hold close and closer to Him for whom we live, in whom we die, to whom alone belongs the soul that He has vouchsafed to satisfy. Thus alone shall we be preserved from the spiritual leanness that blasts the character of so many that on earth are fortunate.

## XII.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN VISION.

Where there is no vision the people perish. — PROVERBS  
xxix. 18.

**T**HIS is an allusion to the prophets and to what followed in Israel when the prophets were lacking ; for it was the prophets who supplied to the people their vision, — or rather it was they that opened the people's eyes to see the vision which from time to time was there before them, if only they would recognize it. The phrase of our text carries us back from the period of the kings to the period of the judges. You will remember that when the Israelites were first settling down in Palestine, after Moses and Joshua had brought them up out of Egypt, their political condition was somewhat disorganized. The various tribes were more or less shifting for themselves ; the nation of Israel was not yet welded into compact unity. Different judges appeared, now in this tribe and now in that ; and sometimes more than one judge appeared at the same moment ; and the tribe that was thereby brought into prominence assumed for the time be-

ing a preponderant influence among the others. Samuel was the last of these judges; and it is in the third chapter of the First Book of Samuel that we read: "The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision," — that is, prophetic communications from God were rare in those days, and no messages from the Lord were publicly promulgated. For the function of the prophets as originally understood did not have to do alone, or even chiefly, with predictions as to the future, but rather with insisting on God's presence and providential government of His people, with appealing to men's consciences, and encouraging men's wills to obey their consciences, — in short, with opening men's eyes to the vision of God in the needs and emergencies of their present existence. The prophets were what we should call preachers, whose main duty then as now was to sharpen and enlighten the spiritual insight of mankind amid the changes and chances of this wicked and perplexing world. But in the times of the judges, as in all times, the political and social condition of the Israelites reacted upon their religious condition. The lack of unity and concentric purpose in their secular life, the multiplication of their interests, and the conflict of petty purposes, and the variety of exterior dangers, blurred and blunted the spiritual sense not only of the people but of their prophets also; and even those prophets who had a message lacked opportunity to make

their message heard. Every man did what was right in his own eyes; there was no central and recognized authority, and so no open vision. It was to a similar state of things that should ensue later on, when the tribes of Israel were again broken up and carried into captivity, that the prophet Amos alluded when he said: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst." It was Samuel's errand to correct this state of things in his day; first to impart unity and cohesion to the social being of his people, and then to renew and clarify their sense of God, — to make their vision "open." And when King Solomon was gathering up the past experiences of the people of God, and, after wise reflection, was condensing these experiences into the terse apothegms of the Book of Proverbs, this was the lesson that he drew from that moment of their history when social distraction had weakened the moral force and the religious insight of the Jews: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

We shall not appreciate the full force of this conclusion unless we first consider the importance of

man's vision of things in all the departments of his life, even in those which at first sight seem trivial and quite without the pale of religious thought and action. There is nothing whatsoever in this life of ours, no matter how mean or small or isolated, which does not to thoughtful eyes suggest a larger vision, a deeper outlook, a wider interdependence of the finite upon the infinite; and in every stage of human civilization and every department of human endeavor those nations and those individuals alone have been able to march forward and achieve what we call greatness who in dealing with life's littler incidents have been able to discern also their ideal significance, — the bearing of the parts and parcels of life on life's completer whole. This is, indeed, the highest use of poetry, — to disclose, or at any rate to suggest, the richness and the sweetness of that ideal life which alone lends dignity and value to the real. This is why Plato was right in saying that prose is fiction and poetry is truth; for no man knows the truth of things until he perceives their relations to the infinite, and it is the poetic faculty that does this for us. Poetry, in the highest sense of that term, transmutes life into truth. Give me this insight into to-day, and I have also the past and the future.<sup>1</sup> There is a higher interconnection of things whereby

<sup>1</sup> This is a reminiscence of one of Emerson's essays, to which I cannot now refer more definitely for lack of books. Cf. Wordsworth's poem, "Stepping Westward."

the meal in the firkin, the milk in the pan, the plough, the shop, the ballad in the street, the gait and glance of the wayfarer, partake of vaster issues and a sublimer meaning than appear to any but the visionary eye. A single flower pressed between the leaves of a well-worn book, how trivial it appears to the casual observer; but to him who knows the human soul that fingered the pages of that volume and left within it this fragile relic of its yearnings, how large a piece of human life is hereby suggested, how many precious memories and hopes! You are walking the streets of some venerable city in Europe; you have come, for example, to the classic bridge that spans the Tiber close to the Castle of San Angelo. To the child by your side that bridge is no more than any other bridge, its stones than other stones; but you, in crossing it, cannot shut your eyes to the vision that inseparably belongs to it. Two worlds, the classic and the modern, for you there meet and mingle and your eager footsteps are arrested by the thousand unseen links of history that bind that bit of stone and mortar to the mysterious fortunes of mankind. In this way all books of history are full of inevitable visions; and to the writer who in telling his story is blind to them we deny the title of historian. And who is the truly artistic painter? The man who by dexterous tricks of brush and pigment can make a copy of an actual fragment of natural scenery, bare and isolated, and

cut four-square as by your window-pane? No; not at all. Not so have wrought our Milletts and Corots and Daubignys, our Whistlers and Turners. Rather we value their handiwork because they have visions to show us, — glimpses into the connections between Nature's impressions and the higher world of sentiment which man has fastened to them; so that the sower starting out in the fields in the first flush of morning becomes typical of the long and difficult endeavors of all mankind; and the battered hulk of the Fighting *Téméraire* towed up the Thames at sundown is suggestive of the heroism of the ages.

This sense of the larger life within us and around us exists more or less in every man; it is the mark of the man in contrast to the beast. Almost all men are in some measure prompted and sustained and improved in their apparently circumscribed occupations by the consciousness, duller or keener, that they and their little life are in touch with a larger life, and therefrom gather a higher dignity and value. Where there is no vision, the people perish; and from generation to generation they have demanded and are still demanding of their teachers and preachers to be reminded of their visions. The power of public leaders is precisely proportioned to their ability to do this; so that the veriest demagogue loses his influence over the masses unless he is able to persuade them that he is leading them on to achieve their own visions and to realize their relations to the infinite world.

It is this sense of wide relations and of an infinite ideal importance which renders the history of Attica in the days of classic Greece so dignified and strong, so full of inspiration even to ourselves. Measured by our standards of physical size or of commercial value, what a tiny place was Attica! — how trifling its political experiments, how small its armies, its very temples on the Acropolis how diminutive! Yet the story of Athenian activities, as graven on stone by the chisel of Phidias or as told by the pen of Thucydides, is fraught with significance as beautiful as it is profound. And why? Because those Athenian poets and artists and philosophers and statesmen were so truly patriotic that in doing their small deeds they rose to the conception of great principles. They were not merely citizens of Attica, but men of the world. In Greece there was an open vision, — so much so that when Greece as a political power was only a memory, because Rome had conquered Greece, nevertheless the individual Greeks, with their vision of commerce and art and culture and philosophy, set the tone for all the world, and furnished the language which was to be the vehicle for the transmission of Christianity among mankind.

All these illustrations of my theme lead up to something higher. Man's instinctive consciousness of the infinite relations of things is an adumbration of God. To have these visions of the wider and deeper meaning of the scenery and activities of hu-

man life is to be ready for the vision of the Divine Reality, in whom alone man lives and has his being. "In Thy light shall we see light," says the Psalmist. You have only to mention God to your child and he understands you ; but God must be mentioned. The prophets must prophesy constantly. "They that fear the Lord must speak often one to another, and think upon His name." There must be an open vision, a continual reminding of human souls of that mysterious key to their existence which they are aware of but so easily forget, or else the people perish. The religious vision is the only thorough vision of the world.

This is a fact which continually comes home to the careful observer of human operations and of the course of human thinking. One of the most noticeable features of all the larger movements of society and the schools of thought in whatever department is the rapidity and the naturalness with which they assume religious phraseology. Even the free-trader and the protectionist, even the socialists and the nihilists, even the materialists and the agnostics, not to mention the philanthropists and the artists and the devotees of science, use language that might almost be borrowed from the Prayer Book. Some who observe this trait laugh at it ; but to a deeper insight there is matter here of the most serious suggestion. Religious sentiment is the legitimate outcome of every larger vision of the world. God is the

end of human thinking and of human aspiration ; He alone is the explanation of the intricate infinities of the universe ; and every man who has risen up high enough out of the littleness of his particular lot and the one-sidedness of his particular activities to be able to grasp any of their higher connections and more generous responsibilities, — every such man is in fact feeling after God, if haply he may find Him ; and if the man do not find Him, if there be no open vision, then he is bound to succumb finally either to the disposition of impatient violence or else of dissatisfied despair. Great causes move slowly, even as the world does. To seek to attain one's end by violence is to destroy what ought to be fulfilled ; to despair of one's end is to tumble back again into the isolation and emptiness of the individual who has no vision at all ; and the only way to check the impulse to be violent on the one hand or discouraged on the other is to press on from the vision of the infinities of Nature to that of the Infinite God, — to set God always before us. Without the lower vision, the people perish temporarily ; without the higher, they perish eternally. And the best moments of our existence here are those when our very efforts for some human cause, some project or party, transport us by their own momentum up into a higher plane, where God is seen to be *the* thing that we are longing for ; and the reverent spirit does obeisance to Him, until from that Divine intercourse we acquire a more

patient courage and an even more enthusiastic devotion to the earthly schemes and causes in which we are engaged. Hereby nature itself conspires with spirit to emancipate us from nature's fetters. The change in our point of view makes our whole life seem changed. As when in the rapid movements of a journey the familiar features of one's fatherland wear a new aspect, and the homeliest objects please us most, as when to him who has climbed a mountain-top even the features of the landscape which near by are ugly appear pictorial, so if once we rise here to the vision of our God, then all earth's tasks and trials and ambitions become purified and beautified in the light of God.

"Who sweeps a room as for God's laws  
Makes that and the action fine."

Here lies the great line of difference between men and men; not in the difference of occupation, or even of talents and fortune, but in the presence or absence in them of this vision of the soul. In the one case the day-laborer at his toil, the scientist with his materials and experiments, the money-maker with his buying and selling and his endless ventures, — yes, even the so-called religious man with his mint, anise, and cumin, his prayers and ideals of charity and acts of worship! — all these alike are narrowed, absorbed, and lost in the nearer and evident details of a business that is selfish and small and without honor, be-

cause ministering only to vanity, or idle curiosity, or blind greed of gain, or to some sense of momentary need. Fools that tear down their barns to build greater ones, not knowing that this night shall their soul be required of them, not perceiving that our every smallest act issues in the vast beyond! In the other case we see men whose employments to outward eyes are identical with those of their fellows, but who in their acts and words and wishes betray a certain consciousness of our relation to that ineffable Divine Reality whose present perfection and supernatural power imparts the quality of eternity to all we think and do. Thank God that in every nation there are some such as these; for "where there is no vision, the people perish." And oftentimes that strange and painful feeling of unreality, which even religious men experience in regard to their religion, when nothing seems true, or right, or good, or profitable to them, when faith seems an hallucination and duty a figment and prayer a mockery, and all endeavors after goodness hopeless and self-contradictory, when sermons and sacraments seem dreary and barren, as if all real religion were wiped out from the world, — oftentimes this perplexing and disheartening condition of soul is mainly due to a temporary obscuration of that higher spiritual vision by which our nobler life is fed.

Men and brethren, if there be any place where this theme is appropriate, it is here at this capital of our

country. There are dwelling in this city many whose especial business is the conduct of our national affairs. As members of the Executive Government, as statesmen and lawgivers, as jurists and judges of the law, nay, even as mere voters, it lies with them to direct the fortunes and to mould the manners of our strangely heterogeneous people. On them all eyes are centred; to them all wishes turn. Yet how difficult it is for them, and for us who are their witnesses, to recollect sufficiently the gravity of their tasks! how readily they lose themselves in the multitude of details! Pestered by office-seekers, worried by the claims of partisans, tempted by private interests, discouraged by the obstacles to a fulfilment of large views, how easy it is for them to sink down on to a low and temporizing plane of thought and action. One thing alone can save them, — can hold them up and keep them true to their original vocation: they must retain their vision before them always. Often and often they must clarify their souls to behold the ideal of their task, — to see the fair form of our fatherland beckoning them to be true above all things to her, whose virtue and fair fame are in their keeping; yes, and true to the God of our fatherland, Whose holy will it is to operate across and by means of our erring human wills; they must set God always before them. And certainly this morning, when the thoughts of all of us are drawn to the sudden death of one of the

most prominent members<sup>1</sup> of our national government, we have a striking enforcement of my theme; for he of whom we are thinking, with whose bereaved family we are mourning, as the more hidden and domestic and personal traits of his character are revealed to us, is found to have been a person the motive of whose public action was this secret consciousness of responsibility to God. The late Secretary of the Treasury was a God-fearing man; and it was because he realized so keenly the solemnity of the trust committed to him, the bearing of his actions on the life of this nation and the world, that although he was aware that disease was weakening him, he toiled bravely on, and died at the post of duty. His very last act was the great oration in which he sought to convince his countrymen that it will not do for statesmen to handle the commercial interests of this nation sordidly, or selfishly, or rashly, because even the gold and silver that we buy and sell and coin have a determining influence on our higher welfare as social and thinking men. That last speech of his was a sample of the higher vision. God was not mentioned in it; but to those who knew the speaker, it is easy now to recognize that the thought of God and of each man's responsibility to God was behind that speech.

<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to the late Mr. Windom, who died the end of January, 1891. This sermon was preached on Sexagesima Feb. 1, 1891.

And need I remind you, my brothers, that nothing will help us to catch this spirit so much as the prayerful study of the life and words of Jesus Christ our Master? In the pages of the Gospels we have the record of the Perfect Man, — of One who had the beatific vision, who saw everything in the light of God. How He looked things through, and men through, seeing behind men's purposes God's purpose, and behind men's labors the operations of the Most High. His was the true presence of mind. His moderation was known unto all men, because to Him God was at hand. "Pilate saith unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered him, Thou sayest." "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight." "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" "Peter saith unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, This night thou shalt deny Me thrice." "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." "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?" Let us study often that character, those words, of Jesus Christ. Let us try to catch somewhat of the singular aloofness of manner and the far-away glance that belonged to Jesus because, though fully alive to the present, and living vigorously in this passing world, He still contemplated time in the view of eternity, in the vision of the Eternal Father, with whom is no variableness. Without that same vision, we and all people perish.

### XIII.

#### SELF-PRESERVATION BY SELF-SACRIFICE.<sup>1</sup>

Oh, all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord: Praise Him and magnify Him forever. — SONG OF THE THREE CHILDREN, v. 35.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. — ROMANS xii. 1.

PERHAPS you have sometimes wondered, my brethren, why we give up the *Te Deum* and say the *Benedicite* in Lent. Lent is supposed by some to be a sombre season, yet the *Benedicite* is so gladsome; and besides, there are passages of the *Te Deum*, with its referenee to the life and death and passion of Jesus Christ, which are certainly appropriate at this time. Nevertheless if you will look at the matter more closely, I think you will see the wisdom of our custom, and recognize that the *Benedicite* is quite the most appropriate service of song that we can possibly offer at this Lenten season.

For what are the sum and substance of that magnificent chant of the three children in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace of fire which we have just been

<sup>1</sup> Ash-Wednesday sermon.

singing? Is it not this : that nothing whatsoever in the whole universe of being, physical, mental, or moral, exists for itself, — that it is all for God ; that we are God's creatures, and as such belong to God ; and that when we and all living things, in this or any world, fulfil God's word and serve Him and bless Him, and thereby magnify Him, we are simply doing what we were meant for, because God created us for His glory? "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves."

And is not this the great lesson of the Lenten Fast, brought home to us by its regimen and services in every possible way? And when we stand up of an Ash Wednesday or a Sunday morning and say this *Benedicite* between the Scripture Lessons, are we not summing up and condensing into one enthusiastic expression all the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts at this special period of the Church's Year, — simply putting into song that which we see to be the true motive and ideal of our Christian life?

So to-day I make that theme my text. I wish to put before you that great underlying subject which Lent is intended to emphasize, — the true view of self-sacrifice, the gladsome view. Let us think this morning of the Christian view of the actual fact of every creature's life. Self-sacrifice is the inevitable law of the universe ; and Christ shows us that self-sacrifice is true self-preservation. "He that loseth

his life shall save it." This is what Saint Paul was thinking of in that passage of the Epistle to the Romans which is part of my text to-day: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service," that is, the service which falls in with what reason sees to be the facts of human life.

1. Consider, first, that the keenest instinct of each individual is the conviction of his own value. This is manifest by the universal instinct of self-preservation. Some creatures flee to save themselves; some fight to save themselves; but to defend and maintain their individual being is the common instinct of all. When a poor wretch commits suicide, that is, when he gives up the battle for life, there is something in the heart of every sane on-looker which declares that the suicide has been untrue to himself, untrue to the law of his own being.

Nevertheless when we look out upon the universe at large, the tendency of things appears at first sight to be contradictory of this supreme law of individual self-preservation. Nature everywhere seems careless of the individual. The very conception of general law appears to be so. The single atom cannot be for itself; it is one of a mass of atoms, and the rules of the mass control it. The single man, no matter how he loves his single being, does not now, and never for one moment did, exist singly. He has been from

the start a member first of his family, then of the Church and the State, next of the existing race of men throughout the earth, and finally of the human race as a whole, whose strange, mysterious past life modifies its present life. There is a general law of progress and of decadence, of wealth and poverty, of ignorance and knowledge, of righteousness and unrighteousness, which finds the individual at the very beginning of his being, and shapes him and constrains him. "All we are members one of another." "No man liveth to himself, nor even dieth unto himself." "Ye bear one another's burdens." If the universe of being be regarded as chaos, then the individual has of course no meaning. If it be looked upon as a cosmos, then the very orderliness of the world signifies the overmastery of the individual for the benefit of the world. In either view, and there is no third alternative, this indomitable instinct of ours that our individuality is precious, and, if we choose, inviolable, seems at first sight a pure paradox.

And if this holds good of the affairs of this earth considered by itself, how much more when we take this earth in its conjunction with the myriads of other orbs that surround it. "When I consider the heavens . . . what is man?" If the microscope widens our view of the relative largeness of man to countless creatures whose being is inwrought with his, the telescope belittles him and his whole physical sphere. When once we have an inkling of the innumerable

systems of suns and stars, of which our whole solar system with all its orbs is but one, it seems harder than ever to maintain that any individual creature of any kind is intrinsically valuable on its own account. Nevertheless to be an individual is to have *per se* that idea, and to maintain it at every cost. It is of the very essence of individuality to recognize that individuality is precious, and that self-preservation is our highest duty. "What shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?" Nothing. There is nothing that man or God Himself can give you that would countervail your full and free possession of yourself. That is the simple meaning of individuality to itself. What then shall we make of the paradox before us? Why is it that the very notion of universal physical law, and national and social and family law, dwindles the individual till he scarcely seems of any independent value; while all the time for the individual to be at all (and he must be, else there would be no society, no State, no Church,) is to know that he is most valuable? Surely, men and brethren, it comes to this: the apparent paradox springs from man's misconception as to *what is the function of individuality*, what its purpose and its power. Our modern scientific apprehension of the physical universe forces us to this conclusion, — that while the individual is a fact (if there be any such thing as fact), nevertheless the use of the individual is not for independence but for dependence, and that

self-sacrifice is self-preservation, is the simple recognition of what it is to be an individual and where his value lies.

3. And is not this, which is the revelation of physical and social science, also the revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Yes; but Christ puts new light on it, transmutes it. Science is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; but Christ takes us further than natural or social science can, and discloses a better motive for that sacrifice of self which both Christ and science declare to be the law of every individual life. To preserve yourself is your rational duty; and in order to preserve yourself you must devote yourself. But to what, to whom? To God in Christ, because you are God's creatures and He is your all-wise, loving Father. If only you have eyes to see Him, you can find God behind every earthly case of self-sacrifice, — behind it and the object of it; that is the gospel explanation of our law of individual self-sacrifice. Let us examine it a moment.

The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not to revolutionize this world, but to enlighten us as to how to use this world as not abusing it; to enlighten us as to how to avail ourselves of its laws. God made this world, and hence its laws are His laws, — the expression of God's mind. And forasmuch as it is very easy for us to forget God in the world, to lose sight of Him, to have our consciousness dulled to Him, and so to fancy that this world is an end for

us in itself, and that its laws have nothing behind them, the whole purpose of the Gospel of Christ is to make God once more vivid to us, — as Christ Himself says, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” Now, when we look at Jesus Christ what do we see? We see One in whom our idea of God as our Maker and Master is transfigured into the idea of God as our Father. The reason why we so easily forget God in the world is because we think of Him too much as merely our Maker and Master; for that is a hard idea; and if you have a hard idea of God, then it is easy to take instead of Him the blank idea of a Law that cannot be broken, which is a hard idea also. As Saint Paul shows in the Epistle to the Romans, to think of God simply as our Maker is to think of ourselves as clay in the hand of the potter. All notion of spontaneity on our part, of mutual allegiance and love and understanding between creature and Creator, is apt to disappear. The pure idea of God as Creator is very grand; for it implies that our subservience to Him is boundless because His sovereignty is boundless. According to that idea, whatever is or happens we must take on faith because of our faith in God; our relation to Him is one of utter reliance because there is nothing else to rely on. But although the idea of God as Creator is thus very grand, and quite in consonance with what physical science teaches us as to the inevitable dependence of the individual life on the vaster life

around it, nevertheless this idea is one-sided. It does not fit in with that indomitable sense of our own individual preciousness which, as we have seen, is of the very essence of our consciousness of our being as individuals. If I myself am really valuable as a separate being, then my relation to God must be such that I can for myself respond to Him. God must be my God ; it is not enough that I should be God's ; God must also be mine. There must be thorough mutuality between the creature and the Creator, if the creature's sense of individuality is not a sham ; and the creature's sense of individuality cannot be a sham if his sense of the vast outer world is not also a sham, for both senses are equally part and parcel of his being. Now, this mutuality is just what the revelation of Jesus Christ imparts to the relation between God and man. God is " My Father and your Father," Christ declares. Is there anything more mutual, more reciprocally spontaneous, than the relation of parent and child ? Is not the very being of the father in the child, so that the child is the express image of the father ? And if the parent be true to the child, and the child true to the parent, is not the self-devotion of each to the other the most spontaneous, the most absolutely mutual, thing in the world ? And if you see the child, can you not in him see the father also, not because the father's will and nature is mechanically stamped upon the child, but because the child of his own free will ex-

presses the father's will, so that you can tell what the father is from what the child does heartily?

Thus the Christian recognizes, no less than the disciple of physical science, that absolute subservience to a power outside himself is the law of every individual's life, and that in yielding to that law the individual is simply yielding to his own instinct of self-preservation; only the Christian has transfigured the yielding to a law into devotion to a Father, and self-preservation into self-sacrifice. Nay more: the moment that God is seen to be our Father, so that love for us is the law of His Life, then self-sacrifice becomes the law of God's life with us no less than of our life with God, and the unity of the entire universe of being is perceived. Self-sacrifice is the law of this world, for the very reason that it is God's world, and that its laws are the expression of God's Being. God's own Being is one eternal act of self-devotion to His creatures; and when we by the stress of circumstances are compelled to sacrifice ourselves, we are in reality being compelled up towards the very life of God; we are being told, as the men with the talents were told in the parable: "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" find thy joy in that which is God's joy. Have you never noticed in your intercourse with men that, if you reverence a man, your reverence for him always springs from some glimmer of himself in you, — from the fact that there is in you a little of what he pos-

esses so much better and more abundantly? And, somewhat in the same manner, does it not impart a new and far more personal intensity when Christ reveals to you that the necessity of self-devotion which belongs to the life of every man corresponds to the absolute self-devotion to His children which belongs to our Heavenly Father's character?

But there is one step more. By the stress of circumstances and the law of our life we are all compelled to self-sacrifice, and it is the instinct of such self-devotion in us that makes us reverence the self-devotion of God Almighty to His children; but if we would be verily godlike, we must not merely be compelled to self-devotion, we must choose it. God's life is free, and ours must be free; and the whole purpose of our earthly discipline is that we should win back the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Do you remember the story of Hezekiah's great temple service of sacrifice? and do you remember the verse with which it ends? "And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets." And do you not see the meaning of it?<sup>1</sup> Not in cold silence did their sacrifice go forward, as if the people were doing a task, an unwelcome duty; but with a burst of triumphant music, expressive of the joy of their hearts, because their

<sup>1</sup> This application of the passage from Hezekiah is a reminiscence of one of Phillips Brooks' sermons; but I am unable, at this distance from my library, to make the reference more precise.

sacrifice was free. And this song of joyful self-devotion is not merely called by the prophet the people's song ; it is God's song too. Many and many a man has gone far on in life making the inevitable sacrifices which all life claims of us, but making them reluctantly. The rich man sacrifices himself to the laws of money-making, and in his more serious moments he finds them tiresome. The learned man devotes himself to books ; but sometimes as he rises and looks out of his study windows, he finds that books grow dull. The politician devotes himself to statesmanship ; the teacher to teaching ; the lawyer to his clients ; the philanthropist to human welfare ; but often and often the question presses : What profit is there in it under the sun ? Oh, my brothers, you are very young and very thoughtless if that question has not risen in your heart sometimes and tired you ! The burnt-offering goes forward in all our lives, but in how many, many cases there is no song with it ! Yet to walk with Jesus is to catch the contagion of His song, who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, — endured it because He was the Son of God, and God is always self-sacrificing, and it is only our fallen manhood that renders self-sacrifice painful. Self-devotion is the very note of love, and God is Love. And you and I, my brothers, because we are inviolable individuals, were made to love, — to love mankind for God's sake and God for His own sake. Love is the consecration and salvation of in-

dividuality. It is putting it to use. And just so far as we let God's love transfigure us, we are saving our life in sacrificing it. Perfect love casteth out fear.

I wish I could speak to the soul of the most selfish creature present here to-day. I wish I could bring him to Jesus, and leave him there to enter into the joy of our Lord. Is there any one so blind of soul and narrow in his experience as not to have seen that even earthly love makes sacrifice a joy, — transfuses and transforms the same burdens that other men are bearing bitterly, unwillingly, and renders them welcome burdens? That common earthly fact is a reflection of the Divine eternal fact of God's own character, in whose image we are made. And Jesus our Saviour came to open our eyes to its diviner meaning.

And Lent is intended to make us realize this as never before, — to give us a chance to deny ourselves that we may find ourselves, — to put us on the alert for new openings of service and self-surrender to the Almighty Father in whom we have our being. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

Then Lent will have really taught us our *Benedicite*.

## XIV.

### SUNDAY OBSERVANCE.<sup>1</sup>

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. — EXODUS xx. 8, 9, 10.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard within me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last. — REV. i. 10, 11.

THE first step towards a holy Lent is that we should do our regular duties better; and one of our regular duties is the observance of the Lord's Day. So I shall speak of that this morning.

I have put side by side these two passages from the Old and the New Testament respectively, because by their mere juxtaposition they convey a lesson on a momentous subject. Read them thoughtfully, first one and then the other; notice the variation in their tone; and you have all the difference between the Law and the Gospel in the whole matter of Sunday observance. The language of the Fourth Command-

<sup>1</sup> Lenten Sermon.

ment is narrow, restrictive, hard. Behind it you hear the Mosaic anathemas, the thunderings of Sinai. In its very phraseology you can, as it were, foresee the stiffness of Pharisaism. Notice, too, the compulsory, mechanical character of the ancient patriarchal system that breathes throughout the passage, — the spirit of which our New England Puritanism was in part an echo. Under the patriarchal régime the head of the house was its master ; his fiat was the inflexible law for all ; as he prayed, so must the wife and children and servants pray ; as he thought, they must think ; nay, even the stranger that sojourned under his roof must think and do likewise. The independence, the individuality of the single soul, of every soul, finds small expression here. Religion is a tribal matter, and the patriarch is the head of the tribe ; and if you can get him to keep the commandment, you need have no concern about the rest ; they are bound to do likewise. But God, who in sundry ways and divers manners hath spoken unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. Jesus Christ has showed us a better way. There was use and reason in the earlier way. The rigorism of the schoolmaster forefends and fosters the free-will of the youth. Freedom would be nothing to any man without the free-will in him ; and free-will must be trained, — trained to make use of freedom. Freedom is the privilege of which educated free-will avails itself. Take this matter of the Sabbath. Before the

Christian idea of the Lord's Day could enter into the world, the Jewish idea of the Sabbath must precede it, and the Jewish method of enforcing the Sabbath must have sway wherever the Jew should range. You must snatch the soul out of this sinful world, and must make clear to it the contrast between God and the world, before you can trust the soul in the world, to be in it but not of it. All about the Jews, when Moses took hold of them, were nations so steeped in sin that the idea of any Sabbath, mechanical or free, had vanished from their minds. In order that the idea of the Sabbath might be restored to the Jewish soul, it was necessary to hedge off the Jews from the idolaters. When they had been hedged off long enough to perceive the contrast between God's idea of the world and the idolater's idea of it, then the Jew would be ready to relinquish his narrow Sabbath in favor of the Lord's Day, in favor of the Christian freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," — there, and there alone.

Thus, then, after reading the Fourth Commandment in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; after taking careful note of the tone of it, — of its rigorism, its narrow definiteness, its externality, its insistence that the substance of the Sabbath is to be ascertained by the presence or the absence in it of mere toil, — pass on to the other passage in the Revelation of Saint John the Divine. Are we not standing on a different plane, — breathing a higher atmosphere?

Here is no *command* about Sunday observance at all, but rather a *description* of it ; and what a description ! How far away we are from all precise enactments ; from arbitrary distinctions as to what is, and what is not, work ; from the mint, anise and cummin, the “touch not, taste not, handle not” of Pharisaism. “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and heard within me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End.” That is what comes of keeping the Christian Sabbath as it was meant to be kept : to be pervaded by the conscious presence of the Spirit of the living God ; to hear within one’s soul a great voice, as of a trumpet, speaking of the underlying Reality of things, and saying, “I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.” It is no longer a mere question of externality ; of doing a particular something, or not doing it ; of working or resting from work ; of reading some books and letting others lie ; of praying more prayers, or fewer ; of going to church instead of to the counting-house ; of gathering one’s family and friends about one, and keeping holiday at home ; of fingering the religious newspaper instead of the secular newspaper. All these be matters of detail, questions of method ; whereas Saint John on Patmos had gotten behind details and methods into the deeper substance of our soul-life. The ideal Sunday, the true Sabbath of the soul, is an occasion for laying hold simply and directly of our God, — of Him in whom we live and

move and have our being. As we drift along the swift, relentless current of time; as days and weeks and months and years follow one another in breathless haste; as persons crowd upon us and jostle us; as books and business and the varied interests of our manifold existence harry us; as anxieties increase, and sorrows deepen, and riddle upon riddle rises up for our bewildered intellects and hearts to puzzle over; as the essential vacuity, the hopelessness of the world dawns upon us, if we be "without God in the world," — then, if we are not utterly superficial, we come to realize what the privilege is of being, once in every seven days at any rate, in the Spirit on the Lord's Day; then we recognize what a comfort it is in life, what a simplification of life, what a restoration of energy, to hear deep down within us the great voice saying, "I am Alpha and Omega."

My dear brethren and friends, in this Lenten sermon, on this Communion Sunday, I wish to hold up before you once again the Christian idea of Sunday observance. We hear a great deal nowadays about the importance of Sunday even from the secular point of view, from the utilitarian point of view. We are told that the very beasts of burden do more work, and in the long run better work, if they rest one day in seven. It is quite true; and in behalf of the working-class of human beings the arguments in favor of the Sabbath are practically identical with the arguments that the laborers

themselves use when they go on strikes to obtain fewer and shorter hours in their week-day toil. These be good arguments; they are true and telling; but they do not help us forward much towards the eternal outcome of the world, — towards the spiritual interpretation of human existence. If we are going to live as drones, and think as drones, and recreate as drones, I cannot see that it makes much difference whether or no we make haste to rise up early and so late take rest; I cannot see why it is so much better to regulate our periods of droning or to shorten them. Droning is always droning, no matter how and when you drone; and if you want to stop droning, you must *change your idea* of what you are about, — not necessarily change your occupation, but change your idea of it, spiritualize it, put soul into it, put God into it. To make a point of getting “into the spirit,” of realizing that every one of us is “in the spirit of the Lord,” to hear His voice as of a trumpet talking with us, — that is the intention of the Christian Sunday, the only end of its observance, the only cure for droning; and anything, I care not what, that accomplishes that for us is Sabbath-keeping, and whatsoever hinders this is Sabbath-breaking. To rise up for an early celebration of the Holy Communion, and then spend the subsequent morning hours over the Sunday newspaper, crammed full of items of the workaday world, — of fashion and gossip and scandal, of politics and

trade, of mere art and literature and æsthetics, that are as God-forgetful as it is possible to be, — that is not to be “in the spirit on the Lord’s Day.” To go to church at eleven o’clock and listen to a sermon, and then on the way home to drive out the whole impression of it by sights and sounds of the flesh and the devil; to excuse one’s self altogether from church on the ground that Sunday is the one day you have to devote to your wife and children and friends, and then, instead of so devoting it to them that you and they are lifted into a purer and higher and kindlier atmosphere, to spend it in making it harder for them than ever to know and feel that love is of God, and earthly fatherhood a shadow of the Divine, and that no home on earth has any meaning apart from our Heavenly Home, — no, my brethren, if such be the way that we spend our Sundays, if we be not yet ready for the Christian Lord’s Day, I say that it would be better for us to go back and be Puritans once more; to be shut up and tied down to the stiff, forbidding customs which it is our boast that we have outlived; to have God thrust on us as a consuming fire, and religion as a stern taskmaster; to have the line between the church and the world, between heaven and hell, drawn sharp and strong, so that we shall never ignore and never forget that there is a difference between them; to have it graven on our souls as with a pen of iron that “it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God,” and that

for wicked men it is easy enough to slip into hell, but impossible to slip into heaven; that “from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” I appeal to-day for the necessity that we who call ourselves Christians should exert our wills and apply the whole force of our minds to keep the Lord’s Day holy. I do not desire to see the old unlovely days of Puritanism brought back again; but I do desire that the loveliness of true Christianity should be recognized as something which, like all else that is comely and of good report, requires a decided effort either to gain or keep. Have you not known, you busy men of the market and the courts of justice, — have you not known what it is to have a case that required, if you were to succeed with it, to be really mastered? Have you not known what it is to go to your upper chamber and shut your door, and forbid yourself to callers, nay, even to your own household; to lay your papers before you on your desk, and close your ears to every sound, your eyes to every sight, and just to ponder with yourself all alone and steadily the matter before you until you had saturated your mind with it, — yes, and not even to stop there, but when you have gotten your mind full of your subject, to go about with it and croon over it for hours, until all that you know and all that you have experienced in your previous life and profession seems to be brought to bear on it, flooding it with

new meaning, until at last you have been able, as we say, "to look at your subject all round"? Well, if it is by such efforts and such seclusion alone that we are able to master our more important matters of earthly business, do you think it likely that we shall fare more easily with the serious matters of our eternal life? Do you fancy that you can be "in the Spirit," as John of Patmos was, on the Lord's Day or any other day, without careful determination to do so? If this world is too much with you even for you to prosper in your worldly business unless you take pains to shut out the world at times, do you suppose that our heavenly business can be conducted without at least equal restrictions? No, my brethren, believe me, if once we come really to love our God, really to prize and venerate the spiritual side of our being, really to recognize what even art and literature and poetry imply in the way of absorption and devotion on the part of those who cultivate them; if once we perceive that none of life's flowers can be rudely handled or rudely neglected if we would keep them sweet and unfading, and least of all our religion; if once we accept the Bible statement that "he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," — then we shall admit that how we are to observe our Sundays is a matter of the greatest delicacy and care and conscientiousness. I am not bespeaking for the Lord's Day aught too much of

the old-time narrowness. Let the day be a very natural, — a truly homely day, a day that the youngest child can look upon with pleasure, a day that will reveal to both parent and child the exquisite, the infinite possibilities of home. I am not asking you necessarily even to come always twice or thrice to church; I am not asking you to be handling all day long manuals of devotion; I am no friend of too many “good books,” as they are called. But whatever you read, and whatever you do, at least beware one day in seven of triviality, of superficiality, of the slightest breath of impurity; let there be one day in the week when you and yours will make this common effort: that “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,” you will think on these things, and let the rest alone. The house where other things are mentioned, on the Lord’s Day you will not visit it; the book where other things are discoursed of, on the Lord’s Day you will not open it; the man or woman whose company is suggestive of other things, on the Lord’s Day you will avoid them. You will go nowhere, you will read and hear nothing, you will consort with no companions, that would make you shudder to remember that brief word of the Psalmist: “Thou God seest me.” History, the better poetry, the more earnest science, the more serious statesmanship, — to consider these things as part of your contemplations is

entirely compatible with such an endeavor ; for “ the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.” But beware of all that would seem to persuade you that the earth is the devil’s or man’s. People who know what friendship is know that it must be cultivated ; that if you are to give aught of yourself to your friend, or get aught out of your friend, you must take time for him and pains. Intimacy is the very condition of friendship, — community of thought and feeling. And can we hope to have God for our Friend on any other terms ? Can we hope really to know God, to love and understand Him, to gain some insight into His ways, if we spend no time with Him ? It is often remarked nowadays that it requires a great deal of effort in our distracted and overcrowded modern life to keep up one’s friendships. So it does. And think you that it requires less effort to keep up one’s friendship with God ? That is what the true Christian sets apart Sunday for, — to keep up his intimacy with God. There is nothing awkward or strained about it, or artificial. There is no sudden break or jar in one’s life because of it. This is the very prerogative of friendship that it makes no jar. No matter what you are doing, if your real friend rings your door-bell, you welcome him and take him in ; you do not change your life for him ; you take him right into your life, and tell him to make himself at home. All that you are doing and thinking and

striving for, — your little anxieties and great, your small and larger joys, — you take him into them, and talk them all over with him, and he throws light on them. You show yourself up to your friend, and trust your real self to him, and the inspiration of his sympathy sweetens and strengthens you just as you are, just where you are. It is for the stranger that you wear a mask and put your house in order and don fine clothes, not for your friend. And the idea of the Christian Sunday is that to take God into our ordinary life will likewise cause no break in it; that to be “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” will be to receive into our common daily being One who will enter into it as no one else can. You do not undo your life, or wrap it up in falsehood, or stiffen it unnaturally by taking God into it; rather God brings truth into your life, order and genuine simplicity; for God is the Reality of things. The great scientists come to us in these days and tell us how matter really is, in spite of its appearances; and God comes to us and tells us how man really is, how the whole universe is, in spite of the appearance. You hear a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying within you, “I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last.” All that you are and that your home is; all that your mind is busied with, that your ambitions are planning, that your exertions are accomplishing; all your mistakes and failures; the things that balk and the things that profit you, day in and day out as you go

forth to your work and to your labor until the evening, — on the Lord's Day God calls on you, and you take Him into these, and make yourself at home with Him. All your secular work throws light on God, and He throws new light on it, puts new meaning into it, — helps you to discern the temporary and to grasp the eternal in it ; that is all. It is as when God came unto Abram in a vision and said unto him, "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

## XV.

### THE SEARED CONSCIENCE.<sup>1</sup>

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, . . . having their conscience seared with a hot iron. — 1 TIMOTHY iv. 1, 2.

THE two Bible lessons of this morning's service,<sup>2</sup> taken together, are a practical appeal to the human conscience as a witness to the Providence of God, and as a justification of that Providence. Conscience is hereby made the clue for human thinking, as also for human action. Now, no one can study the career and character of Saint Paul without perceiving that he was a peculiarly conscientious person, — that in his whole life as a man of action and as a man of thought conscience was the predominating motive. With many good men it is not so ; in them conscience simply goes along with other motives and supports them ; it follows, but does not lead. In their lives it is the intellectual motive, or the motive of the affections, that predominates. Their ideas and actions are due in the first instance to their reason, or to their heart. They lead their life because they

<sup>1</sup> Lenten Sermon.

<sup>2</sup> Preached on the second Sunday in Lent, March 2, 1890.

love it, or because they first have thought it out so, and afterwards have found that their conscience did not forbid it. Conscience was there to restrain or to permit, but it was not foremost to guide and to suggest. In Saint Paul's case, however, conscience was foremost always. Read together his epistles and the account of his life as given in the Book of the Acts, and it is easy to see that his views of truth and his course of action from first to last were due primarily to what his conscience dictated. When he assisted those who stoned Stephen, his consenting to that martyrdom was because his conscience, only half educated as yet, bade him to do so. When on the way to Damascus he met his Saviour and was converted, his first steps as Christ's disciple were taken because his conscience smote him. And the whole question of the mutual relations of Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles to the older Jewish law — which was the great question of his ministry, and which he did more to settle than all the other apostles — was essentially a case of conscience, as his own argument in the eighth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians proves. And if any one desires to see what a difference it makes in the whole tone even of one's abstract thinking whether pure reason or conscience be the impelling and paramount factor in the mental process, let him read through Saint Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Here we have a theme of the profoundest theology, touching the

whole past moral history and intellectual history of the human race. The argument and the conclusion are rational throughout ; but it is perfectly plain that the first and final motive-power that actuated the writer in choosing this theme, and in dealing with it when chosen, was a conscientious motive ; and no one can study thoughtfully this letter to the Romans without observing what marvellous power this faculty of the soul, — this practical sense of right and wrong, which is the very voice of God in man, — what power it has to contribute to man's more abstract knowledge ; how, in proportion as it is pure and well-disciplined, conscience helps the reason to discriminate and appropriate truths of whatever kind ; and how it disposes the mind to listen to one eternal message rather than to another ; and how each new truth thus accepted from without, in proportion as it is made the subject of thorough religious contemplation and action, elicits from within the soul a responsive harmony which completes the evidence for that truth.

Hence we can easily understand how shocked Saint Paul was when he came across men in his ministry for whom conscience had no voice at all in their ideas and impressions of truth. The keen metaphor into which he throws his thought shows of itself how deeply Saint Paul was pained. "Having their conscience seared with a hot iron," he says. Have you ever seen what a red-hot iron will do to

the flesh of living man, — how it changes the whole character of that flesh, making it stiff and hard and insensible and ugly? The flesh is there still, but its quality is altered; not only is its beauty gone, but its use is gone; the functions of the body, the healthy action of blood and tissues, the sensitiveness to outward touch or inward volition, no longer operate there. If it be not renewed and reformed, the flesh that is seared might almost as well be dead; and what the seared flesh is to the animal life of man that, in Saint Paul's view, the seared conscience is to his soul-life. Man's faculties of knowledge, of affection, of aspiration can no more operate naturally and rightly than his will can if his conscience becomes inactive. Hence as Saint Paul went about his ministry to human souls, seeking to bring home to them the grace and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it pained him inexpressibly to find among his hearers persons whose souls were in this state. Here was an absolute obstacle to his success with them. The truth he brought to them could not touch them, could not really affect them, could not get into them, so long as they continued so. He and his fellow-worker Timothy must first address themselves to curing the scar, to removing and making once more sensitive the deadened surface of the unbeliever's conscience, before proceeding to their higher task of revealing the gospel of the Crucified.

I do not think that we sufficiently appreciate how

much the state of our conscience has to do with the state of our faith as Christians. I do not think that we are aware how much both the processes of our thought and the results of our thinking, both the manner of our affections and the outcome of them, depend upon this single condition : whether all along in our thinking and in our loving we have kept our conscience tender.

Let us, then, consider first the effect of a tender conscience upon one's thinking, — upon the sort [of thinking that you and I are most likely to engage in as we live in the world of to-day. Everybody is more or less of a philosopher, and in our generation more than ever before. The spread of education to all classes, the facility with which the thought of the few gets current among the many, disposes us to philosophize, if not profoundly, at least superficially. The air is full of the criticism of human life. The very newspapers and reviews that we skim through morning by morning have a column for crude suggestions as to the philosophy of life. Now, there are two ways of confronting this state of things, the conscientious and the unconscientious. The unconscientious man does his thinking about life with little regard to actual living ; he looks on at life as a spectator, not as an actor ; he fancies that merely to know about life is an end in itself ; the personality of man, as it passes to and fro before him, is a machine whose work he watches, or a plant whose growth he at-

tends. The history of the past, the transactions of the present, are an interesting spectacle to him. He observes the development of customs and institutions and ideas, their combinations, the play and counterplay of *other people's* conscience and emotions and reasonings and actions, as if humanity were a species of mere vegetation. If the process goes on quietly and steadily, he thinks it dull; if there are crises of energy and disaster, he thinks it exciting, — like a good play seen from a comfortable seat in a respectable theatre; he has no feeling for the practical consequences of what is going forward. But the conscientious thinker, — neither the energies of passion nor the refinements of thought nor the mirage of art and beauty nor the complications of action in society content or occupy him in and for themselves. Each and all of them are pregnant with results, — with results that touch his own person and the person of his brothers in the world. Of these transactions the conscientious man perceives the inevitable to-morrow, — the good faith kept or violated, the purity maintained or lost, the influences of example that reach so subtly and so far in this world of accountable wills. This spectacle of human action and passion is not simply a spectacle; it is a spectacle in which we take part; it is an image of what we ourselves are doing and becoming; and it shows what sort of an example we are setting to others. Ah, to look at this scene of life is more than mere

looking ; it is to feel, to be drawn, to be impelled ; there is practical suggestion in it. Among the on-lookers there are even now personal beings in temptation to whom this spectacle will operate either as a warning or as an allurements ; there are sufferers whose wounds will receive from it either balm or poison ; there are toilers to whose weariness it will bring either discouragement or consolation. Life is not simply beautiful or hideous, dull or interesting ; life is life. It is a question of living, not of seeing merely ; and in this living not one of us can shirk his part. We may or may not have time to contemplate things ; but in any case at every moment we are acting ; we must act. Our actions modify the spectacle, and therein lies our strict responsibility. The seared conscience is impervious to responsibility ; but the man whose conscience is not seared, — who listens to the categorical imperative of duty uttered steadily in his soul, uttered absolutely, with no appeal, subordinate to nothing, — this man recognizes that every phase of life is also an instance of responsible action, and that every action, implicitly or explicitly, is a profession of faith or of unfaith in God, and a matter of obedience or else of disobedience to God. To look at life as a mere observer, and for purposes of criticism alone, is to separate knowledge from duty. But in conscience man's knowledge of God is inseparably bound up with his duty to God. To see or to know anything

of life carries with it a command to act and to be according to what we know ; and this not for the sake of our knowledge, but for the sake of God, whose we are, and whom we serve.

And this leads us directly to another effect of conscience upon the mind of man. Conscience does not only temper man's knowledge with the sense of personal obligation to act, making knowledge in all cases a part of life and amenable to life ; conscience also gives steadiness and tranquillity to the mind itself in acquiring what it knows. To realize God with humility always steadies the mind, and through conscience we do realize God. The conscientious person is well aware that the thing in all this world of being, next to our own personality, which we know first and longest and closest, is that strange, imperative, inner voice that bids "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not," when we turn to the right hand or when we turn to the left. So soon as ever reason and experience had trained men's eyes and hands to discriminate duly between appearance and reality in the things we see, conscience was there to guide ; and this guidance of conscience was always recognized as God's guidance. Thus our very first notions of reality are fastened to God. Every attempt to explain conscience as the voice of men to man has ended in self-contradiction. Every attempt to explain away conscience had fared no better than the similar efforts to explain away free-will. My soul still knows *I*

*ought*, even as it knows *I can*. And this voice of duty at every period of history has been recognized as a voice from the eternal world, — from where, beyond these earthly voices, there is peace. This knowledge of what we ought to be here is knowledge of what God is there, — a knowledge, first, that if we are, God is ; and secondly, that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It is a knowledge keener and stronger than our knowledge of things outside us, or of men outside us, because it is a knowledge of God within us, — a bond that binds us to the eternal Person who is to human persons at once a Lawgiver and an Inspirer. It is a misrepresentation to say that the uneasiness of him who disobeys his conscience is the simple fear of punishment, whether human or divine ; rather it is the intense anguish of the soul that feels that it has wilfully broken with its only real Support, and with One who knows it better and loves it better than all else in the universe. If there be any such thing as human knowledge of anything whatsoever, or any such thing as human certainty, then this is the certainty of all certainties, and the first factor in all our knowledge. The very root element in our sense of the permanence of anything is our sense of God's permanenee that belongs to us in conscience. There speaks the one "I Am." Is it not easy, then, to see how the conscientious man is fortified in his efforts to acquire and to master some knowledge of the things of earth

and time? how frail and fitful must be his thinking whose conscience is seared? Have you not noticed the bewilderment and exhaustion — the feeling that life is hardly worth thinking, any more than it is worth living — in the critics and philosophers of our day who have let slip their faith in God? The first feature of modern literature and knowledge is the vastness of it, its multiplicity, its infinity of details. We are doomed to be specialists if we would not be superficial; and every specialist is superficial except in his own domain; and even his own domain touches and crosses so many other departments of investigation that he cannot be sure of all the bearings even of what he knows. Do you remember Albrecht Dürer's grand engraving, *Melancholia*? A robust woman,<sup>1</sup> full of intellectual and vital force, sits drearily in the midst of the implements of knowledge. She broods, with her chin resting on her right hand. Books and scrolls and scientific instruments are strewn around, and in her left hand she holds a compass. It is plain that that resolute genius is melancholy neither from weakness of body nor vacancy of mind. She sees the avenues to all there is to know. She is strong and she is learned. But though the plumes of her wings are mighty, she sits moodily, pondering amidst the tools of suspended labor on the shore of a silent sea. Is it not the portrait of too

<sup>1</sup> This illustration is taken from P. G. Hamerton's "Intellectual Life."

much of our modern culture, that is overtaken by the mass and the variety of the materials of knowledge, and has lost the clue to them? But the conscientious thinker can never lose his clue. However the objects of knowledge multiply, he always falls back on this primal sense of God, the Beginning and the End of all things. He is familiar with intellectual suspense, but not with intellectual doubt, for his conscience has given God to him as the basis of all knowledge and the Giver of it. Nothing external can shock or gainsay that direct sense of God's Being within the personal soul. Over against its ideas and emotions and experience, and all information from without, the human thinker confronts in his own inmost being the Divine Reality that underlies him and all things, — which all things presuppose. True to conscience, the thinker perceives that each phase of truth, inward or outward, is but an aspect of the nearness of the Almighty, the echo of His Voice, the history of His operations, the prophecy of His purpose. "All things are from Him and to Him, and by Him all things consist." This is the conscientious thinker's point of view; and hence no facts of science or of history or of personal experience can daunt him; for facts are the expression of God's Providence; but human inferences from facts are to the conscientious thinker invariably false if they seem to lead away from God. God has given him all he knows, together with his faculty for knowing; and so he

goes on learning all that he can so long as he can ; not asking for more light upon his knowledge than God now vouchsafes to shed ; confident that all the roads of human learning lead straight to God, if only we had time to follow them out, and waiting in strong humility for the call to that higher sphere of being where we shall know even as also we are known.

I had intended to dwell also on the effect of conscientiousness upon the life of the affections, but I have scarcely time. Just as the lively conscience will modify all man's thinking, giving to it on the one hand tranquillity and firmness, and on the other hand attaching to all thought the sense of action, of consequences, of personal responsibility for life ; so also it will purify and steady that side of man's relations with his fellows which we vaguely call man's heart. Oh, how rare is a conscientious life of the affections ! Take one instance, and the capital one, the life of man and wife. Other relations of life are more or less invaded by the laws and the scrutiny of society and the state ; but, so long as they keep clear of positive crime, in all their most intimate relations man and wife are left to themselves. A man's home is his castle. Love, like death, is beyond the pale of social conventions. There they are then, these two, male and female, face to face for better or worse. Sooner or later they will reveal each to the other, in spite of themselves, the very depths of their being

and character, and the crises that they pass through will show up the roots of their souls. Behind the four walls of that home will be transacted infamies that no human law can reach, or heroisms that no human honors can glorify. There will arise between these two souls opportunities of self-indulgence or of self-control which no wills but their will shall ever modify ; and cases of conscience which none but the Spirit of God Himself can rightly solve. Ah, what misery then, if their consciences are seared ! if they have deadened the faculty whereby the Pure and Holy One could speak to them ! For though the hours pass, and the years go by, and death may break their bond, for what they two have done together during those same fleeting years they will have to stand for judgment at the eternal bar of right and wrong.

God help us all, my brothers, to keep our conscience tender and alive. As we do these little deeds, and think these little thoughts, that seem to us such trifles, — such petty failures to obey the still, small voice within, — let us henceforth remember that we are thereby insensibly deadening and damaging our most precious faculty of all, — conscience, the faculty whose failure to operate renders our thinking wrong, our actions bad, and our affections ruinous to us and to those we love.

## XVI.

### CHRIST'S VERDICT ON HIS OWN SUFFERINGS.<sup>1</sup>

Then opened He their understanding . . . and said unto them . . . it behoved Christ to suffer. — ST. LUKE, xxiv. 46.

TO-DAY is Passion Sunday. By to-day's Epistle the Prayer Book begins to draw our attention especially to the approaching anniversary of Christ's sufferings and death. And here in our text is our Saviour's verdict, after His resurrection, on all His sufferings that had gone before. Observe that it is Christ's own verdict, — not what some apostle or friend or distant onlooker said of them, but what He Himself said. The opinions of those who observe the sufferings of another may be valuable for the purposes of history, of medicine, of scientific psychology; but from the standpoint of individual morality they are of little worth. When we speak of the secrets of the single soul, — of that mysterious inward history that no human outsider can unveil, — what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him? Who would

<sup>1</sup> Passion Sunday sermon.

dare to measure the balances of advantage and disadvantage, in the case even of his best known brother and say certainly that in any given crises of his soul-life, it is well for him to be suffering what he does? "Every man shall bear his own burden." But in the passage of our text we have Christ's own verdict on His own sufferings. After He had lived and died and risen again, this is His confidential commentary on all that He had undergone.

It was Easter night, and ten of the disciples were sitting together with closed doors for fear of the Jews. The two who had seen Jesus on the way to Emmaus had just come back to tell the glad news; and as the disciples sat there discussing their strange story, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." But they were affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. So He asked them, "Why do anxious thoughts arise in you hearts? Handle me and see that it is I Myself. And while yet they believed not for joy and wonder, He said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and of an honeycomb, and He took it, and did eat before them. Then opened He their understanding, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead." Out of the calm and comfort of His eternal resurrection life this is Christ's message to all those who have the fellowship of His sufferings.

Have you ever tried, my brethren, to make that message a real one to yourselves? Have you ever sought to make vivid to yourselves, so far as the human mind is able, what Christ's sufferings were, — not sentimentally and fantastically, but plainly and truly according to the simple narrative of the Gospels? Devout people often say that Jesus Christ seems far away to them; that while God our Father is a reality to their souls, Christ our Saviour is vague, — that they cannot bring Him close to them, and feel that He makes any practical difference in their daily life. They can live with God the Father daily, — can pray to Him, and think of Him, and lean on Him; but Jesus Christ our Saviour, though they believe that He did redeem them centuries ago, seems hardly to touch their present life, — nothing seems to bring together them and Him. But how can we expect that Christ will seem a reality to us, if we do not so much as try to apprehend what the Gospels state definitely about Him, nor realize how accurately His earthly life was parallel to ours? Let us then endeavor this morning, in one particular at any rate, to retrieve ourselves as to this matter; let us try to bring out sharply to our historic imagination the downright facts as to what He suffered, as they are told so briefly and yet so eloquently in the New Testament histories; let us see how strangely and yet how truly the things He suffered were like what average men and women still suffer from day to day.

To begin with, our Lord was poor. This, as a general fact, often passes through our minds; but let us make the fact definite; let us see how Christ was poor. There is hardly a country in the world that has altered so little as Palestine. If you go through Galilee to-day you see things pretty much as they were when Jesus lived there. The country is the same; the occupations are the same; the houses are the same; the very style of living is similar, — nay, in many cases you can actually put your hand on the stone walls of some ancient building, recently excavated, and say: “That house was there, and looked even so, when Jesus of Nazareth passed by.” Jesus was a carpenter in some small house of that small village of the most despised province of a conquered land. When people wished to prejudice Him in men’s eyes, to brand Him with opprobrium, they styled Jesus a Nazarene. “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” they would say. Thus for thirty years, from babyhood to manhood, in a low stone house, with no windows, and lighted only by one door, probably with but one room serving at once for shop, kitchen, and bedroom, Jesus Christ lived and labored at His trade. I do not say that at that time He was pinched for bread. Food comes easily in that climate, and physical wants are simple. Our Lord doubtless earned His living, as His foster-father Joseph had before Him. It came by the sweat of His brow; it cost Him trouble, and made

Him constantly tired ; but it came honorably, and without begging, and was sufficient for His low estate. He was never on the lowest round of the social scale ; He was simply poor. The suffering that poverty caused Him was not so much the suffering of privation as the suffering of being despised. Poverty hindered His teaching, stood in the way of His wonderful power of example, deprived Him of prestige ; for among the Jews, no less than among the Romans of those days, to be poor was to be contemptible. The distinguished Pharisees, the rich Sadducees, educated at great cost, were all agreed that it was absurd to look for instruction, in religion or in morals, to a man of low extraction and mean surroundings. "Is not this the carpenter? Whence hath this man wisdom? Out of Galilee ariseth no prophet!" they exclaimed. Thus our Saviour was always under social disabilities. Look into your hearts, my brothers ; recall the twinges of offended pride, the heart-burnings of balked ambition, and the nobler yearnings to break down the barriers that hamper your usefulness, and tell me now that you can find nothing in the Christ-life that brings it close to yours ; tell me, above all, whether there is not the ring of real, downright, every-day experience in the Master's words when out of the richness of His own soul-life He began His Sermon on the Mount with this saying, "Blessed are the meek."

I have said that in His opening years Jesus' lot

was not one of complete deprivation or extreme physical pain. That experience came later on, in His passion and crucifixion. In the two and a half years of His final ministry as a teacher, He tested this trial likewise. Hunger, thirst, sleeplessness, nervous exhaustion, the sharpest bodily pain, — all these His crucifixion brought to Him. Indeed the record of His passion would seem to indicate that He was never physically as strong as most men. He fainted under the burden of the cross, but the other prisoners did not faint. He died so much quicker than was usual that when the soldiers came, according to custom, to break His legs and put an end to His torture, they found Him dead already. And some months previous, when persons were over-eager to become His disciples and He wished to test their earnestness, He gave incidental testimony to the daily hardships of His ministry by saying, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests: but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Have you ever been uncertain of your home? seen it broken up by financial ruin, or physical ill-health, or death? Has that bitter adjective "homeless" applied to you? It matters little how trying a man's life may be in other respects, if only he have a good and happy home. There is one place at whose door all burdens are laid down, all disappointments lightened, and the fretted heart is cheered. Love and trust and self-respect and fellowship are very medicines for the

mind diseased and the soul that is sorry. But from the day that He began His Ministry our Saviour had no home. Yet there is other testimony, equally incidental and even more significant. Thus at the time of his conversation with the woman of Samaria it is mentioned by Saint John that He was wearied with His journey and sat on the well to rest; but the disciples who had journeyed with Him were not weary, — they went away directly unto the city to buy meat. And by and by at Jerusalem, when He was arguing with the unbelieving Pharisees, they suddenly exclaimed contemptuously: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham?" Have you ever appreciated what a hint we have here of our Lord's personal appearance at that time? "Not yet fifty years old!" In fact He was not yet thirty; and how wasted and infirm He must have looked, for them in their scornful guesses to have added twenty years to the days of the years of His pilgrimage! There are souls that fairly consume the bodies that they occupy. Keen mental conflict, high moral earnestness, disinterested self-devotion to mankind, are wont to make ravages upon this tenement of flesh. So was it with Jesus Christ.

Again, our Lord's isolation was not merely that of the affections; it was intellectual and moral. Many a man finds his mission in the world comprehended by his fellows, even though he himself may not be so. But in Christ's case men misunderstood His mission

quite as much as they misunderstood Him. From the first the rulers misinterpreted Him; and although the common people heard Him gladly so long as He simply cured their bodies and soothed their earthly sorrows, they quickly turned against Him when He insisted on the eternal matters of the soul. Then not even His brethren believed on Him. They would have accepted a throne for Him and for themselves, but they would not bear the cross. And with the chosen and more faithful Twelve, even up to the very hour of His death, He had to say, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" I have read of great philanthropists who could find no one to organize their schemes; of great generals who lacked assistants; of inventors who died before they could adequately disclose their secret. I have known of parents who passed away feeling that they were powerless to secure possible advantages for their children because the children would not grasp their views. I have known men of culture and large ideas living among others whose minds were dull and whose hearts were narrow. But the mental and moral loneliness of Jesus Christ was greater, keener, still. Once more, our Saviour "suffered being tempted;" and until we realize this we shall never feel close to Him. Temptation is the deepest mystery of human soul-life. That awful law of opportunity, whereby the soul that

is meant for God meets a force that draws that soul away from God, and, if only the soul be willing, draws it successfully; that singular variety of character whereby what is one man's food is to another poison; that terrific drama which, as enacted among us sinners, is but too accurately described by Saint Paul when he says, in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin," — this ineffable fact of temptation is the deepest mystery of the soul; and to the man whose conscience is keen it is also the sharpest of all suffering. There are moments in every noble soul-life when no physical pain, no grief of the affections can be compared to the simple misery of being tempted, — when a man would gladly cut off his right hand, or put out his right eye, if only he could escape that crisis, foreseen but unavoidable, when the old sin that so easily besets him will again be present to his choice. All this, even this, Christ also experienced. Holy Scripture says expressly that He was in all points tempted like as we are, though without sin. Unlike us, His will never flinched. He never once chose the evil. But He was tried just as thoroughly as we are, and "He suffered being tempted." He conquered the temptation, but there

was an amount of anguish involved in that conquest which Gethsemane itself can but suggest to us.

My brothers, I have not been dwelling on these things merely to call out your sympathy. In such matters mere sympathy, mere sentimental appreciation, is dangerous to the soul. But it is not dangerous, it is very helpful, after we have thus realized how easily Christ's life comes home to our lives in all the materials of sorrow, to listen to His own verdict on such sufferings after that He had outlived them forever. "Then opened He their understanding . . . and said unto them . . . it behoved Me to suffer." Who would not wish to have been present on that memorable evening, and to have heard the full conversation of which our text is but the briefest record? to have heard how the risen Jesus ascertained in the higher world that it was a good thing for Him to have suffered, — that in God's presence all sorrow turns to joy? And yet I doubt if we have really missed much that would be valuable here. I fancy that as each and every soul must bear its own burden of suffering, so a stranger doth not intermeddle with the joy into which hereafter the sorrow is found to turn. It is a personal experience which all may duplicate, but which none can anticipate or share. Here, if anywhere in the Christian life, is the sphere of faith. We can look on while others suffer; we can hear them say, and can accept their saying, that they find such sufferings a good thing in the end;

but their sufferings are not ours, nor ever can be. The essential quality of suffering is that it is personal, — that it is my pain, and not another's. And when the inviolable soul is caught in the throes of any such personal distress, it requires nothing less than personal faith to bear the present pain in confidence of future welfare. Such faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; it is a strong and trustful leap in the dark. If it were not for this darkness, faith would not be faith; and the difficulty of it, the tremendous strain which it puts on the moral fibre of even the best of men is sufficiently attested in the Gospel story of the three hours' darkness when Christ was on the cross, — of the yearning, piercing cry that burst from Him: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" When it was all over, and in persistent trust He had yielded up His broken spirit into His Father's hands, and passed behind the veil to "where beyond these voices there is peace," — where in the clear, calm light of God's eternal truth and righteousness "we shall see even as also we are seen," — then Christ could come back to earth and announce to His disciples that it behooved Him to suffer; but while the trial was still going on the best that He could do was to say resolutely, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." It was an act of faith, and thereby of necessity an absolutely personal act, — an act which faithful Christians, copying their Holy Master, may

duplicate, but cannot share. No man shall ever learn like Jesus that his sufferings here are all worth while, until he, like Jesus, has ceased to suffer and partaken of the resurrection life.

But although in this absolute sense our Lord's words on this matter can only serve as an encouragement to our individual faith, and cannot replace the peculiar certitude that will come to us from actual experience of the life beyond the grave ; nevertheless there is a sense in which, as we study the general religious history of mankind, and our personal religious experience, we can see, even while we are still on earth, that it behooved us to suffer. For what, as a matter of historic fact, has been the persistent function of suffering in the soul-life of this world? Has it not from the beginning been the link, surer than all others, to bind the soul to God ; to make the soul both feel and recognize the need of God, to sigh and hope and wait for and believe in "an ampler ether, a diviner air" than earth supplies to us? Mere theism — mere belief that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him — would not withstand the stress of this world's happiness if it were wholly happy. We should be so contented with the world and with ourselves that our faith in God, and our consciousness of needing Him, would be soothed to sleep. Theism, like pure oxygen, is the breath of life ; but by us sinners it may not be breathed alone. It is too rare and fine for the actual conditions

of this workaday world. But suffering, in Christ's view of it, supplies the lacking element to the atmosphere that human souls must breathe. No faithful soul can take it in without being aware of new motives, higher aspirations, — of yearnings that nought earthly can satisfy. It was under the stress of suffering and sorrow that the saint cried out of old: "*O amare, O ire, O ad Deum parvenire.*" "Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God: when shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" Suffering takes the very materials of earth and transforms them into prophecies of heaven. It is God's perpetual protest against materialism. It vindicates the great truth that underlies all really rational philosophy, that the vast mechanism of the universe implies something beyond itself; that it exists for the realization of moral worth, — worth in character and conduct, — not simply for physical satisfaction, or even for mental and spiritual satisfaction. Suffering makes the note of human living and human soul-power, self-devotion, not self-satisfaction. When Saint Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is speaking of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, he says that "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Oh, my brothers, do not our hearts tell us that in all this world it is never really well with us except when we are obeying God? and

that if we had not known what it is to suffer, we should never have quite known what it is to obey? Here then, perhaps, we have an intimation of what in heaven we shall know; that every trial we underwent here, every grief and difficulty and anguish was absolutely necessary if ever we were to learn to bow down our souls and obey our Father which is in heaven; and then we shall see what now, alas! at times we can only believe, — that even such entire obedience of the creature to the Creator, of the child to the Father, is the very bliss of being, the essential joy of the soul. And then we shall say, as Jesus said, that “it behoved us to suffer, and to rise from the dead.”

## XVII.

### HUMAN LIFE UNREASONABLE UNLESS IMMORTAL.<sup>1</sup>

Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. — 1 Cor. xv. 20.

**I**N husbandry everything centres on the first-fruits of the field. They are the justification of all the previous labor, and the promise of the full harvest that is to be. So the husbandman looks for them intently, builds all his hopes on them, and takes great pride in them. He holds them up to all men's gaze in triumph, as a specimen of his pains and a presage of his profits. Hereon hangs the significance of the sacrifice of the first-fruits to the Lord Jehovah in the Old Testament ritual, as ordained in the twenty-third chapter of Leviticus. The Israelite would not offer unto his God of that which cost him nothing; and of all his offerings there was none more precious or more prayerful than this one. The Israelites were a race of husbandmen, and all their yearnings for prosperity and peace, the whole outcome of their energy and life, were typified and focalized in this annual ceremony, when from far and near the farmers gath-

<sup>1</sup> Easter sermon.

ered, and offered to the priests the first-fruits of their land. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto ye, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priests: and ye shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you. . . . And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the self-same day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings." It was to this scene of joyful sacrifice, and to all the feelings which in it found expression, that Saint Paul was alluding in his effort to describe the practical significance of the resurrection of our Lord, — to indicate what Christ is to the Christians who believe in Him.

And just as from summer to summer the first fruits of the year are equally important to those that have toiled for them, so each generation of Christians have equal reason to take home to their own selves the significance of Christ's resurrection. As each seed-time and each harvest has its own peculiar difficulties and discouragements and hopes, so also each generation of human souls has its peculiar temptations and its need of special cheer. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not therewith." And therefore Easter after Easter for eighteen centuries Christians throughout the world

have gathered to commemorate this their feast of the first-fruits, and to reiterate their expressions of what this resurrection of Jesus means to them and for them. When the Saviour was talking to His disciples the night before He died, He said to them, "Because I live, ye shall live also." They did not understand Him then. But after He was dead and risen again and ascended into heaven, His apostle Paul was able to offer this commentary on that earlier saying of his Master: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept;" that is, Christ died, as all of us must die; and as He rose again, so shall we all. Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming.

Do we not need that message to-day, my friends, quite as much as men needed it of yore? Have not our modern investigations and discoveries in science and history, and in the comparison of the religions of the world, raised up for us new problems, or rather new expressions of the same old problem that Saint Paul was facing — the mystery of death? Are we not hearing and reading constantly the theories of philosophers and moralists who have lost this faith in a personal hereafter, and who pretend to us that that faith is not really necessary for the welfare and progress of mankind? And are not we obliged, even as the Corinthians of old, to sift these theories and to test these would-be explanations of our life, so as to see whether they are ade-

quate to the occasion? Ah, this is a matter which cannot be shirked, — an inquiry which each thinking soul must consider for himself; for if there be any matter on earth which concerns us personally, singly, and all alone, it is this of one's individual resurrection, because, as Pascal said grimly, "I shall die alone." And if there be sound rational grounds why we Christians can say, and must say, that the risen Jesus is simply the first-fruits of ourselves, the harbinger and the sample of our own immortality, then shall we not bring to our Easter festival a keener feeling and a profounder intention than belonged even to the Jewish festivities over the first-fruits of their fields? Will not the joy of our harvest be greater than theirs?

My theme to-day, then, is this: that human life is unreasonable, if earthly life be all of it, — that personal, human life is unreasonable if not immortal. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is indeed a question of history, and must be dealt with as we deal with matters of historic fact. Nor need we be afraid to deal with it on that platform. Physiologists and sociologists come to us nowadays with what they insist are positive evidences of the ancient condition and the historic development of the races of mankind. I am not prepared to question their evidences, but this I will say: that if these be historic evidences which can pass muster at the bar of rational probability, the evidence for the actual resurrection of Jesus

Christ is indefinitely greater, is by comparison simply overwhelming. Nay, to leave questions of the more ancient history and to come to modern, I say that if on grounds of historic evidence we have any security that Cæsar Augustus or Pontius Pilate lived, we have vastly more security that Jesus Christ both lived and rose again. For human history is a matter of documents and manuscripts, of monuments and institutions; and there is actually to-day more extant evidence of that kind open to scholars and antiquarians in favor of the Gospel story of the life and death and resurrection of the Man Christ Jesus than exists for the accredited history of any of Christ's contemporaries. If only you could and would investigate this plain question of historic evidence you would see this for yourselves.

But historic evidence, like all other kinds of evidence, is only evidence to those who have eyes to see; and the reason why so many persons think that they are absolutely sure, say of the career of Julius Cæsar, while they are by no means sure of that of Jesus Christ, is that when they come to the latter question there are scales over their eyes. First they think, and rightly so, that the question of Christianity is not merely a matter of history, but also of philosophy and of religion, not perceiving that there is philosophy, and religion too, behind their faith in Cæsar; and next they fancy that there are *a priori* reasons which render any and all evidence for the Gospel story of

Jesus extremely improbable. "When they hear of the resurrection of the dead, some mock: and others say, We will hear thee again of this matter." Now, when a person tells me, as Mr. Huxley does in one of his latest books, that man is an automaton and no more, then I can easily understand that he should think there is *a priori* evidence against the resurrection of Christ, — though I cannot think Mr. Huxley quite ingenuous about it; for if he and I are automata, what does any argument of his amount to in itself, or what likelihood is there that it can modify either my convictions or anybody's else? But putting the materialists on one side for to-day, and speaking rather to that vast majority of mankind who believe that they are not automata, but rational persons, with power to think for themselves and to act for themselves, — of these I desire to inquire whether it cannot be shown that, so far from there being any *a priori* grounds against the resurrection of Christ and the immortality of man, there are not *a priori* grounds in favor of these; whether human life itself is not utterly unreasonable unless it be also immortal, — unless, that is, our death involve our resurrection. For again let me remind you, my friends, that in our day we shall never get even a hearing for the historic evidences of Christianity until we have first answered this previous question; since it is because of their being thus previously prejudiced against all evidence for the future per-

sonal existence of man after death, that many persons in our day are induced to reject the overwhelming historic evidences of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. They will not believe that Christ is our first-fruits from the dead because they do not believe that death has any fruits at all.

Men and brethren, there are times when it is well to scrutinize human life in parts and parcels, and to follow the single traits of it as far out as we can. But there are also times when it is well to look at life as a whole, and this is certainly one of these times ; for there is such a thing as being unable to see the forest for the trees. It is impossible to grasp the ultimate significance of our life unless, beside looking at it partially, we also rise up and regard it as a whole. And it is speaking of human life on this earth as an historic whole that I claim that man's life is utterly irrational, if the earthly life be all of it.

1. The wider our view of the relation of this world to the universe of worlds, the keener our insight into the past history and the present conditions of mankind on this earth taken by itself alone, so much the more inevitable is our conclusion that any one man, or race of men, is comparatively insignificant here. Like the ripples on the stream they vanish, and are no more seen. "Put not your trust in princes or in any son of man, for there is no help in them. For when the breath of man goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, and then all his thoughts perish." Such

in every age has been the burden of thoughtful reflection, whether in prose or poetry ; and all our hearts echo it, and the Bible itself justifies it. From the standpoint of this life alone there is nothing more to be said. Death, if it be the end of the individual personality, does not only defeat it there and then, but it depresses the individual at the very start, robs his heart of all courage, and his career of all dignity. Man is no better than the beasts ; they perish.

2. However, there are some in our day who, although sceptical of man's immortality as an individual, claim, notwithstanding, that the relation of the individual man to the whole race of men secures, even to the individual that is bound to perish, his consolation and his dignity. Before he goes hence, and is no more seen, the individual, it is urged, makes his indispensable contribution to the welfare of the whole race of which he temporarily is a part. Without the temporary parts the continuous whole could not be. The merest insect, whose entire vocation in life is to be for a few hours a living group of molecules, and to eat of a single leaf, and there to deposit the egg of a future progeny, has wrought a work that shall have consequences in the eternal order of this world. Much more the individual man, with his longer life and higher powers, no matter how obscure he may be, is playing his part in the lasting life of collective humanity. The individual passes upon earth, but the race endures.

Yes; but does the human race itself endure? This doctrine, which is the sum and substance of the so-called Religion of Humanity, sounds well. There is a ring of disinterested courage in it which is certainly very attractive. But the doctrine is lacking at one point. If humanity were to be permanent on earth, then there might be ground for this religion of humanity; but if science has anything whatever to tell us that is sure, this certainly is the surest: that mankind will not last on earth, — not the individual merely, but the whole human race, is bound to vanish. The material conditions towards which this earth is tending, as æon succeeds æon, will be such that human life cannot survive on this globe. The heavens and the earth will pass away. Here, at any rate, science and the Bible are agreed; and so the whole basis of this self-styled Religion of Humanity disappears. It has borrowed its note of generous self-devotion from the Religion of Jesus Christ; but the *object* for this devotion it has got from nowhere, — neither from Christ nor from science. It is the baseless figment of a dream.

3. Hence it is that human life is seen to be unreasonable, if this earth be the whole of it. The stream cannot rise higher than its source. Man *is*. He finds himself here with these persistent ideas of eternal activity, and eternal duty, and eternal self-devotion and love. If he is, they are; for they are part of him. Man's mind repudiates absurdity; and

for him and his whole race, to be what they are and to feel what they do and to think as they must, and then to have nothingness and annihilation for their end, is a rational absurdity. This ineradicable idea of eternal activity implies without argument that the being who has it is to be eternally active. This idea of endless self-devotion implies the self to devote, and the object to which to be devoted. This law of eternal right involves the existence of God, of whose righteousness this law is the expression.<sup>1</sup> Thus human life, as we know it, without God on the one hand and man's immortality by God's grace on the other becomes unthinkable; it would signify nothing; it could not be. Man here and now is rational; and

<sup>1</sup> As this volume is going to press I chance upon the following paragraph in Dr. Momerie's article in the "Fortnightly," entitled "Religion: its Future." Dr. Momerie puts well and clearly much that I had endeavored to express above. He says: "Reason can only grasp what is reasonable. You cannot explain the conduct of a fool; you cannot interpret the actions of a lunatic. They are contradictory, meaningless, unintelligible. Similarly, if nature were an irrational system, there would be no possibility of knowledge. The interpretation of nature consists in making our own the thoughts which nature implies. Scientific hypothesis consists in guessing at these thoughts; scientific verification in proving that we have guessed aright. 'O God,' said Kepler, when he discovered the laws of planetary motion, 'I think again thy thoughts after thee.' There could be no course of nature, no laws of sequence, no possibility of scientific prediction, in a senseless play of atoms. But as it is, we know exactly how the forces of nature act, and how they will continue to act. We can express their mode of working in the most precise mathematical formulæ. Every fresh discovery in science reveals anew the order, the law, the system, in a word the reason, which underlies material phenomena. And reason is the outcome of mind."

therefore he instinctively and absolutely repudiates absurdity; and therefore he finds it *a priori* probable, instead of improbable, that death does not dispose of him; and therefore, further, when he confronts the historic fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, he is already prepared for it. He looks at this divine Man, Christ, as simply the first-fruits of death. Since by man came death, by man comes also the resurrection of the dead; for it was rationally impossible that man should be permanently holden of death. When Saint Peter was preaching his great sermon on that first Pentecostal morning he was appealing to the invincible reason of mankind. "Ye men of Nazareth, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it." For ages upon ages there had floated before the mind of man, in his better moments, a vision, an ideal, of perfection. Towards that ideal the better energies of men had tended; for it their hearts had longed; by it their own conscience had been educated and enlightened. Now there before them in human flesh, that they

could see and hear and handle, that high ideal had been realized. Christ was the Perfect Man ; and to make death the end of Him would be to make human life absurd. The human reason refuses to suppose that such a life and character as Christ's could be at all if it were simply a fortuitous concourse of atoms signifying nothing ; for "perfect" has no meaning unless it be permanent. If goodness is not abiding, is not eternal, it has neither use nor beauty ; if goodness dies, it must rise again, or else it is not good. And this is what the ignorant masses of mankind perceive full well ; looking around and above them, these masses of the people behold the privileged few whose fortune it is to possess what the masses desire. Christ has power to restrain the masses because He preaches that character is better than earthly possessions, and that the eternal future belongs to good character alone. But if you tell these people that there is no future, then they will naturally conclude that good character is not worth while. Some few of the noblest among them you may still restrain by proclaiming your religion of humanity, — by urging them to deny themselves and toil on generously for the welfare of the race that will abide when they have ceased to be. But when the facts that science already knows have reached the masses, — when they hear that there is no abiding future here even for humanity as a race, that this face of earth itself is going to vanish, and therewith

all mankind, — then even these nobler souls among the poor will declare that you have been cheating them; that you have stolen one of the *motives* of Christianity without the *sanctions* of it. And then all barriers of civilization will be broken, and with a mad rush and a wild hurrah the masses will seize your coveted possessions to glut their natural passions and their own greed of gain, saying: “Give us, O fortunate ones, a share on earth, since you have robbed us of our share in heaven; let us, too, eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” If Christianity be not rational, then Nihilism alone is so.

This is a good argument; but it is not quite the best; it is a trifle selfish and temporizing. The argument *in terrorem* will do when we are thinking of general society, which it is dangerous to upset. But the best argument of all for our faith in the resurrection of man is the private and personal one. In any fair view of the nature of man, one’s life and death and one’s hereafter is a matter of one’s own. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? So far as each of us is ultimately concerned, it is the being and behavior of each one’s separate soul that alone has given quality to the life that we have known. Life to me is what I see it to be; it is for me what I have made it. This is what renders each of us responsible for his life. And it is because this mind of mine is so constituted that it cannot unthink itself; it is because this soul of mine feels to its inmost

core that its innate ideals of truth and holiness and happiness with God are realizable for the very reason that they are thinkable, — it is for this reason above all that, when the soul is confronted with Jesus Christ, in whom these ideals *are* realized, we greet this risen Saviour as the first-fruits of ourselves.

To this feast of the first-fruits we are invited to-day. At the Lord's Table we meet the risen Lord Himself. Come let us adore Him, come bow at His feet; and as we kneel there let us have faith to receive of Him the life which He offers to us all. Christ the first-fruits; afterward we that are Christ's.

## XVIII.

### THE RESURRECTION A FULFILMENT OF MAN'S NATURAL DESIRE.<sup>1</sup>

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. . . . Now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city. — HEBREWS xi. 13, 16.

OUR Easter service, my brethren, is no time for an elaborate sermon. This "Day of Days" is an occasion to Christians of entire worship, and in particular of that supreme act of worship, the Holy Eucharist. We are come this morning to God's altar, to partake of the mystical "Food of Immortality;" and our whole being, body, mind, and soul, should be concentrated on that holy function. We worship Christ, our risen Lord, to-day; and for us frail creatures true worship and entire is always difficult. Even if the spirit be willing, the flesh is weak. Let no moments be so spent now as to weary us for our proper duty. Let no topic be prepared for

<sup>1</sup> Easter sermon.

your consideration that would jar with our Liturgy of Easter prayer and praise. Rather let me simply suggest to you one topic of meditation that is strictly in unison with this service, — a topic, too, which those who stumble at the Church's dogma of the resurrection, and who therefore find themselves indisposed to accept their privilege of Easter communion, may take away with them for further and prayerful reflection elsewhere.

Oh that there were none such as these! that we could every one of us with one accord kneel and partake at yonder table of the Heavenly Food! that there might be no sad divisions in our households between those who do and those who do not eat of the Sacrament of Reconciliation! that fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends might all go up together to the altar, and wait together for the benediction of the Lord! that those who in their residences in this city are lonely and far from home, might find a home, and feel at home, in this House of God, this sanctum of Christian fellowship! But as it is not so; as there must needs be this outward separation between those who are communicants and those who are not; and as this is but the outward and physical sign of a spiritual separation which, however sad and undesirable, is at least in many cases conscientious, and therefore honorable; and as these doubtings and hesitations of our brethren oftentimes affect those of us who are communicants, casting a

certain cloud of intellectual difficulty over our own spiritual insight, — let me endeavor briefly to suggest a topic which I think is timely, and which bears witness to the thorough reasonableness of that great dogma of the Christian creed which we profess to-day.

The great desire of man is for personal immortality in body and soul; and in the fact of Christ's resurrection which we commemorate to-day, the Christian finds the pledge and the assurance that this universal desire of mankind will be satisfied; that our life in the world to come will be a transformed continuation of man's complete being in body and soul. Now in our intellectual attitude while sifting the evidence for Christ's resurrection from the dead, a great deal depends on whether we regard that resurrection beforehand as likely or unlikely. Men of science are quite familiar with this supreme importance of the attitude of the investigator's mind towards the truth that he is in search of. If the observer is wide awake; if by previous reasoning he is already disposed to accept the truth he is in search of, then he is instinctively alive to subtile indications of it that will inevitably escape his notice if he be otherwise disposed. It was because Newton was ready for the law of gravitation that he detected it in the falling of the apple. It was because Davy was keen for the discovery of a new motive-power that he found it in the steam that raised the lid of his boiling teapot. It was because Edison was on the track of the tele-

phone that he was able to invent it, — because all his brain-power and all his senses were on the *qui-vive* to the finest methods for the communication of sound. The same phenomena, the same facts of nature, had been for centuries at the disposal of mankind; but mankind were blind and deaf to them. It was because Newton and Davy and Edison were not blind, because on the contrary they were intensely predisposed to see, that they were able actually to make their great discoveries. Now I claim that in this matter of the resurrection from the dead, you and I, my brethren, are in a far better position to weigh the evidence for it, to see the signs of it, than our forefathers were; and that for this reason. The scientific investigations<sup>1</sup> of our age, and in particular those of Darwin, have established beyond controversy this fact: that the natural desires of every creature invariably find their satisfaction, — that the mere existence of the desire implies that somewhere in nature's repertory there exists the means to gratify it. Darwin lays it down as an axiom, applicable to the whole range of living being, that there is no such thing as useless desire, — that desires are never vain, — and that the great lever of progress from protoplasm to fully developed man has been the continual search for the satisfaction of desire, and the success

<sup>1</sup> For the scientific illustrations of this sermon I am deeply indebted to Canon Macoll's "Christianity in Relation to Science and Morals."

of that search. Whatever the desire of any living creature may be, you may be sure of its fulfilment; you can find its fulfilment, if only you have eyes to see. Hunger implies food; thirst implies drink; the eye implies sight; the pinions of the bird imply the atmosphere against which the wings may beat to raise the bird on high; the web which the spider weaves implies the insect which shall therein be caught for food; the very inability of the orchid to fertilize itself implies the bee that shall bring to it unawares the pollen of other flowers. And as with the lower animals, so also with mankind. The impulse of the architect to construct implies the wood and stone and iron wherewith the building can be done; the artist's impulse to depict on canvas or to carve in marble his subtle apprehensions of natural beauty implies the pigments, brush, and chisel wherewith his work is created. Once detected, the illustrations of this law are seen to be as manifold and as interesting as the whole wide universe of being.

Shall the law then cease to operate just where it is most demanded? If there be such a thing as the reign of law (and on that our whole modern science depends), shall its reign stop short at precisely those desires of man which most ennoble him; which distinguish him from the lower orders of beings; which have been the motive-power of all that is peculiar in civilization? The magnet of raw iron implies invariably the pole. Put the magnet in a vacuum, in

absolutely empty space, and the magnet will point nowhere ; it remains motionless. But put it in the world as we find it, and the magnet points always to the pole. And is it reasonable then to suppose that the human soul, the highest stage of all in nature's evolution, — the human soul, with impulses as universal and imperative and useful as those of any lower order of being, — is it possible that the human soul is the one exception to the rule? that there this reign of law abruptly stops? No, until you can show just cause for such an impotent conclusion, it is profoundly irrational to admit it for a moment.

Now of all the desires of mankind, the desire for immortality in body and soul together is the keenest, unless the man be brutalized. The higher the type of man, the nobler his achievements, the sweeter his affections, the grander his ideals and his plans, so much the intenser has always been his desire not to die. More and more he feels that this short life is not the whole of him : that there is a higher, an endless sphere of being into which death will usher him. The lower animals for the most part seem adapted to their abode. There is no indication in them of any wish for a hereafter. The bird in the egg, indeed, the caterpillar in the chrysalis, are not fully adapted to their abode ; you see in them the rudiments of organs that point to another state of being. But when the bird has broken its shell, when the caterpillar has emerged from its chrysalis, there is in them

no further mark of inadaptation to their surroundings. Like all the other beasts that perish, they are quite contented with their home, and give no sign of larger longings than earth can satisfy. But man is not quite adapted to his earthly home; the shell is not large enough, nor lasting enough for its tenant. The veriest savage shows his discontent by at least building the most enduring monument of himself that his rude skill can raise. The one unanimous refrain of human literature from its dawn until to-day, from Homer and the Zend-Avesta to Dante and Shakespeare and Goethe and Tennyson, is that the aspirations and endeavors of the soul transcend the boundary of mortal life. Man's thirst for knowledge, for beauty, for power; his persistent longing for the dead; his indomitable horror at the idea of his personal annihilation, — all these, which have been the mainspring of his progress here, are also the gauge of his strong desire for immortality. And I insist that by all the force of analogy, by the stress of right reason, by the significance of the universal reign of law, and above all by cogent inference from his own recently discovered law that every desire implies the satisfaction of it, — I say that it is going against all our best knowledge of the universe and of man himself, to suppose that his insatiable impulse after a personal immortality is to be robbed of fruition, — that man's highest and last desire is the one to be balked.

How all this comes out especially in the Christ, whose resurrection from the grave we celebrate to-day! By common consent, apart from all questions of theology and of His Divine Nature, Jesus Christ is the perfect Man, — the highest type of manhood that the world has ever seen. And in Him this desire of immortality passes into absolute conviction. Notice Him as His death draws near. Listen to Him as He prays with His Apostles in the upper chamber the night before His betrayal: “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee. . . . And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. . . . Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are. . . . I pray for them. . . . Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedest Me before the foundation of the world.” Would it be possible to imagine a more complete expression of the intense desire of the perfect Man for the immortality of Himself and those He loves? The highest development of humanity utters this desire the most intensely of all. And as we confront Him on the Via Dolorosa, as we watch Him dying on the Cross, our reason commands us to believe that that desire of Jesus is certain of satisfaction.

True, in Jesus Christ the desire for immortality is a desire for something more than immortality ; it is a desire to be immortal with God. But in the last expression even of our erring wishes to continue after death, is there not, my brothers, something of the same ? Do not all our desires lead us at last to God Himself, and merge themselves in Him ? This love of knowledge, this insatiable curiosity that in all ages has sent man across inhospitable deserts, and over forbidding seas, and into the bowels of the earth ; that has induced him to pass sleepless nights and laborious days in exploring the secrets of science and scrutinizing the records of history, — does it not invariably land the student at a point where he must be thinking of God ? And love, is it not the very essence of the quality of human affection that it suggests God ? And beauty, is not all the best poetry of our literatures a witness that the ideal beauty is Divine ; that the evanescent loveliness of earth beckons the soul to the world where loveliness is eternal ? Ah, we are making a sorry mistake if we allow ourselves to fancy that the immortality that we are in search of is an immortality without God. Any immortality which should be a mere repetition of this world, out of which and away from which we, by our own confession, have been growing, — any immortality which should shut us up in ourselves and our creaturely circumstances, apart from the Divine Being whom even here and now we have discerned in them, — any

immortality without God would be indeed a hell. "Thou, O Lord God, art the thing that I long for." "Like as the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, yea even for the living God! When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" Such is the real content, the true object of man's universal impulse, of his progressive desire. The man who accepts the revelation of Easter morning must be prepared to submit himself to a process of much winnowing, of constant purification. He must be prepared to see God as He is, and to love Him and serve Him as He is. "Our God is a consuming fire." "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; for the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is." Even true earthly love soon teaches a man what it is to be purified by one's own desire. Many a man who had no conception what the love of woman would do for him, has been amazed to find how it lifted him out of his lower self and raised him to a higher, unselfish plane. All that renovating and elevating power was hidden in the flame of his own desire, though he little guessed it at the first. And can it possibly be otherwise with the soul's love of our Father which is in heaven? This is the very essence of our Easter message. This is what Saint Paul refers to when he speaks so often of the "risen life." "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things

which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." But when we recognize all this, and are prepared to struggle to attain it; when we feel the glow of Easter morning mellowing our earthly impulses and suggesting to us that it is straight to God they carry, — how often, alas! we find ourselves abashed and chilled by the cold, dark spirit of scepticism, inspiring a doubt whether there be, for us at any rate, any personal life after all, — any personal resurrection; whether we have any *proof* at any rate, that our hope of future immortality is justified by what we know of present facts. It is at such moments, I think, that the considerations which I have to-day suggested will be especially helpful to us; showing, as they do, that the stress of the most modern scientific principles, and the entire tendency of our being, and the very constitution of animal life as a whole, compel us to the inference that, as every desire of every known species of being implies and involves its satisfaction, so also this universal desire of mankind to live forever, and to be forever with God, is bound to be fulfilled. God is our shield, and our exceeding great reward. Just because we desire a better country, even an heavenly, therefore God is not ashamed to be called our God; for He hath prepared for us a city.

## XIX.

### THE LONGSUFFERING GOD.

The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering. — EXODUS xxxiv. 6.

THIS is one of those passages which make manifest the divineness of the Bible; how it was really a revelation; how truly inspired. Here we have a description of God's character. It is not marvellous *to us*; it is the description of God we have been familiar with from childhood. But put yourself for a moment in the place of those to whom these words were originally addressed; recall their ways of thinking and feeling; the customs of their society, of their homes; their habitual type of character; the prevalent view of the world, and of God's relation to the world, — consider these things and then you will appreciate how impossible it is that any such view of God's character as this of our text could have been conceived by them, except as a revelation from on high.

Moses and the Israelites were living in the Oriental world, and the Oriental mind was essentially despotic.

We see this to-day in those countries where our western ways have not yet changed the face of things ; there are nations where the same characteristics of thought and manners prevail now as at the period when this book Exodus was written. And the extant literature and monuments of these past ages tell the same story. It was a time when the will of the father in his family was the perfect type of that of the king in his kingdom ; the father was a despot in his family, and so was the king on his throne. The king's will, the king's most passing whim, was the law for all. He was alike and altogether jury and judge and lawgiver and master of armies. Whomsoever he blessed was blessed, and whomsoever he cursed was cursed. Hundreds of minions waited on his nod ; thousands of slaves were ready to fulfil with expedition his works and plans. With him to will was to execute, for there were no hindrances ; to brook the slightest hindrance, to be willing to compound with delays, was *ipso facto* to be unkingly. This was the prevalent ideal of the family and the state, which it was the whole tendency of things to realize wherever the father and the king were by personal character equal to their opportunities.

And this view of earthly matters was projected into the heavenly. To the Oriental mind God also was a despot ; if He had been otherwise He could not have been conceived of as God. Is not the very attribute of God omnipotence ? and if God be by

nature all-powerful, will He not naturally and of course proceed at once and arbitrarily to execute His will? Such was the drift of the Oriental religious feeling, and the logic of the Oriental mind; nor need we look farther than to Calvin to see, even in our modern Western civilization, proofs that such views of the Divine Being are far from foreign to us, by no means necessarily irrational. What God's real nature is, is a question of fact; as far as we can see beforehand theoretically, there is much in man and much in the material world that would seem to lead to contradictory conclusions about Him. And at any rate the Oriental view of God was despotic.

Directly in opposition to that view, then, came this revelation of God to Moses: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering." Long-suffering is the antithesis of despotic. Yet Moses had come of the race of the patriarchs; of those to whom the sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham, even if it had been consummated, would have appeared quite proper, because the father of every family was held to have authority even over the life of his wives and children. And Moses, born of such blood, had been educated in Egypt, in the house of Pharaoh, — in the land where the idea of a blind and darksome fate tintured all the customs of religion and society, and where Pharaoh's will and Pharaoh's whims were as sure of execution, as inexorable, as

fate itself. Beyond question, then, we have evidence in this book Exodus of something higher than mere natural religion, — of something finer and sweeter than the instinctive conscience of that benighted age and people. It is God Himself coming down to man, and rectifying man's partial notions of His Divine Being and character; supplementing and transforming the idea of omnipotence by that of patient and persevering mercy. "And Moses said unto the Lord, See, Thou sayest unto me, bring up this people. . . . Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now Thy way, that I may know Thee; . . . I beseech Thee, shew me Thy glory. And Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto Mount Sinai, as the Lord had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the Name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering. . . . And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."

Such was the singular revelation to the leader of Israel as to the essential character of the Almighty. And the whole subsequent history of the Israelites was an exemplification, a practical demonstration of this. When we look at that history as a whole, noticing the perpetual aberrations of this chosen people, their inadequacy to their own mission, their

misuse of opportunities, the repeated betrayals of their trust, their unfortunate approaches to the heathen nations around them, their witchcraft and idolatries, the complete obliteration of the Ten Tribes, the seventy years captivity of the two remaining tribes, their conquest by the Greeks, and again by the Romans, until their very existence as a separate nation was voided; and how this moment of their disappearance as a nation under the imperial supremacy of Rome was the moment of the appearance of the long-promised Messiah, — when, I say, we regard this chequered history of the Jews as a whole, seeing, as we can, the end from the beginning, the impression that it makes on us is precisely this: it is a vindication of the revelation to Moses, — a practical demonstration, in a wide area of human life, of God's character, not as despotic but as longsuffering, — not as of One who, because He is all-powerful, breaks and effaces the opposition of his subjects, but as One who is content to wait on human wills even for the fulfilment of the Divine plan that has been determined from all eternity. God has put His treasure in earthen vessels, and He remembers whereof men are made.

It is striking to observe how continually difficult it is for the human soul to lay hold of this feature of the Divine character as a present fact. Looking at the past, we detect it; but in the stress and perplexity of present life it eludes us. And the occasions

which produce this difficulty for the soul, — the reasons why the human mind finds it hard to grasp this present fact of the Divine Mind as a patient and persistent Providence, and not a despot, — vary from age to age. To the Oriental mind, as we have just seen, this difficulty arose from the general conditions of Oriental life. Power in the Orient was seldom patient and forbearing; it was swift and arbitrary, regardless of the personality and the privileges of subordinates. Hence the subjects of earthly sovereigns were wont to project into heaven their experience of earth, — to imagine their God as they saw their king. In our day the difficulty arises from a cause the direct opposite of this. Life was small and simple in the ancient world; in the modern it is complex and large. The human mind has analyzed the universe and split it into bits. The multiplicity of nature, the infinity of life's details, — so vast and far that the telescope cannot reach them, so tiny and so intricate that the microscope cannot fully disclose them, so various that each separate science has branches enough to occupy the entire intelligence of man, — this is the aspect both of the animate and the inanimate world which in our age most abashes man's powers of comprehension. Starting with the innate idea of design, without which our reason refuses to take a step, because if reason be, chaos cannot be, — starting with this original idea of design, our modern science has found itself compelled to follow out that

idea to an extent that is bewildering. We had learned previously to think of our God as patient, because of the facts of the Old Testament history and because of the influence of Jesus ; and therefore we were quite ready to see design in nature because design suggests patience, and patience permits design. But now our idea of design has taken us beyond all bounds. Not only in the development of mankind, but in the development of the whole universe of nature, we find designs which, if there be a designing mind at all, it has required thousands and millions of ages to achieve ; designs involving an infinitude of efforts, crossed by what to our eyes looks like failure, to be crowned only after the expiration of aeons with success which, if in one aspect complete, in another seems accidental. There is no denying the plan, there is no concealing the success. Even the phrase "survival of the fittest" admits both the plan and the success. For if there be no plan, how can anything be either fit or unfit ; and if the fittest survive, then the plan has succeeded. But is not nature her own plan ? Is there a personal God succeeding *in* nature ? Is there any Being behind nature, other than nature, at all ? Is not nature too slow and too multiplex to be so much as permitted by an omnipotent God ? Personality implies not merely design, but desire ; and if to infinite Desire there be added infinite Will, is it possible that this infinite Will should be so utterly longsuffering in the execution of His designs as the disclosures of science indicate ?

Do you not see, my brothers, that this objection issues from the same misconception of God which clouded the Oriental mind? We indeed have repudiated arbitrary governments among men, but we still allow it to God. Even though the facts of the Old Testament history and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ had induced us to think of God as a longsuffering Father towards the human soul, yet now we are tempted to waver in this faith because of what modern science has revealed to us. The evident delays and complexities of the natural world seem to many minds in our day incompatible with the idea of God's omnipotence, as making impossible demands upon such a God's patience. It seems to some that an Almighty Being could not put up with such infinite delays, could not be so longsuffering. Nevertheless such a view of what would be necessary to God's perfection, if there be a God, does not agree with our modern view of even human perfection. It does not square, for example, with the modern ideal of national government. Our latest conception of the best human government is a government of the people, for the people, by the people; and such government necessitates design, and a troublesome complication of the wheels of government, — perpetual postponement and patience. Why, then, should our conception of the Divine government be contrary to this? For what is the root reason why the government of the people by and for themselves has finally

commended itself as the best? Is it not because it has become more and ever more apparent to mankind that individual character is the most precious thing in human life, and therefore that that method of government is best which is most promotive of individual character? Just because the Almighty Father of us all is all-powerful, He is also infinitely versatile and infinitely longsuffering in the achievement of His design. Character, good character, is *the* design of God. All the other materials of the world, all the other designs of the world, are but so many tools and guises and methods for the good character of God's personal and intelligent creatures. To Him no outlay is too great, no field too vast, no materials too abundant, no methods too circuitous; for only thus can character be secured in the creatures of His hands. Personal character in the creature implies will in the creature; and the very fact that God has created finite wills assures us that He will never play the tyrant with them; for to coerce a will is to extinguish it, since the essence of will is choice. God chooses that all His personal creatures should likewise choose; and therefore He will draw them, and impress them, but not coerce them. Rather He will wait for them indefinitely, because by any other course God would defeat His own design.

I said that we have a hint of this in what the common conscience of civilized man has come to recognize as the best form of human government, be-

cause the freest. But have we not an even better suggestion and adumbration of this character of God in what we all recognize as the typical character of the human father who is at once good and strong? Surely we have abandoned the idea that the despotic father is the good father. What is the aim of every noble father? To be himself what he would have his children be; to impress his children, but not coerce them, — not to compel his boys like puppets, but so to show them what goodness is that they will choose it for themselves, that their own wills will agree with his. And is it not the peculiar gift of good motherhood to be longsuffering, — to have the genius of dexterity and invention and persistence in influencing her children to love what she loves and choose what she chooses? Have we not here, then, an evident parable in the beautiful intimacy of home life of the diviner and perfect character of our heavenly Father which more and more is disclosed to us in the marvellous intricacies of the universe? In the sweet and strong subordination of the parent's designs to the possibilities of the child-life and of the child-will for which these designs are entertained, have we not a parallel to those vast designs of the eternal God, who is never wearied by delay, nor confused by complexity? If there is subordination as well as mastery in the human father, may there not be likewise in the Divine?

My contention, then, is this: that the most modern

dictates of the human conscience and reason as to what constitutes the ideal government in the private home life and in the public national life compel us to admit that the recent evidence of God's longsuffering in the whole natural universe agrees with our true conception of what the perfect God must be. Just because God is all-powerful He must be also infinitely forbearing, since only by such forbearance can the true aims of power be achieved. More and more it is borne in on reflecting minds that this universe of natural forces and material things can only be interpreted in terms of spirit; that the universe is irrational unless it be spiritual; that there is a tendency in things which makes for righteousness, and righteousness is a matter of free-will. God's design in human history is the education, the persuasion, not the coercion, of man's will. The entire life of our race has been to discerning eyes a spectacle, not simply of God's omnipotence, but of God's omnipotent patience; for patience is the essential quality of the Divine omnipotence. This notion of despotism which haunts us so is a hint of God's perfect power; but it is a shameful parody of that power; it shows how very far gone we are from the original righteousness in which God created man. Power, if despotic, defeats itself, it is imperfect; whereas God is perfect. Given the known facts of our present sinful character, ready for evil choices, if there be a God He must be patient with us, or else He could accom-

plish nothing. Of such all-powerful patience our history is the spectacle. Human history is like one of those classic musical compositions where one grand thought predominates, unfolds, recurs, gives color and meaning and unity to the shades and turns and transitions of the mysterious whole. The thought of history is the longsuffering of God ; the records speak for themselves. The mere theory of democracy, now making its way everywhere, shows how this fact of the Divine government has slowly approved itself to us as the ideal of human government ; how the ideal of justice, peace; a fair field and no favor, for every individual, and of forbearance for all, has been grasped by the conscience and assumed by the reason of mankind. Not yet, indeed, have the nations perceived that the final purpose of such government is not physical comfort or mental satisfaction, but physical, mental, and spiritual redemption from sin, — the purification of character. The eternal counsels of God, the secret of Jesus, are not yet understood by the world as the Church understands them, as the Bible reveals them, as every single soul shall see them hereafter at the Judgment. But the world has at length come to see that the end of all government is the education of character, even though sin as the obstacle to right character is still ignored by the world. Thus our own common view of what constitutes good government on earth prepares us for the Bible revelation of the character of the Most High.

If, then, fresh from this view of human nature and of human history, we turn to the spectacle of the natural world, we need not be daunted if we find that world making similar demands upon the character of God. We simply find the universe of one piece, — that is all ; man and nature alike calling out from their Creator perpetual expressions of His longsuffering ; and this as nothing else could impresses us with a sense of the reality of the world. Our senses tell truth ; our reason is right ; our conscience is just. Nature brings the same revelation of God that man does. God's method with the universe is identical with his method with the human soul. To both He shows Himself the same ; and in some mysterious way He has linked the fortunes of both man and nature together, so that, as Saint Paul says, “ the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

Finally, dear friends, what an instance we who believe in Christ have here of the constantly recurring fact that the profoundest truths of theology come closest to our ordinary life, — to our daily tasks and efforts and troubles ! What grace do faithful Christians need most, perhaps ? Steadiness, perseverance, — longsuffering, in other words. And to-day we have seen that this is not merely a human grace ; it

is *the* grace of God, the essence of His power. In proportion, then, as we exercise it we are liker to God ; it is God's life realized in our lives. To be possessed of some great plan, or devoted to some great cause, or bound by love to some person, and yet be obliged to wait and manage, to postpone the fruition of our hopes, the fulfilment of our designs, — herein and hereby is brought home to us the most mysterious feature of our being : that we, poor, erring, inadequate creatures, are made in God's image ; that our life, like God's life, if we be noble, if we be really powerful, will be a life of longsuffering.

## XX.

### AUTHORITATIVE RELIGION.

By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority? — ST. MATTHEW xxi. 23.

THAT is the question which men are always putting to their teachers, and in our age especially to their religious teachers. We need not wonder that it was put to Jesus Christ. But before we can understand why Jesus in this case parried this question, we must notice who they were who put it to Him. We are expressly told that it was the chief priests and scribes who put the question. In other words, it was precisely that party among the Jews who laid their whole stress on the Mosaic law and the Jewish ecclesiastical tradition. Now it was they who, as the term is usually employed, were most authoritative in their religion, — depended most on what we should probably call the dogmatic position. At first sight, therefore, it might appear as if our Lord was here avoiding a great opportunity; for as His gospel was essentially authoritative, it may well seem strange that He should decline to state the source of His authority to those whose whole bias

was supposed, by themselves at any rate, to be in favor of the dogmatic method of religion. Again and again Christ did state to others the grounds of His authority; why does He decline to do so to this deputation of the chief priests and scribes? I do not think that we can discover the reason of Christ's silence here, without comparing the passage with a previous one in the same Gospel, which throws light on it by contrast. At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount it is stated that "It came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine: for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Now surely it is remarkable that the scribes should here be said *not* to teach with authority; for according to our conventional notions of authority that is the very note of their teaching. Their method consisted in this, that whatever maxim they enjoined, whatever custom they enforced, they always did so, not as of themselves, but with an appeal to the ancient traditions of their Church and the prestige of Moses the Lawgiver. And when we examine the contents of the Sermon on the Mount, we find that our Lord's method was apparently the reverse of this. "Ye have heard that so and so hath been said of them of old time . . . but I say unto you," is His constant refrain. And certainly if you and I had been suddenly called on to decide whether Christ or the scribe could the more properly be called a teacher by authority,

we should have answered in favor of the scribe. Obviously, therefore, when the people said of Jesus that "He taught with authority, and not as the scribes," they were suggesting a notion as to what authority really is, very different from that which we commonly ascribe to it. For example, it is often complained of a certain school of Churchmen in our day that they lay too much stress upon authority in religion; that is, that they give too much weight to ecclesiastical tradition. Now, without turning aside to argue whether the true members of this school do so or not, it may be allowed that the Jewish scribes did so; and this very common remark in regard to a church party in our day goes to show that if we had been living in the days of Jesus Christ's ministry, we should have said that it was the scribes, not He, who spoke with authority. Now here we are laying our finger, I think, on the essential difference of idea between our conventional notion of what constitutes authority and the New Testament idea. When the people declared that our Lord spoke with authority, they were using the phrase in its exact original signification; we use it in a transferred sense, that is, we apply the term to a process of thought, a method of rational appeal, which, however correct in its own sphere, cannot properly be called authoritative. Our derivative usage does no harm, provided we remember the original significance of the phrase and interpret our usage accordingly; but it does great harm if

we fail to appreciate what it is that constitutes any religious argument, whether from tradition or otherwise, really authoritative. The appeal to tradition may be authoritative, and it may not; that depends. And it is because this question goes right to the roots of some of our modern difficulties in religion, that I ask you to consider with me this morning, my friends, what it is that authority really signifies; why it was that the Jewish common people considered that Christ spoke with authority, while the scribes spoke without it. Then we shall better understand why our Lord thought best to parry the scribes' inquiry, when they asked Him what His authority was. Then too we shall carry away with us in our text to-day a very great help to our own personal religion.

The word authority, as its derivation shows, conveys the idea of the personal self in action, in production.<sup>1</sup> A man speaks with the supremest authority possible to him who speaks himself, his whole self, straight out; and the weight of his authority will depend largely on the weight of his personality. An abstract idea lacks authority until it comes to us in and across some living human being. You speak of thought, of love, of art, of religion, of life itself, in the abstract, and you cannot help conveying a vague impression, difficult to seize and easy to argue about unconvincingly. But set before us a thoughtful man, a loving man, an artistic man, a religious man, a

<sup>1</sup> *Augere*, to produce, to create.

living human being, and instantly we know what you mean. The mystery of the matter is no whit altered, but the power of the fact is felt. The lover speaks with the authority of love, the artist with the authority of art, the thinker with the authority of thought, because in each of these love and art and thinking are alive, are personal, are productive. And the reason why a truly religious man always exercises an unmistakable authority in religion, — an authority which other men may reject, but which they cannot deny, — is precisely this: that one chief root of the scepticism of honest sceptics is the unreality of religion to the sceptical soul. Such souls are not conscious of religion in themselves, and the half-religion of most other people who call themselves religious does not satisfy the sceptics. But once let a truly, an entirely religious person live and move before them, and instantly religion acquires real authority in their eyes. The authority of it may not convince the sceptic, because of some other authority to which he prefers to bow; but at any rate there is now a genuine and actual authority for religion, because religion is vital in an impressive personal being. This is the original significance of the term “authority.” And closely allied to this is another, equally germane to the conception. An idea acquires authority, not merely because it is realized in the person of him who utters it, but also because it finds a response in those to whom it is uttered; not merely because it

expresses him, but because it expresses them, — represents somewhat of their own being and experience; and the more persons there are of whose personal life the idea is an expression, the greater will be the authority of the idea. Hence we see wherein the power of the Christian appeal to ecclesiastical tradition consists. Whenever it is a valid appeal its validity consists largely in this fact: that a man who is possessed by a certain truth, and who desires to commend that truth to other people of his own day and generation, is able and glad to show them that this truth has been embraced not only by himself but by countless others who lived before him, and above all by Jesus Christ Himself. The Christian of to-day is not content with the authority of his single personality, but desires to reinforce it by the authority of a long line of other personalities in the past, and above all by what we call the primitive authority of those who lived closest in time to Christ Himself. This usage is parallel to that stirring phrase which we find so constantly in the Old Testament: "The God of our fathers." It is the authority of present individual conviction reinforcing itself by the authority of a great many other individuals whose experience vouches for itself.

A singular illustration of this the real quality of all authority, as distinguished from mere personal assertion on the one hand, and from brute force on the other, was furnished this summer by an incident

in the House of Commons of the English Parliament. When the thirteenth Parliament of Queen Victoria assembled last August at Westminster, the first business was the election of a Speaker. In this the notable feature was the cordiality and the unanimity with which the House, whose political complexion had been radically altered by the recent elections, and whose sections are divided by the sharpest and strongest differences of opinion, joined in nominating for Speaker the same person who held that office heretofore. Now the Speaker wields immense power in the House. He presides over its debates, and announces the rules under which the great party contests are to be waged. Yet the party which has just come into power joined with the minority in reappointing the same Speaker who had held office under the previous régime. Such action is conclusive testimony to the courage, the ability, and the impartiality of the man elected to the office; but it is testimony to something more. It shows conspicuously the twofold character of the Speaker's authority under a well-organized popular government: it is the authority of the single personality supported by the sympathy of the great band of personalities over whom he presides. It is not merely an intellectual, it is essentially a moral force.

Now the authority of a religious leader is analogous to the above, though broader, deeper, and more delicate. The Jewish scribes, in spite of their ostenta-

tious appeal to tradition, lacked authority in the eyes of the people, not because the people did not respect their own traditions, nor because these traditions did not represent a great deal of the people's personal experience, but because the scribes did not present to the people the authority of personal religious character. The scribes were what Christ called them, hypocrites. Appealing to the law, they were not as individuals possessed by the law, living exponents of its spirit in their own life and conversation. And it was because they did not themselves act out the law in its essential spirit, that they so readily overlaid the law with extraneous traditions and customs of their own. It takes a genuine hypocrite to out-herod Herod; and when Christ declared against some features of the then Jewish law, He did so in the real interest of the original Mosaic ideas which the scribes' traditions had obscured. As He Himself insisted, He was not destroying the law, but fulfilling it. And the evident reason why our Saviour parried the scribes' question as to the nature of His own authority was that the scribes were not sincere in asking it. The authority of true personal conviction and of personal loyalty to the Mosaic traditions was wanting in themselves; and hence they were not only unworthy to receive Christ's answer, but unable to understand it had it been given.

It would be an interesting study for us to open at this point our New Testament and see how entirely

Christ Jesus realized in Himself what we have found to be the root idea of authority, — the authority of the individual personality: how He was what we call whole-souled in his grasp and presentation of the truth He preached; so much so that He alone of all men that ever lived could declare, "I am the truth." If we did so, we should of course observe behind and above all this, which is within the scope of the perfect man, that the authority which He exercised was more than human because He Himself was more than human. It is this ever-present, predominant consciousness on His part of His own essential Divinity which most of all impressed those who came in close contact with Him, and which breathes in such utterances as these: "Before Abraham was, I am." "Destroy this body, and in three days I will raise it up." "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "I have power to forgive sins." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "I and My Father are one." "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." "Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." Who can read these sayings of Jesus without perceiving that he is confronting an unique Personality? and it is this uniqueness of Christ's Personality, combined with the thoroughness of its expression, which con-

tributes to the uniqueness of His authority over the human soul. Yet even in Christ's case we see this authority of His own personality reinforcing itself by the experience of those whom He addressed. "Come see a man who told me all that ever I did," — that exclamation of the woman of Samaria is the utterance of one who is evidently impressed, not only by the unique personality and the intense personal conviction of Christ Himself, but also by Christ's singular power of reading to her her own experience, — of summoning to the aid of his individual authority the authority of the woman's own life, whose results and meaning she could not gainsay. "Out of thine own mouth I will convince thee," Christ seems to say. And when in our own day a true Christian preacher appeals to the tradition of the Church as of binding force, he does so not only because Jesus Christ stands behind that tradition, but also because the experience of the Church shows up what the religious men of Christendom have ascertained to be the outcome of human soul-life; and if in any individual case the man's own self does not respond to the tradition, then the tradition cannot, for the time being, be an authority to him. Nay, more, so strong is the instinct of mankind in regard to this quality of true authority, that the failures of the Church Catholic to convert the world to Christ may be largely ascribed to the Church's own failure to embody thoroughly in herself the message that she has preached. In spite

of the truth to which she witnesses, in spite of the validity of her traditions, the world is only impressed by the authority of the Church's witness in proportion as she is herself impressive by her real devotion to Jesus. The church that is lukewarm or worldly, lacks authority in the eyes of sinners, and will lack it to the end.

But I desire in closing to turn rather to the other aspect of the subject, which conveys a solemn and searching lesson for ourselves. As the New Testament narrative shows, even Jesus Christ, with all His intrinsic authority, was dependent, for the effect of His authority, upon the character and will of those who came to Him. Over the hypocritical scribes He exercised no authority whatever; and even of the populace who honestly felt His power, who perceived that He spoke with authority and not as the scribes, — even of these He made few converts, because of the hardness of their hearts. True authority is not brute force. Even God Himself does not coerce. The Bible reveals to us that the devil believes in God, but the devil does not bow to God's authority. How seldom we take in the import of what the New Testament itself contains in this regard. There is the very Son of God, living in human form, walking, teaching, praying among the children of men. Yet after a life of three and thirty years, and a public ministry of nearly three, there are but twelve men whom He can in strict sense call His disciples, and

one of these betrays Him ! And He is the Almighty God, who created man, and holds him in the hollow of His hand ! He whose authority is, in one view, absolute and invincible, stands before the sinner and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" It is God respecting His own image in His creature, — respecting the individual free-will and free intellect. Now is it not the natural tendency of every one of us, my brethren, who is possessed by strong convictions, to assume towards others an attitude which is quite the opposite of this ? Are not intolerance and earnest faith to be seen constantly together ? Is it not extremely difficult for most fathers, for example, and for most teachers, who feel quite sure that they know what is best for their children and pupils, — is it not extremely difficult for them to act upon Christ's principle, that even the authority of absolute truth can do nothing for those who are not ready for it ? And do we not all of us fail in the other direction also ? — fail to recollect that the chief thing for us to do, if we wish to be authoritative, is to be in ourselves as far as possible equal to the truth that we desire to have other men embrace ? There is a very practical and personal application of Christ's saying, "I am the truth." Would to God that you and I tried harder to be what we believe. There is no authority like personal character in religion. And believe me, the hard-headed men of the world respect no other, — nay, your little child, with his shy but keen insight,

he, too, in the long run respects no religious authority but this. Nor need I remind you that this authority is never acquired by us except from God ; it comes to us when Almighty God co-operates with our own free-will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. Even in our Saviour's case, when men asked Him whence He got His authority, His reply was : " The Father who dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works."

And this same truth has another face which must not be passed by. All about us there are multitudes of men and women who, with a greater or less degree of sincerity, are studious of Christianity, concerned with Christ's message to mankind. They are really attracted by Jesus ; and so they go groping in countless books, and investigating all sorts of evidences, and listening to this person and that person who claims to have something to say about Christ and Christianity and the Church of the living God. It is well. But, my brother, while you are thus considering what other men can do to help you towards Christ, does it ever occur to you to consider what you yourself can do to help you towards Him ? Does it ever occur to you that possibly you may actually be as one of those who saw Jesus in the flesh, and still were not convinced by Him ; that if ever Jesus Christ is to have authority *over* you, He must first have authority *in* you, from you, out of your own life ; that in your mind and heart and will there

must be a response to Him? The authority of Jesus is not unlike that of purity. The human mind and conscience are so constituted that the mere presence of a pure man or a pure woman awakens approval in us. Simply to see purity is to recognize its authority as the standard for human life. But between such recognition and the being one's self pure there is a wide interval. You yourself must be trying to be pure before you can fully appreciate the authority of purity in another. Now, the method of religion, the movement of the religious mind, are somewhat like that. Many a thoughtful and reverential man in our day, disposed to be a Christian, but seeing that he cannot fathom beforehand the substance of Christianity, says to himself: "If this were a matter of business, or of human affection, I should follow the weight of probability. In such cases faith is reasonable. In ordinary life faith is not opposed to reason, but to sight. You have got to live; but in living if you should always wait till you can completely see, you would die first. You have got to act on faith in order to live, and so faith in ordinary life is rational, — is not opposed to reason, but to sight. It is more reasonable to live on faith than to wait till you are dead, because you cannot completely see. Ordinary life is a perpetual venture of faith in business, in education, in jurisprudence, in the affections. Reason itself is a venture of faith in the capacities of the mind. But is not religion dif-

ferent from ordinary life? If I say that I believe the Christian Creed, that I believe in Jesus Christ, must I not thereby imply that I know all about it beforehand?" To that question, my brethren, I answer emphatically, No. The method of religion and of ordinary life are identical, and they ought to be; for true religion is the final expression of man's life. I could not be religious if I did not find that its method of assent is identical with that which I have to employ in the affairs of my daily secular existence. If religion did not harmonize with that, I should think it unnatural, irrational, to be religious. But it is because in religion likewise faith is not opposed to reason, but simply to sight; it is because I feel that the authority of Jesus Christ corresponds to the authority which I am always assenting to when I love my friend before I have complete knowledge of him, or when I devote myself to a profession or a trade before I have mastered it, and in order to master it, or when I accept the dogmas of an art or science in order to learn them,—it is because of this likeness in the method of assent that I devote myself to Jesus Christ. This is the very note of the Incarnation: that the Son of God became Man that we might believe in Him as we believe in man. Then is God made man in order that we may believe in God after the manner that we believe in man. All the deepest and most earnest thoughts of the most earnest men point straight

to Jesus Christ, and my own heart and mind point to Him ; but if I will not put faith in Him as I put faith in a man, if I will not follow the pointing, I cannot expect that Christ will ever convince me ; for this would be to expect that the method of my religion should be different from the method of true human life, whereas religion is the final expression of life.

And I say that if you wish to admit the authority of Jesus Christ with your whole free intelligence and soul, the best way, the only way, to arrive at this is to undertake here and now so noble, so serviceable, so elevated and devoted, a life that you cannot do it except by Christ,<sup>1</sup> and then see whether Christ does not help you, — see whether the certainty that He is what He claimed to be does not break in on your mind and soul. We are all agreed as to the beauty and truth of Christ's maxims of practical life. The Sermon on the Mount is common ground nowadays, — common to the socialists and the positivists and the agnostics, and the Christians too, — so far as the ideal of the thing goes. Go out, then, and try to live it awhile ; try to deal with your neighbors, with yourself, with God, according to that standard. You will fail constantly ; but God will see to it that sometimes you succeed ; and when you are for a

<sup>1</sup> This is a reminiscence of a passage in one of Phillips Brooks's mid-day addresses, delivered, I think, in Trinity Church, New York, and reported in one of the church newspapers.

little while succeeding, — when pure thoughts have driven awhile your impurity away, and gentle deeds have cracked the crust of your habitual selfishness, and the smile of some lonely man or sick woman, or of some neglected child that you have helped, or of some servant that you have shown courtesy to, has beamed on you, and turned your old-time cynicism into trust and honor, — then in that moment open your New Testament and read a little of what Jesus Christ has ready to say to you, and see whether the authority of Jesus Christ is not evident to you at last, whether His key to human soul-life is not the key, whether you can possibly care for your old life any more, and whether you can possibly lead the new life without Christ's help; whether you must not now protest to Him, as Peter protested, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." You will perceive at last that the Son of God speaks with authority, and not as the Scribes; that every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; that he that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love; and that greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

## XXI.

### STANDING BEFORE GOD.<sup>1</sup>

As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand. —  
1 KINGS xviii. 1.

ONCE again, my brethren, and for the last time as your Rector, I have the privilege of addressing you ; and it is upon the same old story. As I look back over our three years together, it appears to me that I have never preached to you but one sermon, — always the same idea under various lights and from different sides ; and that is, the ultimate simplicity of religion and the inevitableness of our Christian faith. That is the conviction that possesses me ; that is what I believe to be God's message through me to you ; and in that message, under it as a veil, I would fain cover up to-day, suggesting them rather than expressing, the thoughts and feelings of regret and distress, and yet of faith and hopefulness, with which I part from you at the evident call of duty. Surely it is better so, and it is easier for me. It is appropriate that in the House of God our personal feelings should be translated into the

<sup>1</sup> Farewell sermon. Preached in Saint John's Church on the morning of the 20th Sunday after Trinity, Oct. 30, 1892.

larger and less individual expression of common prayer and praise.

“As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand.” This was an ordinary Hebrew idiom, a conventional phrase. In the Old Testament usage it appears to have sprung from the vocation of the Levites, who, as we are told in the book Deuteronomy, “were separated to stand before the Lord to minister unto Him.” It was the Jewish priest’s essential duty to realize man’s nearness to God, and to help the common people to perceive their God, “about their path and bed, spying out all their ways.” But in proportion as the priest’s function was effective this phrase descriptive of the priestly character would widen into a description of the people’s character also ; for the whole gist of the Old Testament was to bear witness that the priests were intended to be representative of the people, — not to come between them and God, but to go before them towards their God as spokesmen. In actual fact the people, no less than their priests, were daily and hourly “standing before God.” God’s service was their duty, God’s law their rule ; God’s eye was ever on them. And from the days of the Exodus onwards, as this truth became more and more a part of the common Jewish experience, we find the phrase of our text passing over from the restricted usage of the Levitical order into the wider parlance of the people generally. Any and every

man, if he wished to impart solemnity to what he was saying, might preface it with the assertion, "As the Lord God liveth, before whom I stand." True, as usually happens in such cases, the phrase depreciated as it widened. Men ceased to feel the value of the idiom just because it was so common. We men and women of the English speech seldom recollect, in wishing one another "Good-by," that our phrase is a mutual prayer, signifying literally "God be with you." So we must not be surprised to find how lightly a somewhat similar expression fell from the old Hebrew lips. Nevertheless from Elijah's lips the words did not fall lightly. In this matter the privilege of genius and of profound religious earnestness is the same. We all know how the poets and great writers of our literature owe much of their charm to their singular faculty of so employing our trivial expressions that they become once more fresh and vivid; and in like manner it is given to the deeply religious, so to speak our worn-out phrases that they come again to us full-fraught with messages of the soul. Thus was it in the thrilling history of Elijah and Elisha. When Elijah in his conflict with Ahab and the prophets of Baal, when Elisha in his effort against idolatry in the reigns of Jeroboam and Jehoshaphat and Jehu, uttered the idiom of our text, they did actually convey the impression of persons who were building their hopes and staying their minds on Jehovah; and their influ-

ence revived in many another soul around them a vital sense of that high and holy Presence in whose inviolable shadow their life was moving on.

But it is not of Elijah or Elisha that I mean to speak to-day; I wish rather, as briefly and pointedly as I can, to consider with you what this word of theirs will mean for us, my brethren, if we use it as thoroughly as they did.

“The Lord God liveth, before whom I stand.” We do not stand alone, then; we do not even stand simply and solely before our visible neighbors and fellow-men, before the objects and the strong forces of this material world, before our outward circumstances, as we call them, that hedge us in and seem to shape our lives. In fact we stand directly, stand finally, stand always, before Almighty God; our being is in Him. Yet in every age we try to stand apart from God; and each successive age brings to mankind its own special temptations and facilities for living presumably without God, — for shutting up the windows of the soul against God, albeit our God is in fact always at hand.

One of the special temptations of this particular age is the fancy that we can do our thinking without God, — that, however it may be morally, intellectually at any rate we can live without Him, — that while Conscience may well, for practical purposes, presuppose God, there is no practical necessity that Reason should presuppose God. Let me explain what I

mean. I really believe that the number of those who try to live morally before God is larger than it used to be; for I cannot else explain the wider diffusion of such ideas as justice, and compassion, and the duty of assuaging poverty and pain, which so mark our civilization. In fact there is now abroad a general passion of mercifulness which argues well for us in comparison with earlier ages; for this feeling extends far beyond the pale of Church membership and religious profession. But although a great many people are now endeavoring to live morally as those must who recognize that they are standing before God, how many there are who are willing to live intellectually apart from God, — as if, man being a personal unit, his brains and conscience could possibly be sundered! Yet is it not true, my brethren, that many a man in our day is honestly attempting to take the Sermon on the Mount as his practical standard, who nevertheless fancies that he can do his thinking as he pleases; that is, that moral considerations and the consciousness of God have to do with our wills, but not with our intellects as such? In its latest phase this spirit has been manifest in the attitude of many persons even towards our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is sometimes stated blankly, and very often it is consciously or unconsciously insinuated, that while Christ is the moral Master and the moral ideal of mankind, His intellectual conclusions were far behind our age, so that we in some ways know more of reli-

gion than He did. This is the fundamental issue of several recent much-read novels ; and what we there find in fiction may be found otherwise in countless treatises and essays that are popular to-day. Hereby it is distinctly asserted that what Christ said in the Gospels theologically, that what He taught us about the relation of God to the world as our Maker and our Father, has no such binding force *on our intellects* as what He said about what is practically right and wrong has *on our consciences and wills*. As if it were rationally conceivable to have such a moral hold of God as Christ had without effect upon the mind's hold of God ! As if, to any one who appreciates the actual unity of our human personality, it could be possible in the same breath to exalt Christianity as our moral ideal, and then to depreciate it intellectually ! As if it can be admitted for a moment that Christ's acts and standards of action could be ideally true, while at the same time His ideas and methods of mind, His whole intellectual grasp of God, could be untrue ! Nay, as if Christ Himself had not declared that His morality depended on His intellectuality ; that to do as He did would lead men straight to think as He did ! for He said expressly, " He that doeth the will of God shall know of the doctrine." And, my brethren, if you desire a practical demonstration of the fallacy of this whole view of the matter, you have it ready to hand in the ideas as to what truth itself is which prevail among very many

of our would-be leaders of thought to-day. There is hardly a better way of getting the intellectual bearings of a man than to ask him what he means by truth. Drive that question home with him. Compel him to give you a frank answer. You will find continually that his notion of truth is simply human knowledge of facts. It is what this age has come to know of itself, and of the universe. It is the sum of enlightened human opinions ; it is man's views of the world. But if man is the touchstone of truth, what will there be left of truth when (as the men of science assure us is certain to happen) this world has ceased to be, and man has ceased with it? If man is the centre and the touchstone of the truth, then when this human race vanishes, the truth will vanish too. Yet the truth cannot consist in any such system of changeable relations. When this human reason of ours seized this idea of truth, it was an idea of something absolute and permanent, and to be depended on, not of something always in a flux. Reason, as the Greek philosophers would say, demands, as such, a *pou sto*, a settled point, on which to fix the lever of its thinking ; round which to arrange the various facts that from time to time we come to know ; and you cannot get this anywhere in a world where all is changeable. Depend upon it, we must give up our very idea of truth, as such, unless we cling to our idea of God the Heavenly Father. Truth is not what man knows of the world ; it is what God knows, it is the relation

of God to the world ; and man knows only so much of real truth as he knows about God. Facts are not truth. Facts only become truth when they have been interpreted ; and no fact can be rightly interpreted unless it has been brought into its connection with God. Nothing that man discovers from time to time is really true unless and until man has got this discovery into its relation to God. If the universe of relations has no permanent centre, then the universe is irrational and there is no such thing as truth. If the universe has a centre, man cannot be that centre, because he is transitory. Depend upon it, to think aright, to think thoroughly, we must have for our first intellectual principle that motto of Elijah, " The Lord God liveth, before whom I stand." The very principle which has long proved itself to be the most serviceable for practical morality is also the only principle for thorough thinking. The basis of morals and the basis of rational thought are one and the same, — the living and eternal God, our Father ; and it hurts human thinking just as much to let God go as it hurts human morals to let Him go. God or chaos is the only intellectual alternative, just as God or hell is the only moral alternative that humanity can grasp, if man be personal and moral at all. Now reason refuses to admit the possibility that the universe is chaos, just as conscience insists on Heaven with God. Therefore reason and conscience both bring us straight to God, on whom alone morality

and truth depend. If the creative power in us and behind us be not a mind, and not a will, and not a spirit of righteousness,<sup>1</sup> then human morality and human truth are equally the figment of a dream, signifying nothing, and the process of our latest thought is the last step to the suicide of reason. Reason is the adjustment of the mind to steadfast conditions, and the only condition absolutely steadfast is the God that Christ revealed. "No religious mind tolerates the notion of being really thrown upon itself; this is only to say, in other words, that it is thrown back upon God."<sup>2</sup>

Ah, has it seemed to some of you, my brothers, as if my subject this morning were hardly of practical moment for professing Christians like ourselves? Do not believe it. The fading away of religious purpose and passion, of the vital recognition of the living God whose presence we acknowledge with our lips, is very common even among those who by profession are Christians. By way of testing the matter, make a point of taking your mind unawares.<sup>3</sup> What are you usually thinking about when your mind is free; when your business, and your duties, and your proper pleasures are over; when there is a lull in your day's routine; when you are quite alone; when neither

<sup>1</sup> I am here indebted to an article on "Religion without God," which appeared in the London "Spectator" of September 5, 1891.

<sup>2</sup> Mozley, quoted in Dean Church's "Oxford Movement," p. 349.

<sup>3</sup> I am here indebted to one of Canon Liddon's sermons, but in the absence of books I cannot make the reference more definite.

friends nor books claim you ; in the twilight hours, when your thought pursues its own course ? Are you busy with ideas that tempt you to sin, — with idle dreams verging on impurity ? Do you croon over imagined wrongs ? Do you envy other people ? Are you scheming about the world of fashion, and how you can rise in it ? Or does your mind rise naturally to God, because you know that you are standing before Him ? Would you ever think about God at all if you could help it ? These surely be practical questions, and they rise right out of my text to-day. And oh, our formalism in worship ! our habit of turning these very moments of Divine Service in the church into a hollow routine ! our shocking way of going home from them with the contented feeling that, having sat here for an hour and a half one day in seven, we have got on the right side of God, and can afford therefore to leave Him alone for the rest of the week. That is not standing before God. As if the forms of worship, when we have made them hollow, could possibly be substituted for the genuine recognition of our God ! and as if, indeed, worship is anything in God's eyes except as the final and more finished expression of our constant life ! Believe me, we should be less perturbed by the ratiocinations of the avowed agnostics, were it not that too many of us are ourselves agnostics unavowed. Let us who call ourselves Christians, pause oftener than is our wont in these days of strain and stress and giddiness,

and repeat in all sincerity Elijah's words : "The Lord God liveth, before whom I stand."

Once more. Think, in conclusion, of what is termed by most of us so bitterly the monotony of average human existence,—the inevitable boredom of our being. Here we are this autumn returning, most of us, to our regular routine; is there not in many of us a latent repugnance to the old ruts of labor, to the sing-song of our ordinary conversation, to the dull procession of the hours? Is there any word oftener on the lips even of the young people of our more educated classes than the expression that this thing or that person "bores" them? Well, my brethren, if you leave God out of your life I think that that impression is inevitable. To the man or woman who by practical experience of life, or by the theoretical intuition of it which accurate education confers, has had any wide views of human existence, the impression of boredom is sure to come, if God's presence and man's relation to Him be ignored. This is why the oldest extant form of human civilization, the Chinese, wears pre-eminently this attitude of the bored. It cannot be tempted with promises of novelty, because it knows that real, substantial novelty is out of the question for a race that has lived six thousand years. The superficial aspects of life, some of its tools and methods,—these may change; but the substance of life, the final results of it to individual beings, the joys and sorrows and the uses of

it, — these change not. Solomon knew what he was talking about when he declared, “There is nothing new under the sun.” Nay more. From the standpoint of accomplishment, this state of things is precisely what man requires. Here and there there may be apparent exceptions, but these only prove the rule that in every walk of life, to-day as always heretofore, it is not the idlers, nor “the men on leave,” but the steady toilers, the *routiniers*, who “get things done;” and this is why the Trades Unions have no patience with triflers in their ranks. They know that the sameness of labor is of the very essence of its success; that the man who succeeds is the man who goes to his office at the same hour, works mostly in the same way, and keeps as far as possible to the same general division of labor. The experience of centuries has taught the Trades Unions that the steady man, the man who “lasts,” is worth far more in results than many an abler man who is impatient of monotony. “Eat when you are hungry” appears at first to be a wise rule; but it is soon ascertained that if we desire health and strength from our food, it is better to eat always at the same hours, about the same quantity, and pretty much the same proportion of the relative constituents of food.

Yet does not monotony reduce men to mere machines? Hardly. In literature, as in trade, it has been usually the men of humdrum lives whose literary instincts were the strongest, and who produced

most ; in art it has been the same ; and even outside of the larger forms of business, and outside of art and literature and what are termed the "professions," those persons whose toil is most confining have been generally the most thoroughly intelligent. It is proverbial that the cobblers and the weavers are among the most thoughtful of handicraftsmen ; yet no business is duller than theirs.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that they become so used to their tools, so sure of themselves and of their surroundings, that their minds are free to range, and have a background to range from. They obtain the very solitude and security which are generally the conditions of intellectual activity. No ; so true is it that monotony is the lubricant of life that whenever man obeys his best instincts we find him trying to establish regularity, framing laws, founding institutions, promoting human organizations, — endeavoring, that is, to produce all around him the very monotony which nowadays it is the fashion theoretically to decry. Man takes his cue from nature, with her endless repetitions of light and dark, of calm and storm, of warm and dry ; with her periods and cycles, where change is the superficial appearance and sameness of average the fundamental fact. Man feels beforehand that for him a world where there was no tendency to regularity, no forceful order to the in-

<sup>1</sup> I am here indebted to an article which appeared in the London "Spectator" last year.

dividual to make a groove for himself, would be a world of premature exhaustion. No; it is not the monotony of labor that is alien to us, but absence of idea. The artist who loves his art has the idea. The tradesman who lives for his home and loved ones, or for some wide, ambitious vision, has the idea. The true socialist, who works, not for himself alone, but for his fellows, for his kind, has the idea. And to such the most monotonous life is fullest of interest. I believe that our modern outcry against the sameness of our existence is due to one great cause,—to our restlessness; and I am sure that our restlessness has come about quite naturally from the general hurry and excitement of our new-found means of intercommunication. By means of universal cheap printing, of steamships and railways, of telegraph and telephone, every part of the civilized world wakes up of a morning to find the news of every other part of the world thrust upon its mind. We lose our grip of our own life, because we are distracted by the pull of so many other lives. In time this new condition of our civilization will work its own cure; the benefits of it will endure, while the special disadvantages will be counteracted by habit. It is possible to get so used to the roar of Niagara as not to notice it, so accustomed to the strain of a multiform business in a great city as not to be perturbed by it. But before this condition of mind and



spirit can arrive amongst us a whole generation or more must pass. You and I must die before that day; and is there no help for us? Must we be sacrificed for the sake of the good that others shall hereafter reap? Are not our souls as precious as theirs? Yes; there is one cure ready to our hand, and only one. Take the thought of God our Father into your restless life; say to yourself steadily as Elijah did, "The Lord God liveth, before whom I stand." What our distracted modern natures want is a grand, controlling, practicable idea to give calm and concentration and overmastering purpose to our being. God is that idea. I have said that the ambitious man, the artist, the philanthropist, even the petty tradesman, if fond of wife and home, have the idea. It is true. But there are ideas and ideas; there is the idea that is frail and fleeting and disappointing, and the idea that abides; the idea that is partial, and the idea that is absolute. Most human ideals, even of the better sort, are fleeting and disappointing in the end. The very best of our ambitious men, of our toilers and philanthropists, of our lovers of home, when once their experience is ripe, will join in telling you, as their forefathers in every age have told, a sad confession of incompleteness and of unsuccess, and of hearts which, even if true and unbroken, have at any rate been terribly wrung and overborne by the pains of sickness and the mystery of death. Ah me, there is but one idea that stands

the test of time even, to say nothing of eternity, — one idea that sums up all the others, and complements them and adjusts them to the permanent issues of the human soul, in joy and sorrow, in achievement and disappointment, in life and death and the august opportunities that man still persists in anticipating in the other life that will never end. God is that idea. He knows the end from the beginning; with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. What we call the monotony of human history, in the larger, longer view of it, is but the expression of the supreme and final fact that we and all the world live and move and have our being in Him. How could this world's forms and phases be otherwise than same and steady in the final analysis, if this world be God's world, as we know it is? To know and feel that in the last resort we live and are not for ourselves merely, not for our best friends merely, not for our nation or our age merely, but for Him, in Him, who is eternal, holy, true, — that knowledge, if kept vivid, will give pause and poise and direction to the most distracted mind. Ah, and God is more than an idea; He is the heart of the world. The most insidious, the most fatal, form of human restlessness is not of the head but of the heart. Do you not know it, my brothers? Is it the fuss and fidget of an overactive mind that is hardest to cure, or the distress of a disappointed, of an unoccupied heart? Are the men and women, or the chil-

dren, whose hearts are happy ever quite devoid of peace? And to-day, by that verse from Elijah's mouth, God is saying to each one of us, "My son, give Me thine heart!" When Elijah, at that crisis in the fortunes of his afflicted people, uttered before Ahab that simple phrase, "The Lord God liveth, before whom I stand," it was the expression of a typical human soul at peace with itself because loving the Heavenly Father and assured of His love in return. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee."

THE END.











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