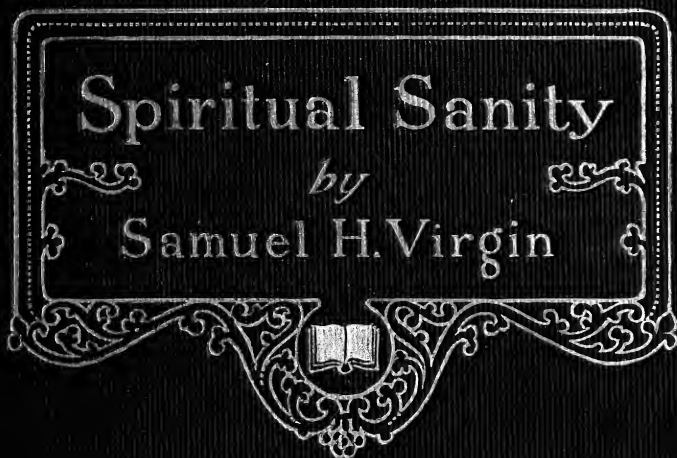
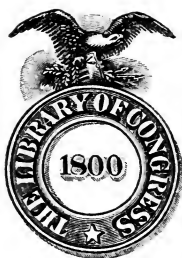


# Spiritual Sanity

*by*

Samuel H. Virgin





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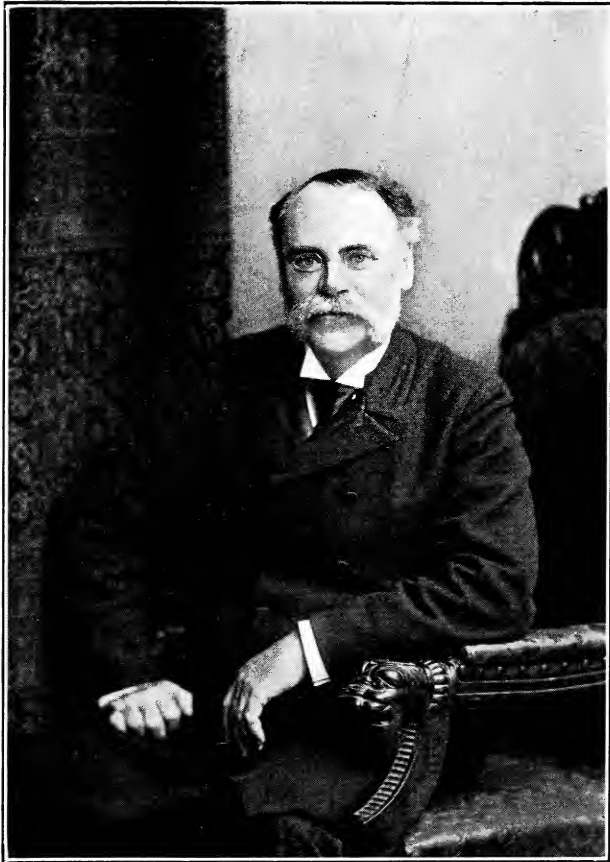
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Yrs Cordially  
Samuel H. Virgin

# SPIRITUAL SANITY

AND

OTHER SERMONS

BY

REV. SAMUEL H. VIRGIN, D.D., LL.D.

PASTOR EMERITUS

OF

THE PILGRIM CHURCH OF NEW YORK

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY

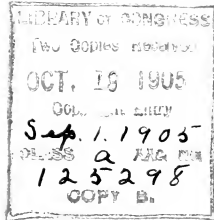
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To

The Pilgrim Church of New York

*Whose Service Has Been a Consuming Passion with Me for  
Nearly Thirty-four Years*

THESE SERMONS PREACHED IN ITS PULPIT  
ARE  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



## FOREWORD

I HAVE long been accustomed to say in response to questions about my sermons that if they were not in the lives of my people they could not be found elsewhere. A handful of notes represents many years of preaching. The sermon has to me never been an end in itself, only a channel of blessing. And it is only in answer to the entreaty of a host of friends in many lands that I have arranged the sermons for this volume. The vividness and sudden sweep of thought may be missed by some. But that is the attendant of extempore preaching which has been my custom mainly for thirty years. Always happy in preaching, I feel a degree of pleasure in using this pulpit of our beloved American Tract Society.

SAMUEL H. VIRGIN.

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## SPIRITUAL SANITY.

“I am not mad, most noble Festus: but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” Acts 26: 25.

WE turn our eyes to a scene worthy the attention of the historic painter. Put in its proper grouping on the canvas, it would immortalize the artist, retain its hold upon human interest as long as any outline remained and gather about it as distinguished a company as the Madonna of Raphael in the Dresden gallery.

It is the occasion of Paul's last sermon in Palestine. Twenty-three years have elapsed since he journeyed to Damascus intent on persecution, but was met and turned into the way of holiness by the Lord himself. These years have been full of labor. His name is known wherever the doctrine of Jesus has been preached. He has formed churches in the great cities, has journeyed from Jerusalem to Corinth and left the impress of his strong life on multitudes of souls. He has preached to the great congregation and to the small company of believers. Persecution has followed

him and marred his body. Angered men have set upon him thirsting for his blood. Reports of him have been carried into palaces. His name has been spoken in the ears of kings. The despised Nazarene has been forced upon the attention of an unwilling world, and the hostile Jews have made the Lord more prominent by their turbulent proceedings in every city.

Love for the crucified and risen Lord has deepened in the heart of Paul, his mind has laid hold upon the vastness of the truths he has taught and he is now within two years of the time when he writes of himself as the "aged Paul."

It is the year of our Lord 60; Paul is under arrest; he has been tried before Felix, who "in the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave," who trembled before the preaching of his prisoner, but without repentance, and kept him in custody in hope of a bribe. He has been brought before Festus, and to his amazement has uttered the word which instantly removed him from the jurisdiction of the governor and secured his passage to Rome. He is now summoned before Agrippa, a visiting king, not for purpose of trial, for that is prevented by Paul's own act of appeal to Cæsar, but really for the purpose of entertainment under the pretence of aiding the governor in preparing the papers necessary to transmit to Rome. It furnishes Paul with one of the grandest opportunities of his life, that of preaching the Gospel of Jesus and the Resurrec-

tion in the presence of royalty, and he improves the privilege with a manliness and a power which moves the skeptic governor, and discloses the heartlessness of the last of the Herods.

The scene is in the city of Cæsarea, then populous and grand, now deserted and lone. We journey to the spot to-day and find a total absence of every sign of human life. Where once was grandeur, now is waste. Ruins lie close along the winding shore, projecting here and there into the sea and presenting huge masses of shattered masonry and piles of granite columns to the restless waves. In the interior all is ruin. Not a building remains entire. Not even the foundations of a building can be fully traced. The gate by which Peter entered was there; the ruins of the palace in which Paul preached were there; the remains of the harbor in which he embarked were there; the massive fragments of Eusebius' church were there; the walls which the brave Crusaders built were there. But heaps of stones and rubbish, here a solitary column, there a disjointed arch, yonder a fragment of a wall, all encompassed or overgrown with thorns and briars and thistles, intermixed in spring with myriads of yellow marigolds and scarlet poppies. The famous harbor is choked up with sand and rubbish. The sighing of the wind among the broken walls, the deep moan of the sea as each wave breaks upon the cavernous ruins of the ancient harbor, are the only sounds to be heard. No man is seen. The Arab and the shepherd

avoid the spot. The very birds and beasts shun it. The only living creature seen by a traveler was a jackal in one of the crypts of the cathedral.

But the words of Paul there spoken have lived, surviving all changes, and have been carried to the ends of the earth, yea, are read by travelers from distant climes amid the ruins of the palace where first he uttered them. But as we look upon the city as Paul knew it, we behold "every thing that could contribute to magnificence, amusement and health." It was the work of a Herod, and this family indulged to excess a taste for the colossal, the showy, the magnificent. "This city," says Josephus, "Herod adorned with most sumptuous palaces and large edifices for containing the people; and what was the greatest and most laborious work of all, he adorned it with a haven that was always free from the waves of the sea." The edifices all along the circular haven were made of the most polished stone, with a temple upon an elevated spot. Here was the seat of the Imperial power. Heathen strangers were in its streets, and a Roman legion, 6,000 infantry with a regiment of cavalry, sustained the power of the Procurator, whose residence was in the city. Into the gorgeous palace of Herod, into the auditorium used for purposes of public reception, trials and other state business, doubtless decorated in all the showy style of the Herodian period, Paul is led in chains.

His audience has already assembled. Festus the



Procurator of Judea, Agrippa King of Chalcis and President of the Temple at Jerusalem, in whose power lay the appointment of the High Priest, Bernice the profligate sister and doubtless incestuous wife of the young monarch, the chief military officers, in full military dress, together with the prominent citizens of Cæsarea.

Paul could desire no better audience. He has often preached to the lowly—he has now an audience of intelligence and power. The opportunity repays for his continued imprisonment, and he sees the mercy of God in the privilege of these honored persons now to hear and receive the Gospel. He has not to plead for his life; that is in Cæsar's hand. He notes the regal display of Agrippa, yet but thirty-two years of age; he sees the rich apparel on the corrupt woman leading such a scandalous life; he regards the pride of Festus in the splendid hall, the gorgeous trappings, the evidence of power, the military display, his exultation in the opportunity of thus regaling his distinguished visitors and feels a longing in his heart to win them all to Christ.

With words of strange introduction from Festus, the waving of the jeweled hand of Agrippa, Paul stretches forth his hand from which the chain still hangs as mark of his imprisonment and speaks.

His appearance is in strong contrast with the pompous display in the hall, but he is by no means the least distinguished individual there. He has called

them together ; it is to hear his story and gaze upon his person that they have turned from all other attractions in the splendid city. He is between 50 and 60 years of age, "short of stature, with long face, high forehead, an aquiline nose, close and prominent eyebrows," with full beard, clad in simple garments, doubtless much worn and weather-beaten, in an attitude expressing courage, strength of will, with manners indicative of a courteous and loyal soul, unawed by royal hearers, unaffected by his eminence as a Christian teacher, with an earnest look on his face as though his thoughts were fixed on some high subject, his chain clanking as he moves—well may he be considered the most important man in the royal palace. The others are remembered only in their connection with him.

He is at his best intellectually. His powers are all under control. Excitement does not disturb their balance. The experience of many years in many and various assemblies has taught him to use his varied attainments with an equanimity of mind that marks him as a man of unusual strength. His learning is the servant of his piety and is made the vehicle of carrying the glorious Gospel into the souls of his fellow men. His intellect is illumined with the light that shines from that world where the glory of God doth lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof. He has used his skill as a dialectician till to reason of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come with such

power as to make the wicked tremble is easy for him. He knows whereof he affirms.

His arguments are builded upon firm bases, and the warmth of a personal experience in the rich truths into which he seeks to lead his hearers glows through every address. There is nothing to indicate the fanatic alarmist. He is not a demagogue stirring up factions among the people. He has not passed through these countries like a devouring flame, leaving a track of desolation to mark his progress, but as a wise thinker, a fervent teacher, a spiritual force. He has left groups of people in every place pondering on their duties to God and one another and seeking to be more faithful in every relation of life, and if the halo that illumined the face of Stephen does not radiate from his features, there is the light of intelligent piety in his face that the lines of suffering cannot efface, that makes the chain upon his wrist an evidence of some brutality outside himself.

And as he stands speaking to this skeptic, heathen, worldly assembly, absorbed in his thought, entering again into the cloud of light, hearing again the voice of Jesus and moved again by the greatness of the commission given him from on high, the prisoner is lost in the Christian orator and thrills of emotion tell the royal hearers that they are listening to no ordinary man. Courteous and considerate of the powers that be, he has no flattery for princely ears. He stands to speak for Christ.

He passes from an allusion to Agrippa's Jewish knowledge to a declaration of the strictness of his early life; he rises easily into "the hope of the promises made of God unto our fathers," and declares the point of Jewish accusal of himself. In terse and glowing sentences he relates the story of his conversion, and the message that was delivered to him. He avers his faithfulness to the heavenly vision, and acknowledging the source of all his strength calmly declares, "Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles."

His audience is profoundly moved at this simple, straightforward address. His loyalty to the unseen Christ, the murdered man of Calvary, the focussing of such stupendous results upon the alleged stealing of this man's body from the tomb by his disciples, which Paul affirms as his rising from the dead, carries him beyond the comprehension of the selfish Roman, and Festus, excited and showing his excitement in the loudness of his tones, breaks into his discourse with the words, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

With dignity, with marvellous composure, and with a directness that in themselves made the charge of

madness a mockery, Paul replied, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." He appeals to the king and with a sanity that gave the Jewish monarch trouble of mind and conscience pressed the question, "Believest thou the prophets?" And then, with a pathos that must have touched every heart, expressed the longing that all might have the knowledge and joy in God that was his portion, might be as he, and as his eye falls upon his chain or as his ear catches the sound of its clanking, with royal magnanimity he adds, "except these bonds."

The charge of madness which was met by this declaration of the Apostle has been made by the Festus of every age and community, and is still best met by the declaration and exhibit of the truth and soberness of the faith once delivered to the saints.

It was wonderful that no charge of madness was made against Paul when, according to his own assertion, he punished Christians in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, he persecuted them even unto strange cities. He was then the rising young man of the Jewish church. It was not upon this portion of his address that Festus based his charges of madness, nor was it in this experience that Paul found the answer to the charge. The world does not count its votaries mad when they expend strength, health and fortune in a vain effort for fleeting pleasure or ephem-

eral fame. 'Tis only when they turn strength, health and fortune into channels of permanent worth that this cry is heard.

What was the ground on which such a thought could have entered any mind concerning Paul as he stood in the majesty of his manhood in the palace of Herod, in the auditorium of Festus? It did not show itself in his personal appearance, his intellect, nor his life. He was a burden to no one. Multitudes felt his presence a blessing and wept when he passed out of sight. He had taken into account spiritual realities, and lived under their influence. No less a man in all that concerns manhood, he was more a citizen of a spiritual commonwealth in which truth and soberness were crowned virtues, and the only evidence of madness was the refusal to walk in the darkness of the past, to live by old rules of duty that were musty with age and inapplicable to present requirements, to subject his noblest thoughts and richest knowledge to the thralldom of tyrannous priests, to bury his living soul in the dark tomb of Jewish infidelity, and to be put away in the sarcophagus of the Jewish church.

He had heard a voice from heaven, he had received spiritual enlightenment; a sinning world, a suffering Saviour, ransomed souls, were now to him as stern realities as tent-making. To be unfaithful to this instruction, to this enlargement of his spiritual horizon, would be a madness indeed. To escape from destruction that is imminent, to seek to rescue the exposed by

perilling self evokes the cry of madness only from those who are blind to the danger. And if there be such blindness, the charge of madness is increased in proportion to the gifts and graces of the awakened soul.

It is said that Mr. Moody was generally known in Chicago as "Crazy Moody."

Dr. Arnot writes: A few years ago, in the United States, a young woman of taste and genius burst into sudden and great celebrity as a brilliant writer in the periodical literature of the day. After a youth of constant and oppressive struggle she found herself at length an object of admiration and envy throughout her native land. The world was all before her; the ball was at her foot. Fanny Forester's troubles were over and her fortune made. She has reached the throne at last and may now sit as a queen in the highest circles of American society. The fashionable world had no sooner recognized and accepted their favorite than rumors began to be spread, muffled at first, but anon breaking out in clear tones and distinct articulation, that their chosen heroine had consented to be the wife of Judson, now far advanced in life, and to plunge with him into the darkest heart of heathendom, there to burn her life lamp down to the socket, learning a barbarous language, training a cruel race, and contending with a pestilential climate—all that she might make known the love of Jesus to an uncivilized and idolatrous nation.

To Burmah she went: did and bore her Saviour's will there, till life could hold out no longer; and then came home to die. "The woman is mad," rang from end to end of America, echoing and re-echoing through the marts of trade and the salons of fashion, "the woman is mad." Herself caught the word and the thought, and like the liberated Hebrews in the wilderness, consecrated what she had borrowed from the Egyptians to the service of the Lord. She wrote and published an essay on "The Madness of Missionary Enterprise," in which she effectively turned the money-making and pleasure-loving world of her own people upside down. The missionary cleared herself and her cause, leaving the imputation of madness lying on the other side.

And now after these many years have passed, there has arisen in the heart of this great metropolis toward which the eyes of the civilized world are turned, on the south side of Washington Square, between wealth and want, one of the most imposing structures of the city as a memorial of him whose name she took and whose labors she shared; and this has been erected by the efforts of him who as an infant boy she took to her loving heart as she reached the heathen land and for whom she performed the loving offices of a mother. Who is mad? The Christian or the skeptic?

Who has not heard this cry of Festus breaking in upon the earnest appeal for Christian consecration, sounding in loud dissonance amid the sweet calls to



Christ and His salvation? Luther heard it from the monks in the monasteries of Germany; Knox heard it in the rugged speech of Scotland; Wicliff heard it as he gave the Bible to the people, and the Puritans heard it as they went from a tyrannous ecclesiastical establishment; Whitfield heard it in tones that had penetrated the ears of the Wesleys; Edwards heard it at Northampton; Carey heard it when he gave birth to the missionary enterprise.

Many a young disciple of Christ has heard it in humble circles and exalted station. It is the devil's protest against the saved soul, and the winds that blow bleak from the realm of lost souls fan it into a cyclone as it sweeps around the will of the struggling son of man. But there is ever to be opposed to it those words of truth and soberness, adamantine pillars sunk into the depths of Deity, rising into the altitudes of infinity, against which the fretting storms of time, the empty cries of men batter in vain.

The cry of madness condemned Festus to an imbecility of mind that the world sees to-day. The answer of Paul elevated him to a height of sanity so that the world owns him her instructor through nineteen hundred years. The close of Paul's Palestine ministry is the declaration of the soberness of those who hold the truth of Jesus and the Resurrection.

As the royal company attracted attention by their pomp and glittering jewels at the beginning of this incident, all the military officers eager to catch sight

of the opulent Syrian king and his admired sister, all the Cæsarean nobles anxious to observe every movement of the renowned visitors, at the close of the scene Paul has captured the attention of all. Festus with disturbed spirit gazes intently upon him, Agrippa with biting conscience and sullen lip beholds the man whose powerful soul courts and chains cannot subdue, and all the haughty crowd forget themselves, their ruler and their guests, enchanted by the opulent grace and wisdom of the fettered prisoner. Guilty of nothing but nobleness of soul, they all conclude that but for his appeal to Cæsar he might have had his liberty again.

The charge of madness was therefore momentous and passionate. An insane man should not be freed. The parchments and friends with whom so many hours had been spent should not be suffered to increase his madness. So hollow is the charge that it perishes with the utterance then and now.

It is vain to cry "madness" to consecrated souls. It is vain to cry "madness" to historic Christianity.

If Paul's response was above challenge in that early day, how unanswerable is the sober reply of Christian truth in this latter time.

What are those words of so much power? They are those that predicate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; they are those that declare that light shines upon the great problems of man's immortality and his freedom from the thralldom of sin; they are

those that proclaim hope for all the world—for every class, for every creature; they are those that dispel fear, that awaken confidence in God, that assure the sin-laden son of sorrow that he is not forgotten, that though he die he shall live again in beauty immortal. The words are weighty with the gathered facts of the centuries. Christianity does not call for the ranting fanatic to proclaim her messages, she is not dependent upon the alarmed lunatic to arouse the world. She sends forth her sons of sober mind and bids them speak her words of solid truth, more massive than the marble, more polished than the diamond, glittering and glowing with light divine. Would that we could send them forth as the bugle blast among the hills, echoing and re-echoing, winding through the valleys in long reduplications of sweetness till every ear is reached! Would that we could send them forth as the light from the great orb of heaven as it enters every crevice, bathes every leaf, brings out the perfume from every flower, calls up the sap from its well-stored chambers, clothing the earth with verdure and filling it with fruit, so evidencing its mighty power! Would that we could send them into the darkened minds, into the bleeding hearts, into the sin-crushed spirits of the thousands in this city with all the emphasis of Christ's own lips upon them! Would that we could send them forth with the unction of their primal utterance till at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and all the world be his!

## II

### SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE

“I conferred not with flesh and blood.”—Galatians 1:16.

THIS declaration of the Apostle Paul, though only a bit of his experience as related in this first chapter of Galatians, is the key that unlocks the secret of his clear understanding of the truth of Christ and his masterly defence of the same. Though he had never seen the earthly body of the Lord nor listened to the public and private teachings which enriched the souls of other Apostles, no one gives more lucid teaching, nor better unfolds the lessons, germ thoughts of which fell from the Master's lips. Though he was not called like Matthew, who from his place at the receipt of custom heard the Lord's voice, saying, “Follow me,” he was none the less called to be an Apostle. Though unlike Mark in enjoying the pious instructions of a mother and the direct teaching of Peter in preparation for his holy work, he was none the less prepared for subtle argument and bold attack. Though the Evangelist Luke received his truth from eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word and bears the marks of Paul's

instruction and hastens to acknowledge it in the outset of his writing, Paul acknowledges no such teachers and fails not constantly to assert his independence of them, and yet his teaching was none the less authoritative. Though the beloved disciple enjoyed the friendship of John the Baptist and thus early was prepared for the close intimacy that followed with Jesus, yet even he in the sweet musings of his chastened and sanctified soul does not call forth richer harmony than that which swelled and poured forth from the soul of him who declared that he was as one born out of due time. Herein is one of those strong illustrations of the spirituality of the Christian Faith, and the whole explanation of Paul's power is found in the words of the text, "I conferred not with flesh and blood."

Two valuable lessons confront us here. 1st. The source of true convictions. 2d. The source of successful activity.

1st. A spiritual manifestation of Jesus Christ had impressed Paul's soul, and in the longing for higher instruction concerning the revelation, for lasting benefit, for profounder movements upon his soul, he turned to the spiritual source of that which he had already received and conferred not with flesh and blood in reference to it. Out of this experience came that matchless teaching given with no uncertainty both to the Romans and the Corinthians concerning the revelations of the Divine Spirit, the beauty and force of Christian truth when it is spiritually discerned. The

example which is thus brought to our notice is too illustrious to be ignored; the precious fruits which were garnered under the spiritual instruction which Paul received are of too high a value to be despised or neglected. The necessities of our own spiritual nature are so great, its strength so feeble, its attainments so puerile, its parasitic tendency so evident and active that it is refreshing to behold a man of like passions with ourselves turning from the scaffolding of human invention, and without any conference with the powers of this world in flesh and blood, stand forth, flushed with health, a clear eye, a strong pulse, a vigorous soul, a quiet conscience, a firm purpose, every faculty of his being in happy holy exercise to make that purpose effective, the cankering chains of sin's thralldom broken, every fetter unriveted, the man an absolute freeman in Christ Jesus.

The course pursued by Paul carries its powerful lesson to all who would attain like solidity of character, like poise of soul amid conflicting thoughts and emotions. With the wonderful revelation of spiritual truth which was made to him on the road to Damascus, there came a need of calm deliberation, of personal spiritual activity, divorced for a time from the suggestions and the helps of earthly friends, an adjustment of the truth received to the character and wants of the soul. This process is facilitated by special spiritual influences, is guided to blissful results by the Divine Spirit himself. The deepest con-

victions of any soul are thus obtained and thus made permanent.

A conviction of the reality of eternal things must have the atmosphere of eternity about it to attain legitimate proportions; compared with things earthly, entering only into the computations of things that perish, measured only by the reach of things temporal, submitted only to the consideration and counsel of finite, limited, cramped intelligence, it fails of receiving that increased weight and producing that larger impression upon the truly spiritual nature that would accrue from conference with him who is Spirit and from whom alone proceeds every truly spiritual influence and impression, moving men to the higher ranges of thought and life. Weighty as are the thoughts of cultured minds, helpful as are the counsels of profound philosophers, strengthening as is the grasp of the loving hand, inspiring as is the sound of the voice of human sympathy, there are times when these all should be ignored for a season for a higher, holier, more spiritual conference than these afford and into which the intruding thought or voice of man must not be permitted to enter.

Paul is not an exceptional illustration of the course of those who have attained colossal spiritual proportions. Moses was thus prepared to be the law-giver to Israel; even Jesus declares it as fact in his life. All those who have at any time profoundly impressed the world with the strength of their spiritual character,

the holy beneficence of their spiritual influence, have been the sons and daughters of spiritual conference. To flesh and blood they have said: "Stand aside for a season—that which is spiritual must be spiritually discerned." The struggles which have glorified man have not been upon the plains and hillsides, whose battle smoke has hid from pitying angels the stream of human blood, in which nations have sought to settle disputed claims, nor yet in chambers where the heated brain has melted ores of thought to flow in silvery eloquence, or clash in rugged conflict with opposing thought and lift on whirlwinds of debate men and parties into lasting prominence. Man is not glorified by the struggles that smut his hands with cankered gold, and waste the holy energies of mind and spirit in frantic paroxysms after fleeting fame. This is a struggle that weakens and often debases. In it the muscles knot and are not nourished and paralysis ensues.

There is a struggle that ends in strength. On plains far lifted above these, on thoughts too mountainous for sluggish souls to climb, where the pet son is the sacrifice and the eye of God alone beholds the strife—away from the din, the clash, the snarl of earthly wranglers, the smitten soul has betaken itself, and God has beheld a struggle pregnant with glory, from which immortal happiness has sprung and on which has hinged the comforts of thousands on whom has poured the full light of benefactions whose roseate hue here dawned upon the wrestling soul. The forts



and bastions whose fall has raised the loudest shout in heaven, and brought the most enduring worth to man, have been carried when, by conference with God and a resultant allied strength with him, the soul has attained a moral omnipotence before which the forces of sin have melted away like frost-work before the full blaze of the meridian sun.

It is not the arm of flesh that deals the mightiest blows; it is not the brain in whose delicate tissues thought is most active that wields the sharpest scimiter; it is not the heart whose blood-beats are most regular and full, that pulses most of joy and sympathy and love into the human race; the arm may be feeble, the brain weak, the heart faltering, and before the giant strength of the soul dwelling in these crime may tremble, and personal sin be throttled and chained. The conviction of the right and the way of securing it may be so clear and regnant that nothing can stand before it. The great movements of soul that have lifted the accumulated crust of error and superstition in the different epochs of the world's history have been inaugurated and carried forward by those whose plans have been submitted to other conference than that of flesh and blood and whose pre-eminent peculiarity has been that of spiritual conviction, sustained and deepened by constant contact with its primal inspiration.

Those men who in every period of the church have most contributed to her welfare by their success in

public preaching, in private ministrations or in moulding her statements of truth, and in their elucidation, have borne the stamp of that untrammelled conference with God apart from men to which the soul is invited and whither it must go for strength and blessing and the solution of every spiritual question. The rituals of no church, however carefully prepared, the ministrations of no preacher, however wisely directed, can suffice for that intimate communion with God, concerning the soul's wants, and his provision for its necessities—a conference into which only the spiritual elements of the problem are allowed to enter. *We must be closeted with God.* And the necessity is not only upon those who are to be the master spirits of every age, to mould its thought and guide its councils, whose names are to be before the world, and whose words are to be weighed by succeeding generations.

Spiritual conference is the need not only of the prominent but as well of the obscure; not only of the mighty but as well of the weak; not only of the learned but as well of the ignorant; not only of the teacher but as well of the taught; not only of the aged but as well of the child; the lesson is for all. The source of strong spiritual convictions is in spiritual communion with God, and every such conviction must be made the subject of prolonged spiritual conference for its true place in moulding and controlling the being.

The impressions that come we know not whence, the impulses that quicken thought and feeling are all to be

examined, not in the family, the club, the church alone, but in the Mount of God, that their relation to the Divine may be known. This does not necessitate an absolute ignoring of all parental and friendly advice; it does not raise one's head into the clouds far above the reach of loving words, nor does it imply a misanthropic spirit, a dislike of human councils, a separation from mankind to live with Thoreau on the banks of some Walden Pond; it does not require a fancied superiority of soul to decide all questions by some esoteric reflections and instruction, but rather an emphasis upon the spiritual nature and its divinely provided privileges and possibilities.

The glory of Protestantism is that every soul may have direct contact with God; that the intervening hand of man, the obtruding ear of man, the prattling tongue of man may be removed and Christ alone make the soul acquainted with God and at home in his presence. The first work then that invites a soul conscious in the least of its sin is a conference with God. Paul fled to Arabia, into the desert southeast of Damascus; he was gone probably three years, then he came to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter, was driven away in a fortnight, "came afterwards into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ, but they had heard only that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed." His talk with God and examination of his

life in view of the new conviction which he had received led him to a deep sense of his spiritual needs and the revelation of Christ satisfied that want. The work which was then in process was a purely personal work; those hours were more valuable to him as an individual than any others in his life, for, after all, the great value of his conversion to Paul was not that he should preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and unfold Christ for future generations, but that he, Paul, should be saved, become a joint-heir with Christ to priceless riches in the Kingdom of God.

A like work pertains to each of us; we may not go down into the desert and abide three years, but go into the close presence of God alone we must, if we would secure salutary results from our spiritual impressions, if we would have them deepened into convictions to rule our lives. They came from God whatever the channel which brought them into our spirits, and they call to God with a voice equal to their intensity. The conference with father or mother, with husband or wife, with pastor or friend is right, must be seasonable, but that is not the first work; go you, O stricken soul, immediately to God. Wherever you are on the instant of conviction, flee to the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty; disclose to him the workings of your heart.

It is no childish play to talk aloud alone to God, and examine the secret workings of the soul. To it you are expressly called of God; conceal nothing—tell

without fear of rebuke the sin which oppresses you, which stifles you—tell of the closeness of the moral atmosphere in which you dwell—tell the desire for pardon which you feel. The royalty of heaven will listen; God incarnate in Jesus Christ shed tears at such recital on this earth; unveil, disrobe the soul and stay with God till he has clad it in the robes of Jesus' righteousness and then come forth and confess him before men. If a fear and dread of earthly conference controls you, you need have no fear of spiritual conference; that, too, will fit for a subsequent work as nothing else will do within the soul's utmost possibilities. You will come forth weak and trembling perhaps, but only with that weakness which precedes compacted strength. You will resemble the buildings which the early visitors to the Peruvian settlements found along that coast—poorly built, thatched with straw and unilluminated by a single window but glowing within with tapestries of gold and silver, and in time the whole shall be rebuilt in beauty and in strength.

To-day the Divine Spirit waits to give counsel, to give hope and assurance. Obedience to this call of the Spirit alone secures settlement of the troubled and vexed questions that disturb the peace. Here no voice speaks of a more convenient season; here is no parleying with fancied scientific errors; here the cosmogony of the universe does not intrude, nor the deluge of Noah trouble, nor the apparent inconsistencies of

Scripture narrative steal up like ghosts to frighten from the gospel ground. These all are chained to human conference and appear only as the least important questions to vex the soul or hinder its progress. The business relations of life dwindle into their proper insignificance when viewed in their spiritual and eternal relations. Only as we hold such conference with God, can we properly understand the vastness of the claim he has upon us, and the enormity of that sin, whatever it be, that prevents hearty obedience to his revealed will.

Nor is this conference to be confined to the primary spiritual experiences. These all settled, other questions appear of such serious importance and gravity that their decision may not be entrusted to human council. Motives to action are often subtle and well nigh obscured in the atmosphere of earth; they need to be taken into the rarer atmosphere of the high tablelands of faith and prayer; they need to be made subjects of prolonged conference with God. The questions of right and wrong, the proper attitude for the soul to sustain towards men and parties and creeds and society standards and amusements, the principles that shall govern action in all doubtful hours and emergencies must be determined in these silent hours with God. The source of all strong convictions is here. When stamped into the being by the hand of God they become indelible; criticism of the world, condemnation of others does not affect them; the fires of persecution

cannot burn them out, nor the warning of the timid prevent their utterance.

Convictions are often troublesome in the world, but they are the evidence of spiritual communion that commands the careful consideration of all. Paul's mature thoughts and his grand system of truth was the fruit of his spiritual conference. Luther knew its power; Bernard felt its inspiration; Carey realized its worth, and they came forth to preach and sing, and evangelize the world against the sneers and persecution of lesser souls. If you will mature your thought and settle your doubts, and work out your difficulties in this way, this church will become mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin. It is in hours of uncertainty that this becomes our choice privilege. Questions that are thus settled are apt to be settled right; those that are decided on human advice alone are still unsettled.

2—The Source of Successful Activity. This is found at the source of wisdom and might. When convinced of the propriety of any step in the interest of the soul not yet taken, any progressive movement towards the high standards of life in Jesus Christ, then is the hour to adopt and conform to the words of the text. Will power is mighty, but the omnipotence of God is greater, and this is promised to the sons of faith. He only is faithful in this world who acts promptly and fully up to the mark of his spiritual convictions. How shall one face the howling crowd

that blocks the way of him who turns from long habits of thought and declares them false to move successfully along a higher plane of thinking and living? How shall one be prepared for the desertion of friends?

How shall one be made strong to speak his thoughts in critical and hostile ears? How shall one endure the sneers of lips that oft have praised, the blistering words of captious critics, the malicious distortion of motives and the nightly owl hoots of constant watchers—how? but by the Pauline method of turning from flesh and blood and obtaining spiritual might from spiritual sources. However great the difficulty to be overcome in following the promptings of the soul, however small it be, the same course is commended to all, since the source of success in life and action is here. Led by the Divine Spirit has many a man pondered and groped his way through brambles and over rocks, and the value of his future work has been in proportion to the depth and character of his conference with God in the passing hours which he spent in the desert.

This course is not strange, nor out of harmony with the suggestions of reason. With higher convictions of duty, with clearer views of truth inflashed and infixed by God, day by day should men be seen mounting higher cliffs, seeking a nobler life. Month by month should members of a congregation come forth from the audience chamber of God, filled with holy love,



nerved with celestial strength, fortified by the conscious presence of their Lord and God. The glow should be on some face continually as it gleamed from the face of Moses as he came from the mount. One by one we are going into the heavens; we are becoming pure spirits whether we will or not; our conferences with men cease, with God they must begin. It is well to be familiar with the Lord, to know his will, to be obedient to his commands, to have his approval upon every adopted plan of life.

I call to you to-day, young men, before whom roll the waves of a restless life, before you venture where the depth of sea shall give tremendous swell to the waves, hold conference with God that his strength may be imparted to you. Day follows day; weeks multiply; earthly friends suffice for all you need, but at length the storm cloud hovers on the horizon, clouds the heavens, beats the sea to froth, opens seams in the vessel which creaks and cracks like egg shell in the grasp of strength. Then how shall you endure if you have sailed without any divine direction, if Christ be not on board to counsel, to steady and to save?

Confer with God, young maidens. Fashion, folly, vanity call for your time; music, poetry, painting allure you to their salons; the conference with the world is attractive; the demands of that mystic matron, society, are numerous, imperative, but while you heed them, judiciously confer with God. There may be for you a holier work than you have planned, a

more celestial mission than the lips of fashion have ever yet whispered. Leave flesh and blood awhile and lovingly confer with God.

O friends, what holier message could I bring you to-day than this, if by heeding it you found new joy and peace in God. Care, anxiety, grief are your daily portions; of them you speak each day, as families you plan for their removal, or for their adjustment to your strength; the words concerning them are often upon your lips. Go talk of them to God. Take into the mount for a long conference, but most of all go with a burning wish to seek new spiritual strength, new spiritual light to-day. Dear Church of Christ, would you present a solid, compacted strength to wrestle with sin in this community, would you flash a clear, unspotted, undimmed radiance into all this region, then must you follow Paul as he followed Christ, and in the power of new unity, new love and new consecration come forth from the communion with the Divine Being to a grander work than yet has been achieved.

Only as the church becomes spiritual from fresh inspiration from the source of power can she meet a critical scholarship, a combative disposition, a worldly spirit and the oppositions of wicked spirits in high places; but with the furnishings from the spiritual armory her foes shall all be overcome for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God. A spiritual man is the mightiest ally of truth; a spiritual church is resistless.

### III

#### SPIRITUAL INTUITIONS

“When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.” John 1: 48.

WHEN these words were first spoken by the Lord they produced a startling effect upon the guileless Israelite to whom they were addressed. He was not suddenly entrapped in a spiritual net that had been warily laid for him, yet he responded instantly to these words: “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”

It was not after years of profound teaching nor months of miracle working so that the land was full of his fame, but it was on the threshold of the Master’s work that this conversation occurred.

Andrew and Peter had become disciples, Jesus had also called Philip, and these three men of Bethsaida were his followers. There is no record of any instruction that he had given. John had baptized him, the heavens had given their witness; John, too, had said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” And now Philip has found his friend Nathanael, brought him with the doubt and sneer still curling his lip to hear the greeting, “Behold

an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile." The sneer is lost in astonishment, and in reply to the question, "Whence knowest thou me?" the words of the text were given and Nathanael was a firm disciple.

What manner of man is this, we ask, that so slight an utterance in his hearing produces so stupendous an effect? Others listened to long discourses, sweet with the fragrance of heaven, persuasive with the eloquence of truth, and stirring with the power of gracious oratory, but turned away, rejecting the preaching and the preacher, sometimes enraged to the point of personal violence. This man yielded at a single sentence.

"With but little persuasion thou wouldst fain make me a Christian," might the bystander say, "if this is a sample for us all," though the *little* of Paul's address to Agrippa was abundance compared with this remark to Nathanael.

Nor was this Israelite a weak and fickle man. The guilelessness of his spirit is not an evidence of puerility; he is not a man of credulity, led by every new teacher and swayed readily by every new impulse, following the latest teacher who aspired to be a leader and crying "Rabbi" to every one who startled his intellect by the presentation of sparkling truths which might be errors in disguise. He was a calm, thoughtful man; he had no impetuosity like Peter and was not easily betrayed into a false position. St. Augustine denies that he was one of the twelve disciples under the name of Bartholomew, on the ground that he was

most likely a learned man in the law of Moses, and Christ preferred to choose unlettered men to confound the wise. When Philip met him he awakened his interest by the declaration, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

That he was a man of acute penetration and balanced powers is evident from the little we know of him, and the cordiality of Christ's greeting is an assurance that he was both sensible and sound.

We must account, then, in some rational way for the effect of this simple sentence upon him. Why should the thought that he was observed as he sat under the dense shade of the fig tree have so quickly removed his doubt and given birth to such forcible testimony concerning him to whom Philip had brought him? A calm mind weighs evidence, adjusts so-called proofs before judgment is pronounced. A judicious spirit does not make proclamation of the deepest things in life on a cursory examination, and surely there is nothing deeper than the discovery of the presence of the Son of God, the King of Israel, and his acceptance as the soul's Rabbi or Master.

There was more to Nathanael in this remark of Christ than appears on the surface. He put a powerful lens upon it and read great truths and saw mighty evidence of the greatness of him who stood before him. His purity of spirit enabled him to discern quickly what to others was clouded by their own defective

spirituality. "The pure in heart shall see God." The guileless spirit shall detect the essence of divinity where others see but rude cabalistic signs.

It was because of the great cluster of truths and powers that he knew to be in the spirit of him who spoke these words that he gave him so instantly the trust of his heart. As Leverrier demonstrated the existence of a planet beyond Uranus by its own irregular movements before any eye had seen it, and at length, through a powerful telescope, the planet Neptune was found just where it had been shown that it ought to be, so did Nathanael, with a wise penetration, discover what lay beyond by acute observation of that which was in sight, and it may be that that which flashed upon him will give its light also to us, and that which brought confession to his lips will bring a yet more devout and fulsome utterance to ours.

It was a purely personal truth concerning Nathanael alone that Jesus made known. The value of the jewel did not disappear with the brilliant lustre that flashed upon him—the truth was not exhausted in its application to him. All that was good for him is equally available for us.

There is in every human life at times a sense of isolation. Often we long for it and cannot obtain it. We are so situated that the chains fetter us and hold us in connection with our fellowmen so that the wail of childhood, the monotone of business, the shriek of suffering, the wild whistle of the tempest gale of life

sounds in our ears and disturbs the calm of our spirits. We fret under the constant attrition of the world. We sigh for the place of perfect rest, where no vibration of air, stirred by the pulse of human woe or want, shall break the quiet of our repose. We yearn for an hour in which we shall be secluded from all and hear only the beating of our own hearts, and note only the sensations of our own being; where no buzzing insect and no intruding bird shall startle the utter abandon of our spirits. We want an hour for scrutiny of self, where we can read aloud our deepest thoughts and put into words our most secret purposes; where we can unfold our doubts, disclose our agonies and bury in surrounding silence the sins, the shames, the sorrows, the meannesses of our spirits.

Even Christ had his Mount of Olives and Gethsemane was at its base. Under the shadow of its trees, aided by the friendly darkness of the night, he ate the meat of which his disciples had no knowledge, and came from these hours of solitude to walk the surface of the lake and speak its tumbling billows to an instant calm, to hold in check the rising passions of the mob, to stay the progress of disease, send light into sightless eyes, wreath the garlands of wisdom for the brows of ignorance, and call with potent voice the very dead to life. Transfigured *once* in three and thirty years, he *often* sat in solitude upon the shore of the infinite sea, and let its waters break in multiplying billows across the borders of his being, seized with

bolder thought, the great purpose of his life, and armed himself with new spiritual might to conquer sin and death. The very value of these hours is in their secrecy. Without that the purpose of the spirit is disturbed.

Now Nathanael had his fig tree, and beneath its refreshing shade he had held communion with himself. It was the custom of the Jew to repose under the shade of the fig tree as beneath a leafy roof, occupying himself with reading the law. Nathanael may have been thus employed. He may have been praying for the coming of the redemption of Israel; his thoughts may have been fixed on the Messiah whose advent was to bring glory and gladness into this darkened world; he may have been occupied with the things of his own life and peopled the shade with the creatures of his own thought; he may have spoken out the story of his distress at some early sin or some later sorrow; he may have conversed with himself as one talks with another of the dark things in his being, conscious of his entire separation from all, his isolation from men, his insulation in space, and so with freshness and fullness his thoughts were laid bare.

There may have come a sense of deep distress that none could know how deeply he regretted sin, how sorrowfully he mourned over his fall, how solicitously he looked at the weak points in his life; there may have been pain that no one could know the sorrow that oppressed him, the sense of loneliness that came over him



in view of possible changes that were apparent; his fig tree communion puts emphasis upon all that was needy in his life and spiritual needs lay deeper than all others. Philip was a friend, but when he met him there was no knowledge or hint of that inner experience through which he had been passing. It was all covered from his sight as the billows cover the treasures of the sea, as the rough stone surface hides the flashing crystals of a geode. As soon as Nathanael met a man again, the inner life was covered, perhaps every thought of it suppressed.

You remember the solitary hours in the experience of the minister whom Hawthorne described in the *Scarlet Letter*, when he left his house on an obscure night in May and reached the spot where Hester Prynne had lived through her first hours of public ignominy. The same platform or scaffold, black and weather-stained with the storm or sunshine of seven long years, and foot-worn, too, with the tread of many culprits who had ascended it, remained standing beneath the balcony of the meeting-house. The minister went up the steps. If the same multitude which had stood as eye-witnesses while Hester Prynne sustained her punishment could now have been summoned forth, they would have discerned no face above the platform, nor hardly the outline of a human shape in the dark gray of the midnight. But the town was all asleep. There was no peril of discovery—no eye could see him, save that ever-wakeful One which had seen him

in his closet wielding the bloody scourge. And there he stood alone, afraid, unobserved and anxious, lest some eye should see him in the moment of his expiation, discerning "by the faintness that came over him when the light of a glimmering lantern held in the hand of a passerby had faded away without discovering him, that the last few minutes had been a crisis of terrible anxiety."

Such hours as these, having more or less intensity according to the purpose that prompts them, and the thoughts that occupy them, hours of concealment, are not intended to belong to the world. Sometimes the feeling in the soul is so intense that the thought of publicity is forgotten, though the secret purpose is cherished.

I have read that one evening, long after Dr. Samuel Johnson had reached the zenith of his literary fame, he said to his hostess: "Madam, I beg your pardon for the abruptness of my departure in the morning, but I was compelled to it by conscience. Fifty years ago, madam, on this day I committed a breach of filial piety. My father had been in the habit of attending Uttoxeter market and opening a stall there for the sale of his books. Confined by indisposition he desired me that day to go and attend the stall in his place. My pride prevented me, and I gave my father a refusal. And now, to-day, I have been at Uttoxeter; I went into the market at the time of business, uncovered my head and stood with it bare for an

hour on the spot where my father's stall used to stand. In contrition I stood there and I hope the penance was expiatory."

Thomas Carlyle says of this event: "The picture of Samuel Johnson standing bareheaded in the market there is one of the grandest and saddest we can paint. Repentance, he proclaimed, as with passionate sobs, but only to the ear of heaven, if heaven will give him audience; the earthly ear and heart that should have heard it are now closed and unresponsive forever."

The silent attitude of this man in this public place, in which he became absorbed with his own relations to past events and persons out of sight, is like that of the minister on the platform at night, like Nathanael under the fig tree, like each one of us in such hours of abstraction and painful experience.

When, then, there came to Nathanael the assurance that not only was he observed in his place of retirement, but that all his secret thoughts had moved out from himself into possession of this man to whom Philip had brought him; that the deepest emotion of his heart, the tenderest possessions of his being were no longer his, that his place of retirement was a place of exposure and the shade of the fig tree no cover to his person; when he saw no malicious gleam of triumph in the eye of him who addressed him, no secret chuckle at his knowledge betrayed in the tones of his voice, no tyrannous mastership exercised over him while his heart lay like an unrolled manuscript before

him, whose every line, whose every word, whose every dot had been scanned; aware of the supernatural power thus disclosed, he cavilled not, nor cared to reason further, but, with the loyalty of a spirit without guile, exclaimed, as Thomas did on the lower plane of contact with the flesh, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel!"

So, when there comes to us some sudden disclosure of the Christ, the knowledge that he is acquainted with *our* fig tree experience, that he has heard our moans and cries, our spoken sorrows and our untold pains; that he has seen our weakness, our shrinking, our steadfastness of spirit; that when we went alone to gird ourselves for trial or for combat, he stood by, though we were then unconscious of his presence in our complete absorption in our own condition, so that the knowledge of ourselves is not locked up in the chambers of our own being but shared by him; when we are assured that he was a silent partaker in the experience of our hour of solitary struggle for something better than we had been or known, there is first a shock to the sensibilities, then an outflowing of love and confidence as we detect his greatness and understand the purpose of his revelation to us.

Nathanael was informed of the Christly observation, not that he might have a fear of an everlasting sentinel pacing to and fro through all the secret places of his life, but that he might have the repose of a spirit whose secrets are safely lodged with infinite

love, and whose weakness is sheltered beneath a present Almightyness.

“When thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee,” Jesus said to Nathanael, “Thy struggles, thy wishes, thy hopes, thy plans, thy desires, thy sins, thy sorrows, thy doubts, thy fears, thy trusts are all known to me,” and he knew he stood in the light that makes stars and suns all needless, and is in itself the executor of the divine will as it reveals exact proportions and shows inevitable destinies, that he only could thus penetrate the covering of custom and courtesy who was the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Never again could he take his place beneath the fig tree for meditation or study without a thought of this spiritual inspection; never again would he go apart from the world without a deep sense of the necessity of perfect honesty in all his dealings with himself; never could he abandon himself to the wild play of his own feelings, as though no one cared for him, no one knew him, no one was interested in the issue of his meditations, no one could share his loneliness or be admitted a partner in his experience, but “Lo, I am with thee,” would be written for him on every leaf that lent its cooling shade, and would be sung for him in every movement of his leafy covert.

Often had this lesson been taught in the Old Testament Scriptures with which Nathanael was familiar, but doubtless it came to him with a freshness as it became a reality in his own experience. Possibly some

of us have yet to learn it as we come from some hour of fancied solitude to meet the Christ whom we have not yet fully known. The story of Hagar in the wilderness, when "Thou God seest me" became the name of Jehovah to her as the Lord met and blessed her, was well known. Peniel was familiar to him as the place where Jacob in his solitariness saw the Lord face to face. He knew that the Lord met Moses in the desert as he led the flock in a retired place away from his kindred, solitary in spirit. The history of his people had made him familiar with the frequent manifestations of the divine presence in hours of special personal distress.

He had sung the precious truth in the words of the psalm, "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassed my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely

the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

And yet he could have an experience of solitariness as though there were a sense in which the Lord was not with him. But when the Master recalled his historic consciousness of the divine presence and assumed to possess it himself, breaking over all the ordinary barriers that divide men and revealing knowledge of his inner being, accompanied by evident love for him and supply for his needs, his heart was captured.

And thus the appreciation afresh on our part of the share which the Lord takes in all that tends to separate us from the supports of this world may quicken in us the truths of the word and lead to a blessed experience of Christly friendship and companionship.

The great truths that meet us in this study are:

Ist. There is a constant divine inspection of the obscure. The Bible repeatedly asserts this, and the natural world everywhere forcibly illustrates it. Every department of natural study is constantly lifting into greater prominence this lesson. The chemist, the botanist, the geologist, each with the microscope in hand, declares that the most powerful evidence of the presence and workmanship of God is in the most minute and obscure specimens that can be obtained. Delicacy of finish is not determined by the publicity or the speedy exposure, but rather by its obscurity.

God can work and wait thousands of years for an observer. The occult things of nature discovered by man are all worthy of their divine author. "Apparently trivial changes in atomic arrangements effect changes of the most unexpected and startling order," and proclaim everywhere the divine inspection of the obscure. All things celebrate his presence, even

"The wind, before it woos the harp,  
Is but the wild and tuneless air;  
Yet, as it passes through the chords,  
Changes to music rare."

It is thus that in the combination and contacts of things without life the presence of a divine worker is manifest. And if in these material things, how much more in the lives of his children! It is not an empty utterance that informs us that the hairs of our head are all numbered—that we are of more value than many sparrows, though not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father. There is nothing obscure. A prayer meeting by a hay stack is proclaimed in the majestic movements of that great society that seeks to bring the whole world to Christ, and Henry Martyn, dying obscurely in a foreign land, becomes a beacon light to flash through centuries. The retirement under the fig tree elicits the divine observation, interest, blessing. The very obscurity of our lives emphasizes the fact of the divine notice.

2d. There is no retirement from God's love and



sympathy. We may be separated from the human of necessity or by choice. The shade may lure us from the light, the silence from the roaring noise, the fig tree from the temple, the rural from the urban, but nothing can separate us from God. Sorrow, sickness, pain, disappointment, the needs of our spirit may hurry us away from the sight of men, but under the fig tree the Lord bends over us in compassion, and in our weakness seeks to lift us in his arms, since "in all our afflictions he is afflicted," and the declaration of this truth to Nathanael gives its rich treasure to each of us. So may we sing—

"Oh, I know the hand that is guiding me  
Through the shadow to the light;  
And I know that all betiding me  
Is meted out aright.  
I know that the thorny path I tread  
Is ruled with a golden line;  
And I know that the darker life's tangled thread  
The brighter the rich design."

Knowledge of these truths ought to furnish basis for a larger and sweeter trust to-day. Without him the fig tree may become a place of pain and at length of suicide; but with him it becomes the most hallowed spot on earth. Its voice calls for a rich acknowledgment of blessing, for a real consecration, for a nobler service, for a holier life. It ought to lead us to say with Whittier:

"I care not where the islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air:  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond his loving care.  
And so, O Lord, by whom are seen  
Thy children as they be,  
Forgive me if too close I lean  
My human heart on thee."

## IV

### THE PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP OF CHRIST

“I am with you alway” (all the days).—Matthew 28: 20.

FEW words of our Lord would be more seriously missed than these if they should be taken from the sacred volume by the demands of scholarship or the tooth of time. They have become so familiar to us, the truth they convey is so inwrought into our experience that we are not conscious of its value or of our dependence upon it. As we do not pause every morning to consider the value of the returning light, but cheerfully enter upon the duties of the day under its brilliant ministry, so do we almost unconsciously walk in the silvery sheen of this blessed truth intent only upon that which it enables us to perform.

But when some enthusiastic lecturer or some student professor, warm with his theme, analyzes for us the beams of light, acquaints us with all the details of its formation, its long and rapid journey, its marvellous adaptation to our necessities, its abundant provision for our wants, we rejoice with a new joy in its presence, and even forsake for a time its use that we may

celebrate itself. And when we are called by any agency to apprehend the specific excellence of this glorious Christ-spoken truth, and feel its warmth and realize its strength-giving quality and see its beauty and measure its worth, we are ready to drop every employment that we may fitly celebrate, the source of all our goodness, the ground of all our strength, the open secret of all our successes.

The harmony that in our lives has charmed the passing stranger, the fragrance that has drawn to us the attention and fixed upon us the affection of our fellowmen has come from a single and simple cause. The tree has not grown its luscious fruit out of itself; the bush has not from its secret reservoir drawn out and hung in sight of all its brilliant and beautiful berries, but from beyond, from air above and earth beneath, with which its contact has been constant, has both beauty and richness been derived. The spirit among men that has been strong and grand in purpose and in act, dignifying the race and proving its worth, dispensing treasures of learning and nobler treasures of virtue has not evolved these from the depths of its own being, but has derived them from beyond the limits of itself. Excellence would soon be withered, virtue would soon fade, beauty would soon be gone, if nourished only from the human supplies. But with eye fixed upon the external, we are unmindful of hidden processes of production; hungry, we are intent upon provision, regardless of its source, until

called by a master voice to a considerate regard for that upon which we have found ourselves so dependent.

To teach us this truth, our headlong pace in life might be arrested by the sudden withdrawal of that which nerves us for every conflict; then, indeed, are we awakened in wild alarm to our grievous neglect. It is better to be summoned to a vivid sense of that blessed presence, that, while it is the charm of heaven, is also the unspeakable treasure of every earthly life, for a consciousness of our true relations to our Lord will compel us each to cry with the psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!"

This was not a wayside utterance of Christ, suggested by local surroundings and limited in its application, but it was so royally set as to flash its radiance to the remotest bounds of time, and secure attention by the hour and place of its utterance.

I. There was a profound necessity in the condition of the early disciples for the announcement of this truth on the part of Christ in some emphatic form. He had given them a stupendous work to perform in face of unspeakable odds. They were a frail minority in midst of powerful and determined opponents. Religion and government were arrayed against them. Their story was mocked, their persons were to be maltreated. Contempt was to be visited upon them, yet they were to go forth and disciple the world. They were to overcome all opposition, and change the whirl-

wind of human passion into a sonata of divine praise. They were to honeycomb the proud philosophy and the boastful religion with its pantheon of gods with the words of their Master until they both crumbled away, and these new and living forms of thought and devotion appeared. They were to lift a blood-stained cross till monarch and people hailed it as the sign of spiritual freedom and glorious deliverance from sin.

Here was transcendent need of some divine help, some all-glorious leader. Natural infirmity must needs be supplemented by spiritual might, and all the conflicting desires of imperfect men be unified in the rule of a dominant leader. This word of Christ became thus the prelude of victory. It met the necessity of the hour. If defeat came it was but temporary; if blood flowed, it was but for a moment; if Satan triumphed, it was only to make his overthrow more conspicuous and complete; if persecution led to prison and to death, it was only to emphasize the splendor of that conquest which should subdue all opposition and shake the universe with its carnival of joy. If Christ were really with them, the disciples felt that they were equal to every emergency. And so they braved the evils of their day, and started Christianity on its sublime mission. They sang amid the tempest, and quailed not before hostile kings; they roamed the land and sailed the sea, carrying their message to the ends of the earth, for a present Christ sustained their faith,

quicken their courage and kept warm their affections.

II. The same necessity remains to-day. Disciples still need the assurance of this truth for the conflicts now in progress. Sin is the same as in the early day; hatred of God and human and demoniac opposition to him is unchanged. The foes of the truth are yet in battle array, and the rule of this world is still the issue in the mighty combat. Personal passions are still strong, and wicked spirits in high places vex and torment the sons of God. Unbelief and wrong beliefs still fling their insolent taunts at Christian faith, and old forms of error still hold the allegiance of millions of our fellowmen. The centuries of conflict have not displaced the crescent nor raised the cross in triumph where Buddha taught and Confucius led to idolatry, though doors are open and voices call in every land where men have gone astray. Eight hundred and thirty-five millions are still Pagan, five hundred millions follow Buddha, one hundred and seventy-five millions extol Mohammed, while eight millions of Jews ignore Messiah and two hundred and seventy millions are the slaves of a corrupt Christianity. The battle wages all along the line, and Satan struggles for body, soul and spirit. Even in this age of thought and investigation God himself is denied existence in his own world, and the spirit in man is reduced to the principle of life that brings a shrub to flower and fruit to decay and extinction. That "the wages of sin is death," that

“Jesus died to save lost souls,” is still an unwelcome message, and the disciple has no more power in himself to-day than when Peter fell and all forsook the suffering Master and fled. At the head of the faltering columns, by the side of every man there is need of the glorious leader. And this stimulating word of Christ comes to meet our necessities in the struggle with sin, in the combat with error, in the attempted conquest of the world. “I am with you” brightens the eye and stirs the slumbering pulse and quickens the lagging steps.

III. But in what sense did Christ intend us to understand his presence? How are we to believe that he is with us?

There is a powerful stimulus in that which stands for another and is so vitally connected with him, that it may be said to represent him, even to be him. One may be present with friends and followers by the truths which he has spoken, by the instruments he has used, by the institutions he has established, by the charms or amulets he has left, by fragments of himself as bone or garment, by the people whom he has won to himself.

Was it in any or all of these senses that Christ spoke this word?

There is a fragment of Plymouth Rock upon which our New England Fathers landed in the face of the pulpit at which I am accustomed to minister; it stands for the principles and suggests the sufferings of our



Pilgrim Fathers. Is Christ with us by some symbol typical of him and his work and constantly suggestive of it, and with us no more than the fathers are with us by the rock, through memory stirring us to heroic endeavor for the right? Would this text be satisfied in the presence with us at this hour of the seamless garment which our Saviour wore, for which the soldiers gambled? The Capuchins, an order of Franciscan monks, were wont to show to their audiences locks of hair torn from the head of their martyred saints, so quickening enthusiasm and preparing for their stirring words of address! Were the martyrs there present *as* Christ would be with us by the exhibit of some relic? Is he no more with us than they?

This is our central question—vital as our very life, our hope of everlasting victory.

That Christ is with us by *his truth* let us freely and happily admit. The words he spoke vital with his own life spring with elastic step along the ages, touch the dead into life, the living into power, awake nations from the long sleep of centuries to leap from the motionless dust to every form of noble action, and justify his own declaration, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." We see the transforming energy that is in them, and seek to carry them as a living person to every land. They comfort the sorrowing, they support the weak, they recall the erring, they give peace to the trusting, they chariot

the dying as the loving embraces of strong arms to the world of life and light.

“Sing them over again to me,  
Wonderful words of life;  
Let me more of their beauty see,  
Wonderful words of life.”

Yet we are not ready to believe that Christ referred to his words when he said, “I am with you alway.”

We know the power of a mother's letter to recall her spirit after she has gone. How single paragraphs will ring with her voice! How single words bring out the expression of her face! Often such a letter is tear-stained from frequent use. But the letter is not the mother after all. Neither is the gospel letter Christ himself. He did not intend us so to understand his teaching.

A little shoe will recall a baby's face and fill again a mother's arms as she sits in her chamber oblivious of all, holding again her baby, while she really holds only a little toe-crumpled shoe. There is marvellous power in representative things. The heart of Bruce thrown to the enemy fires to transcendent heroism the Scottish warriors—for to them their king is then among his foes. The idol becomes the God whom it represents, the wafer is declared to be Christ that it suggests, and even tutored minds bow before a crucifix and yield to the strange fascinating power of a relic of early days or a symbolic representative of them. The tragic story of the history of the wood of the true

cross shows in its convulsive power over nations the might of representative things. But *we protest* against any or all of these as being *Christ in the world to-day*.

Parties stand for the thought and life of those who formed them, bearing more than their names to posterity; societies and clubs perpetuate personal qualities and individual lives. The Christian Church pulsates with the life of Christ and is dead without him. As he abides in its members, and so in it, disclosing again the peerless qualities of his being, so are they and it useful and powerful in the world. There are special promises concerning his presence in and with his Church, but we cannot believe that he referred to his Church when he said, "I am with you always."

The Church, bloody, boastful, vengeful, corrupt, worldly at times, is not Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.

A son may represent a father, a follower may resemble a leader, a disciple may embody the spirit of the teacher, a friend may reflect the life of his boon companion, but each is distinct. Individuality of being is the law of life. So Christ is not with us simply in the person of his dearest and truest disciple and friend. He may answer the prayer of Thomas Aquinas for more of himself, till the devout monk is full of the glory of his Redeemer, and yet Christ shall be distinct from him. He is with none as he is with the Father. His Church is not himself.

With all these eliminations, his utterance yet remains and demands explanations. Do we not find it in the simplest possible meaning?

IV. Jesus Christ is with us as a person distinct from truth and symbol, separate from church and people as when he dined with Zacchaeus, or slept on the waking boat, or walked on the foaming sea, or taught on the green slopes of the hills. As he was with James and Peter and John, as he was with Mary and Martha, as he was with the twelve at the First Supper on the memorable evening in the upper room, so is he with us to-day. Apart from elements here spread, distinct from truth and church and each disciple, in his own blessed personality he is here now. This is the declaration of his own lips. A person is always better than possession or attributes, and his promise declared his personal presence through all the days. It is his presence that has brightened the ages and cheered the saints in every land. Luther before the great tribunal, Bernard in his lonely cell, the nameless disciple in the Catacombs, the martyr in the arena with the raging lion—all knew a personal presence as did the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace of old. And the tried, troubled, feeble, sorrowing disciple of to-day has the same source of comfort as the widow of Nain on her sad journey, as Mary and Martha when Lazarus lay dead. Into the chamber of sickness he still comes, unchanged in spirit and in purpose of blessing, to brighten the weary hours and give

strength to bear the wasting pain, the desolating loneliness.

The joyful assembly he still joins, to increase its pleasure as when he found his way to the wedding party at Cana, or sat at feast in the rich man's dwelling. He still calls to Zacchaeus in the tree and to Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom. He beckons disciples from every condition in life, and draws near to the boys and girls to be their friend and helper. He still takes the infants in his arms, and says, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." No struggle with temptation escapes his loving attention; no fallen Peter fails to receive his look of sorrow or his message of forgiveness and hope. He is still wounded by the desertion of friends, by the cold indifference of those who know him, by the refusal to become his disciple. He still lingers with those who question, like Nicodemus, and is patient with the obtuse sense of those who, like the woman of Samaria, have long lived in sin. *He still* wants the affection of men; he still desires to save them from their sins. Hypocrisy and Phariseeism are still hateful to him, and unbelief prevents his mighty works of power. Steadily as the years move on he works toward the end of this age when Satan shall be overthrown and choices be fixed and eternal. Not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, he multiplies agencies of spiritual influence, and personally makes them effective; uses weak instruments, making them power-

ful by his presence. He seeks in the lonely mountains and in the crowded city the soul that has gone astray, and unseen, but not unfelt. He stands pleading, pleading for the soul for which he shed his precious blood.

V. In this understanding of our Lord's words there is

(1) Perpetual corrective of evil, and

(2) Perpetual stimulus to good.

I am sure I would not have done many things that have marked my life, had Jesus Christ in the flesh been my conscious companion. Words would have been unspoken, deeds would have been undone. But if Jesus be just as really with me as though in the flesh, and I am conscious of that presence, shall I not be kept from open sin, from secret fault?

How the meanness of my spirit will crouch away from disclosure! How the stinginess of my soul will cloud my life and be quickly exchanged for open liberality in blessed gifts to him and for him! Every temptation will lose its power, every besetting sin be more quickly attacked, every unholy alliance be more readily broken in the sense of his personal presence. The thoughts themselves will be kept pure, the tendency to yield to evil suggestions will be held as with bit and bridle, and the spirit feel a consciousness of the surety of triumph over all that has made it narrow, small, ungodlike.

The mystery of the Lord's ubiquity is lost in the

joy of the personal experience of his holy promise. This truth cannot fail also to be a perpetual stimulus to good. The reality of his presence will prevent discouragement. Activity will be more constant and service more successful. The Sunday-school teacher will not falter, the mother will not lessen her efforts to bring every child to Christian living, the disciple will not hesitate to confess his Lord, the sufferer will become more patient, the bereaved will be more readily comforted, and the dying smile at the disclosures to the spirit as it wins the victory over decaying nature. The disciple who has turned from duty will return and bear his cross and serve his master, conscious that his Lord is really with him.

One of the most beautiful legends is connected with the old age of Peter at Rome. Persecution had become severe, dangers were imminent, and the old man for the moment forgetful of the dear Lord's presence, escaped in the early dawn from the city and passed through the gates into the Appian Way. In a vision he saw the Lord approaching, bearing his cross as on the way to Rome, and, throwing himself at the feet of his master, he cried, "Lord, whither goest thou?" In tender and unrebuking phrase, but with a look that brought again his real presence to the faltering man, he replied: "I go to Rome to be crucified instead of thee." That presence nerved the soul to any suffering, turned Peter back to the persecuting city and made his martyrdom glorious.

It is to us with fulness of meaning that the Saviour says in this hour of tender and affectionate commemoration, "I am with you all the days."

I walk down the Valley of Silence,  
 Down the dim voiceless Valley—alone!  
 And I hear not the fall of a footstep  
 Around me, save God's and my own;  
 And the hush of my heart is as holy,  
 As hovers where angels have flown.

Do you ask what I found in the Valley?  
 'Tis my trysting place with the Divine;  
 And I fell at the feet of the Holy,  
 And above me a voice said, "Be Mine!"  
 And there arose from the depths of my spirit  
 An echo—"My heart shall be thine."

Do you ask how I live in the Valley?  
 I weep, and I dream, and I pray,  
 But my tears are as sweet as the dew drops,  
 That fall on the roses in May;  
 And my prayer, like a perfume from censers,  
 Ascendeth to God, night and day.

But far on the deep there are billows  
 That never shall break on the beach,  
 And I have heard songs in the silence,  
 That never shall float into speech;  
 And I have had dreams in the Valley,  
 Too lofty for language to reach.

Do you ask me the place of the Valley,  
 Ye hearts that are harrowed by care?  
 It lieth afar between mountains,  
 And God and His angels are there;  
 And one is the dark Mount of Sorrow,  
 And one the bright Mountain of Prayer.



## V

### THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN

“And Cain talked with Abel, his brother; and it came to pass when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him.”—Genesis 4:8.

“Andrew first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith to him, we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.”—John 1:41, 42.

THE brotherhood of man is a fruitful theme of modern discourse—men of every shade of belief and unbelief announce their faith in these words. The Agnostic, who often knows so much about what he asserts cannot be known, declares his firm belief in the universal brotherhood of man; the infidel and skeptic who avow their hostility to Christianity as a form of faith, yet loudly vociferate their loyalty to the brotherhood of man; the liberal Christian who dislikes creeds and searches ever for the outermost rim of acceptable thought, glibly asserts his confidence in the brotherhood of man; the stoutest adherent of the most hide-bound creed equally affirms his devotion to this holy fraternity. All are agreed in advocating this

noble dictum. Blended with the most scathing criticisms of the dearest beliefs of others are eloquent attestations of the beauty and glory of human brotherhood. In the common Fatherhood of God, all would find the cosmical human relation established, and have each one love and honor his brother, as the highest type of true religion, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen," is a favorite text. All this savors of a very friendly spirit, and if the history of man had never been written might seem a very natural and easy attainment.

The beasts and birds gather the crowds about them in Central Park, because they are caged from their visitors, and from one another. Their snarls and cries of jealous rage during the distribution of food are not reassuring to him who speaks of the abolition of the savage nature by years of kindly treatment; all are thankful for the bolts and bars. Even the domestic animals in the barn and in the yard alike present an unseemly strife for bits of food, and often snatch away that which is the lawful possession of another. The sight of caged convicts in jails and prisons, *men and women* in full possession of their senses, bitter and vengeful, stirs a feeling of pity for them, and gladness that they are secure from the community. And the struggle in the open world gives abundant evidence of the feeling in the human heart. Travelers tell many strange stories, and it sometimes

seems as though nations were only caged from each other by mighty walls or bars of armed men.

The debate on brotherhood assumes a new aspect when conducted on the border lines of great nations, or when taken into the mines of Siberia, and proposed to Russian officials. Stepniak, of London, and George Kennan can contribute some facts to the problem. The armies and armaments of the nations are strange comments on this universal agreement in brotherhood.

Four million six hundred and twenty-five thousand one hundred and forty-two in the regular armies of the world—21,127,027 when on a war footing, costing annually \$909,628,736, beside 298,309 in the navies of the world, costing to support \$233,582,937, are important items in this discussion.

The problems that are constantly arising out of the blended representatives of all nations that make our sixty-two millions demand a closer study of the brotherhood question. The fifteen millions of immigrants that have reached our shores during the last seventy years, the fifteen millions of colored people that have grown up within our own borders, the two hundred and fifty or three hundred thousand Indians, the Chinamen, whose once curious cue and dress is now as familiar as our own national garb, combine to increase the interest in these flatulent declarations of common brotherhood. Our attention is forced anew to this question: Will the recognition of our common descent from Adam, and so of our common brotherhood secure

that fraternal feeling and interest which is thus implied? What was the relation that existed between brother and brother in Adam? If we return to it, will it be sufficient? Is the cry of brotherhood deep enough to meet the emergency? The great historic facts are before us and help to an answer to these questions.

If it is enough to put in every mind and crowd into every heart the realization that every human being is a true brother to every other, then the great work of life is simplified; but, if after that is accomplished, the same indifferent and hostile feelings remain, we must turn our efforts in another direction.

If we shall succeed in reducing the world again to a single family in Adam, so that all shall recognize the common interest, there is widespread expectation that difficulties that now beset us will all be harmoniously solved. But, if it should appear on careful study that a lack of unity prevailed when this family existed, we must find another and more effective bond of fellowship.

The two passages of Scripture which I have brought together this morning present to us the first exhibit of brotherly relations in the family of Adam, and the first exhibit of brotherly relations in the family of Christ. In the one case it is that of estrangement, jealousy and murder; in the other it is that of loving anxiety, search and spiritual recovery. This is a startling, historic disclosure. It cannot be merely fortuitous—it is a revelation.

The family of Adam presents the condition to which we are urged to return, because, it is asserted, that in the holy bond of brotherhood safety and happiness will be secured. But here we find a strife as bitter and deadly as is found among the representatives of different races. We can only answer the question—what will be our relation to each other when we are all gathered into one family again—by declaring what it was in the first instance. It will be the relation of Cain to Abel. They were brothers, in the same family, with loving parents and with no hereditary, ancestral strifes coursing in their blood. The attitude of man to man, then, if returned, only to the Adamic family will be the attitude of contention and enmity. And so we find it the world over. Men have been brought together only to swing apart again with angry feelings in the heart, and bitter denunciations on the lip. Fraternities have been formed that seemed to be the germ forces of human redemption from vexatious conflicts. But they have been shattered on the cruel rocks of ambition and greed. Common pursuits and similar tastes have been the basis of union which has ended in a fratricidal war. The harmony of years has at length been broken, and the history of combinations and leagues, of guilds and clubs is an age-long comment on the hopeless efforts to effectually unite men on the simple ground of mental or industrial agreement. In no nation is exception found. The cultivated and the degraded

alike unite in Adam to divide in Cain and Abel.

The natural man is selfish, considers primarily his own interest. By just so much as we are in Adam, we are pivoted on self-interest. All things have a personal relation. The dark picture of human life, with its startling contrasts, its Rembrandt lights and shades, its palaces and hovels, its noble faces and demoniac features, its richly-robed people and ragged crowds, its saintly sacrifice and devil-fish greed, its portly persons and shrunken frames, its busy fingers and idle hands, its pampered crime and persecuted innocence—tells to earth and heaven the story of human brotherhood in Adam. The ages show no improvement. Crime is as black, fiendish and hellish today as ever. Deeds as foul as ever are wrought in the sacred name of friendship, and Cain still walks with his brother in the field, and there rises up against him, and takes his life.

Philanthropy is blessed in theory, but in practice it must receive salt at the fountain whence it springs. Even the church as an organization shows painful illustrations of the reign of the human passions in the dark days of her history, when membership meant little more than brotherhood in a human family. The terrible antagonisms that have arisen, the fearful outbursts that have kindled the fires of martyrdom, the dreadful deeds that have been done in her name, but without the spirit of him who is her head, declare the

inutility of any mere human brotherhood to make men what they ought to be. If it could have been done we should see the ripe fruits of it to-day.

In the first exhibit of brotherly relations in the family of Christ, we find a delightful contrast.

In the uplift of soul that came to Andrew in meeting and yielding himself to the Lord, there was an instant regard for his brother's welfare. Great as was his own comfort, it was incomplete until he had found and communicated it to Simon. The joy in discovering the Messiah was coupled with the immediate impulse to share the treasure with his brother. It was no preconceived plan on his part; the wave of heavenly love that had swept into his life brought with it the heavenly desire for others' good. It was irresistible. Absence from the person of Christ, ignorance of his being was a loss deeper than all others; his quickened life could bear no delay. He sought and found Simon and brought him to Jesus. If there ever had been animosity or strife of any kind, it was drowned in the flood of new emotions that now occupied his breast. He, too, talked with his brother as he led him across the field, but of the boundless blessing to which he was directing his feet. And the affection that was thus disclosed was permanent and prophetic, as well as illustrative of the true brotherhood into which all men must be bound for eternal union. The Christly man is unselfish, and considers primarily his brother's interests. By just so much as we are in Christ we are

pivoted on fraternal interests, and not on our own—our brother's interests are our own.

If we study these two cases more minutely we shall discover the folly of much declamation, and the worthlessness of much work on efforts to bring all classes to a common level, and the plain path that leads to the much coveted goal.

An analysis of the spirit of Cain and his attitude toward Abel reveals many important particulars:

1st. He had separate *business* interests. The division of the labor of the household might and ought to have been the ground of closer union, but it grew to be the occasion of a wider separation. Abel cared for the flocks while Cain tilled the soil. The work of one naturally supplemented that of the other and illustrated the desired harmonious division of labor in modern days. But Cain had little or no regard for the welfare of the flocks, even looked with jealous eye upon their increase and regarded his brother's prosperity as dwarfing his own. They seemed to be rivals in business. Doubtless Cain had his share in all the increase and family rights in the use of what he desired, yet he used no portion save that which came from his own toils, at least, for his religious offerings. The fraternal fact did not help the fraternal spirit of mutual advancement, either for increase of property or united approach to God. There were evidently no consultations as of those who were conducting different branches of the same enterprise, but a reticence and



guarded silence lest the plans of one should be known to the other. The mere fact of brotherhood did not unite their business interests.

2d. Cain had separate *religious* interests. His offerings were selected according to his own choice without regard to Abel's idea, and probably at variance with the divine command. He wanted no dependence upon the toils of his brother in his approach to God. He headed the liberal school of thought and scoffed at the literal interpretation of the divine requirements. He chose to offer what he pleased, regardless of what Abel might sacrifice. If brotherliness created oneness, then there would have been kindly communion and agreement; there was the exact opposite. That was not the result of brotherhood, but in spite of it. The family relation does not, and will not *of itself* promote unity in religious thought and life.

3d. Cain cherished personal animosity at Abel's acceptance with God. Instead of recognizing his error, and penitently and joyfully turning from it, joining his brother in glad and acceptable forms of worship, the demon of jealous hate stole into his heart, received cordial welcome and took up his abode there. Henceforth Abel was like an enemy; no harm had come from his lip or his life: his gentle spirit had enriched the home and his diligent devotion to duty had increased the common treasure, yet the flame of wrath shot up in the heart that should have glowed with tender affection, consumed in its fierceness all

gracious feelings, and at length drove the hand to the murderous act. There is nothing in parentage to compel strife like this between offspring, nor is there anything that absolutely prevents it. We can imagine the debate in the field between these men of such different spirit. The harsh tones of the one met by the gentle expostulation of the other; the condemnations answered by protestations of ardent affection, the frown lighted up by the smile, the savage rage of the murderer heightened by the forgiving love of his brotherly victim, the divine communication that had preceded the interview instead of healing the smarting wound in Cain's soul only seems to have inflamed it the more. This whole narrative as presented on the page of Scripture tells a most discouraging story to him who seeks only a common brotherhood to solve life's tangled problems.

An analysis of the spirit of Andrew and his attitude towards Simon reveals also many important particulars.

1st. He had common business interests which were cemented in his new love for Christ. That which had held these two together on the plane of brotherhood held them more firmly in the family of Christ. If, bound together by business ties, Andrew feared that the establishment of a new basis of union would disturb the old one, he was glad to find that it only strengthened it. His natural tie, firmer in his case than in that of Cain, but not firm enough for uni-

versal happiness, showed perhaps a more congenial spirit than appeared in the first family, but the desire for a deeper and truer union sprung from the *new* impulse, and did not grow out of the old. Together these two men had sailed the sea, and cast their nets, endured hardships and divided the gains, and still by a mightier power their hearts were to be held together for nobler work and more superlative rewards. The bond that time and storms might have severed was made eternally secure in making permanent their business interests.

2d. Andrew desired and sought to secure common religious relations and service.

Whether or not they had hitherto sympathized in their adherence to the Jewish church, membership in the great Master's family instantly gave birth to a longing that in this matter they should be alike. However much they might differ in natural gifts, Andrew wanted similarity of spirit and offering as they knelt together at the mercy seat. There was no place for jealousy in the heart filled with the new affection. He was possessed with the masterful desire to communicate the new truth which he had received. Though he was conscious of having been made a nobler and greater man, he was not thereby lifted above any, but brought under a holy compulsion to bring everyone to his higher level. He was eager to make known his new discovery and convince his brother first of the presence of the true Messiah in the world. Where the

natural brotherhood has always failed, this new and only true brotherhood triumphed. It sought not its own but another's good. Cain and Andrew stand before us as the types of brotherhood, Cain weak and ineffective, Andrew strong and successful.

In Jesus Christ the only true bond of brotherhood is found. The spirit of Christ in the human life revolutionizes it and makes possible loving contact and association with all others. The extremes of humanity are brought together without mutual repulsion, and the prophecy which the angels sung on Judean hills becomes fact in the experience of the world.

Here is the only hope of the world. Until the dawn of the day of Christ all efforts for the unity of the races were futile, and still every plan that omits his Mastership is *radically* powerless. It may have much that is commendable; it may be presented by eloquent lips; it may be pressed upon the attention by men and women of noble lives; it may win popular applause; it may promise well by early successes; but in the strain of ambition and greed it will wreck the hopes of its founders as its fragments disappear in the seething whirlpool of angry debate.

Multitudes whose souls have kindled into flame, as with Tennyson they

“Dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be,”

have prayed with earnest longing that in their time might come the blessing when

“The war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furred;

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world;  
There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.”

But even youths may be roused to conflict by these very souls with the prayers still warm upon their lips, as was often done in the stirring hours of our civil war. The bondman flying across this Christian land to the borders of Canada for the right to own himself, with bloodhounds on his track and a brother man in hot pursuit, amply show that the brotherhood in Adam fails.

The brotherhood in Christ alone is equal to the emergency.

It accomplishes its sublime results, first, by destroying the Cainite spirit. It does not simply lull it to sleep for a season to be aroused again by some masterful passion, but it subdues it and eradicates it from the being. It not only groups people in one body with common aims and a grand enthusiasm for their accomplishment, but it renews the old nature and makes of every man a new creature. Animosity, feuds, the treasured wrath of years disappear, and in their place the love and compassion of Christ appear. The weakness of a fellow man is an appeal for help and not an invitation to oppress him. Under its influences nations rise out of barbarism, lay aside their warlike habits, beat their swords into ploughs, their spears into prun-

ing hooks, settle differences by arbitration and seek the welfare and prosperity of all.

A combination of all the societies that have ever been formed would fail to produce such a result. It is the legitimate and inevitable result of the true brotherhood in Christ. On the ruins of every other endeavor it builds a sublime success. The removal of the spirit of envy, pride, haughty dominance because of better conditions in life takes away the source of much bitterness and strife. It is the unremoved root of the old Cainite evil that has destroyed so many organizations that promised much for the welfare of man. In every age the wisdom and goodness of man have been taxed to secure the common weal. Philosophers have reasoned and men of practical minds have wrought till splendid structures, apparently equal to every need, have arisen, only to prove their incompetence by the retention of that evil, which, like a covered spark, at length ignites the whole. The communistic societies of our land, various in name and widely scattered, all contain the dynamite for their own destruction. The orders of antiquity, many of which lay at the basis of social and political revolutions, were themselves swept away so thoroughly that their names are like fragments of a dream. The power to hold men together is found alone in him who exercises the spirit that was in Cain, and substitutes that which appeared in Andrew.

The brotherhood in Christ succeeds, secondly, by purifying and glorifying natural affection.

Notwithstanding the dark shadow that rests upon natural brotherhood, there is the element of divinity in it. By the touch of Christ alone is that redeemed from evil, recovered for its blessed work. The primary command of the great Master is, "Go home to thy friends." The thrill of love that, like an electric current, sweeps with measureless speed around the globe, flies along the natural tie and instantly reaches a brother's heart. By prayer and speedy act and word, the family feels the new love that has come to any member. The separation of years is immediately ended. The wanderer is sought and forgiven. He turns to his early home. The father and the prodigal are in each other's arms. By a process of divine alchemy the silent, long inoperative forces of the being are quickened and furnish sufficient motive for action.

The love and mind of Christ in the home life so exalts to free and vigorous action affections chained and slumbering in the dungeons of the being that they assume their rightful control and command to blissful endeavor. Every relation sustained by one human being to another feels the inspiring touch of the love of Christ. All other attempts to harmonize the scattered millions have been partial, narrow and sectional. They have forgotten hidden thousands, and neglected many delicate ties. The breadth of the true Christian brotherhood declares its origin to be divine. It strengthens the bond between husband and wife; it

sweetens the affection binding parent and child till the earthly home savors of heaven; it welds the hearts of kindred till all family burdens and sorrows are kindly adjusted to the strength of each; it kindles the flame of neighborly regard and beautifies the community; it sets face to face the capitalist and the laborer till with joined hands they bless each other and promote each other's happiness; it works its way to all the hidden relations of life and creates sympathies and activities which relieve the asperities of a world of sin. Resistless tides of emotion swell and sweep over the soul and carry away all that separates and embitters. Attempts at creedal agreement, at equal distribution of property, at free occupation of land, at any of the suggestions of the social reformers of the day would leave the human heart as it was, to renew its strife and regather about the old centers the divided estates. Natural differences again exalt themselves. In the family of Christ, love for each overrides every other consideration.

The brotherhood of Christ succeeds, thirdly, by seeking the recovery and uplifting of *all*.

The prayer that Jesus put upon the lips of all was "Thy Kingdom Come"—not to the rich, not to the poor, not to any class, but to all. The expansive affection of the Great Father was to enter into every child. The crowded tenement house of the densely populated city must win his eager thought and care equally with the elegant mansion in the open park. For the poor



struggling for life under heavy burdens and oppressive conditions, the heart of the true Christian brotherhood beats as for the prosperous man who controls vast industries and many millions. It does not compel equality of condition in this world, because it does not rearrange natural gifts nor determine that which belongs alone to God, but it binds all into a blessed solidarity and fills every soul with the love of Christ. "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all."

When shall the petty plans of men be lost in the sublime plan of God? When shall the wrangling voices of discordant factions be stilled long enough to hear the sweet, sonorous voice of the Son of God, calling us from every quarter of the globe, from every realm of thought, from every condition of life, to gather at his feet, and in a solemn acceptance of him as Master, and his Spirit as the controlling force, blend our lives in that holy brotherhood which shall be the glory of earth, as it is the consummate excellence and everlasting blessedness of heaven!

## VI

### A PUBLIC MAN DESERTED BY SPIRITUAL FRIENDS

“Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death.”  
I Samuel 15:35.

“DELIVER me from my friends” is a prayer occasionally offered, and then evoking a hearty “Amen” from some eager sympathizer. But it is always forced from the lips by the presence of some unusual circumstances. It is not a natural petition. It startles those who hear it, and awakens strange emotions in loving hearts. It seems to speak of a disordered spirit, and declare that something is wrong in the life of him who offers it. It hints darkly of sinful secrets that cannot bear the light, of melancholy brooding over wrong that cannot be whispered in the friendly ear. When the loving arm of a friend, stealing round the neck, ruffles and disturbs the being like the sinuous folds of a serpent, when the generous proffers of help, which seem to invite confidence, drive the soul away like the probings of a detective, when the sound of cheerful conversation is like the fitful gusts of wind that pre-

cede a sweeping storm, when the laughter of a merry party is like the shriek of a gale through the cords of a flying vessel, there is something wrong in the life. When there is a growing tendency to silence and secrecy, to loneliness and self-absorption, it is an hour for the coming of the best physician the world can offer. Though created singly and coming only rarely in threes and twos, and even then often stealing the preference as Jacob did, we are yet bound into the common bundle of humanity, and have natural calls for contact and association with others which create friendships and the tender ties of affection and the holy bonds of fraternal and family relation. Even to desire to annul this is to show the presence of a foreign element that, like the worm at the tree, will wither the leaves and blight the fruit.

Friendship has sung the sweetest, carved the noblest, painted the grandest, and lived the holiest of all the forces known to man. Even Jesus steadily lifted his followers from servitude to this exalted relation to himself, saying at length, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends," and declaring to all, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "Love is the fulfilling of the law," it is written—for such obedience makes the perfect character and allies the soul with God, who is love.

It was evidently the plan of God in creation that along the channels of friendship should flow the richest streams of happiness and bounty that this world

could know, so that under its powerful sway weakness becomes strong, error changes into truth, deformity develops into beauty, ferocity sinks into gentleness, latent powers come into conspicuity and genius glows with its transcendent glory. The touch of friendship, like the touch of Ithuriel's spear, makes transformations startling and bewildering. The coming of a friend is often like the dawning of the day which fills the air with light, and sends the music of a thousand warblers into the silent spaces in which a soul has been isolated and imprisoned. Nothing can surpass in importance the formation of a new friendship, for it is fraught with untold possibilities.

The fastening of the electric wire along which the currents from the heart of God himself ceaselessly flow, so that an individual's life may catch the divine messages and feel the throbs as they move on is a sublime act, and the making of a friend is nothing less than this. If friends had only to do with this life, all this would be emphatically true, but as we remember that the spirit is shaped for eternity here, that the magnetic forces draw the life into the paths along which it shall eternally run, profounder thoughts come to us, deeper emotions control us and more powerful considerations affect our choices.

The value of a spiritual friend is incalculable. If there be one who keeps his spirit in sympathy with the divine, who is not drawn aside by the polar forces that deflect the needles in the compass by which we sail, who

is not swept from his course by the rush of mighty currents, whose calm and steady soul has power to meet all opposition and toss aside the crashing blows from life's wild sea as granite cliffs break into spray, for the sun to rainbow the giant waves of ocean, let him be our choicest friend. We are ever in need of spiritual help. Childhood feels the dangers that threaten the living; poison ivy is on the walls round which the children play; the eagle and hawk swoop down where the cradle rocks in the shadow of the pine, and deep pools lie close by the stones on which all pass from childhood to years of conviction and action.

There is weakness in every life and from one-quarter, at least, there must come spiritual help and support; the tendency to fall must be met by the bracing arm of a friend. 'Tis not the simple who thus fall, when unguarded and unattended, but thou, oh man of noble build, boasting of thy strength, thou art the bubble in the breeze! and ere thy words that mock the faintness of another have fallen from thy lips, thou art in the dust, overwhelmed, dismayed. No man is strong on every side! A spiritual friend with whom the great problems of the soul may be constantly debated, and from whose wholesome words of faithful life a daily tonic may be drawn, is our constant need. The Son of Man is with us as he promised, the guardian angels keep the camp about our dwellings and sentinel our paths, but still we need the human friend who can express in living language the words we need

to hear and give in earthly terms the strong supports we need to feel; he cannot be ignored but with peril to the soul while still in fleshly garb.

This is true of all in every rank in life; those who live in obscurity and have to battle most with the enemies in their own bosoms, whose path is seldom crossed by the wily human tempter, who do not even read books or papers to lead them astray, need the hours of precious converse with one whose constant companion is the Lord of glory, that their inner chambers may be kept in order for the Holy Guest, their broodings cleared from the mist that rises from the low places of their being, their despondency checked by thoughts of future usefulness, the owls and bats that live in lonesome souls chased out by the sound of human conversation. Those who live with books and bore and delve amid the treasures of literature, must have some one who will ever speak to them of the certainties of the spiritual world, or even its eternal verities become like the creatures of the brain and lose their hold on conscience and on life. Those who spend their days in the busy marts of trade, buying and selling, exercising all their powers shrewdly, meeting the sharp devices of unscrupulous men, the inflexible will of the monopolist, the unsatisfied greed of the money-hunter, the bold effrontery of the determined competitor need a friend of spiritual character, that they may often think of the treasures that are fadeless, of values that do not change, of merchandise above the price of

silver and of those important business transactions that do not have a commercial character.

The votary of pleasure whirling in the dance, seeking sweets like humming birds from every flower, tossed on the changing customs of society, offending often the native instincts of modesty in dress, turning night into day, and accepting entertainment that savors of the polluted days of decayed nationalities needs the friend who needs no mimic performance on the stage to quicken sympathy or stir indignation or furnish pleasure, but for whom the seething world of living, suffering mortals supplies the tragedy, the comedy, the farce more thrilling than the histrionic genius can portray, and who by consciousness of spiritual truths rises superior to the empty vanities, the sensational silliness, and the hollow heartedness of the whirligigs of fashion.

But especially is it true that those who spend their days in public life, and are the representatives and servants of the people need spiritual friends to counteract the steady influences that tend to make them worldly minded and smother the flame of humble, homely virtues on the altar of their souls. Publicity is a large price to pay for civic and national honors. Few realize the immense cost when struggling eagerly for position. When the eye of the world is constantly upon a man, then desires struggle for gratification, weaknesses are cloaked or ignored, falseness seems essential, retention of the good will of all becomes the

constant effort, and convictions that stand in the way of progress become troublesome, and self-interest urges their removal out of the way. He who lives by faith and close to God, who snaps the hollow maxim of the world and substitutes the law of right, who fears no man and wants no collusion with sin, and brings from his hours of prayer the serene wisdom of the heavenly world is the absolute essential as a friend to the public man of affairs. His withdrawal is not only a personal injury, but a public calamity, and the spectacle of a public man deserted of spiritual friends, of the withdrawal of the highest spiritual influences from him who needs them most is one to move the nations to distress, the very heavens to sympathetic sadness.

Such an event occurred in Jewish history and is chronicled in the words of the text and stands as a blasted oak on the mountain side, a conspicuous warning for all time. Saul was a mighty monarch; he towered above his kindred and his men of war; victory perched on his banners and his name was great among earthly rulers; he was a monarch of a people greatly blessed and favored with the friendship of Samuel, one of God's noblest saints, who from his very infancy was called to minister in spiritual things and gave him the friendship of his heart and interpreted to him the will of God. But in the arrogance of his hour of victory, in the indulgence of his pride in conquest, for the promotion of his own glory in the sight of watch-



ing and shouting multitudes, Saul substituted his own wish for the plain word of God, and so far sunk the divine authority beneath his own individual choice, and the spiritual counsellor's advice beneath his own selfish pleasure, that with the word of solemn warning and the assurance of the loss of his kingdom, with sorrow in his own heart, Samuel withdrew and came no more to see Saul until the day of his death. The light that he had refused to follow was put out, the voice that he had declined to hear was silenced, the person that had represented high and holy refreshment and influence was removed, because he ignored its sacred help; the spiritual friend whom he declined to follow was lost to him and never seen again till in his deep degradation, in the utter terror of his soul, in the presence of a witch, while his flesh crept with horror and his hair stood on end, the saintly image of his friend, the impersonation of all that was good in his life, called from the world of spirits by the wretched man, rose before him paralyzed and speechless.

Who shall say that this rapid degeneration of character was not hastened by the absence of that conserving force which is found in a spiritual friend. There was every promise of the highest good from the administration of this public man; he was wonderfully attractive. Even David "loved him greatly," though he sought his life; every student of his character pauses to pay his tribute of admiration. "The deep discords of his spirit are not incapable of being sub-

duced into harmonies, as sweet bells jangled or out of tune which for an instant, though, alas! but for an instant, recover their sweetness, and most noticeable of all, the love which he could feel, he could also inspire. If, then, there was a shipwreck here, they were not paltry wares, but treasures of great price, which went down into the deep," writes Trench. "Saul's character is marked by much that is considered to be of the highest moral excellence—generosity, magnanimity, calmness, energy and decision. No one could be selected more suitable in talents or conduct for maintaining political power at home than the reserved, mysterious monarch whom God gave to his people; none more suitable for striking terror into the surrounding nations than a commander gifted with his coolness and promptitude in action." This is the verdict of John Henry Newman.

"We can hardly conceive a more promising commencement to a reign, or one more calculated to gather power and work deliverance for Israel. Saul's is just the character of many a young man, full of high and noble feeling, modest and distrustful of self, coming from a religious home or the influence of religious impressions, and placed in a post of responsibility, of activity. All is promise; we look for high distinction of the best kind, and for bright and blessed deeds for God and for good," writes Dean Alford.

There must have been a terrible change when all good men shrank from him with abhorrence, and even

Samuel could commune with him no more; when those who have studied his career and written such glowing words of praise have been compelled to chronicle the sad story of his deep disgrace, and utter their burning words of condemnation. Hear how praise turns to blame. "All the finer qualities of Saul display themselves at the outset of his career; they gradually fade and fail from him, pride meanwhile, and caprice and jealousy and envy and open contempt and defiance of God coming in their room, until at last of all the high qualities which he once owned only the courage—last gift to forsake a man, often abiding when every other has departed—until this only remains." (Trench.)

"By wilful resistance to God's will, he opened the door to those evil passions which till then, at the utmost, only served to make his character unamiable without stamping it with guilt. Derangement was the consequence of disobedience. The wilfulness which first resisted God next prayed upon itself as a natural principle of disorder; his moods and changes, his compunctions and relapses, what were they but the convulsions of the spirit when the governing power was lost." (Newman.)

"During the first two years of Saul's reign the man of grace in him had been waning, the man of nature had been waxing stronger. The tendency of the man was to emancipate himself from God's law and make himself supreme, to follow his own bent and natural impulse, to the setting aside of God's positive com-

mands. Saul desired to be his own master, and he was left to himself by God." (Alford.)

Samuel did not withdraw because he wished to, but because he was compelled to. The repellent pole in Saul's nature was made so active that it forced from him those spiritual counsels that only could have saved him, and the spiritual friends through whose lips they were communicated. His call for them to remain, for them to return, was as hollow as his apparent sorrow, which went no deeper than regret at the loss of his kingdom, and did not touch the deeper misery of his abandonment of God. Deserted of Samuel he swept like a hurrying canoe toward the brink of the great cataract and plunged over the shining edge into the seething, boiling caldron, his person lost in the struggling clouds of spray, his voice drowned in the maddening roar as of a million demons laughing at his fall.

Had he cultivated the spirit that led him to desire the sweet music of David's harp when evil musings disturbed him, had he kept as heart companions those who loved to tell the story of God's right hand and holy arm in delivering his people, had he kept as spiritual friend the great seer whose fellowship with God was constant, and through whose life there streamed a light that fell on conscience and the path of right, and whose converse was ever a tonic to faltering spiritual energies, this public man might have finished his career in a blaze of fadeless glory. His feet would

have been kept in the ascending path, his heart would have been kept in loyalty to the Divine Ruler, his spirit would have been freed from troublous tempters, and the soft light of the Shechinah illumined his later hours in place of the dark shadow that fell from Endor's witch. That Samuel was faithful in his councils while they were permitted and when they were ignored no one can doubt. He ceased to come, only when his coming brought but increase of condemnation.

This sad story does not stand as a solitary instance of the spiritual desertion of a public man. Samuel has had his followers in court preachers, the lustre of whose names shall ever shine in the brilliance of heaven. The words of Ambrose to the Emperor Theodosius, of Bossuet to Louis XIV, of John Knox to the Scottish Queen declare the faithfulness and value of the spiritual friend. But Saul has also had his followers. Kings and princes have been warned only to silence in flames the lips that gave them counsel. Nobles and leaders of the people have refused their friends who came with tender messages from heaven to hear the ruder voices of this world. Like Lorenzo the Magnificent, they have compelled the retirement of men as true as Savonarola was to him. His experience is a type of all. "Oppressed by the weight of his crimes, he needed some assurance of divine forgiveness from trustier lips than those of obsequious courtiers, and summoned the unyielding prior to shrive his

soul. Savonarola reluctantly came, and, after hearing the agitated confession of the dying prince, offered absolution upon three conditions. Lorenzo asked in what they consisted. "First, you must repent and feel true faith in God's mercy." Lorenzo assented. "Secondly, you must give up your ill-gotten wealth." This, too, Lorenzo promised, after some hesitation; but upon hearing the third clause, "you must restore the liberties of Florence," Lorenzo turned his face to the wall, and made no reply. Savonarola waited a few moments and then went away. And shortly after his patient died unabsolved. The unflinching faithfulness of this servant of God to that which was right, his refusal to change or soften the conditions of a true life even for a monarch shows the priceless value of the spiritual friend to him for whose favor the multitudes would even voice the words of the tempter in the garden of Eden, "Thou shalt not surely die." Great statesmen in the crucial hours of their career have been saved from yielding to the clamors of worldly friends, the threats of desperate crowds and greedy politicians, the resounding voice of their own ambition by the quiet converse of those who have steadily held them to the simple question of duty to God and their own eternal interests. When the voice of prayer is heard in the home and study of the man of affairs, when the prophet Samuel is seen to come and go from his abode, there is one whom all may trust, with whom they may not always agree, but in

the integrity of whose purpose, in the honesty of whose utterances, in the firmness of whose convictions and in the value of whose public discussions all may take delight.

But if Samuel has departed, and the wild brood from the four quarters of political despair have taken his place, and the time-server and the destroyer of his fellowman, and the garrulous sophist, and the strange woman are the friends of the public man—when self-advancement has crowded out obedience to God, and determination to do right simply because it is right, is gasping and dying in the stifled atmosphere of the soul, then woe to the people who have entrusted aught to such a man, the people over whom by right of heredity he may reign. It is not enough that one be colossal in body, head and shoulders above all in Israel, as was Saul; it is not enough that he have the genius for conquest and a wonderful potency in the command of men such as Saul disclosed; it is not enough that he win victories and bring the splendid trophies to adorn his triumphal car and swell the glories of his triumphal procession, as did Saul; it is not enough that he have ability to rule, interpret law and apply it to his government, as Saul did; it is not enough that his constituency be large and his popularity phenomenal, his gifts abundant and his followers devoted—he must have Samuel for his counsellor, a spiritual friend for his director, or his decisions will be faulty, his thoughts grow erratic, his influence increase the power

of godless men, his own life shrivel till in its diminutive worthlessness God can find no place for it in the kingdom of the good.

Never in the history of the world was there such need of the warning of the text as now. Infidelity is defiant and the enemies of a spiritual faith mock the sons of God. But the great declarations of God's word are in process of accomplishment; mighty changes are apparent over all the earth; colossal plans seem maturing. He is a mere tyro in observation and in thought who does not perceive a growing consolidation, a developing crystalline beauty and order throughout the world. Spiritual forces are irresistible—they have pushed over in a day the ancient barriers that guarded Japan and Corea, and have split and gapped the walls that surround China. They have opened broad paths into Africa, and are stirring the nations of Europe, and true Christianity is the essential in all wise and permanently successful diplomacy. Our own land shows such ferment as precedes great advance in spiritual conditions of living. The interblending of nationalities and the consequent fresh solution of problems in sociology, with the unseen hand of the risen and reigning Lord guiding the dormant forces to their final triumph, make demands for public men whose hearts are right in the sight of God. Let us forsake all others; let us turn to those whom God has not rejected, from whom the Samuels have not withdrawn, but whose faces are towards the



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coming glory and whose brows are radiant with the rising splendor, whose lips declare the Christian faith, and whose counsellors are men of spiritual might with the law of God written in their lives.

## VII

### THE PRESENT PROFIT OF GODLINESS

“GODLINESS is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”—I Timothy 4:8.

WE have sometimes looked far away to the future world for the positive results of the proper use of the things of this world and stimulated our souls with the Christly assurance that heavenly and eternal friendships might be made out of the mammon which we now possess. This evidence of future friendships and blessedness is very gratifying to us when we are impressed with the fact that life is short and we are near its border lines, when we are conscious that our days are numbered and we shall soon leave the associations of this world, when we contemplate the loss of all earthly acquisitions and the solemn certainty of a solitary passage out of this world into the next. All well-stored treasures give a sense of satisfaction in the thought of the enjoyment they will give when the need for their use has come. Anticipations of meeting friends thrill the soul with delight and the consummation of such anticipation, even in this world, gives the keynote to that larger and more blissful delight which shall be ours in heaven.

There is a tendency in view of the declared glories of heaven and the exaltation of the believer to carry the thought over the affairs of this life into the next, whenever we wish to obtain refreshment from the blessedness of Christianity. It becomes easy to close the eyes and summon the Scripture pictures into view and see rising before the mind the golden streets, stretching away beyond the gates of pearl to the many mansions tenanted with the happy, waiting throngs, among which move our kindred and friends, while glorious harmonies fill the air from worshipping hosts, and the tender light from the throne illumines all and reveals treasures exhaustless, the portion and the joy of all, who, freed from sin, have reached their heavenly home, and at length the reverie closes with a sense of pain that we are still in this world and must take up its weary burden again.

In our prayers we ask for the glories of heaven at last, with grace sufficient to bear the sorrows and losses on the way thither, and unless there is special watch, we really indulge the thought that the supreme end of godliness is the attainment of heaven, and that the main joy of a Christian is his anticipation of what shall be his portion by and bye.

The staple talk of some believers about the cross, and the burden, and the fight, and the thorn, and the struggle, and the slipping and falling, and the tears and groans, the duties and claims, the self-denials and sacrifices, seem to suggest that in this life the Chris-

tian has a hard time of it, but will have enough glory to make up for all such agony as soon as the borders of this world are passed. The use of many hymns appropriate to certain seasons at all times and in all places, the solemn-visaged disciple in the place of innocent mirthfulness, with the far-away look in the eye, the frequent quotation of Scripture which has a blessed meaning when rightly applied, but which has a definite and local and not universal application, all furnish the foes of Christ with the weapons with which they resist the ingress of his helpful and inspiring truths. For this life stretches on through many hopeful years before many; they are rightly expectant of various experiences before the change of world comes, and the accumulations and blessings of the present have an attraction as well as the glories of the future.

In a very practical world present relations have an important claim upon thought and that religious system that hoards everything for the future is not adapted to the human race, that religious devotee who, to gain what lies outside this world, becomes oblivious to its charms and wasteful of its opportunities, and blind to its beauties, deaf to its harmonies and degrades himself to the condition of beggary and disease to obtain a heavenly inheritance shows either that he is a fanatic or his religious system is not fit for man. So Christ came eating and drinking, mingling with men, far from asceticism in his life; relieving the disasters of the present, while he also pointed to the

future; adding to the delights of this life, while he multiplied those of the life to come; comforting the sorrowing of this world, while giving assurance that all tears should be wiped away in the next; calling to a rich, full and joyous experience here as the preparation for an absolute felicity hereafter; declaring that even the sorrows and pains, the necessary accompaniment of a world of sin, should be made to minister to an enlarged ability for enjoyment and service.

The anticipation of the future, therefore, should not so fill the orbit of a Christian's thought as to exclude the present. Paul had sublime expectations of things to come, but he wrote to Timothy that godliness was "profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

With firm assurance of the heavenly gain, let us think of the present profit of godliness.

1. It relieves the friction of life and so adds to its pleasure.

When a machine works according to the design in its manufacture, every screw firm in its place, every wheel moving with appropriate motion, every connecting rod accomplishing its end, a complicated net work of wheels properly controlled and in perfect order whirling with successful results, there is delight in watching such a piece of human mechanism. We instinctively feel if it could speak it would declare its own pleasure in its unhindered movements. But when some screw is loosened and a jar is felt some little

wheel slips from its place or fails to record its revolutions at the proper place in controlling other motions, there is a lack of pleasure, a positive pain. The machine declares it in an unsteady rattle, in a failure to produce the designed results. The work that corrects the evil and sends each part in proper connection to carry on the whole in harmony and with power is a blessing beyond calculation.

Now, every man is made to be godly. Godliness is his proper condition. It is a fact, as Socrates says in the *Memorabilia*, that man is naturally and differentially a religious animal and is not thoroughly or normally himself except when he is so. All men turn instinctively to God, and when in action according to their evident design are moving in a production of godliness. The disturbance which we call sin threw the whole man out of harmony, and all the manifold disorders have naturally resulted. That work which sets every faculty to play its proper part restores the healthful movement, reproduces the joy and secures the desirable results again. This is the design of Christianity; godliness or the proper use of all that is in man, on the very lowest plane of reasoning or thinking, adds to the delights of every hour of intelligent life because it brings man into the condition in which he was designed to live and move. It is because of this that wherever godly character is developed there is progress in all material things. The nation that rises in godliness multiplies all her means

of becoming mighty and populous ; her harvests are larger, her imports are greater, her progress is quickened, invention is stimulated and all forms of life instantly declare the enlargement of the capacity of production. The mind was made with a positive relation to God to receive his directions and follow out his thoughts. The whole being bears this same relation to a divine guidance and dependence. If some other guide is sought, some other dependence recognized, or a self-direction followed, there is such a failure in the use of faculties that only weakness and disorder could follow.

The misery of man in a state of sin is the profoundest comment on the existence of God and the human relation to him. As soon as thought, will and affection yield to the divine control there is an instant elevation of being, a new and the proper movement of life begins, and when all the adjustments are made, and the individual is acting as he was made to act, the life is filled with delight, the mind finds evidences of God and his great goodness in everything, its own thoughts become like his, the heart grows warm with holy affection and the activities blossom and fruit in all the products of goodness. There is an understanding of what was hidden, there is a choice of what was refused, there is a quiet where once was confusion, there is an acquiescence where once was debate and refusal, and the great change marks at once the appropriateness of the new course to the life and being of man. We

might expect all this development to come when this world was in the past, but the first sphere of man's designed life was here and the faithful and orderly procedure according to the plan of God would make this life in its range as happy and blessed as the next. It was the teaching of Christ, who came to restore the lost paradise, that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us. The lion and the wolf are to be banished from the human enclosure, and the nobler, the divine elements of character are to be developed. And the advent of true Christianity in any soul is the rearrangement of all disordered activities and redirection of all faculties in the way and toward the end of the original design. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord."

It is impossible, therefore, but that godliness should be profitable for this life in the orderly movements and proper application of every faculty of our complicated being. The faith faculty, the love faculty, the service faculty, all in operation bring into the being such vast amounts of treasure that its growth, its joy, its blessedness are constantly enhanced. It is disloyalty to the goodness of God to suppose that obedience to him is to shackle the powers of soul, belittle the grandeur of man, lessen the amount of his delights and subject him to a painful imprisonment for life. It is a shame to think that man's natural faculties produce all the misery and corruption of the world, all the wretchedness that the great city presents; if redeemed



man can perpetuate the glories of the pure and blessed heaven in his choices and his affectionate service, then, when moving in harmony with God's requirements, he can do the same thing here. This world will be glorious beyond expression, when godliness becomes the portion of all, and the individual who is to remain in this world the longest needs the most of godlikeness for his joy and the illumination of those about him. When God takes the place of the devil in guiding a soul, when thought is anchored in goodness instead of in evil, when the life swings obedient to this anchorage and finds itself where light and blessings of every character are its constant portion, the experience of the life must be one of added pleasure. "See," saith the Lord of Hosts, "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life that both thou and thy seed may live."

With the emphasis of an oath, the Almighty declares the connection between godliness and profit. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright."

2. The present profit of godliness is seen in the removal of anxieties concerning the world to come.

It is a fact beyond question that every individual has more or less question about his probable future condition. All discussions of the future have a kind of personal element in them. Thought of heaven as a place or state, of its work and its worship, its rest and its rewards, its nearness or its remoteness, have all an undercurrent question of our individual relation to it all. The presence of death in the household, of appalling calamity in the community, quickens and deepens the thought. The conscious weakness and frailty of the body for any reason awakens the thought; public discussion on the problems of the hereafter creates a strange tremor in the soul at times. The pungent and powerful preaching of the gospel, the calm and reverent reading of the Scriptures, the thrilling appeal of some awakened friend, the prayers of the good as they fall upon our ears, all keep the question of our individual relation to the future world in our mind. If it is absent from our thoughts for any length of time its sudden return alarms us. The night witnesses our fevered tossings, when we realize that soon we shall be dead, as our poor human speech calls it; children are not free from this feeling, it accompanies us through life.

If we are in the indulgence of sin, are not followers of Jesus Christ, have not adopted firmly and positively religious opinions, there is a difference in the effect of this question upon us; some are profoundly moved, others deeply alarmed, others yet only imagine

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a great haze, with a sense of being lost in a grand mystery. I should be sorry to feel that any man could think without any emotion upon the hour of his departure and the possibilities of his hereafter. It ought to be considered one of the most alarming danger signals.

When the Scriptures speak to us of the overthrow of the wicked, the apparent permanence of sin, of the end when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, when he shall put down all rule and all authority and power, even death itself being destroyed, and the Son also himself shall be subject unto him that God may be all in all, the anxiety of the soul is deep and often distressing. When Christ speaks of the lost, declaring that he came to seek and save such, calling upon all to find safety and salvation in him, the question is awakened, "Am I then among the saved, whatever that may mean?" Amid the troubles of this life the thought arises, will they continue forever? or will they be buried in the grave? Through long years these questions find no happy answer in the experience of multitudes. Now godliness comes with the blessing of the present and takes all this anxiety away. The godly man has his thoughts and his questions of the future, but they are among his most delightful musings. A godly character shall surely have blessedness. The spirit that is in blessed association with the divine here cannot come to harm hereafter. The sweet, clean, trustful soul that cannot explain the mys-

teries, but lives daily obedient to God in close discipleship to Jesus Christ, has the positive assurance that such life shall continue, broadening and enriching. There is no distress about punishment, or the judgment seat. He reads God's own message, "Know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself." He knows that his loyalty to Christ, his increasing love for the good, his happy toils for the Redeemer's kingdom cannot be changed, and so with blessed expectance he enjoys this world till the larger joys of the next are opened. If any think that this is a light blessing let them compare the brilliant anticipations of the godly with the gloomy doubts and dreads of the worldling, let them contrast the two periods in the same life. When all this anxiety is removed from this life there is a wide field opened for other joys. The sting is taken from many an hour of pleasure, and the dark drapery removed from many a chamber of delight. Hours of distressing reverie become seasons of inspiring and stimulating thought, and the vigor and buoyancy of hearty, strong, physical life is given to the work and the pleasure of days as they pass. There is no sigh at the end of a joyous day in the thought that soon the last day will come, that the joyful opportunities will all have passed, that death will come and then—what?

3. Godliness furnishes positive comfort in this life.

Every human life has its difficulties and troubles. Goodness does not exempt from the common lot. A

godly man suffers pain, and the separations of life bring sorrow to him as to others, but the godly character and the godly activities insure helps that none other can receive. The best comforts are not those that are brought to one from without, they are not in the form of material benefits, they are not even friends who will keep away loneliness and enliven the weary hours, they are not the purchases of wealth, but they are states of mind, conditions of spirit. In time of blindness it is good to be guided by friendly hands along a dangerous way, but *it is better* to see with one's own eyes; it is good in time of weakness to be fed with other hands, but it is better to have strength enough to feed oneself; it is good to listen to words of consolation from human lips, *it is better* to experience their truth in the soul.

When sickness, failure, loss, come to many, they have no resources in themselves to sustain them, but the triumphs of godliness abound in such experiences. The soul that is joined to God by likeness of purpose and character has the inflow of divine support by a kind of right that God himself has established. He has written the pledge of all such help legibly in his word. The great sin problem which lies at the basis of all the evil of the world has been so solved that the forgiven sinner receives a peculiar and precious support, and, while the worldling is embittered by his sorrows and lies in helpless prostration, through the divinely arranged channels are pouring the elements

of strength and greatness into the soul of him who seeks to know the fruits of godliness. The fibre of a worldly character becomes coarser by the harsh discipline of the world. The perception of delicate relief is blunted and the relief lost. The fibre of the godly character is the more refined, and the light affliction which is but for a moment worketh that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. The perception of the marvellous comforts provided is quickened and the world seems to be a store of bounties specially provided for the human need. The purely spiritual and inexpressible thoughts and emotions constitute new argument and expression in themselves for the life of godliness. The announcement of trouble by our Saviour is made the basis for a ringing cry of triumph. "In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but *be of good cheer*, I have overcome the world," and we add, "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

4. Godliness increases all the legitimate joys of life.

If it did otherwise, it would annul its own claim to acceptance. To smother the natural delights of life is no part of true religion. There is no people so full of healthy joy as that people whose God is the Lord. The best delights of the life are those that godliness has taught. It snatches from the forces of evil many joys, purifies them and puts the seal of approval upon them. It seeks to regulate amusements and make the more serious business of life contribute to the pleasure

of living. The strength of the godly man is said to be in the joy of the Lord. The purpose of Christ's rich instruction he declared to be that his joy might be in them and that their joy might be full. All of delight that the powers of mind or body can produce godliness swells to the flood. Riper visions open to the poet, fairer beauties to the Christian sculptor and painter, and to the ordinary mind the common joys of daily life are enriched by those subtle charms that the reverent mind ever obtains from its union with the divine. If the baser joys of life are refused, the wasteful and riotous, the enervating and luxurious delights of the worldly life are forsaken, it is because more real joys are found and not because the soul is sobered out of all care for a merry scene.

5. Godliness adds to the joys and possessions of this life.

Its own peculiar treasures become the portion of the godly. The consciousness of personal acceptance with God through Jesus Christ is so unique that it can come only in a single way; it is a joy and promotes joys of its own; it is a treasure and leads to other values that at length make the soul rich in its possessions. The knowledge that follows godly living, the indisputable revelations of the Spirit of God to the soul long years before it passes out of the body, the freedom from the burden of sin which has been transferred to Christ Jesus having become as he came to be *the Saviour from sins*, the new delight in the widening domain of

truth as it spreads through lives and conquers hostile lands, the increase of blessed companionship now embracing the good of every age, all come as the absolute gains of godliness, and not the last gain is that of peace, concerning the provision for the life that now is. The sparrow tells the story and the hairs of the head call it daily to mind. "All these things shall be added unto you." Godliness is a problem in addition, ceaselessly piling up the accumulations of body, soul and spirit. The new interest that comes with godly living in the lives of those about us, drawing us to new views of property, of association, of the use of time and speech and influence add unspeakably to our possessions.

I would not lessen the value of earthly friendship; it rises in beauty on the wreck of a world, it reveals its lines of strength and writes its stories of happiness on the ruins of human nature; but the addition that is made to the ordinary human affection by the development of godliness can be learned only by experience. The home relation is glorified by it, and even the contact with the brute creation feels its influence. The compassion for the multitudes is no platonic feeling, but the genuine emotion of the divine nature. The rise and growth of desires looking to the elevation of man, touching every part of his being and every relation of his life, crowd out plans of selfishness that once reigned supreme and the secured treasure feeds with a living stream the verdant banks of life. Hours once



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idle are now packed with refreshing thoughts, and voices speak their thanks in places once unknown. The common business of life loses its secularity, as God is associated by prayer with all its transactions and recognized as the source of all prosperity. The minute inspected by God requires faithful attention and thus the whole life is garnished with the beauty of a jewelled offering to God. The promises of God, the portion of the godly, add as much to the present life as the faith and confidence of their holders extract from them, so that in all that makes this life useful, prosperous and happy the godly man in an inestimable measure has the advantage of the worldly man. With the sure glories of the heavenly world in one hand, and the multiplied advantages for this present world in the other, stands the Lord Jesus before us each, saying, "Come unto me and all shall be yours."

## VIII

### AN EXULTANT CRY

“I have kept the faith.”—II Timothy 4:7.

WE listen with breathless attention to catch the final words of those we love. We ransack the biographies of eminent persons to find the last words that fell from their lips. These are the watchwords of parties and peoples. They easily become current, and if at all epigrammatic have remarkable longevity. Webster’s “I still live” will be known when the close of his reply to Hayne has dropped from the declamations of the schoolboy. Tyng’s “Stand up for Jesus” rings in song and exhortation from the lips of thousands that have never heard another word of his. Cookman’s “I’m sweeping through the gates” has been preserved in song and story. The last words of Goethe, “More light,” are better remembered and more worthy of remembrance than many others from his gifted lips. Cries of victory and fear, of hope and despondency, of pain and pleasure, have fallen from dying lips. The last written words of men have been equally treasured. The close of the last essay, the

final sermon, the last page of the last book, the final poem, are cherished with peculiar interest. This observation of final thoughts and words is not confined to small minds and narrow households. The great ones of earth linger at such points and drink a holy inspiration. Thomas Carlyle pauses in thought and study by the dying Schiller, and notes the mild heroism of the man as he describes his feelings as "calmer and calmer," and marks his liveliness of spirit as for a moment he looks up to say, "Many things are growing plain and clear to me," and then closed his eyes for his deep sleep. The world has listened to the last words of Jesus and reverently treasured them in memory and repeated oft, "It is finished."

These last utterances can generally be divided into two classes:

1st. Those which are of present concern, of momentary application. Such cover only the time of sickness or the hour of departure. Socrates said, as he lapsed into insensibility after drinking the hemlock: "Crito, I owe a cock to Æsculapius; will you remember to pay the debt?" In these words he meant to say: "I am now getting well; make for me the usual offering for recovered health." This had little reference to his past life and was only an index of his thought of death. It was of local concern, applicable only to the hour and the event.

A person's thoughts absorbed in the strangeness of the event of a change of worlds takes coloring from

it, and the expressions of the lips are not calculated to be an epitome of the sayings of the whole life. They have a value, but only in relation to a limited section of the being, a fragment of its existence. They cannot properly be taken as a rule of measurement for the whole period of life. A new face appearing stirs the fading faculties and a word leaps to the lips. A question calls out an answer; a song moves to a response; a prayer starts an exclamation of devotion; a momentary awakening from forced sleep is accompanied with an ejaculation of surprise; words of counsel to friends fall last from the lips. So, when written, they may have only this local and temporary application.

2d. Those which cover the whole life and are the expression of its energy, its direction, its purpose. They are such as give no description of present scenes, but, like golden clasps, fold back upon the beginning of life and hold the leaves together as the book is closed. The mind may have been vigorously thinking and the words which voice its thoughts are weighty with what has been condensed from many gathered clouds. The last writing covers the years of experience and does not necessarily disclose all that is passing in the soul that hurries to the skies. As in entering the cars or boarding the ocean steamer, some will be full of "Good-byes" and others of admonition, others yet will speak finally some word indicative of the work that for years they have pursued—that is the symbol

of nothing connected with their departure, of all connected with their life of toil.

These final words divide also naturally into two other classes :

1st. Those of feeling or emotion. The soul grows introspective and takes cognizance of its own rapid changes, and watches the various hues of its own disturbed sense as we note the iridescence of the dove's neck in the blaze of the sun, and its words are only the index of what at the moment it observes. It may be bright or dark—it may be golden or of sombre hue. As the scientist who has taken poison into his system in the interest of scientific research, and records the changes in his condition as the moments fly as long as consciousness remains, so the spiritual emotions may be registered. The record will be only of spiritual emotions. Emotional utterance is very frequent and covers a large class of these expressions of which I am speaking. They may be of temporal nature or of the operation of the feelings through years. Neglectful or forgetful of all that is without, the soul may be absorbed utterly with the kaleidoscope of its own being. The words spoken may be declarative of joy or fear or wonder at the soul's condition. It may be in roused emotion from some outward stimulant—the glory of the opening heavens, the sadness of a weeping company, the serenity of watching friends. Something may suggest the persecutions of a life and the expression of the suffering of years finds utterance.

The setting sun may throw a lingering beam through the open shutter and emotion responds with a cry of joy. The scent of the garden may be borne on the soft arms of the south wind, and as it leaves its treasure on the quick sense of the being the instant response is with words that savor of earth and heaven. The sublimities of Christianity may claim the deep emotions of the soul, long known, now grandly realized or now for the first time presented as to the thief upon the cross, and the last words will be dictated by the uplifted feelings.

2d. Those of mental rest and deep conviction—the words of settled principle, apart from the emotive condition of the being.

Here the soul is retrospective in its action. It turns upon its acts through a period of many years, that which exists in results of action, and now lives outside itself—that which has governed the whole life and to which its various emotions have been subservient. Imagination is made to fold its wings and sit upon its perch with all its golden plumage shimmering in the light that overtops the walls of glory and streams through the opening gate. The mind, thinking for the pen or the lip, takes account of the operations of the will, and whatever expression is made is index not of the sunbeams or cloud shadows that may be playing on the restless surface of the beating sea of life that now chafes the shores of the eternal continent and gathers crested waves from its very nearness to

the golden marge, but of that current that has steadily run through all the life and even now, bearing on its bosom the changing billow, is sweeping towards the opal beach. The prayer of the aged disciple as he closed life was the prayer of his infancy, "Now I lay me down to sleep." It was the expression of a life-long trust in the divine care.

So then, friends, when we take into our thoughtful hours the last words of beloved ones, the last writings of those we admire, to seek comfort from them, or, as is often the case, to press them like sharpened arrows into the soul, tearing agape its healing wounds, let us discriminate between that which is local and temporary and that which covers the whole life; between that which is emotional and changeful and that which finds its basis on the solid rock-bed of the being. I am persuaded that people make too much of the painful utterances that they last heard from loving lips—too much, be it tenderly spoken, of the glad cries of those who have gone. It is not upon final utterances that we should seek to base the judgment of a life, be they good or bad. Many of the noblest of this world have suffered eclipse of peace and glory for a moment, but only we are assured that the light that dims the sun might burst with increased splendor on their souls. In such cases the Scripture finds its illustration as it declares: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with everlasting kindness will I remember thee."

I shall never forget the afternoon of that summer

day when, with a happy company, I sailed up the Hudson for a day's outing in the Catskills. As we entered the Highlands the fog settled over the hills and hugged the river in its close embrace. Slowly we made the curves, the shores hidden, the needle alone guiding the pilot. A party of which Mr. Beecher was one gathered on the upper deck; there was little conversation, but all were peering into the darkness that had come upon us in this most beautiful part of the river; West Point was passed without a sight of the rocky cliff, and just as we turned and glided between Storm King and Dundenberg towards Newburgh Bay the westering sun smote the bank of fog with burning rays, filled it with its radiant splendor and lifted it like a golden crown about the distant hills that seemed transfigured as they stood on the far horizon, and the broad expanse of water gleamed like a golden pathway to the celestial city. Every head was bared and rapturous adoration rose from every heart. The cloud and the narrow way had but prepared for the surpassing glory of the brilliant scene on the open bay.

Many a final word has been spoken just as the shadow fell across the soul, to pass with lightning speed and make way for the long eternal day; and friends are pining on account of that final word that was a child's cry, on whose face the smile appears while the tears yet chase each other down the cheek.

If the word be momentary, regard it as such; if it be emotional, give it only its just value; if it be that



weighty word of calmness drawn from retrospect of life, it may be treasured and used as means of comfort and of blessing.

Such a word was that of Paul, written in his old age from his Roman prison, to Timothy, the exultant cry of his strong soul, "I have kept the faith."

But what is the value of this utterance?

It is valuable:

1st. Because it covered the whole life of the believing Paul. It is not simply "I am keeping the faith to-day; past the persecution and the storm, I am upon the mount to-day. Having denied the faith before rulers and mobs, having quailed in the roaring tempest of human opposition and yielded to the reasonings of cultured Athenians, debased Corinthians, theistic barbarians and worldly-wise Romans, I am to-day once more happy in the Lord and strong in the faith. Having doubted oft and grieved the Holy Spirit and the brethren, I honor the Spirit and encourage the brethren to-day by my steadfastness." It is not a ray of sunshine streaming on the aged apostle after many weeks and months of wretched despair. It is not the sudden recovery of the lost link of the cable that connects his soul with God across the untraveled abyss; but it is "I *have* kept the faith," or, "I have been keeping the faith." The life sweeps into view. Labors, stripes, prisons, deaths, journeyings, perils of waters, robbers, his own countrymen, the heathen—in the city, the wilderness, the sea—among false brethren, in

weariness, painfulness, watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness—"I *have* kept the faith" girdles it all. In the assembly of the monarchs, in the privacy of my prison, in the crowded cities of Asia, in the lonely sojourn in the wilderness, in the troubles without and trials within, "I *have* kept the faith."

This was not an emotional cry, shot forth under the spur of heated debate and fiery opposition. It was not the reply to a hot challenge of his life, thought and purpose. It did not spring to his lips just as the axe of the executioner was falling upon his neck and the taunt of unfaithfulness sounded in his ears from the rabble crowd. It was deliberative; it was massive with facts that filled its cellular integuments and crowded themselves into every interstice. It lay on the even surface of his life with no danger of sliding from some mountain of neglect. His peace at Rome would have been a treasure to himself and his friends; his faithfulness there before Nero and the decaying empire would have been a blessed heritage for all; but the value of this utterance is in the life measurement that is in it. It is, "I have kept the faith."

The fluctuating life should take its lesson here and now. The steadfast purpose alone can give any value to final utterances. If you sway from virtue to vice, from belief to doubt, from profession to denial in practice, from advocacy to guarded silence—if you vibrate between the church and the world, between Christ and the Devil—if your life is spent in traveling a well-

worn path from the mountain to the valley, from the valley to the mountain, it will be a pleasure to know that death overtook you when well up the mountain side, but any special word that you may leave can never offset the shifting purpose of your life; the moving shuttle will weave a fabric that will be examined when final words are forgotten or ignored. The steadfast life will make a solid base in which to fasten the staff on which you nail your colors at the setting of the sun.

This utterance is valuable.

2d. Because the faith kept was worthy the keeping. Many utterances of apparent heroism have lost all their richness and bravery when closely examined. The cry that has evoked the applause of the world has been sometimes the empty vaunt that has melted into vanished air, and the applause has changed to a howl of hate. History has taken the heart out of many a public declaration and left only a lifeless shell, has often cracked the shell to find it incapable of holding any vital truth. What was the faith Paul kept? Was there any value in it?

It was the faith only delivered to the saints, not something evolved out of his inner consciousness, not a formulated creed spun out of his own musings. It was not the book of Romans, a masterly argument of truth which he proclaimed to the world in his dying cry. It was the faith that for ages and generations held as a mystery, had been made manifest to the

saints "to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The faith Paul kept was simple but sublime; the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the sinfulness of man and the atoning sacrifice of Christ, repentance and faith and godly living, the roadway to glory and honor and immortality. It included the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as proving his doctrines and declaring as beyond question his deity, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the necessity of the new birth, the atonement in his blood, immortality, the eternal judgment with its everlasting issues.

It was no temporary theory on unimportant topics that rose before the apostle's mind at the last. It was not a faith limited by the boundaries of the cradle and the grave, but entered into those sublimities that are more glorious than creation, colossal as the pillars of the universe, valuable as the soul of man.

The inventor whose fertile genius has blessed the world, enriched the poor and saved the wasting wear of human energy, crowned with laurel wreath that the hands of working men and women have woven, may at the last speak of his great work.

The great philosopher who drew the lightning from the clouds and bade it do his will, the sagacious soul that taught the world to whisper over wires that stretch the circuit of the globe, the men that have sent their gaze far up amid stellar spaces and down into

the microscopic world, widening the horizon of life and making man sustain relations to innumerable worlds and forces, may each attest their faithfulness to that which has so blessed the world and yet be far from Paul at this moment of his exultant cry.

His faith was concerning those enduring relations that the soul sustains to itself and to its God. The faith appealed to his acceptance by its very authorship which was from God, by the medium of its communication which was the Lord Jesus Christ, by the character of its articles which met his want and satisfied his soul. Nothing was loftier in the whole range of thought, nothing was more certain in the whole domain of the material, nothing was more necessary in all the provisions of the teeming universe.

This faith that gave him through Jesus Christ pardon for sin, freedom from its power, assured him of his immortality and taught him of the splendors that awaited him when he passed from earth—this faith that promised like glory to all and laid the infinite riches of God at the feet of man for him freely to enjoy was worthy the keeping, and he kept it to the end. It was not injured by the blows that fell upon him; it was not obscured by the storms that swept through the heavens; it was not damaged by the rejection of nobles; it did not weaken as his years multiplied; it did not fail in supreme moments. He had declared this faith which God had revealed to Jew and Gentile alike, for it was the faith that each needed.

There was nothing clannish in it. It was the faith of Christ that was to lift a lost world to plains of glory. It was the faith that lost sinners have a Redeemer in the Son of God; that "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life;" that needy men have a personal friend and helper in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a faith that required the active obedience of its adherents; that necessitated godliness of life, separation from sin; that showed loyalty to it by fruit in the life. It was worthy the keeping, and so gave value to this utterance of Paul.

The great desire of many men is to die rich and leave a name for opulence in the earth. For this they toil diligently through the years and at last declare over their accomplished purpose, "I have kept the faith." But what faith have they kept? A commercial faith only—maxims of the world, the essentials for human regard and confidence. For this they are fitly honored; but this is a poor dying cry. There is nothing in it but that which savors of the temporal; the spiritual part of the being has no voice in it. There is an absence of God; an absence of the provisions for the wounded spirit; an absence of the business concerns of eternity. It is a faith of too narrow proportions for an inhabitant of many worlds. No mighty spiritual structure can rise upon it with walls to cut the azure dome and spires to pierce the cloudless blue. It is unworthy mention as the symbol of a life.

This ought ye to have done and not to have left the other undone. Paul, too, was honest as a tent-maker, but he made no boast of this honesty in presence of a new world. His cry touched a worthier faith.

Is there not here a lesson for those who have no positive faith beyond the business maxims of the world? The faith that is worthy of mention in the gray dawn of eternity must have eternal truth in it. "I have amassed a fortune"; "I have become a renowned scientist"; "I have achieved fame as a merchant prince"—these are vain babblings compared with the whisper of the poor man that, dying on his pallet of straw, declares, "I have kept the faith of Christ."

This word is valuable.

3d. Because it is true.

That which is simply scenic in final hours passes into rebuke; that which cannot bear the crucible tests will be forgotten or remembered with pain. The truthfulness of this exultant cry was evidenced in the marks of the Lord Jesus in the body of the aged disciple, still prisoner for his Master's sake. No one challenges Paul; his word calls forth willing testimony spoken in many dialects, in many places.

So, friends, though we may say with the lips "I have kept the faith," the value of the words will be in their truthfulness. These passing days are writing the challenge to them. It is the lapse of the tongue, of the heart, of the will from the high and holy re-

quirements of the faith that will deface the record of a Pauline claim. The writing of each day is in characters that will not be effaced; life yields its truthful testimony to the value of any final claim.

This utterance is valuable.

4th. Because it declared the present and future riches of the apostle. The faith he kept had conditional promises. They were solid with their weight of treasure. They assured the boundless resources of God to him who was faithful to the end. A crown of life was secured. An inheritance was his, incorruptible. A throne awaited him. The soul of the apostle was ringing with spiritual harmonies, while the instrument for his destruction was being sharpened. God's peace, God's love, God's joy, God's immeasurable benefits were his, and as from the cruelty of the Roman emperor he passed to his coronation amid heavenly hosts, the heavens echoed to thunders of song that rolled far away and broke in waves of glory on the shores of worlds beyond the Roman's vision. The ability to utter truthfully this word disclosed a power of soul, an amplitude of being, a capacity for blessing which the shriveled soul of the devotee of this world may envy. Keeping the faith of Christ not only enriches, but prepares and educates to enjoy the everlasting possessions. Its higher glories and its transcendent beauties come to the disciple as he rises up into them by his own effort and the mighty power of God.



I pray you keep the faith in no narrow sense, that the faith in its broadness may bring you to its supreme rewards, and whether or not it is given you in the serenity of a cloudless sunset, possessing all your powers to speak words of calmness and strength in the ears of listening friends as you move away into eternity, let your lives send forth the sweet, blessed anthem that shall form no discord with the music of the skies. The spoken word is good, but it sinks to silence; the nobler life is better, for its music is eternal.

## IX

### A THRILLING VISION

“Son of man, can these bones live?”—Ezekiel 37:3.

THERE was disclosed to the eye of the prophet of Israel a strange and thrilling scene. From his chamber where he pondered on the condition of the people, saw their revolting wickedness, mused on their idolatry and felt his soul burn within him with righteous indignation against so forgetful, so fickle a nation, where he followed the line of their marvellous history from the days of the angelic visitation on the plains of Mamre when Abraham sat in the door of his tent in the heat of the day, and Sarah within laughed at the message which her husband received, through the sale of Joseph and the Egyptian experience, through the wanderings, the settlement, the judgeship, the kingship, the division of the people, and with a deep sigh poured his prayer up to heaven that a people so led might not be left to perish—from his chamber where he reviewed the judgments of God, flashing like the lightning from the gathered clouds, hurling the people with indignant hand from their land so hardly

won, so divinely blessed, so fearfully corrupted with all the foul crimes of Sodom, king and peasant alike guilty, where he recalled the tender pity of God as he raised up deliverers and set kings after his own heart upon the throne and filled the land with plenty and called for repentance that he might forgive and cleanse their guilt, till the prophet's soul melted within him, and with brimming eyes he pleaded for Israel anew—from his chamber where his prophetic soul had felt its "deep, vehement, tragical emotions," he is led, the hand of the Lord upon him, the Spirit of the Lord within him, away from the habitations of men to a scene which to a man like one of the old Hebrew prophets was calculated to stir the depths of the being and awaken to a lively exercise his prophetic instinct.

The Lord would test his faith. The Lord would teach his child a lesson. As the representative of all the sons of men the prophet is led forth.

Not to the crowded haunts of men where the multitude sweep by in the heat of excited life, where the pulse beats high and the mind works vigorously and the heart sends its steady currents through the whole being and the lungs freshen every current and the tingle of healthy life is felt—not where the stimulus of human enterprise awakens every sluggish faculty and hand in hand a multitude sweeps away all opposition—not where the smoke rises from a thousand chimneys and the steam issues from a thousand tubes and the whirr of machinery declares the forces of the

divine creation are harnessed to do the work of man and put to blush the miracles that paganized Christianity pretended to work in early days of darkness—not where batteries click with electric motion and dormant powers are waked to life and every scene is thrilling in its teaching of activity—not to the mart where varied nations meet and in the contact all are quickened is the man of God who studies the ways of Providence led when God would test his faith.

But Ezekiel goes forth from the habitations of men into the dreary solitude and silence of a deserted plain. It is a lonesome place, not like the crag where Elijah stood and saw the mountains rent in twain and the rocks break in pieces before the wind, heard the earthquake rumble and the subterranean pillars of the earth crash into ruin and the fire sweep by in destructive flame, and in the stormy elements felt his soul excited with most turbulent emotion, but the very silence of death brooded over the place where the prophet paused. The mountains rose in silent grandeur on either side once filled with living armies; now the grass waved in the breeze and the rocks gave no token that the foot of man had ever pressed them. No echo lingered to tell of the wild shouts with which commanders roused their men, men threw themselves into the conflict, as down each slope poured the mighty hosts and met in deadly contest on the plain between. No groan of dying man was in the breeze, no shriek of wounded told the tale; far up and down lay only the bleached

bones of an exceeding great army. The bird of prey had feasted and gone. The keen eye of the vulture lighted on the plain, but the very scent of decay had gone. On jutting rock the raven paused to whet his beak, but sailed above the spot where once his feast had been, where now no flesh for him was found. No prowling animals scoured the plain by night, for years had passed since the slain in battle fed the beasts and birds of prey. Bones only, dry and white, lay scattered on the ground. From their sockets they had slipped, and, gnawed of wolves, dragged here and there, lay in unconnected parts. Eyeless sockets and grinning jaws spoke of a skull within whose ample chambers only the dry dust of the plain had lodged, where once reason had her imperial seat. Bones of the limbs and trunk were clearly marked, but all were now dismembered. No life stirred in all the desolate region. Even the earth-worm had crawled to more abundant living than these sun-bleached bones could give, and had spoken its verdict of hopeless death against them. The albumen and gelatine had gone and nothing but the lime remained.

If the decaying bodies had made fertility more fertile and death had fed upon the forces of productive life, it was long ago and long forgotten, for the plain seemed blasted with these remnants of the human frame.

Round about them was the prophet led; yet all the same, the hills and sky were the walls and roof of a

mighty sepulchre, a lonely mausoleum. The soul of Ezekiel is aroused. He mourns such dreadful destruction. His heart grows sad within him as he reverts to the past and recalls the hour when in the buoyancy of life, in the strength of an organized body, these withered and scattered bones bore their part, when clothed with flesh and filled with life, as men, they knew the joys of men, and shared the toils and honors of the world, now only bones, marrowless and forbidding.

But not for this revery is he led forth. "Son of man," speaks a voice in his ear, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

Never a query so strange had ever claimed the thought of living man. A general question on the vitalizing of a body whose spirit had departed would have sent his thought back to prophetic records till he stood by Elisha in the home of the Shunamite and saw her dead boy wake to life, and he would have found a bold, decided, instant answer in the affirmative. But here was an unparalleled question. "Can these bones live?"

Let him seek aid in his answer. Call for the skilled anatomist and, standing in the field of death, let him make reply. Furnish him with all the instruments that every age has discovered and perfected. Give him all the helpers he may desire till all the bones are assorted, and bone to bone, joint to joint, ball to socket, he has built up the bony structure and fastened it together from foot to shining dome, and he shall leave the

prophet saying, "What I have done upon the field I continue in the museum. I can classify the bones. I can hinge them together. I can label them, but when my work is done, you see a field of ghostly skeletons. I have no power to give them life."

"Son of man, can these bones live?"

Call for the physicist and the physiologist and send them, with all their learning and skill, to the perplexed prophet. What aid do they give? The constituents of flesh they will explain, the necessary organs with all their functions they will describe and wrap their flesh-like models round the anatomist's work and fill the trunk with painted heart and lungs and every organ in the healthy body, set eyes that see not in the sockets and stand the image on its feet and leave it, saying, "More I cannot do."

Send the scientists of every school and let them carry the gray matter that they claim secretes thought as the liver secretes bile and put it in the chambers of the skull, and mix up blood and pour it in the heart and send it by skillful apparatus through the arteries and veins. Let them breathe into the mouth and nostrils their own living breath, hot from the healthy lungs. Let the metaphysician be present and do his best on the mental powers and processes. Let science make the dry bones live or let it confess its impotence, acknowledge its failure, and leave the man of God alone. They all retreat in mute acknowledgment of weakness, and no more life is there than when the

prophet's eye first rested on the plain. Humanity at its best has not helped him, and his own heart suggests no answer. "Son of man, can these bones live?" His reply comes quick and hot, "Lord God, thou knowest."

Whether into the dead dry bones life can come God alone knows. But will he reveal the secret? For this very purpose he has led the prophet forth into this dreary plain and waked his anxious thought by his startling query. For this he makes him teacher to the world. The lesson follows in thrilling speech, "Prophecy upon these bones and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord, Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you and will bring flesh upon you and cover you with skin and put breath in you and ye shall live: and ye shall know that I am the Lord." The obedient prophet hears these marvellous words. He follows the directions given him. Never such a sermon to such an audience. Never such an audience for a sane man to address. In the open temple of the heavens the preacher stood. Its walls were frescoed by the hand of God. The sun was witness, and a million orbs unseen of human eye gleamed in the far-off ceiling. From lofty heaven an innumerable host stood wondering and listening. The souls of those whose bones lay on the plain may have gazed upon the wondrous scene. The bones, Ezekiel's waiting audience, lay unmoved before him. His eye, strange kindling with the fire within, is riveted upon them. His lips



open and, with his prophecy inspired of God, there was a noise and behold a shaking and the bones came together, bone to his bone, and lo! the sinews and the flesh came upon them and the skin covered them above, but there was no breath in them.

The proclamation had been made, the preaching was done. Taught of God, he cries, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live"; and as he spoke the air was stirred as by visible wings, the breath came into the organized bodies and they lived and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. And the voice of the Lord was heard, saying unto the Son of man, "Behold, O Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up and I will put my Spirit in you and ye shall live." And the prophet understood and delivered the majestic message to the children of men. It is our possession, our sacred treasure still. Ages have gone. The prophet is in heaven, but his prophecy and his teaching remains and to us to-day it comes with all its freshness and all its power as we look out upon our city and its needs, our community in its sad and discouraging features. The reign of death seems unending. The absence of all spiritual vitality betokens the steady decay that is in progress. We are living in the valley of dry bones. "Can these bones live?"

With the inspiring scene just described in our

minds let us go forth among the lapsed and sunken classes of our city, into the forbidding human valley. If primeval forests lifting their branches into the heavens filled with the songs of birds and bright with flaming colors, full of shade which their luxurious growths have caused, are now buried deep in the earth and under splashing waters by a subsidence in the crust of the earth, so by great moral sinkage have whole classes of our fellow men gone down. Whole sections are sunken. In the coal-bearing strata of Wales and Nova Scotia the slow submergence shows erect trees standing one above another on successive levels. In the Sidney coal fields fifty-nine fossil forests occur in superposition. We do not like to believe in any class division in humanity, but our eyes compel us to see the different strata as we view a cross-section of the human race.

We go out and creep down to where there is the unmistakable evidence of a human subsidence. A flood of ignorance and sin has swept over all and the stench of polluted waters fills the air. Enter and pass through a dwelling given up to such a class. The uncarpeted floor, the begrimed and naked walls, the broken, scanty furniture, the stifling, sickening atmosphere, the patched and dusty windows, through which a sunbeam stealing reveals the yet more dusty air, the ragged, hunger-bitten and sad-faced children, the ruffian man, the heap of straw where some wretched mother, in muttering dreams, sleeps off her last night's debauch or

lies unshrouded or uncoffined in the ghastliness of a hopeless death, while the drunken husband still drowzes upon the floor, repeat in modern terms the scene that met the eyes of Ezekiel. These are sad cases and scenes, but may be witnessed every day in the community about us. Lack of spiritual life is akin to the silence and death of the valley of dry bones. From cellar to attic neither Bible nor religious volume shall be found. The home of squalid poverty, of loathsome crime, of degrading drunkenness, whereon sin has left its dreadful mark, where hunger stares out of hollow eyes, and despair has settled on haggard faces, and drink-palsied men and drink-blotched and bloated women and sallow, sad-faced infants pine away into a painful death, and children shiver in the cold and spend the gift of charity for the drunken wretches they call parents—these, these are the lifeless bones of the disgusting valley.

Standing thus, I hear the old question, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I have made the rounds of all parts of this community to note the human condition and the human want. From hours of painful visiting among poverty and wretchedness and drunkenness where now and then the gleam of gospel light brightened the dark chambers, and noble battling kept the destructive wolf from the door, though the bin held no coal and the larder was guiltless of provision—from a home where distress sat in every corner and misery waved her filthy wand, and disease stood ready

to take possession, and all the treasure of past years was held in a knit purse which opened into my hand a dozen pawn tickets of values once enjoyed—from a room where on a trunk with dishevelled hair and bloated face and neck, and scanty garments and naked feet, lay the mother, once a member of a Presbyterian church, maudlin drunk, the husband absent on a debauch, once class leader of a Methodist church, a daughter, child of Jesus, scrubbing at the washboard for the means to keep them all together in their mean and cruel life, the faithful member of a Baptist church—from a room where in the window sat a thin-faced woman whose breath was hot with drink, and in an easy chair by the table sat another woman, whose tongue was ready loosed by the devil's drink, their minds too dim to catch the sense of Jesus' truth or know his condemnations that I opened to them, I grasped the hand of a faithful missionary, saying, "Can these bones live?" and his reply was the repetition of the question. I ask Ezekiel, taught of God, the answer, and it rings with his instant response and is given with Scripture clearness.

But before he utters it let the anatomist of charity enter and give reply; he who has studied all the wants of human kind and weighed in scales of nicest balance all supplies, who has dissected all this misery, poverty and crime, and who has classified it, and his answer is: "It cannot live, it is beyond hope." Let the physiologist of religion come and tell us of these classes, and,

though he knows the elements of the moral and spiritual body, he dares not promise nor predict life from these dry bones. Let the humanitarian come and the scientific religionist, with all the helps known to skillful thought and generous feeling, and the mass but absorb the efforts with no change, and they venture no reply to the question: "Can these bones live?" Ezekiel, answer us in the name of God. "Prophesy, O son of man, and say, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord," is his reply. And when you have delivered this message with all faithfulness then lift up your voice and cry to the wind-like Spirit, "Breathe upon these slain," and, though ye say their bones are dried and their hope is lost, yet shall they live and know that the Lord hath spoken and that the Lord hath performed it.

By the prophet's faithfulness life was given to the dry bones; in Christian faithfulness even these shall live. The force that shall lift the sunken mass, that shall quicken the inert, dead soul, is the truth of the gospel of Christ, given by man, inbreathed by the Holy Ghost.

For this the multitudes wait and the promises glow on the pages of the Holy Word. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear." "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold."

The whole truth with its Scripture illustrations

brings two thoughts clearly to view as involved in the salvation of the careless, as well as the debased.

How shall this city, this community, be aroused to life and saved?

1. By the Christian's gospel proclamation everywhere.

Ezekiel, with faith supreme, spoke to the dry bones. God commands his children to declare his gospel in the faith and love of it to all. "To every creature" is Christ's word. "To every man his work" is his forceful teaching. Had the prophet refused to go out to the valley of dry bones for any reason, he had never had them for his audience. Had he been appalled at their sterile condition and refused the truth to them, assured that it was useless because they were so dry and dead, then they had never revived.

Child of Jesus, refresh your energy and hopefulness in the exhaustless love of Christ. See the meaning of the cross streaming with holy blood, hear that pleading voice of the Son Divine calling, "Come unto me and drink." See the crowd of lepers and deaf and dumb and blind and fevered and filled with devils, and the Magdalens and repentant Peters, and, with a faith that is supreme, speak out the gospel promise into every ear as your highest business, your noblest vocation, your grandest privilege, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified.

An earnest Christian says, "Enthusiasm, love and sympathy are needed in successful work." These all

are the gifts from Christ to bring his word in contact with the souls of men. He has given his assurance that his word shall not return unto him void.

Like Ezekiel we must make

2. An appeal to the wind-like Spirit.

Though the bodies of men are built up, cleansed, fed and provided with every necessity; though the pledge be in every house and every name to the pledge; though in order and decency the multitudes live, yet is there not that real life that is essential. Bone found its bone, flesh covered them, the skin wrapped all about, but life failed to come till with the look and cry to heaven, the breath came upon them. This may seem very arbitrary and meaningless; nevertheless, it is the divine way. It is the only way to secure life to the spiritually dead masses of humanity. So in the early day the disciples preached, and when proclamation had been made of the word they lifted their eyes to heaven and cried for him of whom the Saviour had spoken to them, and the Holy Ghost descended upon them like flame and three thousand were converted in a day.

Times change, but truth remains the same. With pungent preaching of the gospel from every lip and life, with prayer to God, we have a right to believe that this city will be shaken, and that there will rise from its low places, from its depressed quarters, a mighty spiritual army clothed and in their right minds, singing Immanuel's praise.

## X

### “A PILLAR OF SALT AND ITS LESSON”

“She became a pillar of salt.”—Genesis 19:26.

“Remember Lot’s wife.”—Luke 17:32.

MORE than nineteen centuries lie between this record and Christ’s reference to it. Both are historic facts. The power to recall events of the past, and live again in the midst of scenes and associations long since changed; to close the eyes and see faces now wrinkled and seamed with age and care, fair and smooth again; heads now silvered, black and glossy; to renew one’s own days of strength and joy; to bring again into the thoughts what has been read or seen or heard, is one of the richest blessings granted us in our creation. The failure of this power we reckon among our misfortunes. When we become conscious that it is more difficult to people our silent hours, and our thoughts travel in a circle and are tinged only with the present; when we think that we shall not be able to recall the events of the passing days, that the books we read, the stories we hear, the great historic events we note will pass away from us, and be to us as though they had



not been at all, a pain is added to our being. To live only in the present is to be imprisoned in a narrow dungeon. To be unable to modify the thought of to-day by the thoughts of other days and other men, to be unable to impress the experience of other years upon the activities of to-day, is to be reduced from the dignity and glory of manhood to the ephemeral life of other beings.

The effect of the unconscious operation of memory upon our lives is prodigious. The effort to live without it would consume all our energies. All things would be experimental from day to day. The extraordinary exercise of memory has added to the power and influence of those otherwise but slightly gifted. It is not strange, therefore, that this faculty is trained vigorously in all practical theories of education. That its neglect is perilous, that the child is charmed by the return to its mind of things already learned, that its intellectual stores are ever ready at the call upon the paying teller of memory, are among the great facts of life. It serves the noble purpose of saving life in exigencies. To remember what ought to be done in important crises is to be of great value in the world. It is the solid pillar of a good education.

No wonder, then, that he who made it uses it so effectually in the spiritual training of his children, that it becomes a prime factor in building up the religious life, and that in the spiritual culture of chil-

dren its neglect is the occasion of years of wandering and sin, of habits that never fail to afflict the life.

As the wise parent hangs upon the walls of his home those pictures that shall constantly suggest good, helpful and inspiring thoughts and actions, so does he also store the mind with noble precepts that memory shall use as ever-present incentives to worthy living. It is not only the immediate effect of evil surroundings that is to be dreaded, but the constant presenting of them to the mind when they are changed. For not only the good but the bad is recalled, not only the wholesome but the sickening. Those glorious scenes that have thrilled the whole being and those terrible events that have blanched the cheek, those inspiring words that stimulated to heroic endeavor, and those burning words of shame that seemed to scar the lips that uttered them—those stories that held a truth, and those that contained a corruption, alike are frescoed on the walls of the inner temple.

He has been wise who has chosen spots for his hours or weeks of rest from toil that are worth recalling, who has selected companions for life-long thought and picked books of helpful interest. For, though the rest days fly swiftly into the past, their harvest does not end so soon. The joy, the calm, the gaiety, the fascination, the glare, the laugh, the sigh, the pure, the gross, the sweet, the bitter, shall all come back again. There is no need to command this faculty with stern words and threats of punishment to do its work. With-

out enforcement, even in the dreams of the night, and reveries of the day, it will perform its mission. The laughing waves of ocean, the singing trees of the forest, the sighing pines of the hillside, the murmuring grasses of the field, the rollicking brook, the frothing fall, the lonely path, the rural and the urban, the sky by day, its lunar glory at the midnight hour, all that has charmed shall charm again. And not this only, but the sweet associations and budded friendships and faithful words and earnest discussion, faces kind and forbidding, noble and base, acts generous and selfish, coarse and refined, shall all return to move us yet again.

Sometimes we seem centuries old, we can remember so much. And often we wish we had not remembered what has dulled another day and blasted another hour. The slightest thing has recalled it, so many servants has memory—a face, a tone, a perfume, a shadow. The only way not to remember the evil is not to be associated with it; not to remember bad things is not to know them. Youth stores the treasures of its later years with good or ill, and every passing day is adding to the pleasure or pain of ages far remote. The operation of this faculty is declared to continue forever. And why not? It is not of the flesh nor in the flesh. It is of the spirit and the body cannot destroy it. With change of worlds it is unchanged.

“Son, remember,” is the corrective call of the future in the Lord’s parable that put the thoughts of justice

in a wounded spirit. To be constantly recalling evil is to be unhappy. The man or woman who has lived unworthy years, bedraggled in the slums, and sits in the dawning of a better life, ever thinking of the past, its wicked ways, its old habits, its sorry sights, its vain, shameful, weary wanderings, grows sad and pines in a wretched forlornness of spirit. The sinner thinking of his sin, the drunkard and the debauchee of his cups and his vileness, the worldling of his sport, drenched in the passions of ungodliness, makes no advance in healthy, vigorous being. And what if this should be his eternal pursuit? And so the Scripture calls to him to "forget those things that are behind," that is, to fix his thoughts on things before until they have become a part of blessedness that shall give delight and help in their recall.

We cannot absolutely forget, but we can crowd into life all things worthy of remembrance to *dispute the right of way* with baser things and crowd them to the wall. The gospel, therefore, supplants the evil with the good; it does not remove sin to leave a vacuum into which seven devils may return, for a memory is sometimes sevenfold stronger than a present act, but it substitutes a good for a bad; it builds into the being constantly that which will help it in its present and its future. Jesus ever gave something to fill up the thoughts of those whose past lives had only evil inspirations and suggestions in their recall. It is vain to call men from evil and then leave them alone, rescue

them from perishing and leave them to the daggers sharpened on the whetstone of their past. That is a rescue which destroys itself. The helpful worker will introduce new thoughts, new scenes, attractive to the taste and abilities of the rescued, that memory of the evil may not altogether hold the being under its awful spell.

It is strange, then, detecting this principle of work in Jesus Christ, noting his effort to replace the repulsive with the beautiful, the severe with the gentle, the forbidding with the attractive, marking his choice of the lovely in creation, the lily from the field, the sparrow from the air, the glowing sky, to find him calling attention to an incident shocking to the tender sense of every age, among the things apparently rather to be forgotten than remembered. It is the impulse of decency in every family to cover its deformities, to blot out the evidences of its past weakness and sin, to extol the virtues and palliate the vices of ancestors. To dwell on some ancestral evil and bring it into public notice, to put together some dismembered family skeleton and call attention to it, would be counted evidence of insanity. No family, however wise or wealthy, noted or exalted, has a perfectly clean record. There are chapters erased, pictures turned to the wall, names seldom mentioned, events of which succeeding generations are desired to be ignorant. And this effort to remove offensive stains is not ignoble but commendable.

But here the Great Cleanser lifts into prominence an act of sinful disobedience and writes anew a fading story of human weakness on a crumbling stone. If the fiery storm surcharged with sulphur that swept over the cities of the plain and buried them in its awful flood, and threw its saline spray over the lingering woman, consuming life and encrusting the body, had been forgotten, it was called to mind again. Its horrors were renewed, the suffering of the destroyed people was again rehearsed, and the woman's violation of the divine command of mercy declared. If no one of the basaltic columns of the region could be identified by the antiquarian as the one whose heart was the wife of Lot, so that the story itself grew dim with passing years, it was all recovered again in this call that summoned from the past into the living present that single member of a family in her thoughtless or headstrong act of disobedience at the very moment of the sublime exhibit of the divine mercy to her and the divine wrath to others. Such a recall of such an event by such a teacher is worthy of the world's thought. It has not been forgotten since. Thousands have reread the story and taught it in all its wretched minutiae, and I bring it again before you, thrusting our thought into the dismal past on the very threshold of a future that we hope is to be brilliant with blessing, glorious with gladness, mighty with mercies, sweet with saintliness, and flooded with the fulness of the gracious gifts of God. It shall not obscure the divine blessing by its

momentary shadow, but from it shall come an inspiration that shall make our praise continuous as our service is unflinching.

To “remember Lot’s wife” is to take cognizance also of a saved man and a ransomed family, of the gracious purpose of God toward the weak and unworthy. It is not simply to look upon wrong made monumental, though neglected mercy stands declared in the pillar of salt. Here we gaze upon the truth of the ages that the disobedient have no permanent part in the saving provisions of God, that they who look back longing for the destroyed pleasures, the ease of sinful indulgence, rather than for the service of a just and loving God, cannot enter into possession of the treasures of God, but shall be hidden in the overflow of their wretched past. To “remember Lot’s wife” is not to go into the dreary ages of the past, and burrow into the corruption of Sodom, to bring again to mind a traveling company, angel-warned, hurrying from the fierce sweep of a destructive tempest, and the venturesome woman whose escape was stayed by her own act, but it is rather to look into *our own* past and observe the blight that marks its sin and follies, the waste that lies along the track of its disobediences, the ruin of much toil, the hot fires that still rage on the site where passion conquered and wrath exploded, where wilfulness triumphed and selfishness showed itself, where pride and malice were indulged, where an evil thought or word or purpose was cherished, and

question whether there is in us any desire to live in such a state or abide in that condition of mind and heart in which we shall be likely to be overcome once more.

It is a lesson of to-day that greets us. Memory gives us our past. Shall it be our future? Shall old passions and prejudices, old habits and indulgences, old enmities and hatreds hold us in their thralldom till we become monuments of their indulgence? Shall lying and profanity, speculation and fraud, deceit and insolence still hold our feet from the ways of noble manhood? Shall worldliness and greed, shall Sabbath-breaking and miserliness, shall any form of selfish indulgence allure us with sufficient power till we shall embody them in permanent form in this community? The expression of our life is becoming fixed; it cannot soon be changed. Lot's wife is not a saline pillar in an Eastern land, but a living person over whom the surges of his own past have gone till his future is made certain in the firm mould in which he is encrusted. Shall your past business habits in which there has been the Sodom taint be continued? Shall that which has prevented you from being all that you might have been still exercise its power over you? Then shall you show to those hastening on to a broader life and a sweeter spirit a petrified pillar, a column of salt. Your past shall give to you its character in unalterable shape. Blessed is the memory of the truth: that, as we break away from all evil and hasten to the



good, as we sever the associations that have been debasing and form those that are elevating, as we rise out of the corruption, ignorance and folly of a wrong course, we change in character and have more fruitful forms of life; that life itself quickens and hastens to new and more beautiful expression; as the thralldom of the past tended to harden and bind into the stillness and stiffness of death, so the loyalty to truth and right tends to make vital and changeful with the pulses of life the whole being. The service of Christ is Christ serving in you. The adoption of the way of salvation is the quickening of every vital element in the whole being and the reception of the impulse of Christ towards the forms of his exalted beauty. With such a stimulative and formative influence, it is impossible to become rigid—impossible to be held fixed in changeless character—impossible that the past should set the pattern for the future.

True Christian living approximates the divine, moves on to higher planes, and unfolds richer elements and attains spiritual beauty. Loyalty to the divine command of progress alone carries one away from the unseemliness of his past life. Lot was obedient and every step took him farther away from Sodom. He is the type of the Christian traveling away from all that is unlovely in his life. Lot's wife became a lonely shaft of warning on the hillside, and a type of him who disregards the law of progress and stays his steps till soul and spirit are stamped with indelible and

unalterable evidences of his sin. Who has not already felt the power of his past life hindering his advancing footsteps? Who has not found it easy to be content with the first efforts toward a changed life? Who has not said, "I am above the smoke and smirch of the city of sin—I will rest content"? It is at just that point that the lesson should reach us. The past can overtake and capture that position. It is a redoubt that cannot be successfully defended.

The young Christian who feels secure and halts, the individual who has escaped from the practice of any besetting sin, the fugitive from harassing thoughts and plundering habits who in fancied security abandons vigorous effort, prolongs the story of Lot's wife. The lesson is large enough for a church—practical enough for us. Church life may be cast in moulds and become monumental. All its increase may be from without, as sweeping sands may pile about a standing column. It may stay its work and refuse the law of progress and enlargement, and no human power can make it other than a Lot's wife. See the obelisks that stand along the line of history. A once living, throbbing church of Christ is the heart of each. Their work was done when they were satisfied with their past and neglected their present.

With special power does this warning come to us. A thousand voices call us on; the future is more attractive than the past. Content with low ideals of individual and church life, at rest where every call for

action is loud and imperative, we shall deserve to be imprisoned where we are. But with open face toward the great Leader, with holy purpose of steady advance, with resistance to every force that would stay our steps, the years to come shall find us far away from every present attainment. Replete with the good gifts of God, strong with the pulses of the divine life, with lofty thought and grand conceptions and worthy experience, a history luminous with noble deeds and sublime achievement—this is worthy our effort, this shall be our portion if we shun the error and so rightly remember Lot’s wife.

It was not a sudden impulse, but the result of growth, of movement away from the selfish life, that was seen on the Nova Scotia coast when the *Atlantic* struck on one of the sharp and cruel rocks. In the furious sea one man struck out for the shore. Driven back by the boisterous waves, he cried, “No man can live in such a surf.” “You can but drown,” said a quartermaster. “Try it again.” And says the chronicler in graphic words: “The resolute man, fully alive to the peril, did try it again, and eventually made his way through the angry waters safe to the shore, nearly a hundred yards away. There, benumbed by his long struggle in the water and by his hard labor through the cold and snow on shore, and almost exhausted, he met the Claney brothers. With a cap, a pair of socks and boots and sixty fathoms of line, seven-eighths rope, he went again to the shore.

“A large number of people had left the ship and were crowded on the sea-washed surface of the rock on whose ledge the ship had struck. ‘Some one must take them a line or most of them will be washed off,’ said the seaman. ‘No man can take out a line in such a surf,’ cried Claney, who thought him crazed by the sudden strain on strength and life. ‘I shipped to do my duty to my officers, my shipmates and passengers,’ said the sailor simply, ‘and in God’s name I will take it out or drown in doing it.’ Then, being himself safe on shore and out of danger, he took the bight of the rope in his mouth, ran down the rocky shore, plunged into the awful breakers and succeeded in reaching the rock. Having secured his line, he swam back again and fastened the rope to a stake which he had driven into a crack of the rocks. Then back and forth through this Hell Gate of the sea, back and forth from four o’clock till seven o’clock, three endless hours, he came and went, helping the chilled and terrified passengers, helping to save over fifty men, many of whom must have perished in unaided effort or have been forced into the sea from the rock by others crowding up from the ship before any assistance came from the mainland. Then strength failed him. As he neared the shore he threw up his arms and they thought him lost, but a friendly wave cast him more dead than alive high up on the beach; he was taken to the house, warmed and restored, and went back to England with life enough left to jump overboard from his ship just

as she was entering the Mersey, and save the life of an unknown person who had fallen from a passing boat.” Such heroism is superlative. It is the growth of a heroic soul. It is the opposite of the stagnant statue of salt.

And there is call for the exercise of just such virtues in Christian work in every great city; for from wounded lives, from sin-crushed spirits, from ignorance and impurity, from superstition and bigotry, comes the gurgling cry of drowning thousands. They perish, and who shall save them? Not they who are infantile in Christian virtue, not they who are stagnant in Christian life, but they who, heeding the million-tongued call to growth, and using the million-handed gifts of God, have become Christ-like, and are ready with fullest souls to “endure the cross,” despise the shame, and at length occupy the throne with the King Emanuel, clothed in white, radiant in glory.

## XI

### THE DIVINE MINISTRY AND ITS RESULT

“Thy gentleness hath made me great.”—II Samuel 22:36.

THIS passage is found in the last song of the sweet psalmist of Israel. Far advanced in life, weary with war and commotion, national struggle and personal contest, conscious that he has approached the hour of departure from the land he loved, the city he had captured and made the capital of the realm, the palace he had builded, from the mighty men that had been faithful to him and still loved him, from his son whose splendid reign is well inaugurated, he casts his eyes over his strange life from its boyhood among the sheep in the green pastures and beside the still waters, or in some conflict with the thieving wolf or bear or lion, through his wondrous introduction to public life in the contest with the giant of Gath, through all his subsequent history of rise and fall, his experience with the moody Saul, the plotting Joab, the wicked Absalom, the yet more wicked heart within his own breast, till his soul fills with a sense of the strong arm that has been around him, the mighty presence that has

accompanied him, the glorious God that has protected and blessed him, and he sings, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer. The God of my rock, in him will I trust; he is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my high tower and my refuge, my Saviour," and recounting his individual mercies set over his ill-desert, his heart melts and he is constrained to put highest in the catalogue of the divine perfections as shown to him and influencing his life **THE DIVINE GENTLENESS**—"Thy gentleness hath made me great" is his willing testimony.

It is not because David has seen but a few elements of the divine character that he selects this as having most power upon himself. If any man ever swept the full circle of divine attributes surely David can claim place beside him. He knew the divine power, he had seen the divine glory, he felt that justice and judgment were the habitation of God's holiness. He had sung his praise as Creator, as King, as Warrior, as Controller of all the forces of nature, using them at his will, as the Pardoner of iniquity, the Shelterer of the refugee, the Saviour of the sinner, the Healer of the wounded, the Blessed One showing mercy to his anointed, to David and to his seed forevermore, and clustering every virtue, all grandeur, each element of divinity shown to himself and to all the sons of men since Adam's day, he sweeps them as strings of a glorious harp and the music that floats forth is accompaniment to the sublime strain that from his own

voice reaches us in the words of the text, "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

Dr. Taylor says: "This expression is to me the gem of the psalm. I am never weary in recurring to it. As in looking on a spacious landscape every feature of which is beautiful, the eye finds itself at length resting with supreme satisfaction on some one object of surpassing loveliness within it; or, as in listening to a piece of music, all of which is inspiring, the ear catches up some specially bewitching strain which we keep humming over to ourselves in all our intervals of labor; so after we have read this whole psalm, we come back again and again to this delightful phrase. It falls upon the ear as if with the soft breathings of the Æolian harp, and amidst the jewels which shine out of this book of truth there is not one that sparkles with a radiance so divine as this, 'Thy gentleness hath made me great.' It is indeed the very heart and center of the cross of Christ. David felt that God's kindness to him in his weakness, his waywardness, his very wantonness of sin, had lifted him up to the external greatness of his throne and had built up in him the internal greatness of his character."

It is not difficult for us to discover what David had seen of the divine gentleness thus to impress his soul. The study cannot fail to bring the same beneficent results to us.

David had seen it from his standpoint as a ruler.

He recognized God as King over all, and discerned



the element of gentleness in the administration of his government. He himself had ruled with a sword in his right hand; destruction had been the portion of his enemies. Many readers of the Old Testament see only a greater David at the head of the armies of heaven. But the Psalmist, with keener gaze, saw the tender character in his God and bears his emphatic testimony to confound the superficial judgment of this century and of any other that pronounces the God of Israel a harsh, implacable God of wrath.

David as a ruler had punished ill-desert with a rigorous hand, and, though he had spared Joab, yet he says to Solomon, "Let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace," and, though he spared the cursing, stoning son of Gera, yet, departing, he bids his enthroned son to "hold him (Shimei) not guiltless, but to bring his hoar head down to the grave with blood." Revolt against him he was ever ready to punish harshly, and, though he was anxious to deal gently with Absalom, yet the conspiracy was eagerly crushed. When the son of Nahash, king of the children of Ammon, ruled in his father's stead, and David thought to requite the father's kindness by show of comfort to the son, the rebuff of his generous purpose brought out his men of war and the land shook in the conflict of the fighting forces. As a ruler David exercised his power over the weak for the gratification of his own selfish purposes, and his iron heel was felt in the home of Uriah. Power was his and he did not scruple to

use it for himself. So when he viewed the divine government from the throne of his own dominion and saw and felt the gentleness of the magisterial hand as it had been laid upon himself, his soul was stirred within him. Though the divine power was perfect and all the forces of destruction were in the Almighty's hand, though he had been rebellious, disobedient, far more than Absalom had in the earthly home, though the people had been unworthy of protection and blessing, but had deserved rather chastisement and captivity, yet to people and king God had been gracious and the severity of all his dealings was lost in the gentleness with which his will was exercised. "He sent from above, he took me; he drew me out of many waters, he delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me," is the burden of his song.

That government that instantly punished the guilty, that heard no prayers for mercy, that established its prisons and filled them, that set its officers at every point to hale offenders, and its executioners to punish them without hope of reprieve or word of pity, was not the government of David's God.

A father held the throne and the hand of authority was laid with the gentle warmth of love upon the sons of men, and when, in the days of his sin, he felt the pardon of his King, this monarch's heart was more than ever moved at the great provision made for the forgiveness of such guilt as his. There was gentleness of marvellous character in the divine government

viewed from the throne of Israel's king. This David learned to praise. It wrought upon his soul and made him gentler, nobler, stronger in his spiritual life. It furnished him with material for his growth toward that greatness which he here ascribed to God.

But as an observer of nature David had discovered the gentleness of God.

And here his opportunities had been abundant and his qualifications were admirable. From boyhood he was nature's playmate and shared her secrets. The thunder that crashed overhead had no terror for him; the voices that often blanch the cheek did not quicken the healthy beating of his pulse; day and night alike he had watched the heavens and earth, had cooled his cheek against the mountain breeze, and refreshed his body in the cool streams, and warmed himself into a glow in contest with the beasts of prey. He had slept on the mountain tops and in the valley and in the solemn cave. The voices of the night were familiar to him as the music of the day. His ears had caught the early warble of the bird and learned to trace the growing love and family affection in the changing tones of bird and beast as the seasons grew. He knew the odors of the fragrant woods and had made his camp in healthful spots that rival Adirondack forest or the woods of Maine.

He was not ignorant of the life that sported in the waters, but had doubtless many a time satisfied his hunger with the fruits of his rod and line. Nor could

he fail to observe, for he had a poet's soul, the beauty of the gleaming fish as the sunlight brought the iridescence of its scaly sides. He knew the flora of that region and had satisfied his soul in brilliant hues and had plucked the dainty petals from many a woodland flower. His eye had watched the lines of beauty in the body of the deer, and had seen his glowing eye-ball dilate as with bounding leap he cleared the underbrush and, panting, sought the water brooks in days of heat. Lambs he had carried in his arms and loved as gentle friends. Mountains he had climbed, grand and majestic, with dashing fall, and bald and rocky crown, the home of birds that started with their wild and piercing cry as he drew near. In cool refreshing glens, piled with rock, moist with the spray of falling waters, murmuring their sweet inimitable monotonous, broken now and then by the sharp cry of startled bird, he had walked and lived.

The moods of nature he well knew, and she had been kind to him, sheltering him in her caves from pursuing enemies, refreshing him with her liquid treasures and supplying him with munificent hand with all her bounties for the welfare of his body and the building of his home. She had grown luxuries for his table, woods for his palace and given up her gold and silver for his delight and use. Her rocks and woods and fields and streams, her skies with flashing stars and orbs of splendid power, her hills snow-crowned, rock-ribbed, bearing lightly on their shoulders the bending heavens

that loved to rest with maiden fondness there—all made their appeal and taught their lesson to David's soul. And not in vain. For his was soul to answer back to every word she spoke. He was not coy, but frank with nature's wooing and did his part. He had a poet's soul that thrilled and throbbed with rich emotion in the daily converse with this minister of God.

O you, who yearly pay your visit to the court of this supernal queen, and lay your hand in hers and rest in her sylvan palaces, tell me, do you behold but grass and leaves and woody fibre and the brown earth and the cold rock and the feathery cloud, the voice of bird, the plunge of forest stream, the kiss of neighboring trees, the strange weird contact of the pine needles, the dip from lofty trees? Does the horse give you but a neigh, the cow her evening low, and every voiceful creature but her wonted noise? Or is there over all, in all, and sweetly but with mighty potency breathed thro' all, the voice of the Great Father communing with your soul, teaching of his divine gentleness? The soul is often hushed beyond the power of words when only the home of the bird, with its soft and downy bed, safe hid in crook of arching tree or in the dense foliage of some tangled bush, suddenly confronts the searching eye and tells of that benign power that in creating so tiny a thing did not forget to tell it how to build its home in strength, in beauty and in safety. The poet soul of David, open ever to hear the Spirit's voice, discerned it in all of

nature's harmony, and quick to see the meaning of Creator in the thing created read over and over the evidence of that gentleness in the divine nature that showed itself in all the marvelous mechanism of the inanimate, in animate life and in the adaptations of the two.

He saw the gentleness of God each morning of his shepherd life in the delicate change from night to day without a hint of violence, as he watched it from some mountain peak. He saw the glories of the upper world lavished on the orient skies and vanishing before the rising sun. And in the hush of his worshipping soul he heard angelic voices in praise of the divine tenderness that thus ministered to man, and he sent back the antiphonal response: "Thy gentleness hath made me great."

While nature punishes with sharp and pain-inflicting hand the transgressor against her laws, she instantly seeks to heal the wound. How she pours her ointments into the gashed tree and barks its bleeding surface and bandages the wound, and on succeeding years covers it with bounteous foliage. How she turns from growth to heal a broken blade of grass. How even the body of man when wounded is aided to recovery by the recuperative energy in itself and in the store of healing remedies in the arcana which nature opens to her lovers. Is not the gentleness of God the teaching of nature? And David, as her willing child, her fond admirer, her constant student,

learned her teaching and felt that to the lesson he owed the growth of greatness in himself.

David also discerned the gentleness of God in the divine healing with him as an individual.

Early in life he calls his God a shepherd. He knows the tenderness of a true shepherd's heart, the need of a gentle hand and loving voice and kind and sympathizing heart. And so conscious is he of these elements in God that he sings, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," and arguing the future from the necessary character of his God he prophesies of his life, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

A careful scrutiny of that life in its multiform relations to the confederated state, the tribe of Judah, to Samuel, Saul, Jonathan, to his home, his warriors, his prayers, his repentance, his forgiveness, his hopes and wishes and disappointments, his toils, his opportune arrivals for special blessings or work, his comfort in old age, his succeeding son, his departure—all justify the historian in declaring the prophecy *true*. He was not punished according to his deserts; for his sins were laid upon another, and as he bowed in conscious guilt before God a gentle hand uplifted him; wayward he was brought back; tempted he was helped; slipping he was held, guarded, defended, saved, unsmitten when he dared the blow, healed when he had gashed his being, led in perilous moments even by the sound of a going in the tops of

the mulberry trees ; the retrospect of his life compels the words of the text as the mature judgment on his life: "Thy gentleness hath made me great." He who could call in the thunder and shoot out the lightning, make the mountains to smoke and the earth to tremble, command the battalions of the skies to move at his bidding, and at whose words archangels hastened to obey, yet regarded the sons of men and sought to relieve their sorrows, direct their paths, and save their sinful souls with touch as gentle as the morning light that opens a sleeper's eyes.

The relations of gentleness to greatness might occupy our thoughts for awhile, were not the connection between the two so apparent as to render discussion needless.

A continuous blow hardens the spot upon which it falls, or breaks asunder the object struck. Neglect of transgression spurs on the transgressor, but the gentle hand that administers wise love saves the soul by its effect upon the soul itself. In home administration this principle is continually tested and proven. Harshness is not conducive to greatness in the character of children ; sternness may secure obedience, but at the sacrifice of a well-rounded, great life. Greatness is the child of gentleness, but gentleness is not careless indifference or indulgence.

The nation that would secure greatness in her subjects and wards must show them the gentleness of her own greatness, the greatness of her own gentle-



ness. This is shown in a report from Hampton Institute where this law of gentleness prevails. "The rhetorical exercises of the afternoon were of unusual interest. The graduating class of thirty-five includes seven Indians, representing the Sioux, Seneca, Winnebago, Pottawatomie and Sac and Fox tribes. The essays, breathing the spirit of self-reliance without self-assertion or self-conceit, of earnestness without assumption or complaint, were thrilling in their simple eloquence. The salutatory, delivered by a graceful Sioux maiden soon to leave for her home in Montana, and there to start a school among her people, was a touching tale of past barbarism. It was followed by an interesting account of the opening of Oklahoma, by a young Indian eyewitness, whose spirit was in marked contrast to the bitterness of the border ranchman. Colored boys and girls, speaking upon such suggestive themes as 'Our Progress,' 'Our Problems,' 'Think and Labor,' 'Our Women's Work,' showed by composition and delivery the capacities of their race. Three recent colored graduates returned to tell of their work for their race in city and in country districts, with the earnest, practical ideas developed by experience. The brilliant address by a young Portsmouth lawyer upon the 'Negro's Experimental Period, and the Successful Accumulation of Property by Industry and Thrift,' was especially striking, and merits wide circulation."

Is not this better than an account of an Indian war, or of negro atrocities?

The reign of divine gentleness has not ended. We are not studying a hopeless present in a blessed past. If David could sing of this element in the divine character, what shall be the burden of our song? Then the graphic pictures of Isaiah's prophecy had not been written—nor the pleading words, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat." The tender plaint of Jeremiah had not been uttered, nor the gracious call of Ezekiel. Then the Son of God had not been seen on earth in human form, nor had the blessed gospel of his grace been taught. David could not read the story of that life so full of heavenly gentleness, nor on his ears had fallen the gentle words: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How has the story of the gentleness of God increased with the process of the suns? What emphasis have the ages put upon it? How it swells with rhythmic fullness as it moves from nation to nation! What melody each life adds to it! What a chorus of voices sing it; what an oratorio on the gentleness of God do the angels and the redeemed sing! And what is its effect upon you?

All that was open to David, and a hundredfold more, presses upon you. The Lord is calling you to greatness like his own by the gentleness of his dealing with all, with you.

Is he not merciful to-day? Is not the voice of all his dealings, "Rise, my son, to a Christlike character"? In the tonic of holy influence do you not feel your soul strengthened for noble action?

I pray you, let the evidences of God's gentleness in your life and your station, this world and its spiritual government move you to an exalted character as you rise to imitation of the divine nature through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## XII

### MOUNTAIN LESSONS

“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains.”—Psalm 36:6.

THE author of this simile is David, a constant reader of the two volumes of nature and revelation in which God has seen fit to disclose himself to the people of this world. He was not perplexed with any scientific difficulties, so-called, in the way of interpreting these volumes. They were ever in harmony because both came from the same source. His mind was not entangled in the network of secondary causes. All things were the result of the divine activity. So he sang with happy spirit:

“The sea is his for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. He made the stars also. He covereth the heaven with clouds. He prepareth rain for the earth. He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.”

Every tree and shrub and flower—each change in all the world was to him the immediate result of the divine act.

The volume of nature was the larger book of the two in his hands. The story of creation, the law,

and a little history was the sum of the one—the air and earth and sky and all they contained was the other. From a child he was accustomed to read the open book of nature and catch its inspirations. He was a reverent student of all her phases. Her voices were the voices of God—commanding, entreating, persuading. Her wonders were a part of the secrets of the Jehovah who was above the man he had created; her storms, her mighty tempests, with terrific exhibit of power, were only a declaration of the divine energy. Her green pastures and still waters were the type of provision for all the sons of men. The young raven's cry was heard, the sparrow was provided a shelter, and over every living thing was careful personal superintendence. With such a spirit a life spent largely out of doors would become spiritual and find constant occasion to worship. The habit of drawing the spiritual lesson from every noticeable incident would be easily and firmly fixed. The mountains, ever grand and suggestive to thoughtful minds, would be especially impressive to such a one, and it was natural, therefore, that they should enter largely into his poetic and devotional composition.

In writing this Psalm the thought of the wickedness of an evil man brought out into the prominence of the goodness of the Lord and the sublime things of nature furnish a means of comparison to his laboring thought. "Thy mercy, Jehovah, reacheth to the heavens, Thy faithfulness unto the skies; Thy right-

eousness is like the great mountains. Thy judgments are a great deep." As he penned these words some lofty summit may have risen above him, some solid, majestic mountain may have been his abiding place. The whole region was mountainous, rising to the icy crown of Hermon that sentineled with ever-flashing bayonet of ice the northern border of the land. Huge masses of clouds may have trailed along their summits like hurrying bands of white-winged angels; the fruitful streams may have gleamed along their sides; the cedars tossed by the blasts may have sent their odors forth to refresh him; the flashing limestone may have disclosed itself in spots, telling of their solidity, and the goodness of God could have to him no more vast and incomprehensible a symbol than the upheaved earth that pierced the very sky. The comparison was not a superficial nor fleeting one. He carried it into his thoughtful hours, and the fullness of the simile satisfied him. Others have studied it and found it true. I have taken it into the mountains, and found that in these latest years it is full of wisdom.

The word that is rendered righteousness might equally have been translated goodness, mercy, grace. The root word means "to be zealous toward any one." The primary idea is an eager and earnest desire by which one is actuated, and it means the zeal of God towards men.

Sometimes it is said that the goodness of God is

obscured. So is a mountain summit by a cloud, but the lofty peak is not altered by the cloud, least of all is it removed, and the Psalmist intended to say that the divine goodness was like the great mountain.

The great mountain is in the Hebrew tongue "The Mountains of God," those mighty masses that he himself has thrown up, coming from him as really as the goodness, and showing by their greatness and all their suggestiveness his glory and power.

Luther was wont to suggest their firmness and immovableness; Stier, the safety of those who seek refuge in them; others, their greatness and height.

I propose now to give some of the points of the comparison of God's goodness to the great mountains that seem to justify it to my mind:

1. The mountains are firm-based and solid-hearted. This is disclosed to every observer. If they were but pivoted on slender foundations, rising like inverted pyramids, the whole region about them would be full of danger. Terrible calamities would ensue when cyclones swept them over. We should not seek them as places of summer rest and refreshment. If they were hollow, it would be unsafe to trust one's self on their sides or summits lest some commotion should suddenly cause the collapse of the whole, as the crumbling of the charred coal breaks in the surface clods of a coal pit, as the crashing of pillars fills in a subterranean cave; even the mountain whose heart is burning lava is destructive. The mountains that rose

before the eye of David were of broad base, stretching out in vast uplands in the land of Ephraim, and the solid rock of which they were composed showed itself in many places. Caves were found here and there, but they did not weaken the strength of the hills.

So the goodness of God to man is broad-based and solid-hearted. It is not fickle. It does not rest on sentiment; it is not a peculiar exhibit of the divine nature, but rises in sublimity out of all the broad plains of an infinite being. It does not pivot on man's goodness, for then the storms of man's passion would topple it—the fall of man would destroy it. It is the uplift of wisdom, knowledge, justice, truth. The goodness of God to man is not hollow; when examined and penetrated it is still good to the last analysis. Its interior is not burning hate or consuming greed, but that which lies out of sight and is undiscoverable in the activities of God is still like the mountain, solid with goodness.

2. The mountains are unchangeable. Trees, shrubs, cities, villages, men change, but the mountains abide the same. Their foliage may have the hue of spring or the gay autumnal colors; they may be wooded or denuded of their forests, but their grand outlines are the same. Men may blast their rocks and excavate and bear away their treasure, but still in serene consciousness of their endurance they look unmoved. You may gaze upon the same summits that met the eye of David, and as you go from time to



time to familiar lofty spots they smile upon you with their friendly face unchanged. And so they type the goodness of God. The kindly acts of man are intermitted. Faces grow stern that once were gentle in their looks, hands smite that once were stretched for loving embrace.

God's goodness is unchangeable—moons wax and wane, seasons come and go, the long centuries pass in unbroken succession and still there is no change. The flow of love seems eternal. Gift is added to gift. If the promise of pardon for sin in type is given to one generation, the personal Christ is given to another, the ever-present Spirit with increasing revelations to another, and people in every land, in every age prolong the song, "Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

3. The mountains are self-evident. They do not need to be labeled. No crier need be stationed on their side or summit with Gabriel's trumpet to declare their presence. They confront the eye that opens—they stand in the way of the passer-by. Swept by a storm, or in the full blaze of sunlight, or throwing their sombre shade at night, their mighty bulk declares them ever there. The Matterhorn, noblest of Alpine peaks, Mont Blanc, the Himalayas, the Sierras—who shall stand and say, "Lo, these are mountains!" Who shall rise with puny form in their presence to argue with a traveler presenting proof that these are mountains?

The goodness of God is likewise self-evident. A blind man may say, "I do not see a mountain," and he shall speak the truth, but lead him on, and he shall soon add: "We are climbing up a height." God's goodness needs proof to the blind alone, and they must know it as their years go on and their lives go up. Long chains with lofty peaks declare without a word of man that he who is above us all is infinitely good. What fool is he who, made supremely diminutive amid the colossal evidences of the divine grace to man, asks for or offers proof that God is good?

4. The mountain altitudes cannot be estimated but by careful measurement. The ordinary standard by which distance is determined is found inadequate when applied here. The guess that may have some degree of accuracy elsewhere is worthless here; the measuring rod cannot be applied, each foot of ground cannot be traversed. Those higher methods and better instruments must be used, involving careful observation and equally careful calculation. So of the righteousness of God. The small measure by which we take account of one another, unable to bring into the calculation motive and intent, the system of computation by which we measure so much goodness by so much benefit received, utterly fails when applied to the divine. A plan of heavenly mathematics must be found, hinted at in some of the works of God, when five loaves and two small fishes feed about five thousand men and leave twelve baskets full of frag-

ments. This is not ordinary computation. The vast extent of the divine goodness can no more be reckoned according to the ordinary philosophy of man than the altitude of Mount Washington can be obtained by a tape measure or than the extent of the Rocky Mountains can be found with a yard stick.

5. The great mountains are awe-inspiring. A sensitive soul is stilled as he stands in the presence of the mighty monarchs. All worshipful feelings are stirred, frivolity is checked, and the impression of power and grandeur moves the soul. High places were early chosen for spots of worship. The lofty summits piercing the clouds or crowned with splendor when all else is darkened, immovable as the earth itself, without voice to tell their wonders, yet by their silent grandeur inviting and alluring thousands to their presence, the home of countless birds and beasts, upon whose lofty crags the eagle whets her beak, whence comes the roaring fall, where the lightnings strike and the thunder-peals repeat themselves in long reduplications of majestic tones, their age, their origins unknown, their wonders undiscovered, ice-crowned, snow-covered, with the creeping glacier between—all move the soul to awe.

So is there sublimity in the active goodness of God. As it towers above the mortal and angelic benevolence, as it expresses itself in forms of provision, protection and guidance, as it shadows the individual and encompasses the nation, as it reaches to marvelous be-

stowments of life eternal to the unworthy in Jesus Christ, as it stoops in him to the lowest and rises with its burden to the plain of everlasting blessedness, the soul is filled with awe and marvels what it beholds. No wonder the angels desire to look into the mysteries of incarnation and man's redemption. It is the awe-inspiring exhibit of God's goodness. The unmoved soul is unworthy of the grace that might add glory to his life.

6. The mountains are difficult of ascent. Many never climb them because of the needed effort. The sluggard neglects their glories; the indolent fail of their treasures. A precipitous front meets him who would ascend, sharp-edged rocks try his strength, tangled thickets and shaded forests are in his path. So out of a worldly life it is difficult to rise into the goodness of God. It is not level to man. God's thoughts are higher than ours. His ways lie above us, and to climb to the altitude of his thoughts, so that they become ours, to walk along his ways and find a harmony of spirit with him and a satisfaction in all he does, whether it lays our plans in the dust or not, requires effort from a weakling man. Even to understand that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" surpasses the power of many souls. They stumble, they grow weary in effort to conceive the height of God's great love.

7. The mountains are regulative of much. They stay the progress of clouds and form rivulets that swell to mighty rivers. Their position makes deserts and fertile plains. On their sides rise the springs that feed the valleys. They temper the heat, they increase the cold; they form barriers between nations, they prevent the shedding of blood. In nature, and among peoples, the mountains play a regulative part.

And so does the goodness of God regulate the affairs of time and eternity. It tempers the operation of a bad justice; it makes life blessed and desirable here and hereafter; it turns aside destructive forces; it modifies the operations of hostile agents. Omit from the calculations of life all estimate of the divine grace, the zeal of God towards us, and how changed is all. No mountain chain determining the character of the country from which it rises can fail to suggest the regulative power of God's righteousness.

8. The mountains are destructive of petty measurements and local strifes.

It is sad that mountaineers do sometimes dispute about their border lines, but as they rise to loftier summits, all their wrangling seems strangely out of place. From mountain-tops any division line seems absurd. The eye owns all that it can sweep, and with miles of territory before it, how petty seems a contest for a few square rods. Rising on God's goodness the measurement of one another, of religious

sects, as well as the strifes of men and parties, seem debasing. The divine goodness extends to all, breaks over every narrow boundary, furnishes untold stores for every living being, minifies all narrowness and, like the great mountain stretches through the lands of various peoples and up above the possession of any, it makes dogmatism ridiculous, and the claim of any sect to hold all truth as absurd. Who owns the ice that never melts on unreached hills?

“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy,  
Like the wildness of the sea;  
There’s a kindness in His justice  
That is more than liberty.”

9. The mountains are full of sublimities and poetry. Their grandeur has never yet been exhausted. Poets of every land have filled their verse in praise of all their greatness; rhetoricians have made their speech powerful and graceful from the mountain figures, and still they are fresh and new and wonderful. Man climbs their rugged sides and, trembling with excitement, beholds the mountain torrent leaping like flame at white heat from dizzy heights, the landscape stretching away like an emerald flood inlaid with precious stones, the clouds above the head or beneath the feet, or sailing far away like great aerial chariots with unseen steeds and hidden occupants, and descends to count all other scenes as tame and commonplace. So does God’s goodness impress the soul.

'Tis full of poetry and sublimity. Its expression is like an angel's smile; its far-reaching influence, its never-failing richness, its marvelous adaptation to every varying need, its unfathomable fullness, its tenderness, its glory, all have moved to noblest expression through fifty centuries, and still the volume of praise swells and rolls on. Aught that suggests the sublime recalls the divine grace.

10. Mountains hide their secrets from the indolent and absent.

Those who dwell at their base may never know the treasures on their sides and summits. It is only as they are searched that their secrets are known, only as they are climbed that the outlook is obtained, only as they are visited that their beauty is discovered. No mountain fairy points the way to spots of enchantment, no Druid tells of hidden blessings, no loud-tongued messenger is sent to proclaim the special richness of the glorious slopes. And thus they type the righteousness of God. To many it has no beauty and no worth. They see harshness and injustice, inequality and cruelty in God's ways. Viewed from afar, unstudied, they do seem passing strange at times. But to the searcher they disclose their secrets. Plans of blessedness lie under thorny brush, and the golden glories of precious truth become the wealth of those who seek to find. No one may expect to know the secrets of God who never comes in close and intimate communion with him.

11. The mountains rise above the clamor of the world.

In their stillness the soul finds rest, the body refreshment. The constant din of the hurrying world, the hum of restless life, cannot reach far up the steep sides. All the world is not disturbed with the rattle of its strife and the groans of its pain. The jargon of Babel is hushed. Afar up the tree growth there is not even the murmur of foliage.

God's goodness is like this. It is not swayed by the demands of men; it is seen like the still heights far above the pushing, noisy boast of human goodness. Climbing upon it in meditation, we rise above the fretful cries of our own surroundings, and feel a quietude that robs us of all anxiety and pain. There is no babbling in God's goodness. His activities, like the movements of the stars, are still and mighty.

12. Attack upon the mountains does not demolish them. They are ruined who dash themselves upon their rocky ribs. Battles may be fought upon their sides, but they remain. Shells may be discharged against them, but their explosion is harmless.

So God's goodness is indestructible. Men doubt it, deny it, combat it, but it remains good. Men wrangle over it; they perish, but the goodness remains. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth ever forever," for his goodness, like the mountains, cannot be demolished by attack.



13. Mountains are often storehouses of precious metals, jewels and valuable stones.

Is not God's goodness full of the sparkling gems that when transferred to man become his noblest treasures? Have not quarries been opened and worked for the adornment of the human race? What has been a more prolific source of gems and glittering glories than the grace of God?

14. Mountains are often lighted with glory when all else is dark.

I looked at a long line of peaks, each one a blaze of glory, bathed in a brightness that came from a loftier point still, while all the valleys were filled with darkness, where sombre night seemed to have asserted herself, and I said to myself, "Surely, the goodness of God is like the great mountains in that it is luminous with glory when clouds and darkness obscure all else."

15. The mountains are places of safety. "Escape to the mountains lest thou be consumed" has been a common cry. How often have they sheltered the exposed, protected the defenceless, put their mighty arms about the weak and made them as the strong! Many a thanksgiving has gone above the loftiest peak and entered into the ears of him whom angels praise for the safety of the protecting hills.

So is the goodness of God a place of safety for the anxious, the attacked, the pursued sons of men. Exposed on the plain, smarting with the wounds of a

fierce foe, hunted by sins of a past life, the goodness of God opens to receive and shelter the soul. None suffer who make this their refuge. It is ample enough for all the human race. As a nation may find safety in its mountain fastnesses, so the world may be saved in the grace of God. The wearing of a fretful spirit, the wasting of a sorrowing soul, the plundering of an anxious mind may all be escaped by flight to the goodness of God. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" is the Lord's own word.

The invitation that calls to God is an invitation of safety. Many a time David found refuge in the mountains—oftener yet in the Lord his God. And to us, again thinking of the richness of this comparison, comes a still small voice rising at length to the strength of a mountain blast calling, persuading, entreating us to make the Lord our refuge, and in the mountainous glory of his goodness to seek our everlasting safety and our eternal well-being; for while time shall last this truth will remain, that "the righteousness of God is like the great mountains."

### XIII

## THE FRATERNAL GREETING

“I am Joseph.”—Genesis 45:3.

THERE are many impressive scenes recorded in the Scriptures, but none more tenderly attractive than that in connection with which these words were spoken. It is as emphatic in its detail as in its broadest outline.

The character of Joseph is ever winsome, but we catch sight of its inner beauties in this disclosure of himself to his brethren.

There was such opportunity for the exercise of those elements of character that mark the majority of the human race, there was such ground for the indulgence of that disposition to reassert the defeated but now successful declarations of early days, that at least a partial indulgence would have been condoned by most men in reading his history. If Joseph had held his brethren from him until he had made them feel the might of his power, had compelled them to fall down before him in humblest entreaties for his favor until the old dream of bending sheaves had been

recalled and their early words of condemnation burned into their souls—if he had impressed upon them his importance as chief ruler in the great land whose well-filled granaries were the hope of starving thousands, and thus shown them that the coat of many colors early worn was only a hint of the royal robes that now adorned his person—if he had in the presence of Pharaoh and his court in the most princely manner, with flourish of trumpets and august and abundant ceremony, declared himself, all the world would have applauded his clemency in sparing any deserved punishment, and rejoiced in his opportunity to turn the tables upon these envious and wicked brethren of his childhood days.

If the idea of many people concerning the Old Testament is true, he should have cast them into prison, and with terrible words of condemnation brought them forth to hew them in pieces with the battle-axe of his wrath. They should have been made to feel the righteous outpouring of his long-afflicted spirit, and by the operation of the law of eye for eye and tooth for tooth, been themselves sold into bondage and made to serve the rest of their days in the very presence of him whose dreams they mocked, whose body they maltreated, whom they sold into Egypt.

But this narrative would not be out of place among the sweetest teachings of Jesus Christ. If it had been a parable from his lips it would have been pronounced an inimitable illustration of the supreme gift of love

and forbearance inculcated in the New Testament; and yet it is found afar back in primeval days, and shows that God's character is the same in all ages.

We do not propose here to present a graphic picture of the scene itself that is so familiar, but to note the salient points of Joseph's revelation, and see how richly they suggest the character of Christ's revelation of himself to us.

Let us recall the mutual relations of Joseph and his brethren.

Joseph was in power. He was the governor over the land. Pharaoh had said to him: "Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou." The ring of Pharaoh was on his hand, he was arrayed in vestures of fine linen, with a gold chain about his neck. He rode in the second chariot, and they cried before him, "Bow the knee," and the king made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. He was recognized as next in authority to the king. His word was law. He had not to ask favors, but to command service. His brethren were without power of any kind. They had not risen to eminence in their own land; they were not rulers of any people; they do not seem to have distinguished themselves in any way. Their presence in this foreign land increased their helplessness. They were not representatives of their home authority, but were here on

business of their own, having no power even over their own lives and liberty.

Joseph was in the midst of plenty. The seven years of abundance had filled the granaries under his control, so that there was enough and to spare; his table was spread with every luxury, and there was no possibility of an unsatisfied desire; the fatness of the land had yielded itself to his call, and with utmost prodigality there would still be enough and to spare; riches were flowing in now from the attempts of the people to supply their pressing needs. The brethren were in want. Hunger had driven them from their own land; the starvation and death that stared them in the face alone induced them to come to Egypt; they were suffering in their condition of want; unless provided for in this kindly way by this eminent ruler their days were numbered, and so they bowed themselves before him with their faces to the earth. Their money was of little worth, if it could not buy corn; their lands were perfectly unproductive. Jacob had said to them, "Get you down into Egypt and buy for us from thence that we may live and not die." Their want was emphasized by the extent and dreariness and prolongation of the famine.

Joseph recognized his brethren and remembered his dreams. Their familiar features told many a story of his boyhood; their names recalled all their common life; their voices refreshed again their hostility to him, their rebukes, their jests at his expense, their

wrangling, their heated condemnation, their scoffing at his dreams, their discussion over his sale. Their presence brought again to mind the hours of their last meeting, when they seized upon him, took his coat, the father's gift, and treated him rudely, saying, "We will see what will become of his dreams." He sees his father's looks in the faces of some and yearns over Benjamin, his own brother, as he sees his mother's tender look, and his heart overflows until he is compelled to withdraw and weep alone.

But the brethren do not recognize him. They seem to have recalled their fault concerning him, and to trace their difficulties in Egypt to their sale of him. Doubtless the journey has brought him to mind, and they perchance conversed by the way of his whereabouts. The presence of Ishmaelites seeking food may have quickened their thoughts, and a similar band to that to which they sold Joseph may have called him specially to mind. He was often in their father's thoughts, as appears from his mention of him as they brought Benjamin away; but as they stood in his presence they had no thought that the ruler was he. He was then about forty years of age, and the language which he used, speaking to them through an interpreter, his full beard and clothing, doubtless so obscured his personality, that in the absence of any expectation of seeing him in such state, they prevented his recognition.

Joseph was at peace with himself. He was con-

scious of a pure and orderly life. No Egyptian worship had drawn him away from the God of his fathers. His noble life had borne its fruits in his exaltation. The false charge against him, resulting in his imprisonment, had introduced him to the notice of Pharaoh and so secured his success and prominence. All things had worked together for good. We do not know why he had not communicated with his home during the seven years of plenty, during which he had been in power. He could not have forgotten his father nor Benjamin, even if his heart had been steeled against his brethren, and possibly he may have made ineffectual efforts to hear from them. His official duties doubtless prevented a journey home.

But the brethren were full of self-accusation; they were troubled at their sin; their misfortunes in this strange land they connected with their wrongdoing. Doubtless they had sinned in many ways, since their wicked act of selling Joseph, yet their minds revert to that great sin as they say to one another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us and we would not hear, therefore is this distress come upon us." And Reuben answered them, saying, "Spake I not unto you, saying, 'Do not sin against the child,' and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

They had, no doubt, many times discussed this question at home, in the field and by the way, but now they



discussed the question among themselves in the very presence of Joseph himself, who "turned himself about from them and wept."

With these mutual relations in mind it is interesting to note the character of Joseph's revelation of himself to them.

1. It was in retirement.

Had he wished to impress them with his greatness, he would have summoned all the courtiers, even the king himself, and then, in a solemn manner, to their terror and amazement, announced himself. Had he wished to increase their discomfiture he would certainly have had an open, public disclosure of himself. It might have contributed to his renown among the Egyptians to see his brethren trembling in his presence and suing for their lives before him. The exhibit of his clemency in view of their maltreatment which must have come out in a public manifestation of himself to them would have stirred the hearts of all and made him famous in his goodness as well as his greatness. Many a reason might have arisen in his mind for such a course, but he cried, "Cause every man to go out from me." And there stood no man with him while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. No eye should see their consternation; no ear should hear their bitter self-condemnation; no witness should carry the story of their greeting to strangers without.

It was not to distress but to comfort them, not to

wound but to heal them that he wished to declare himself to them. What amazement must have been theirs as they saw the attendants leaving the apartment at the ruler's word! What fear lest some strange word should be spoken to them! What wonder filled them as the interpreter himself departed, and with tearful eyes and profound emotion the ruler looked upon them and they caught the accents of their own tongue coming from his lips as he said, "I am Joseph; does my father yet live?" It was well that no foreign eye was upon them as the color came and went, their knees smote together, their heart sank within them and they waited for added words of confirmation and then bitter condemnation. This disclosure was not for the court to witness, for it was a brother's noble purpose to hide fraternal faults, and in its privacy we see the sublime traits of Joseph's character; for it seems that he was compelled to repeat his assertion and then to bid them come near to him with words of entreaty, for they were silent, even terrified at his presence, till he soothed them and comforted them with gracious words. The infinite God looked down from Heaven with approval upon such an effort to conceal a family difficulty, at such a hiding of noble generosity, at such superb forgetfulness of self in thoughts of others' good.

2. It was strongly emotional.

Even now the story cannot be read without tears. They glisten in the eye of the child and fall down the

cheek of the aged. No one need be ashamed to brush them away, for Joseph himself was entirely overcome. He wept aloud. Again and again in his interviews he had been compelled to stifle his rising emotion, but now in their presence he poured forth his whole heart and showed himself of the same tender spirit as when a lad, and between his sobs he told them of his power, bade them come to him and live, and "fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck."

There was no purpose on his part to remain the stern official; he had no desire, though lord of the country, to be other than Joseph to his brethren, and as he now stood among them and was recognized and thought of seeing his father, his dear old father Jacob, his feelings were allowed their natural action, and he did not care to repress them. The joy that swept through his soul as he looked into the eyes of Benjamin, the exquisite delight that filled him as he thought how God had sent him before them to preserve life, moved him to the very depths of his being, and so violent was his emotion that the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. The repressed tenderness of years poured forth before those bewildered men. They could not doubt the genuineness of such emotion, and as gradually the familiar features began to come out in Joseph's face and their own wicked act rose in mind, they could only contrast his weeping and pleading as they sold him with his tears and plead-

ing now, and marvel at the absence of all severity on his part. He would not have been blamed if he had lectured them on their inability to defeat the plans of God, the sure triumph of righteousness. If he had used the severe tones toward those who cast him in the pit, who cowered before him even now, it would not have been strange, but the entire loss of all severity and coldness in the natural and powerful emotion showed the triumph of the rich graces of his soul and declared him far above the average of his race and time.

3. It was free from condemnation.

If ever any man would be justified in speaking a condemnatory sentence it was Joseph. With all the guilt of the brethren in their minds and in his, with the evidence of their sin confronting them in his living person, with nothing to contradict and everything to support his vigorous testimony against them, yet not a word of condemnation escaped his lips. He does not allude to their wrong, save to excuse it in the light of subsequent events and present disaster. He pours upon them the riches of his love, the tenderness of his fraternal greeting, the glad assurances of his warm and generous affection. If others condemn, he does not; if they condemn themselves he declines to add a single bitter word or feeling; if circumstances condemn them he will make effort to change the circumstances. He does not fail to emphasize the relationship between them as he announces to them the

truth, "I am Joseph, your brother." If they have feared lest at some time their sin should find them out and retribution overtake them, they are startled in the magnanimity of their brother's heart. Surely, if he does not condemn them, none other will; if he pardons, they are pardoned indeed. If he does not say "I told you so," their hearts may be freed from any thought or fear of rebuke.

This absence of condemnation finds no superior instance in the history of the world, and the soul that has learned of Jesus Christ how to forgive may turn back to this narrative and learn how to withhold condemnation. Courage and hope rise in the hearts of these men. If they mocked at the thought of bowing down to Joseph when he was a boy, his present attitude toward them compels their admiration and almost draws out their adoration. They cannot believe the testimony of their senses; they await still some punishment, till, having assured them of all the love that was in his heart, he kissed them all and wept upon them again. His words were not "I am the avenger," but "I am Joseph," and pausing there, the clouds lifted from their troubled spirits and his benediction made them glad. This incident might have been narrated after Jesus' words to the sinner whom men would have stoned: "Hath no man condemned thee, neither do I condemn thee; go in peace and sin no more," and all would have felt that the disciple was as the Master. The Master's spirit was given to Joseph in his youth.

4. It was exceedingly simple.

When we think of what he might have said, of what he probably should have said, of what perhaps we are hoping for an opportunity to say sometime to some brother or relative who has wronged us, we can scarcely trust the narrative. Why was there not coupled with his name some Egyptian epithet of power or greatness? Why did he not say, "I am the second in rule in Egypt, but was once your brother Joseph"? Why did he not set his early relation to them in the midst of all that had since been added to it and now clustered about it? It was because he wished to reduce to the utmost simplicity the character of his revelation. If he had said, "I am your brother," that would have left some doubt in their mind as to his attitude; but in the words "I am Joseph" he declared in the simplest form the permanence of the childish relation and gave them privilege once more to use the old word and to renew the old association. "I am that dreamer," he might have begun and so led them on through fear and expectancy to a knowledge of him, but instead he burst upon them as soon as they were by themselves with his simple words, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live?"

5. It was with excuses for the wrong done to him.

When they trembled at the first disclosure and could not answer him, but shrank away in terror as though he was about to smite them, he called them near to himself and began to explain the great value of their

act. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." How kindly he skips all mention of his years of trouble and imprisonment and servitude! How he checks their rising thoughts of self-condemnation to which they are so wont to yield!

"God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God. Haste ye and go up to my father and say unto him, 'Thus saith thy son Joseph: God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not,' " and doubtless in the talk that followed he removed all their pain and helped them into quietude of spirit again. If trouble was ever blessed to the sweetening of a disposition it was blessed to Joseph, and this disclosure of an excusing spirit puts to the blush much of the professed charity of Christian believers.

But this suggests to us most forcibly the revelation of Jesus Christ to us.

We are conscious of the wrongdoing toward God, of a spirit in want and in self-condemnation. The contrast between Joseph and his brethren is deepened in the mutual relations between Christ and us, and when we meet him as the impersonated and revealed God to make known to us the will and speak the words of God we shrink from the condemnation which we know we deserve. But all the beauty of this picture

from the gallery of history shows dim in the glowing splendor of Christ's attitude towards us.

To us he discloses himself as to the persecuting Saul, saying, "I am Jesus." It is the name given him because of its sacred meaning. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people *from their sins.*"

It is not in the public crowd, but in the retirement of the soul, in the privacy of its own meditations that the Lord appears "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely."

With strong emotion does he make known his love; his face is so "marred more than any and his form more than the sons of men."

Gethsemane gave us tears of blood, and the cross reveals his mighty emotion.

"I came not to condemn but to save," are his words. To every one he met he proffered blessings. How often did he declare that his work was to save, man's work was to receive the blessing.

"Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." How profound is his affection for John, for Peter, for Mary, for all! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." How simple his manifestation! No mighty declarations of exaltation, but the minister, the brother, the friend, the Saviour of all; and it was his love that gathered up all excuses and assumed the sin that was



in them, and bare them on his own body on the tree, furnishing for us into the paradise of plenty a free and blessed entrance.

Surely, if we are moved by the gentleness and forbearance of Joseph, we may yield our heart's tenderest affection, our spirit's devoutest service, to him who is our offended brother, but who comes to us with words of holy love and promise, saying to our questions of doubt, "Who art thou, Lord?" the simple, blessed words, "I am Jesus."

## XIV

### THE EASTER MESSAGE

“Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”—John 20:16.

THERE is one word appropriate to every lip on the day that recalls the resurrection of Christ. It is the word of Mary's utterance at the disclosure of the character of him with whom she talked supposing him to be the gardener. Surprise mingled with honest servitude of soul prompted the word of worshipful attachment, “*Rabboni.*”

The Lord Jesus had indeed claimed to be Master during the months, the three brief years of his public life, and many had acknowledged the claim. Noble and lowly had alike yielded to his Lordship, followed him in loving discipleship.

The evidence of his right to their fidelity in service had been constantly manifested. His authority had been recognized by obedient spirits as they fled from their possession of human souls, by wind and by wave, by disease and by death. Heaven had spoken its words of commendation and death had replied in loud Amen. Angels had sung so loud that watching

shepherds heard the strain and the whole life had given powerful testimony to the correctness of his claim.

“I am your Lord and Master,” he said. His words had been spoken with authority, and the listening people noted that he spoke not as the scribes. His commands were to follow him. His declarations were that he would save them from their sins. His promises were of comfort in sorrow, hope in despair, deliverance from peril, glory in eternal security. While there were marks of weakness in him like those that distinguish humanity, while he wept and hungered, and sorrowed, and grew weary, and was lonely, and prayed; while he spoke of death, his own departure by violence, there was so much exercise of power superior to all these evils that the impression on every mind was that he could overcome them if he would. This claim of mastership had been lovingly yielded by his disciples. He was grander than the Cæsars, he was wiser than the Rabbins, he was nobler than the philosophers. No disputant dared ask him any further questions when he once gave comprehensive answer. Kings could not subdue him, crowds followed him, and the land was full of the thanksgivings of healed and much blessed people. Hermon flashed the story of his blessed work from its icy crown, Ebal and Gerizim forgot their ancient echoes to tell a new story, Jordan rippled on its banks with fresh cadences of divine goodness, and even into Edom went

the breezes laden with the tidings of a loving and helpful Lord in Israel. Perea beyond Jordan had seen the hillside gathering and the mighty supply of food, but found no crumbs when the host withdrew and Decapolis had a preacher, once the maniac of their tombs.

Power marvelous and glorious had by its constant display in the interests of man compelled all to own him a Master among men. But the tragedy had come and the Master had succumbed. Power superior to his had at length been exercised and he had hung among malefactors, and groaned in his agony, appealed without apparent result to God, been mocked by rude people and Roman soldiers, been pierced to the heart, died on the cross, and, like any other mortal, placed in the tomb to be resolved to dust again. For portions of three days he had lain there, and his disciples had wandered like forlorn and disconsolate people, with difficulty taking up the burden of life again. The Master had failed them. He was not Master after all. The great conqueror had conquered him, and death was master still. The reassertion of power was necessary to establish the mastership of Christ. Won in his life, it was lost in his death; it could be regained only by his resurrection, and it was fitting that at his first appearance as the risen Lord, the first word of discipleship addressed to him should be that which Mary used and which put again at his feet in adoring worship all the love and all the

service of his baffled and distressed disciples. More than ever and now forever he was to them and to all who should believe on him, *Rabboni*; which is to say Master.

Upon the New Testament records alone we rely for the account of the resurrection of our Lord. Their genuineness and credibility proven, we are compelled to believe the fact of resurrection as we accept any historic fact, and no fact of gospel history rests upon a firmer basis.

On ten different occasions Jesus appeared to his disciples. He satisfied any doubts which remained in their minds respecting the character of his body by eating and drinking with them, and to Thomas he gave clearest proof of his identity by physical contact with the wounds in hand and side. Their doubts gave place to strongest belief which nothing could shake. His mastership was firmly re-established in their souls as in the soul of Mary at the morning meeting in the garden. They proclaimed the fact everywhere in Jerusalem, before those who tried and convicted him, and had seen their temporary lapse of faith and discomfort of spirit. The shams which were invented to screen the hate of the infuriated priesthood were so transparent as at once to lose credence. Oral error on the disciples' part would be quickly corrected. No strong historical objection has ever stood against the fact of Christ's resurrection. "No one ever ventured seriously to question the fact at that time." Various

theories have been advanced concerning the nature of the resurrection, but the fact underlies them all. It is of grandest moment in the Christian scheme, for if doubt rested upon this the whole fabric would be weak, man's faith could not support it; it would be in ruins. The apostles regarded it as of prime importance, gave marked prominence to it and thus in earliest times Christ was evidently set forth as crucified and raised from the dead. It was Christ and his resurrection that Paul preached as the ground of the mastership of the Lord, declaring that if Christ be not risen, we can have no hope of resurrection, and our faith is baseless, preaching becomes vain; and through the ages the belief in this fact has grown stronger and stronger. If at times men have questioned it, it has only served to give greater prominence to the historic strength of the truth; if they have denied the statements of the apostles it has only served to call out new study, which has thrown fresh light upon their declarations till every vestige of doubt is removed from honest, candid minds.

The Almighty has made this cornerstone of Christianity so firm that it cannot be removed, and as year after year has brought the time of celebration the event has started new investigation, and produced deeper conviction on this and established and confirmed other correlated truths, so that no festival of the church has such strong historical basis as this. Newspapers tell the story freshly in varied form each year;

the season impresses those who once neglected it and stiffly rejected its observance, since every Sabbath tells of the resurrection. The whole week is a week of celebration from Palm Sunday through Good Friday to Easter, a week of wonderful interest, reaching in its relations every intelligence and touching the borders of the two eternities. Each event is newly examined, the meaning of all is disclosed in profound meditations and the final scene confirms it all.

The freshest scholarship of to-day tells us that the great German theologian, De Wette, who died in 1849, and who was called the *Universal Doubter*, said in his last work, published in 1848, that the "fact of the resurrection, although a darkness which cannot be dissipated rests on the way and manner of it, cannot itself be called into doubt any more than the historical certainty of the assassination of Cæsar."

It is said that when Neander, the great church historian, read this passage he shed tears over it.

De Wette was a leader of the acutest school of rationalism in Germany in his day, and denied utterly that there are passages in the Old Testament Scriptures predicting the coming of our Lord. He was coupled by Strauss himself with Vater as having placed on a solid foundation the mythical explanation of the Bible. Nevertheless, such is the cumulative force of the evidence of the resurrection as a fact in history that De Wette, listening only to the latest voices of the most laborious, precise and cold research,

affirmed, face to face with the sneers of the rationalism which he led, that the fact itself, although we do not understand the way and manner of it, is incontrovertible.

The continued celebration of this fact through the centuries, now with grand ritual, now with simple services, adds its forceful testimony to its truth and value, and we turn our thoughts to some lessons which the return of the season freshens in our minds.

I. The Mastership of Christ in his teaching is freshly asserted.

The fact of Resurrection makes it unreasonable to further doubt the truthfulness of his instruction.

In his hours of teaching Jesus often referred to this fact of resurrection, speaking of it as a certainty. We can now detect the force of those utterances in the light of the accomplished fact. His disciples, even the best of them, however, obtained but little idea of his meaning, though the truth lies so plainly on the surface of his words. He used the most explicit language. His crucifixion and resurrection were always allied in his mind—they could not be separated. "I lay down my life that I might take it again. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." He knew the one fact as well as the other. If there was doubt at all in his mind, it must have been respecting the Resurrection, for with the hatred of priesthood and authoritative men it was not hard to believe that death by violence would speedily come, but



*to rise again*—to overcome after being conquered—that would be sufficient to stir a question in any soul, but he spoke of it from the outset of his teaching, surely, strongly and unhesitatingly. No one hitherto had risen from the dead, the act of his own will. The Lord himself had raised some, prophets had been instrumental through much prayer and special divine favor in restoring life, but no one had roused himself, seized death with strong embrace and throwing it off, walked back into the strength and vigor of healthy life again.

Was there ever doubt or fear in the mind of Christ concerning the issue of his life in this respect? Did he hesitate to trust himself to the dark future, the cold grave? Was the struggle of his soul on this account? No! far from it. There was never the slightest wavering of thought on this point, from his reference to his body when they thought he spoke of the temple, declaring that if they destroyed it, he would rear it up in three days, to the last words he spoke to his disciples on the threshold of the event itself. He taught his own resurrection. Men doubted it—they refused to follow his Mastership with such words on his lips. They declined to call him Rabboni. And when death held him in its cold fetters, even those who had received his teaching ceased to own him as Master. If then the truth of this teaching be established, is it not a guarantee of the correctness of other utterances? Does it not set the seal upon every word that fell from his

lips? The most unlikely proven beyond controversy, is not his Mastership in teaching to be unqualifiedly asserted and accepted?

The fact of resurrection coming to mind with Mary's acknowledgment of Rabboni, brings into view the great truths that characterized his instruction and lights them up anew with the brilliance of an unobscured sun. They assert their authority over every soul. They claim acceptance. The Great Teacher calls for the word of Mary in the garden, and every soul should say to Christ, the Teacher, "Rabboni, which is to say Master."

What are the truths thus certified concerning the race, concerning himself, concerning the future?

1. Of the race. That it is lost, like the piece of money for which the house must be swept and ransacked, like the sheep that had strayed "out on the hills away, far off from the gates of gold,"

"Away on the mountains wild and bare,  
Away from the tender shepherd's care,"—

like the prodigal son who had wandered from his father's house, and fed swine in a foreign land in want and suffering. That, though made in the divine likeness, though godlike in soul and with marvellous possibilities, yet by nature corrupt, and by practice sinful, man was treading a path that led into the eternities of darkness and distress—that, though able, the race is unwilling to return to God; that its moral ability is crippled and destroyed; that choosing its own

pleasure, lust and sin rather than the pleasure and holiness of God, all had gone astray and the world was a scene of painful burden, bearing which needed the call of loudest note to arrest its attention and the act of mightiest power to remove its load. That, though the planet kept its place and whirled in order in its orbit, the inhabitants staggered to and fro, reeling from side to side, knowing no moral strength, purity, or holiness, "none doing good, no not one."

So taught he to whom the rise of Easter morning says, "Rabboni."

2. Of himself. That he was God in the beginning, maker of heaven and earth, One with the Father in a holy unity—full of compassion for the lost race; that of his own will he became incarnate, in a highly mysterious manner, veiling himself in flesh for the help of his creatures, and that he came into the world for its rescue, as the lifeboat in the angry waves, as the light in the dark tempest, as the sun rising on the cold, cheerless waters, as the life in the midst of death, as the Saviour of the lost, as the mighty one whose power was equal to his work, as the loving one who came to lift the burden that oppressed, and give new strength to the tottering steps of the race, to breathe purity into the moral infection, to cast out from the soul the demon that ruled, and reign himself—the Prince of Peace.

3. Of the future. That heaven and hell had existence, the realm of love and obedience, the abode of hate

and continued sin. That one sheltered in holy ecstasy the loving children of God, saved from sin and all its evils, while the other held in willing servitude all those who hated God, and scorned his imperial power, his loving plans to purify and save from sin.

The established fact of actual knowledge before the occurrence of events which Easter proves, makes certain all this teaching. Upon prophecy, varied yet so harmonious, simple yet so sublime, the fact of resurrection throws new light; we read it in larger characters, in bolder outline; it is haloed in radiant beauty—the beauty of truth, the glory of God, and this morning has a voice which thrills the soul as it proclaims anew with the westward passage of the sun in every clime, on every shore in one sublime utterance, the great truths of Christianity—a lost race, a loving God, a perfect Saviour, a resurrected Lord.

II. The Mastership of Christ in his work is re-established beyond the right of doubt by the fact of the Resurrection.

The work of Christ was explicitly stated. It was either a success or failure.

“I came to work the works of God,” are his words, which we have seen are to be believed.

“I have finished the work that thou gavest me to do,” he asserts at the close of his life. This work demands our acceptance. It was sublime, unparalleled in the history of the universe, grander than the work of creation, the highest illustration of the glorious

character of our God—the work of salvation for man; to maintain the honor of God and secure the pardon and acceptance of sinners in heaven.

It has both its Godward and manhood side.

*First.* It makes it possible for God to continue just and justly forgive the sinful, the disobedient, the rebellious. Respect of law must of necessity dwell in the bosom of Deity—especially of that law which originated from himself, and yet under its stern requisitions there was no hope for the sinful, the disobedient and rebellious. One doom hung over all; the finger upon the judgment seat pointed in one direction and the eye, as it followed it, read the one condemnation which followed sin. It was righteous, it was just, and under it the race must die. But infinite love can work a new work, unheard of among the councils of the loftiest of intelligences, a work which shall so transcend all other works as to constitute in itself a sufficient expression of Divine disapprobation of sin, and approval of holiness, such a marked condemnation of sin with the tenderest, holiest love for the sinner as shall in itself constitute a ground of forgiveness. Stern justice approves. Between her demands and the newly planned work there is no conflict. “Just and justifier of the ungodly” is a sentence which brings no ruffle to the brow of infinite Justice, and Christ performs the work and man can be forgiven.

The seal of the work was the Resurrection of the worker, and when that illustrious event occurred back

flashed the light over the days and weeks of thirty years and pronounced the strange declaration that the kingdom of law had become the kingdom of grace. Well was the work performed, in suffering, in ignominy, in shame, a work of blood, but in that blood was the life of millions; it was a work like its author, a work of Redemption so complete that forgiveness is ready for all men in the moment of their application. Stained with sin as was the cross with blood, there is cleansing. The fiery bolt of the law hisses in the blood stream of grace and cools. The heavens melt with tenderness that once shook with thunderings. Sinai's thunders roll away in the distance and give place to the sweet words of "Blessed, Blessed, Blessed," which come from the mountain teaching. The Lamb at the Jewish altar gives place to the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, and the heavenly host burst into a glorious song, the song of Redemption of the Lamb that was slain.

Easter Sunday tells this glorious work anew, for the Resurrection thus commemorated was the pledge and proof of God's satisfaction with the completed work. Sin was conquered. Death was conquered; the grave was burst and Jesus rises to his glorious reign as Monarch and Master of all.

"Powers of Heaven, seraphic choirs,  
Sing and sweep your golden lyres;  
Sons of men, in humbler strain,  
Sing your mighty Saviour's reign."

*Second.*—The Resurrection sets the seal upon the work of Christ which makes it possible for a man to obtain forgiveness.

Not only has God planned the way of escape, but he has so unfolded that plan as to bring it within the reach and understanding of every soul, and this was the work of Christ. "Repent and be baptized," was the first clarion note that heralded his coming. "Repent! repent! for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" sounded from city to city and echoed from hilltop to hilltop. It was the first step into that Kingdom. It is the first step still. Repentance toward God and faith in Christ is a requisition beyond the powers of none, and the work of Christ was to illustrate clearly to man the simple meaning of repentance, and to give so sweet, so rare, so beautiful a life and so transcendent a death as to be a loadstone of attraction to every soul.

No longer is there a favored race, but all are loved and the same work avails for each. The cross has attractive power for every soul, has efficacy for every sinner, and the cry now is to the ends of the earth: "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters—yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Again recalling the resurrection morning I tell you of the Master-teaching and the Master-work of Christ. It is not the marvel of the rising itself that is to hold your attention, not the scenic splendor of it in its

glorious isolation, but that which is established by it in the correlation of the events of Christ's life.

It calls for the acceptance of his words as the truth, for the obedient discipleship of every soul. It is the appeal of his divinity for the Master's right.

Who shall be **Rabboni** if not the risen Lord? What other can approach him in splendor of teaching, in glory of sacrifice, in majesty of power? Who else has the words of eternal life? Who else can lead the sacramental host through the gates into the city?

Before whom else would we bow in our moments of agony and our days of weakness? When the chill of death comes, and the hand of disease fumbles for our life centre to stop its beating, upon whom would we rely? In our life ignorance and in our death ignorance to whom would we look?

Surely to him and to him alone whose reassertion of power renewed the early discipleship, and to whom we would say this morning, not in surprise but in affectionate trust, "**Rabboni of Mary, thou art also my Master!**"



## XV

### STEPHEN

“Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.”—Acts 6:5.

THE man whose name was Stephen may well claim a place in our thought, for, though his public life was brief, it was of such a nature as to make it enduring, and the stars shall disappear from heaven sooner than Stephen shall be lost to sight from the spiritual galaxy. If only as the man whose prayer was answered in the conversion of Paul, he is entitled to the highest consideration of the Christian Church, but he enforces our attention by his own character, as well as his acts, and appeals with resistless power to our sympathy and love and calls out our profound veneration. While the great mountainous characters of the Old Testament begin to be obscured in the October haze of history, we see rising on our vision new summits of noble proportions, lighted with brilliant beams upon their crowns, assuring us that the race has not lost its heroes and the great upheaval of Christianity has made as massive and colossal characters as ever appeared in the days of old.

It does not require the Philistine stature to make greatness, nor the iron mould that forms it from without; it needs not the age of war nor barbaric grandeur to build up human greatness; the grandest chief that ever sat at the head of his band of nobles, surrounded with all the paraphernalia of conquest, his garments stiff with gems, his crown heavy with diamonds, his palace loaded with treasure, becomes diminutive in the presence of him who is trained in Christian virtue, has subdued his own spirit and been decked with the magnificent apparel that sparkles with the gems of Christian grace of priceless worth. And Stephen, by the greatness of his character, built up from within into stupendous proportions and ornamented from above by the glory from the celestial throne, commands the attentive study of the sons of men. The acquisitions of the rich stir the acquisitive desires of the poor. The learning of the erudite quickens the studies of the ignorant; the power of the orator stimulates the efforts of the young declaimer; the victories of the legislator at the bar or the forum rouse the energies of the youthful barrister, and so the well-rewarded faith and power of Stephen should stir the zest of every disciple of Christ who comes within reach of his potent and instructive influence to-day.

He was an Hellenistic Jew, a man of Hebrew origin speaking Greek. Of his parentage we know nothing; his early history is all hidden from us; his first ap-

pearance is as one of the seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, who were chosen as deacons in the Apostolic Church to superintend the daily ministrations of funds to the poor and settle the difficulties that had already arisen between the Greek-speaking Jews and those born in Palestine. The great beneficence of the early Christians was shown in the generous self-sacrifice which all made for the common good. The wealthy brought their entire possessions and gave them over to the disposal of the apostles and the proper distribution of treasures was a work requiring wisdom and the truest Christian character.

Stephen was the first and chief of those selected for this purpose. He may have been one of those Greeks who came to Philip of Bethsaida and desired him, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus," and to whom Jesus said, "The hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified"; before whom he prayed, "Father, glorify thy name," and in whose presence came the voice from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." He was doubtless present on the day of Pentecost and felt the mighty descent of the Holy Ghost; he saw the multitude converted, the very murderers of Christ, the rabble that had chosen Barabbas and filled the air with demon shrieks of "Crucify Him, Crucify Him," when Pilate asked what he should do with Christ. He may have been present at the crucifixion, watched with those who gathered there and felt the tremor in his soul when the rocks rent, the heavens

clouded, and men smote on their breasts saying, "Surely this was the Son of God." He had heard the first apostolic sermons, looked upon the spot where Judas had hanged himself and seen, perhaps, the ghastly spectacle of the self-murdered apostate; had shared the common bounties with the disciples, seen the lame man sitting at the Beautiful gate of the temple, walking in the strength of his restored powers; had witnessed the opposition of the priests to Peter and John and been strengthened by their boldness. He had perhaps been one to bear away the bodies of Ananias and Sapphira as they fell dead at the apostles' feet for lying to the Holy Ghost; he had known of Peter's deliverance from prison and his speech before the council which cut to the heart of the chief priests, and growing in grace, he was an ardent disciple when we first met him, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. Of his advantages for early study, his acquaintance with rabbinical lore, his membership in any school, the effect of any teacher, we are left without information. He comes to us as Minerva came from the brain of Jove, springing forth clad in full panoply for the battle of life.

With the first mention of his name is coupled the sentence, "A man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," while nothing is said of the other six men chosen for the same office at the same time. Upon his head the hands of the apostles were laid, but the great benediction had already been given and they needed not to say

to him, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." He seemed to have the power of an apostle; his faith allied him with the omnipotent Christ, and his power was felt among the people. Great wonders and miracles were wrought by him. He is declared to be full of grace, according to manuscripts which have been preserved. Whether this display of unusual possessions was the result of his conversion, opening to him anew these elements of character, or whether his previous life had also been marked by energy and boldness, we shall have to learn from his own lips by and by. We should like to read the record of his daily life. His name was on the lips of all as they related the wonders of the day. Many lame men doubtless blessed him, as they told the story of their immediate cure. Many sightless ones blessed him, as he became the first image on the quickened retina. All classes felt the value of his presence in substantial form. We can judge of the wonders and the miracles by those which the apostles wrought, and the poor found in him more than a simple church official.

The office of deacon was made forever grand by the deaconship of this one man, the first to bear the name, yet the grandest of the line, an office sometimes maligned, oftentimes refused by men and gathering the jeers of the crowd, made the butt of the wicked, but still bearing on its standards the name of Stephen, illustrious on earth, exalted in heaven.

But this man was not famous only for his deeds of power, but also for the wisdom and skill of his speech

and the spirit which pervaded his discourse. There were various schools or sets of Jews in Jerusalem, and from their synagogues came forth their gifted men to argue with the young deacon on the points of his faith. Here were Jews from Cilicia, from Alexandria, the manumitted slaves from Rome, men trained in their schools of thought, sharing in the learning of Gamaliel and other Rabbis of both Pharisaic and Saddusaic faith. From the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, from the Nile and Niger, from the provinces of Asia Minor and the deserts of Arabia and from the islands of the blue sea came Jews of every description and lingered in the Holy City. From the banks of the Cydnus, where flourished the vigorous city of Tarsus, came a young man about thirty-five years of age, trained in the highest schools of Jewish thought, strong in his attachments to the religious faith of his fathers, hating Jesus and the doctrine of the cross. In the street, within the precincts of the Temple, in private houses, in public halls these defenders and doctors of the ancient faith met Stephen and charged upon him with all their mental artillery. Learned members of the synagogue came to the rescue of the unsuccessful debaters and they themselves were vanquished by the wisdom of the Hellenistic deacon, for "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit with which he spake."

Even Saul of Tarsus, the rising young man in the Cilician Synagogue, with all his zeal and all his dis-

tinguished talent, was completely routed by the spiritual strength and wisdom of Stephen's speech. The Holy Ghost illuminated his mind, brought to his remembrance the words of Jesus, furnished ripe, religious thought, and gave him fervent utterance. His faith climbed to the mind of God and used his wisdom, settled in the love of God and gained a warmth for his discourse the cold philosopher never knew. He flashed the light on Old Testament prophecy, the national history, the preparation that had been made for the Messiah, the faithful fulfillment of type in antitype. His words were barbed with gospel sharpness and heated in the flames of truth. They flew as from a full strung bow and quivered in the hearts of those that heard. The Sanhedrin was moved. The man whose argument had so much power that none could answer it, whose scholarship seemed furnished with the wisdom of the ages, upon whose pure and noble soul no stain of corruption appeared, above contempt, above reproach, above the slanders of the town, pure from the contaminations of the vile, a victor in soul and spirit, must be removed as a dangerous foe to the Jewish faith, as too strong a power in the Christian heresy. His boldness must be checked, his argumentations must cease.

But none can tell of evil in his life, none have trapped him in his speech. Sagacious, skilled, the Holy Ghost has kept him in the hours of heated dispute. Yet they who hired witnesses and bribed liars

to condemn the Master, can also find other depraved men to convict the disciple. Their purpose ripens and is soon accomplished, and it is in the trial of Stephen and its results that he gains his immortal fame. This is the only scene recorded in his history, yet it has so much of ferocity and gentleness, folly and wisdom, is so lighted by the lurid flames of sin and the golden beams of holiness that, hung on the walls of Scripture history, it is a painting never to be forgotten, whose colors never fade and never fail to attract.

The scene is brief, but thrilling at every point. Stephen is arrested on a charge of blasphemy, and suborned men testify, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." With angry looks and angrier words, with a rabble crowd following, filling the air with shouts, the elders and scribes bring him to the council. He who cannot be vanquished in argument can be condemned by authority.

The Sanhedrin gets to its work. It is the same body that but a few months before had before them the meek Nazarene, whose following they supposed they had destroyed in slaying him; but now the same faces look upon an advocate of the despised philosophy and have to confess that, like his Master, he speaks with authority not to be despised.

The priests are anxious, for the sect increases; the scribes are furious, for the law and the temple service are neglected by these new teachers; the elders are



maddened that the city is so moved by the preachers of this new faith. Before their bar stands the accused and their hearts fail them, as they look upon him. He does not shrink from dread of their authority, he does not quail before their fierce glances, he does not tremble at the knowledge of their power, his cheek does not blanch as he stands where the Crucified stood, but the calm sense of superior truth seems to be like an adamant throne beneath him; they recall their other victim; all the protests that accompanied his death return to their minds, hatred of the sect and fear of its power battle within them, but they grow stern and determined when the case is called and the false witnesses testify, "This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

The charge is heard by Stephen, and his soul is roused to speak the truth in all its majesty in the presence of this august court, the highest tribunal known to the Jewish people, and the glow within reaches an outward expression and the strength, the purity, the holiness of the man, with his calm trust in God, his reliance upon divine power to protect him, all shine out in his face, and, forgetting for an instant the charge of his lying witnesses, the whole council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel. The brutality of the bare-faced

witnesses, the earthliness of the sharp-faced council, stands out in living contrast with the serenity and spirituality of this man whose destruction they so eagerly seek. Touched by the heavenly glow upon his face, awed perhaps for a moment by remembrance of the shining face of that very Moses as he came from the presence of God to the people and against whom this shining-faced man is said to speak, the chief priest quietly questions, "Are these things so?" The dignity of the place is not forgotten by Stephen, though all things tend to disturb him and awaken invective and supply sting. Though the living witnesses, the tumultuous people, and the excited council conspire to rouse him to an eager plea for his life, or to a taunting speech that shall quicken his death, he is not betrayed into sin nor does he lose sight of his exact surroundings. He is still Christian, and so of necessity still a respecter of age and authority; his politeness does not forsake him as he says calmly, "Men, brethren and fathers, hearken!"

His address reviews the history of the people and their relation to the ambassadors of God. He shows them how the patriarchs sold Joseph, though God was with him, how they rejected Moses raised up of God for their deliverance, how they became idolaters when Moses was receiving the law from heaven, how the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands, according to his own word, though Solomon built him an house, and then, borne on the tide of his resistless

argument, moved by the full power of the Holy Ghost within him, he turns upon the council thirsting for his blood, representing all the learning, the power and piety of the Jewish church, and charges them with stubbornness, uncovenanted hearts, disregard of God's word, and, rising on the historic presentation of prophets, he accuses them of betraying and murdering the Just One, the Messiah, and of violating the very laws of God which they were sent to explain and defend. The glow upon his face brightens, for to speak the truth where courage in its noblest form is needed, and where the help of God is consciously bestowed, exalts the human soul to the pinnacle of human greatness. And there stood Stephen, a humble layman from the despised Christian church, braving the court that had murdered Christ, with the light of heaven glowing about him. But the faces of the court are pallid with rage, the venerable men thus accused tremble in the fierceness of their wrath, while words that never before were spoken in their solemn room of assembly still sting and cut their hearts.

He who could speak beyond the power of any answer had another power of which they little dreamed when the chief priest bade him answer to the charge against him. The youthful Saul listened to the thrilling voice and saw the glow upon the face of him whose boldness must have impressed him, whose words he never forgot. The fury of the court was at its height, and, disregarding the propriety of a judicial body,

they gave the signal for a violent outbreak and gnashed upon him with their teeth. The horrors of the inquisition were then unknown or they would have hurried him to the fires of the gridiron or the remorseless rack, but this was reserved for Christian persecutors.

The malignant hatred and fiendish ferocity of the now rabble council only served to deepen the calm of Stephen, and his noble testimony for God brought heavenly recognition as the windows of heaven opened and a direct vision of its superlative glory was vouchsafed to him. "He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God." The council chamber at Jerusalem had opened its walls into celestial infinitudes and the voice of hate was lost in that majestic chorus of praise that swept through the open corridors of heaven upon the convicted man. His sight of Jesus, whom he recognizes as still the Son of man, interested in all the struggles of his followers, standing up to receive him, to succor him, moved with intense solicitude for him, opens his lips in precious testimony of what God gives to those who suffer for his sake, to all the needy among men; and they, already full of wrath, hear the words of the victim whom they are seeking to intimidate, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," and they remember that it was the voice of Jesus that said in their assembly, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven," and there al-

ready is a living witness of the exalted sight, and the glory of the Shekinah gleaming from his face added its testimony to the truth of his words.

With no power to judicially put the man to death, a mob is excited and Stephen is dragged from the council hall—rushed through the city streets, hurried through the open gate that years after bore his name, and so on to the rocky edges of the ravine of Jehoshaphat, where the Mount of Olives looks down upon Gethsemane and Siloam, or on the open grounds to the north, which travelers cross when they go towards Samaria or Damascus, and there, with stones that lay without the walls of this Holy City, this heavenly-minded martyr was murdered. The stones fell heavy upon his resistless head, prayer rises from his lips, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” and “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” and, as though on bed of down in quiet chamber, under ministry of loving friends, with the memory of loving voices in his ears, or at the close of some day of labor on the cool mountain side, fanned by fragrant breezes, shaded by tree of olives, with the voice of Jesus speaking in his ear, and the hand of Jesus held fast in his embrace, he fell asleep.

No face of murderer could be recalled, no angry tone of furious priest, no jibe, nor jeer, nor cruel jest, for from celestial glory and the face of Christ his gaze was never turned, and still it is fixed upon the same sublime spectacle.

“O Death! where is thy sting?” If cruel men, with

savage hate and murderous stones, can only put the martyred man to sleep, and while the blood is flowing from opened veins and the ground is stained with the vital tide, the soul is filled with the glory of the divine and the lips move in holy converse with the exalted Lord—come stones, come fire, come venomous dart, come fiends of earth, or hosts of hell, “let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

The sorrow and consternation of the disciples at the tragic death amid so much heavenly support of their friend and brother beloved must have been intense. Yet his friends took his marred and bleeding body, cared for it tenderly, held over it the mournful service of a Jewish funeral and buried it with solemn lamentation. It is even told in story that Gamaliel sent a number of Christians to remove the body of Stephen and to bury it at his villa, twenty miles from Jerusalem, and that he made lamentation over him seventy days. But the prayers of the last hour were answered, and Saul, who held the garments of the stoners, who heard the final prayer, was soon a preacher of the faith he persecuted, and long since, after faithful life, joined Stephen in the presence of him they both devoutly loved.

This life carries its own teaching, and needs but little comment. The faith in Stephen did not exempt him from trial, but supported him through it; the love which he trusted never grew weak, however much

he leaned upon it. The vision which he saw was the approval of God upon Christian effort and Christian faithfulness, and as such appeals to us, and the care which was taken of him by the Lord, the elevation of his soul, his consciousness of spiritual life and being, as he passed out of the body, contains the strongest rebuke for all those who walk in dungeon dread of dying and think only of the grave as the home of the dead. No! No! we are surrounded by the living, angels are his ministers, the ransomed are with him, and to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

For the life of this calm, strong, faithful, trustful man, for the serenity and beauty of his last earthly hours, we give our thanks to God, and pray that we, too, may be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

He heeded not reviling tones,  
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,  
Though cursed and scorned and bruised with stones:  
But looking upward, full of grace,  
He prayed, and from a happy place  
God's glory smote him on the face.

## XVI

### “THE PRISONER’S SIGH”

“Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee.”—Psal:n 79:11.

WHEN the seventy-ninth psalm was written, either by Asaph or one of his descendants, the ruins of Jerusalem lay before the writer and stirred his spirit to a mournful dirge. Shishak, with his twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen, had invaded Judah, pillaged the capital city, and dragged many of the Jewish nobility into captivity. On the monuments of Karnak we may see the pictured story of these sad prisoners, some of whom were reserved to be offered in sacrifice to the heathen gods. No wonder their misery entered into the heart of their countryman and found plaintive utterance in his prayers.

The sighing of the prisoner is the saddest sound on earth. Freedom is the necessary condition of healthy, joyous life. The humming bird, dainty expression of volatile life, feeding on sweets, flitting amid fragrance and flashing in sunshine, dies under any imprisonment, and all that it represents suffers the same lot. Men and women may still live when flung into



prison ; that is, their bodily organism may continue its work, but there is much in them that dies—only a part continues to live, and when the imprisonment is the result of a capture by some foreign potentate, as in the case of Israel, or is the result of some political tyranny, as in the case of the Siberian exiles, or is the effect of religious persecution, as in the days of Rome’s dastardly reign, the suffering is intense, the pining rapid, and the sighing painful to hear on earth or in heaven.

Many noble souls, gifted with power to lead their fellowmen to victory on the field or in the pursuits of peace, have, by the silence and solitude of the dungeon, been slowly shorn of their power, and at length brought forth to the light again, as the trembling fragments of their former selves. You remember the condition of the prisoner of Chillon, whom Byron makes to say :

“It might be months or years or days;  
I kept no count—I took no note,  
I had no hope my eyes to raise,  
And clear them of their dreary mote.  
At last news came to set me free;  
I ask’d not why, and reck’d not where;  
It was at length the same to me,  
Fetter’d or fetterless to be,  
I learned to love despair.  
And thus when they appear’d at last,  
And all my bonds aside were cast,  
These heavy walls to me had grown  
A hermitage—and all my own!

And half I felt as they were come  
To tear me from a second home;  
With spiders I had friendship made  
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,  
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,  
And why should I feel less than they?  
We were all inmates of one place,  
And I, the monarch of each race,  
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!  
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell—  
My very chains and I grew friends,  
So much a long communion tends  
To make us what we are: even I  
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh."

And that sigh, declaring the burial of so much noble manhood, was the saddest of all.

Compulsory service for no fault wears the soul and wastes the body, and the elements that enter into the sigh that is extorted from such are the noblest that belong to the race made in the image of God. The story of political imprisonment, which forms so large a part of human history, is pitiful—the waste of human life that has been occasioned by the greed of the tyrant, the lawless spirit of the usurper and the jealous wrath of the petty monarch, fills the reader of historic annals with distress. The permanent injury to bodies, the lasting infirmity of minds, the crippling of spiritual energies have followed wicked incarceration, and the sighing of kings and queens and princes and nobles have been prayers in the ears of the Lord of Heaven which have been answered in events that

shook the nations and sent wicked rulers tottering from their thrones. But there is often an inward support for an unjust and crimeless imprisonment:

“Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art,  
For there thy habitation is the heart—  
The heart which loss of thee alone can bind;  
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—  
To fetters and the damp vault’s dayless gloom,  
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,  
And Freedom’s fame finds wings on every wind.

“May none these (prison) marks efface!  
For they appeal from tyranny to God.”

But there is another great class of people in the world who make prisons and reformatories and jails a necessity, and who are confined because of the wickedness of their spirits and the need of protecting society from their ravages. The prison is found in every land, in every age, and bears its woeful testimony to the truthful statement of man’s fall from primeval innocence. Nobody but a criminal himself can be found to declare that imprisonment is not a necessity. There is something appalling in the thought of taking a man from his family and all the blessings of common society, and placing him within stone walls and behind iron bars, with the marks of a criminal on his clothing, with limited food and a constant watch upon all his movements. It almost stops the heart’s beating to think of a fond and petted boy rudely seized from the protecting hand of his mother, and compelled to

live with men hardened in crime, because of his own violation of law—but we all recognize the right and the necessity of such public action. There would be no safety to property or to life but for the processes of justice which land the criminals in the houses of stone provided for them.

Why there continue to be criminals is a question too broad for our present discussion. When we read the story of Margaret, the mother of criminals, and see the terrible drift towards crime that runs in the blood; when we study the history of the Jukes family and compare it with others, we obtain some explanation for crime from the laws of heredity; when we take account of the weak and the wicked, the discouraged and the defrauded, the poor and the struggling; when we consider the great inequalities in human condition and the false views of life that are widely circulated; when we note the struggles of the noble to retain their nobility of character in a world of sin and temptation, we have added explanation of the presence of a criminal class in human society. But we are hardly prepared without careful study to believe in the vastness of the necessary preparation to control these wicked classes.

We have read of the great prisons of other days and shuddered at the thought of the dungeon of the Inquisition, the gloom of the Bastille, the horrors of the Tower. We pass a jail with a disturbed feeling, and do not wish to read of the prisoner when he has

passed out of sight. Of the great multitude of men, women and children who at this very hour are deprived of liberty because of their wicked deeds we have little idea, and often less interest in knowing. Crime is so unattractive save to the baser nature that we have felt it better to leave the whole subject to those whose duty it is officially to attend to it. And so, effort to ameliorate the condition and reform the life of the prisoner belongs to modern benevolence.

The dark story of a prisoner's life before the time of Constantine had nothing to relieve its horror, and the misery of a criminal's lot even until our own day is painfully pathetic. The world seemed to forget that the criminal was but a fallen man—that he had other faculties than those that led him astray, and that under a hardened exterior beat a tender heart—that within him was a soul for which Christ died. The first nominally Christian emperor of Rome provided that confinement should be in a humane manner—that cells should be furnished with air and light; that the mingling of the sexes in prison should be abolished. The Emperor Honorius charged the judges to visit the prisons every Sunday, to see that the prisoners received sufficient nourishment and to take care that proper humanity be shown the convicts by the jailers. But the progress in reform was slow, for the punishments were terrific. Crucifixion, exposure to wild beasts, burying alive, impaling, tearing to pieces, breaking on wheels, were common in classic and Mid-

dle Age days. The inventions for the production of pain were almost barbaric. Nothing was too severe for a criminal. Screws were invented for compressing the thumbs; straight boots of iron for enclosing the legs, between which and the flesh wedges were driven by mallets; racks of various and hideous forms, capable of occasioning the most exquisite agony, were constantly devised. The "strappado" was used. This was an instrument for hoisting the person by a pulley fastened to his wrists to a sufficient height and dropping him with a jerk, dislocating his joints. So also was "picketing," where the offender was suspended so that the weight of his body was supported by a spike, on which he was made to stand with one foot.

Bentham relates that a description of the various methods of inflicting torture and punishment which had been in use in the Austrian dominions was ordered by the Empress Maria Theresa to be drawn up, this investigation being made with a view to ameliorate the existing laws. The book was only exposed for sale for a few days, then suppressed for fear that it would inspire a horror of the laws.

In the time of George III. public whipping for dog-stealing was common in England, and the common law enforced the slitting of the nostrils and cutting of ears for many offences. Branding and whipping have been common in all countries. Within the past century men have been hanged in England for sheep-stealing and stealing in a house, and in the early history of the

United States, many offences, like forgery, stealing and horse-stealing, brought the death penalty after them. In Massachusetts, under the early legislation after the Revolution, ten different crimes were punishable with death, among them burglary; blasphemy was punished with pillory and stripes till 1829. In Virginia and Kentucky, twenty-seven offences were punished by death or maiming. In New York, on several occasions in the eighteenth century, negroes were burned alive for extreme crimes, and the treadmill was used as late as 1822. We read in American colonial history that a preacher in the principal Philadelphia prison was obliged to be supported by a cannon, with a lighted match at hand; that the Connecticut prisoners were kept in one place in underground cells dripping with moisture, where the light of day never penetrated and where vice and riot prevailed; that in the leading city, New York, old and young, male and female, sane and insane, innocent and criminal, were confined in jails together; that drunkenness, debauchery, profanity and rioting ruled in these places, so that all prisons and jails became schools of crime. Surely, under such fearful conditions as these, there was no chance for the saving of the criminal classes. They were absolutely cast out of human society and counted like the beasts in the pens of a menagerie, if they ever entered into thought at all. But the sighing of the prisoner entered into listening ears, and all this is changed, and one has to view the material provision

now made for those who have gone astray with admiration and delight—he listens to the debates and reads the papers of those who have given their lives to the study of penology with quickened expectation, and lifts the psalmist's prayer with renewed hope: "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee."

But if this improvement has been made, what have we further to do about it?

Let the philanthropists continue their work, let prison associations become more diligent in their specific employ, let plans of helping discharged convicts be encouraged, and God bless them all! This is good as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. There are bleeding hearts longing for something more than the practical interest and help of the few—they want the intelligent sympathy of all. There are workers that need the strong support of public sentiment to make their work effective. Most of us are still blind to the situation. Dr. Seaman, who for ten years was chief of staff at Charity Hospital, Blackwell's Island, says that "the people have become so accustomed to this downward drift, this unresting current of wretchedness, profligacy and crime, possibly so hoodwinked by the imposing array of architectural groups and the glamour of official administration and official reports bristling with statistics, that they miss the ghastliness of the situation and think about it, if at all, in a vague and unconcerned way. All the while this menacing under-world, with a biting irony, asserts



itself and compels recognition, as does the cancer as it eats its way to the vitals. It seizes upon and subsidizes the fairest string of islands that graces a metropolis the world over. Stretching at little intervals from Governor's to Hart's Island, full eighteen miles, the Nemesis of penalty and retribution has planted its growing colonies of social wastes, of broken, degraded, repulsive, dangerous human detritus; and this baleful colonization has pushed its way along those beautiful waters, keeping step with the advancing city, until its entire line of eastern frontage far up into Westchester county is sentineled by these menacing excrescences of a moribund civilization."

How shall we regard our criminals? If perchance one of our own kindred is snatched by the whirling current and disappears in the maelstrom, the question becomes a personal one. When we learn from the statement of a prominent lawyer that there are in New York City 45,000 professional criminals of all grades constantly plotting against the law, we are aroused to the intense importance of the question. When we learn that five-sevenths of the prisoners in Sing Sing Prison are less than thirty years of age the question grows pathetic. When statistics prove that three-fifths of all convictions take place between the ages of sixteen and thirty the question summons us to instant consideration.

It is easy for us to say, "They are poor, miserable, wretched creatures—shut them up and let them

alone;" but sentences are daily completed, and the procession not only moves into, but moves out from these prisons. Must their criminal life continue, because in prison they have only been punished for their evil deeds, and no springs of noble action set in motion to control their future? Must they say, as Señor Armengol, of Spain, declared: "We are criminals because society used no means to make us virtuous"?

Jean Valjean may steal the good bishop's candlesticks, but he with rare kindness will declare, when the rearrested man is brought before him, that the booty belongs to him, and reach his heart and save him. Dr. Wines, a life student of this subject, says: "Whether criminals are susceptible to reformatory influences and may be lifted out of the abyss into which they have fallen is *no longer an open question*. Experience has demonstrated the fact, and all authority worthy of the name utters its voice to the same effect."

There are three ways in which we may regard those of whom we have been thinking:

FIRST.—We may count them as wrongdoers, plunderers of society, for whom just laws with penalties are made, and who when convicted of crime must be made to pay the penalty of their offences. We may pay our proportion towards the support of prisons, whose end shall be the punishment of crime. We may leave the whole administration of the laws regulating the criminal to the courts, and rejoice that society is well rid of its pests, when they are under lock and

key. As the farmer breathes easier when the fox is safely trapped, so may we at the imprisonment of every criminal. We may clamor for more rigid police regulations, more severe sentences, less prison comfort, with a due regard to what is right and humane, but by the severity of punishment we may seek to turn criminals from their evil ways. We may consider them as a class by themselves, with which we have nothing to do. But this thrusts us far back into the past, deprives us of all the benefit of years of experience and takes away from us the right to call ourselves Christian. With this vast body of people, the majority of whose years are yet before them, can we say we have no possible connection? To thrust the young criminal out of sight in a safe place for all but himself, to invest nothing but public money in great stone prisons and men of iron to keep stern rule over the recreant spirits committed to their care, seems out of harmony with the spirit and progress of this century.

SECOND.—We may add to this a desire to have some regular instruction given in morals and religion and industrial pursuits, so as to make the time of punishment a time of forcing some unwilling truths upon the attention. We may say of an individual: "He is in prison to be punished; it may increase his punishment to be forced to learn some good." We may be entirely unbelieving as to any good results, for we may consider that he is incorrigible; be unwilling to trust him when he returns to society again—count him one of a

class that is to perpetuate itself as long as time endures. We may be willing to encourage the occasional gifts of fruits and bounties; may lend our influence to the securing of the best buildings; may steadily demand that the prisoner shall be employed, lest in idleness in narrow cells imprisonment be torture. We may even be interested in furnishing books, and always the best hospital service for days of sickness. We may specially care for sanitary conditions, and for the quality and quantity of food. We may be interested to develop any natural industrial trait, and exercise special care in the selection of all the officers in charge. In a word we may regard the criminal as one to be duly and fully punished; to whom, however, we will give some kindly thought while he is obtaining the just deserts of his crime. This has been well done, and hopes have been cherished that such relation to the criminal will do him good and restore him to his place in society again—but it has not succeeded.

The student tells us that “our failure in the handling of criminals, with reference to their reformation and the proportionate security of society and the decrease of taxation, is due largely to the fact that we have considered the problem as physical, and not psychological. The effort has been to improve prisons and the physical condition and environments of prisoners. This effort has been directed by sentiment rather than upon principles of economy and a study of human nature. It has been assumed that if con-

victs were treated with more kindness, if they were lodged in prisons well warmed and ventilated, light and airy, in cells more roomy and comfortable, if they had better food and more privileges (graduated on good deportment), they would be more likely to reform and to lead honest lives after their discharge. But it has not produced the results that were expected, and the revolt in the public mind against what is called the 'coddling' system is justified by facts and results. The modern model prison is a costly and architecturally imposing structure; it is safer to lodge in and freer from odors than most hotels; its cells are well warmed, lighted with gas, and comfortable; it has a better dietary than most of its inmates are accustomed to; it has bath-rooms, a library, often large and well selected; an admirably arranged hospital; a cheerful chapel, garnished with frescoes and improving texts; there are Sunday services and Sunday schools; there is a chaplain who visits the prisoners to distribute books and tracts, and converses on religious topics; there are lectures and readings and occasional musical concerts by the best talent; sometimes holidays are given; there are extra dinners on Thanksgiving day, Christmas day, and the Fourth of July, when the delicacies of the season stimulate the holiday and patriotic sentiments; and in most State prisons a man may earn a considerable abatement of his sentence by good behavior. The sanitary condition of most of these model prisons is good; they are very

good refuges in which to recuperate the system impaired by excesses and crime. The discipline is excellent. The uniform close crop of hair is not always insisted on, and the better prisons are discarding the striped or motley prison dress as tending simply to degrade the men and serving no good purpose whatever."

All this we may consider as abundantly satisfying the interest which we ought to feel in those who by their acts have forfeited all claim to consideration, but toward whom common humanity and Christian sentiment compel us to feel an anxious interest while we protect society against their depredations. But it is fully declared that there is very little difference between our worst State prisons and our best, in the effect produced upon convicts as to reformation or a reduction of the criminal class. Something more than or different from all this must be devised. Education and comfort do not prevent crime. Dr. Prime once said: "Scarcely a sane man, living in the darkest land under heaven, is so ignorant as to commit crime in consequence of it, or from want of knowledge that it is wrong to steal and commit murder. And if the entire population of the United States were taught the whole circle of sciences and arts, so that uneducated men were as rare as angels on earth, there would yet be crime. The Binghamton murderer, Ruloff, was a prodigy of learning. Dr. Webster was a professor in our oldest university. Eugene Aram was a school

teacher. And the ignoble army of official rascals \* \* \* are not poor or ignorant or intemperate.”

THIRD.—We may regard the criminal as a brother man who needs to be saved from his sins and whose imprisonment is to be made the opportunity for instruction, stimulation and complete reformation. With all proper interest in the buildings and their management, our chief concern is to be with the man himself. Forlorn, forsaken, unworthy, outcast, he is to be the object of every possible effort looking to his complete moral recovery. Here is a new position for the public to occupy. Thank God! already occupied by some who, with heroic faith, are working along their new lines and bringing men from the smouldering fires to the cool retreats, from a degraded class to the ranks of the good and true. The song of redemption is sung by lips that were ghastly with profanity, and the peace of God fills hearts that beat in tune with the drums of Satan’s host. Jerry McAulay shouted in a prisoner’s cell with the new joy that filled his heart, and from the frowning walls of Sing Sing and Auburn, from Randall’s Island and Elmira, have gone forth many who have blest the world by their useful and orderly lives.

The sighing of the prisoner has taken the place of his unholy curse, and as good work has been done in the hearts of sinners in prison as was ever done in the gilded halls where Christ has been preached—a Saviour of the lost. We must regard the prisoner not with

false and foolish sentiment, an unfortunate to be loaded with flowers, and his cell to be filled with dainties, but as a wanderer to be brought to his Father's house, as a man to be brought to the ranks of manhood again, a victim of many circumstances over all of which the grace of God can triumph. Let him be punished for crime, but let his punishment work out for him a path to noble living, to a restored home, to a trustful society, to his Father's house on high. The Prison Society says: "More than all, we need the prayerful moral support of thinking people. Our work is one that is at once philanthropic and economic. It helps men who are desperate, and so saves and protects society against them."

The testimony of prison chaplains declares the prisoner to be like other men. They witness "their tears, prayers, repentance, confession, conversion and their fruits unto righteousness, as well as their rejection of the gospel, their repudiation of Christ, and their scepticism."

All who strive for improvement, who beg for sympathy, who struggle for a foothold, who face the light, who bury their past in the forgiving love of God, should find in us such Christian sentiment and help as shall prove that not in vain has the sighing of the prisoner come before us.



## XVII

### CONSTERNATION AT DEFEAT

“O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies?”—Joshua 7:8.

THIS earnest appeal to heaven demands the careful attention of old and young, as it presents a truth of such thrilling importance that it ought ever to be present in our thoughtful meditations. We are often puzzled at the apparent defeat of the good. We stand in perplexity before a sudden check in some prosperous career. The apparent indifference of God to the struggles of his children leads the careless soul to an infidelity, ruinous alike to himself and others. The incidents to which I invite your study is full of helpful suggestion to such troubled souls.

The children of Israel had encountered a new and thrilling experience. In the midst of a prosperity that promised continued victory and divine leadership they are stunned by a shameful defeat. While journeying in the wilderness, full of complainings, their punishment seemed to them merited and almost expected—they were conscious of their own unworthi-

ness. It was not strange, when from Kadesh they went out to meet the inhabitants of the land, that they were overcome, for they were not ordered to make their entry at that time, and the measure of their punishment was not full—the words of their great leader constantly reminded them that they were rebelling against the Most High in their ingratitude and discontent. But the years of discipline were now ended—the Jordan had been opened for them as the Red Sea for their fathers—the monument at Gilgal stood in everlasting remembrance of the divine interposition for their entry into the land—the fallen walls of Jericho were in sight, laid low by more than human power, apparently without human means, and the assurance was in every heart that the time of tribulation had passed, that the old-time promise was in process of fulfilment. There was a new confidence in every heart, words of hope and courage were on every lip.

But a sudden check is given to all these hopes, and the fear that startles them is in proportion to the hope that was so suddenly overthrown.

Israel is defeated within the borders of the promised land. Her shouts of victory, late so loud and strong, are lost in the wild cries of her enemies; the report of her power will quickly be supplanted by this story of her weakness; the hearts of her foes will revive, as they hear of her prostrate banners and her easy overthrow. Dismay is in her own ranks. "God has forsaken us!" leaps from lip to lip throughout the tribes, and even

the commander is heart-sick and troubled as in the bitterness of his spirit he mourns this sudden reverse. It is not only the defeat itself that distresses him, but all that is involved in it, all that is suggested by it.

But in every age victory is the child of obedience in the army of the Lord.

A God-led host can only prosper by close adherence to the word of command, and the fearful people, with their dejected leader, have yet a lesson to learn.

We are amazed at the dullness of their spiritual perceptions. We marvel that they should not at once have discerned the cause of their misfortune, that they should not instantly have read their error in their loss of strength and sought its extermination. That instead of a wail of sorrow they should not have sounded the alarm, summoned the tribes and called out the offenders puzzles our souls. Yet the lesson is of value for us, because we are so like them. Thousands of years have not changed human nature in this respect. Forty years seem not to have impressed the Israelites with the fact of the close union of sin and defeat. Four thousand years have not done the same for many of us. Every foot of the ground they have traversed, every body they have buried on the hillside and in the plain has been vocal with the divine instruction. The defeat of Israel before Ai teaches with fearful emphasis the whole lesson of the wanderings in a single illustration. It is like the exclamation point at the close of a sentence, like the finger point that

directs attention to the whole, it is like a short way of proving the solution of a problem to be correct.

God grant that its force may not be lost upon our children as they study it, nor upon us as we recall it again to-day.

The city of Jericho, the first to resist the advancing people, had been taken in a manner to kindle the liveliest sense of the unconquerable power that now accompanied the people of God, and the fame of Joshua was noised throughout all the country, because of this unparalleled capture. To the north as far as Dan, to the south as far as Beersheba, and to the western coast, consternation seized the people, giants even trembled in their strength, and all were ready to admit the mighty, resistless power of Joshua's God.

The people themselves awake to the greatness of their victory, and doubtless boast of an easy conquest of the whole land. They begin to cast off responsibility and glory in the unseen armies of Jehovah. Jericho and its contents had been accursed and all was to be destroyed. It was devoted according to the law of "cherem," which required a complete separation to the Lord. If the thing devoted was property, it was the Lord's for use by consecration; if a person or persons, it was to be put to death and special warning was given lest any of the *cherem* or devoted, "accursed," property should be privately employed.

The next city to be taken as the people advanced was Ai, about thirteen miles west of Jericho. The

host is still in camp at Gilgal, about the heap of stones that marks the wondrous "Help of God" to them. Ai is reconnoitered by some scouts who report the smallness of the place, and its easy capture. It is on the way to the centre of the land where the great religious ceremony is to be performed, and so must be taken as they pass on and before their deliverance from Egypt and re-ownership of the land of promise can be duly and grandly celebrated.

Considering its smallness, Joshua accepts the advice of the scouts and sends a band of about three thousand against perhaps the same number of fighting men among a population of twelve thousand which the city contained. With eager steps they advance upon the place, counting their work but slight, expecting to see the signs of surrender instantly displayed. Boldly they march directly to the city gate, with blast of trumpet, and as the city guard advances upon them, to their own amazement, consternation and distress, their ranks break, they cannot hold their ground, but flee in haste and are hotly pursued. Quickly the word reaches the encamped host at Gilgal that Israel is defeated. It is like a peal of thunder from a clear sky, and Joshua and his elders abase themselves before the ark of the Lord in grief and fear, lest by a sudden onset of their giant, enraged and now roused and successful foes, the whole people be smitten and overcome.

The leader's courage seems instantly to have for-

saken him. The defeat is so unlooked for, so strange, so unaccountable that it blots out the victory at Jericho, dims the divine help at Jordan, and clouds the whole horizon of his hopes. He is for a moment like a vessel at sea without compass or rudder. He is speechless before his own people, as well as before the heathen nations, and the wail of his soul is in the words of the text, "What shall I say when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies, for the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it and shall environ us round and cut off our name from the earth, and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" He mourns for the lost honor of God and sighs for the other side of Jordan without Jericho and without the glorious passage of the stream. He does not seem to think that there is any cause that he can reach, that the people can correct, till called to himself by the instruction of the Lord. "Get thee up," is the Lord's cry. "Israel hath sinned, *therefore* the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you." It is the voice of holiness speaking against sin. It is the awful logic of deity. Defeat *therefore* sin; sin *therefore* defeat.

The evening is spent in ritual preparation for the scenes of the morrow. Rites, emblems of inward purity, are performed and early in the morning the

tribe, the family, the man is taken and the "cherem," the thing devoted to the Lord, is found appropriated for personal use and concealed, and the occasion of the defeat is thus disclosed. An embroidered cloak, one hundred and twenty dollars in silver, a gold wedge worth two hundred and twenty dollars, have been kept by Achan and all Israel is troubled in the theft of this one man. How trifling the possession! It could not have been its value that caused the trouble. It was the disobedience involved, and in the valley of Achor, ere the sun set, his sin is punished, a heap of stones marks the place, thrilling as was the Ai failure in its mute teaching of the solemn connection between sin and defeat, as was the memorial at Gilgal of the divine assistance. Once again the army forms for conquest, and the city of Ai that had lately repulsed them falls easily into their hands because they have cleansed them of their iniquity and received anew the favor and help of the Lord, which is forfeit by every transgression and is withheld from every body of believers in which there is concealed or unrepented sin.

This story thus told belongs in the far past and would have nothing more than an attractive historic interest for us, were it not for the lesson that remains unchanged for all time and which God evidently designed should be thus conspicuously set and taught for the guidance of every soul. To that let us now turn.

Down through the ages comes this thrilling teach-

ing, holding its place in the volume of inspiration, losing none of its force in the progress of history, but gathering renewed illustration from age to age from similar events in God's providential dealings with peoples and individuals till from a colossal monument it speaks to us to-day; for the heap of stones rising from the valley of Achor is so high that it is touched by the rising sun ere the evening rays are withdrawn, so that all men may see it and all may learn its significant meaning. The hosts of Israel swept through the promised land and conquered it. They slept in its soil—above their graves other feet trampled in the pursuits of peace, in the clash of arms, over its fields and in its cities roamed and taught the Son of man. Again, warlike hosts strove in maddened contest over its choice spots and the dust of the Christian and the Moslem mingled in its soil. Now, the teacher and the student roam its far-famed fields and children study its varied incidents; still the marching and the warring hosts of God on other fields, in other lands, seek its inspirations and humbly learn its lessons.

The old-time conquest is over, but its antitype still struggling with opponents we see in the Church of Jesus Christ, which is like Israel of old to possess its Canaan, even the whole world. Already it is well advanced upon its stupendous achievement. By a grander event than the passage of the Jordan dryshod has it been called into being and promised its victory. From the cross where work divine was done,



where the death of sin was spoken in the death of Christ, from the grave whose iron locks had never been broken by the power of personal will acting in its own behalf, the great Master and Leader came. No passage of the Jordan can compare with this, and still a loving presence, he leads his people to complete the conquest of the world. Every attack ought therefore to be a victory.

The promise waits fulfilment. Cities have been conquered with more *éclat* than attended the fall of Jericho, and other cities wait the army's advent to swell the triumph of our Captain Lord. All forms of evil are to be our captives. The giant sin entrenched, walled and well defended, is to fall, and to the Church of Christ is given command to enter and subdue the world. She essays her work, but sometimes falters and her banners are lowered before the foe. Dismay creeps into her heart and the howl of demoniac forces encourages her enemy. Men sit down in such hours to write books and articles on the question, "Is the Church a failure?" "Is Christianity waning?" and her leaders bow their heads in sorrow and confusion. Faith may be strong, but it is claimed that facts are against an intelligent faith. What is the cause of defeat at any point? The power of the Church is omnipotent, for her leader is Christ. Why, then, is there ever a defeat? Only because the old law is regnant still, that a God-led host must be obedient and the victory in the battle lies in the purity and obedience of the host.

This simple lesson is the teaching of Ai. In many a contest a feeble band of believers has swept a legion from the earth. One has chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight. The philosopher entrenched behind his learning has been overcome by the simple-faithed child of God. The philosophy that held its court in the centre of its brilliant school has been routed by the band of pure-souled saints. The sin that threatened to destroy a land whose minions were counted by thousands has been conquered and deprived of power by the united onset of a devoted band. Then why not always? When churches and saloons meet in conflict why is the victory ever with the saloon? Christian crusaders have power only in their purity and obedience. The days of defeat, when the hosts have mourned and the leaders have sat in the dust before the ark of God, have been the days of degeneracy, when "cherem," that which has been devoted to God, treasure, influence, service, a vote, has been appropriated to selfish ends, when Israel has sinned. A corrupt clergy, a faithless laity, this has crippled the energies of all the faithful, and made their cry of "Onward" give place to the wail of defeat.

And what is true of the Church as a whole in its majestic movements is true of all its parts and all its warring sections. The Church is not the world any more than Israel was Canaan. The property and customs of the world are not the property and customs of the Church, as the property of Canaan was

not the property of Israel for its personal use. The line between them was distinct. A blessing was on one side, a curse on the other, and this line has not been obliterated. There is such a line between the Church and the world. Efforts have been made to dim its outline, to erase it altogether, that the Church and world might mingle, that the Church might do its work along the lines of worldly success, but these plans cannot succeed, for should the line of demarkation disappear the defects of the Church would declare and do declare that she has sinned. It is sin that is antagonistic to God, and nothing else; not possessions in themselves considered; it is sin against which God declares himself, and if sin be in Israel then God is against Israel. Principalities and powers are arrayed against her and her strength shall depart. The appropriation of the things of the world by the Church is its sure overthrow. Here, too, we learn that an individual cripples the world. Organization calls into play occult forces and makes some strange disclosures: "One thing thou lackest," said Christ to a gifted young man. A whole city of forces within him was injured by one lack.

"What shall I say when Israel turneth their back upon their enemies?"

We have now the answer to Joshua's question. We may say, Israel hath sinned. Up! sanctify the people, for victory is impossible without purity, without individual obedience. The holiness of God forbids a bless-

ing on a sinful body and the corruption of a member is the disease of the whole body. There is no concealment. Defeat is disclosure. Passion works to the countenance, so sin in the individual heart appears in the condition of the body to which the sinner belongs. So vitally connected were the children of Israel that the theft of Achan troubled the whole camp, and the sin of the obscure member of the Church to-day helps to paralyze and destroy its power. It is to the sinful member that the enemy points and condemns the whole on his account. Achan's sin was in appropriating that which was good, but which was devoted, "cherem," to the Lord. That member of the Church who uses for his comfort or delight the "devoted" things of the world, all good in themselves, may find at length a heavier burden to carry than his powers can support, may find that he is responsible for the failure of his Church before some town of Ai. I would not like to go to the bar of God with the failure of a Church upon my shoulders.

There is a solemn obligation of obedience resting upon the children of God and a tampering with the unholy things of the world, with the wicked dispositions of the world as a repetition of Achan's sin. If the Church is impure, how can it attack impurity? If the Church is hypocritical, how can it defeat hypocrisy? If the Church is in dissensions, how can it attack the wickedness of schism? If the Church is stingy, how can it defeat illiberality? If the Church

is haughty, how can it conquer pride? If the Church indulges in the amusements and vanities of the world, how can it conquer that which it has made its own delight? Its power is spiritual, and disobedience severs its connection with spiritual supplies. The powerless Church has in the house or heart of some member an "accursed" thing, and its purification is its necessary work.

My beloved people, we stand in this community as a part of the army of the Lord. This is no mean position. We battle in his name. For him we wish to conquer every sin and bring into firm allegiance every heart. It is my wish, my aim, my hope, to carry every heart in this congregation for the Lord Jesus. I preach and pray for this purpose. I tarry with you only for this end. I have summoned you before giant sins for their conquest, and in the delay of victory I say, "Israel hath sinned. Up! sanctify yourselves!"

I summon you before the Lord to-day and pray confession, as in Achan's case. "Be sure your sin will find you out," whether it be the indulgence of your animosity, the gratification of your worldly spirit or the worship of the unslain idol in your heart.

Oh! for the Urim and the Thummim to call out the individual and purify the whole! Our search with this day's study in mind need not be in the hearts of others, but in our own, and if beneath a covering of virtues we find the greed, the vanity, the sin of the world, let it find an instant and hearty repentance, that we may

not be stoned in some valley of Achor, but be pardoned in the sweet valley of Humiliation.

As we love the honor of Christ and the glory of his Church, and as we prize the spread of his Kingdom and the conversion of our friends, let us heed this lesson of the ages. I am sure that they who watch this Church will love it in its strength and beauty and will come to it as it resembles Christ.

It is from distortions and failure of proper power that men turn. It is in the defeats of the Church that they read the record of her sins; and her renewed purity and obedience, in which we shall cast off worldliness and all its snares, shall bring them in earnest cry for her blessings, willingly, reverently, instantly at her feet.

## XVIII

### A CHRISTMAS AFTERMATH

“Gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.”—Matthew 2:11.

CHRISTMAS day has passed, with its music and mirth, its carols and comforts, its bounty and blessing, its generosity and good cheer, and I take this morning to renew all its merry wishes in the House of the Lord, and ask you what gifts you gave to the Christ of God. You remembered the children of your household, the friends of your family, the poor of your neighborhood, perchance, whom no one else recalled. You called to mind the sick, and flowers and fruit gladdened their moistened eyes. You thought of loved ones out of the family circle and awoke their fondest wishes for your happiness as they joyed over your remembrance. You spent many hours in the crowded stores among the beautiful works of art, the products of industrial toil, the wonders of every land. Hard times were forgotten—a stringent money market was ignored—your faces looked as they did months or years ago, before the long days came, with their longer nights of restless trouble and anxious thought. You bought something for the joy of a friend.

The gifts are made, the day has gone, the season is

hurrying by, we are slipping back into the grooves again. With other friends, did you remember Christ? What treasure did you lay beside the cradle of the infant Redeemer? The first visit paid to him was made memorable by gifts. Wise men from the East reverently following the beacon light in the skies, found him in whom all prophecy was fulfilled, whose coming stirred the angel hosts to praise and brought their forms and their music within the compass of our earthly atmosphere. Absorbed in great thoughts concerning the infant child, meditating upon his advancing glory and the splendor of his reign, the wise men did not forget the offerings, which their love dictated and his worth required, and so as they worshipped at his cradle, they gave gifts—gold, frankincense and myrrh. At this point of time, remote from the actual cradle of the Redeemer, we behold the majesty of the life then begun, the worth of the work then inaugurated, the splendor of the glory that was then eclipsed in the earthly body. We see the heavens full of activity at the movements of the thousands of the redeemed who celebrate the grandeur of his saving work, and the earth itself is bright with the presence of the transformed souls who owe their change to his mighty power. So that as we turn to the cradle scene again and celebrate the commencement of that transcendent life, it is fit that while we worship we give gifts; while adoring, we place before him gold, frankincense and myrrh.



It is fitting that these gifts be individual. In the household at Christmas time there is a strange and beautiful secrecy. Many whispers are heard, and the charm of the gift-giving is in its personality. The family does not give as a whole, but each member gives to every other some bit of personal handiwork, at least the individual token of thoughtfulness. How much pleasure would be lost, how much value would be discounted if this personal element were removed; if only families and corporations and churches gave as composite bodies in united gifts! And so it is essential that the gifts to Christ should be individual. We may join in the praise that swells from the great congregation; we may bow with the family, uniting in the ascription of adoration; we may contribute to the family fund for some memorial gift; we may merge our thoughtfulness in the general regard for the season; but he "whose name is above every name" loves to receive the individual gifts that mark the personal thoughtfulness of his friends on earth. If you regard Christ as far removed from the associations of the world, as having no connection with the minutiae of each life, as so high as to be absorbed in loftier things than the passing events of this earth, tenuous, impersonal, unapproachable, then will your gift be small or entirely absent; but if you regard Christ Jesus as he is, the personal friend and intimate companion, the associate in every joy and sorrow, entering into all that concerns you, "with you alway, even unto the end

of the world," then should your gift take a more prominent place and your selection bear appropriate relation to his pleasures and his worth. The child and the man may alike consider the gift he ought to make; the gift it should be the pleasure of his life to bestow upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

The early gifts were of three kinds—gold, frankincense and myrrh. These may be taken as an index of appropriate gifts to-day, prophetic and instructive. They were *costly*. These wise men did not find them by the roadside as they journeyed. They did not wait to obtain them as trinkets in the place where they might find the infant child. They did not come to them as an after-thought, and so were carelessly provided, but they were costly gifts and were obtained with forethought before they set out upon their journey. The gifts we offer to the Redeemer are in strange contrast with his glory. How often are they the gleanings by the way, the careless trinkets that the bright shining of the sun upon our pathway shows glimmering by the road! They cost us little toil; they have not burdened our souls by day and by night; they have not prevented sleep nor caused pain. They are in strong disproportion to the gifts we bestow on earthly friends.

Perhaps the blush of shame would color our cheeks if the Lord were to tell in this house all that each soul had given him during these passing days. We profess to believe that to him we owe all we have and all

we are to be; that through him alone we are free from the power of sin; that by him alone we overcome temptation; that from him only we expect to inherit all things; that eternal gladness shall be ours because of him, and yet the value of the gifts we have bestowed on him is less than that we gave an infant child. We try to say that if the Lord were once again in the manger we would open our doors and take him in; if he once again slept in Mary's arms we would bestow the gold, frankincense and myrrh. But the words choke us, for we know that still he lives to receive not only prayers and church praises, but the costly individual gifts of the sons of men. Christmas without a costly gift to Christ is a strange scene for the heavens to witness. Think of the eyes that look earthward from the palace of the great King. Think of the Master whose name the day bears, whose lowly birth inaugurated it, gazing on the scenes of earth. How marvellous the hilarity, the gaiety, the gift-giving without a thought of him who took captivity captive and brought gifts to men! "God so loved that he gave his only begotten Son." Here was the gold, frankincense and myrrh of heaven and the gold of God should meet the gold of men; frankincense from the skies should meet the frankincense from the earth; the myrrh of the heavenly gift should meet the myrrh of the human offering.

These gifts are symbolic. Let us study them:

The *gold* indicates value, implies toil and a willing

heart. To part with this is to give up actual treasure, the noblest ore of the earth.

The *frankincense* of fragrant odor and bitter taste was used mainly for sacrifices and in temple services. It, too, involved toil in its production. "It was obtained by successive incisions in the bark of a tree called the arbor thuris, the first of which yields the purest and whitest kind, while the product of the after incisions is spotted with yellow, and as it becomes old loses its whiteness altogether." The gold was the mineral product of nature, and this was a vegetable product, and both involved human toil before ready for use.

The *myrrh* was an aromatic of a like kind, produced from a shrub employed for fumigation and used especially as an ingredient of a very precious ointment. It was again offered Christ in the mixture, wine mingled with myrrh, when he hung upon the cross. This, too, was a natural product, but was given to Christ only after it bore the evidence of human toil in its preparation. The wise men did not bring crude gifts, nor the offerings of foreign lands, but what they themselves could produce from their own land. And we may be content to offer, not the cast-off finery of others, but that which bears evidence of our own toil and which lies within the domain of our own powers. We are not called to give what lies beyond our reach.

Now, of the symbolic use, it is thought that the *gold* was given to the King in Christ, the *incense* to the

Lord, the *myrrh* to him who was to taste of death, the Great High Priest. It is written in the Latin tongue that "by the gold is signified the Kingdom of Christ, by the frankincense the pontificate or High Priesthood of Christ, by the *myrrh* the death of Christ." Others suggest that by these offerings is indicated both the divine and human nature of Christ. Another declares, "The *myrrh* as precious ointment may indicate the Prophet, the value of Israel; the incense the office of High Priest; the gold, the splendor of royalty." In that lowly place by the richness of these gifts the greatness of the babe was recognized. How strange to other Jewish peasants there, this adoration of this child of a Nazerene mother! The crowded inn doubtless was emptied by curiosity as in the stable the wise men by symbolic gifts exalted before all the tiny babe into King, Priest, Saviour. These gifts were symbols of the faith of these men as much as of the nature and work of the life there begun. That they offered them to the lowly child with their worship emphasizes that faith and causes it to make its mighty appeal to us. Where is the greatest ground for doubt, at the cradle of the infant or in the nineteenth century? In the stable of the inn at Bethlehem or in this church of New York after eighteen hundred years of Christian history? Under the star that pointed to this dwelling by its vertical beams, or under the swelling dome that lights a world full of the knowledge of the teachings of that life and of its transforming power?

Is it harder to believe in the infant Saviour or the Glorified Redeemer, in the speechless Babe or in him whose words of wisdom have lightened the darkness of the world, whose deeds of mercy have made fragrant the centuries, whose promise of glory gleams in the open heavens? Whether it is easier to deposit gifts to-day or then, whether gifts should be more costly now or then, I leave you each to answer. Had they turned back would the world have wondered? If *you* turn back will not they rise to condemn you, as they speak of their early gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh?

But what is the meaning in these gifts for us?

They indicate value, sacrifice, sweetness, or richness, beauty, fragrance, or life, suffering, service.

*First.*—The precious mineral *gold* declares the high value that should mark our gifts to Christ, and this valuation must be on the scale of him to whom the gift is made. Gold is value in every land—greenbacks are not. An article of diet rare and precious in one land may be quickly hurried to the ash heap in another. So it is value on the Christly estimate that must inhere in our Christmas gifts to Christ.

We search for the things that are of value to God as you have searched the stores of this city for things of value to your friend. We strive to know his likes and preferences as you have striven to know the desires of your friend. He has said and we recall it now, "Wisdom is more precious than rubies and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto

her." Here is a standard of value. *Something better than material things.* Let us try again. "The redemption of the soul is precious." The soul is precious enough to God to be redeemed. "I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." Again we learn the divine estimate of values. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth," "the life is more than meat." "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." "Give me *thine heart*"; that is, give me *thy life*, is the divine call and the index of the divine valuation. Here, then, we find the value of a Christly gift. As gold is the best of material values, useful in all lands, so life is highest of spiritual values and useful in all worlds. A lesser gift than this will be less than the gold of the wise men. Give, then, *your lives* to Christ. It will not be too great a gift, for he has given the gold of heaven, his life, for you. I pray you, do not think a few stray thoughts which could not otherwise be employed, a little spasmodic emotion that some trouble has awakened, a little affection that some glimpse of his profound love has stirred, is a worthy gift. The gold was the first gift as they opened their treasures. So is the life, the whole life, that for which nothing can be given in exchange, to be the first offering to Christ in the modern celebration.

*Second.*—Let us think of the *frankincense*. Still let us keep in mind the divine estimate of values, as *above*

*the material.* This was the fruit of the cut tree. The knife was employed in its production. It was fit for sacrificial offerings, therefore an emblem of the suffering that we may give to Christ. There are few of us that know enough of the frankincense gift. Here and there in the world's history it has been given. You have seen the painting of the maiden in the amphitheatre into which the starved lions have just been admitted, who pause a moment ere they pounce upon their prey, while some one has thrown a flower to the martyr that brings a golden gleam to her eyes. Here was a frankincense gift. There are none who may not offer it. *Suffering for Christ lies in the privileges of each soul.* The cutting of the purse-strings (recall the sorrowful young man of Scripture), the severing of hours of solid worth, the opening of the desires that are set on other things that their rich juices may be given to Christ, the self-denial for his sake, are most acceptable gifts. 'Tis the value that he loves and prizes. He showed its worth in his own gift to the world. He laid aside the royalty of heaven, became poor, of no reputation, was more marred than any of the sons of men, and there exuded from his life continuously that which was bitter to the taste but of fragrant odor in the world, that suffering in which he was made perfect, and which was the heavenly frankincense. We are to meet it with like offering. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, ac-



ceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

It is not meet to give to Christ that which is simply agreeable to us, which comports well with our ease and pleasure; but we should offer those gifts in which are tears and blood; that for want of which we have suffered, which may have cost us earthly friendships, a severed home, a bleeding heart. He who has never given to Christ what it has taken the knife to produce has never given the frankincense of the Christmas gift. I pray you make that gift at this glad season, not smallness out of bounty, but bounty out of want. I have called it *beauty*, for the highest loveliness of earth is in the sacrifice of self for another's joy. The one "more marred than any" was "the chief among ten thousand, the one altogether lovely."

*Third.*—Let us consider the *myrrh*. Here was sweetness—a precious ointment. It is the service of the earthly child—prayer, praise, charity, activity of the spiritual powers. A box of ointment, very precious, was broken for his use on earth and received his grateful thanks against the murmurs of the disciples. Christ gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour. "We are unto God a sweet savour," says the Scripture. The formal acknowledgment of God's power and goodness, the credal assent to his holiness, does not contain the myrrh. To Christ nothing is more acceptable than hearty service. He calls for it with every breath. Bowing of head and

genueflections are too stately; they are like the dry husk out of which the fragrance has gone. In the service of the soul, various as the needs of humanity, the Lord takes abundant delight, and he who would imitate the wise men of the East, in their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, must give to the glorious Redeemer the life, the suffering of self-denial, the service of the soul.

“Saviour, is there anything  
I have failed to bring?  
Lies my offering at thy feet  
Incomplete?”

“Lord, bethink thee, I am poor;  
Slender is my store;  
Yea, my best is nothing worth  
Even on earth,

“Even to men: Oh! then, how small  
To thee, Lord of all,  
Who, creating worlds anew,  
As the dew,

“Sweep them lightly from their place  
In the fields of space;  
Count the universe as naught  
But a thought.

“Saviour, is there anything  
I have failed to bring?  
Lies my offering incomplete  
At thy feet?”

Answered he: “If thou thy life hast brought,  
Will crossing mine in naught;  
Faith that shall outlast thy breath,  
Strong in death;

“Matters not thy world’s estate,  
Be it small or great,  
This thy offering, thou dost bring  
Everything!

“I am satisfied,  
Having all beside,  
Since that erring heart of thine,  
On my shrine

“Broken, contrite, suppliant lies—  
Sweetest sacrifice!  
In that offering thou dost bring  
Everything.”

## XIX

### THE FINALITY AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

“We shall be like him.”—I John 3:2.

THE finality and blessedness of the spiritual life invites our thought.

“Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,” said the aged Jacob to Pharaoh, though he had then reached an hundred and thirty years.

“I am now eighty-three years old,” said the venerable Baron Kottwitz, the spiritual father of Tholuck, to a friendly visitor. “God has made me a present of three years, for the Bible says: ‘The days of one’s years are three score and ten; and if, by reason of strength they be four score years,’ and so I must constantly be expecting the messenger to tell me that my time has come.”

If we look forward, we think this life will be too short for the completion of all our plans; if we look back, we know that our thought has been realized. “Few” are the days at best, and, though progress is the law of spiritual life, yet at the margin of this

world we are not what we want to be. There are still experiences which we have not known, there are heights which we have not reached; we are sure that we have not traversed the whole domain of being. We are not yet satisfied with our spiritual attainments. Though we are permitted to see royal exhibits of Christlikeness in some, though the transparency of some lives reveals the working of the true Christly spirit within, yet is there room for larger growth, for more perfect symmetry. The holiest with all their growth use words of bitter self-condemnation, and still reach up into the possibilities of nobler being.

We are assured that the end of spiritual growth is not attained in this world, that all that is here attained is but preparatory for the more blissful advancement when freed from the limitations of the flesh.

Of Rev. Thomas H. Skinner, D.D., Professor Henry B. Smith said: "His personal power was also enhanced, year by year, with the increase of his spiritual life; he became more and more a living epistle, a gospel of God's grace, known and read of all men. Vexed and perplexing questions were merged in a higher life. Revealed facts took the place of disputed propositions. The living Christ took the place of the doctors of the schools and with advantage. Thus he lived and grew day by day, in his serene and hallowed old age, toward the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. He was called to be a saint and

he was always fulfilling his calling, not counting himself to have attained, but ever pressing onward." When the body of Professor Smith himself lay before the pulpit of the Church of the Covenant in the presence of an assembly representing what is highest and best in American culture and scholarship, Dr. Prentiss said of him, "I do not believe that for many a day any redeemed spirit has entered into the presence of the Son of God, who had enshrined him more completely in his utmost being, loved and strove to serve him more ardently, or gazes with a more exulting and large-minded joy upon that beatific vision than he who has passed away from our poor fellowship to that of the church triumphant." And yet Dr. Smith had said of himself, with all his superlative attainments and colossal results of toil, "It sometimes seems to me as if my life's work, what I ought to have accomplished, would never be more than half done."

At the Semi-Centennial celebration of Dr. Hodge's professorship at Princeton, the venerable divine was eulogized in many most emphatic addresses. Some one said of him, "It must require a great deal of grace to bear all this." Said he, "I never felt so mean in my life."

There is a perfect life, but it is not known here. There may be glorious fullness in single elements of character, there may be vast accumulations of spiritual treasure, but no soul is satisfied with its acquisitions. Even the human eye detects the wants of the

spirit and the lavish praise of friends is followed by the loud lament at personal deficiencies.

The steadfast growth through three score years and ten does result in noble character ; the attainments possible to every soul in this world stir the deepest desires and lure to the grandest efforts, but the fact that needs no testimony beyond the individual experience remains, that the spiritual life cannot have reached its finality under the most favorable circumstances in this world.

Between the individual rich in Christly virtues, sweet with the Christly essence and prodigal in Christly toil, and the Christ himself blessed and glorious, there is an amazing difference. It takes the whole brotherhood of earth to make the one living Christ and yet the very perfection of God is presented as the ideal and goal of the individual endeavor. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father in heaven is perfect," is the teaching and call of Christ himself, and the assertion of John is that, "we shall be like him." Ages before, the Psalmist, disturbed by his own likeness, in which he saw so much for distress and shame, cried out with exultation, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." The change of worlds will only continue and doubtless hasten the full development of the spiritual life. I cannot believe that the work will be consummated by death. We cross the border line of the two worlds, but are the same on either side.

There is here possibility of growth, the same abides beyond, and when the spirit is disrobed of flesh, the process will not suddenly usher into the absolute fullness of glorified being. We begin beyond as we end here, and the whole character of our earthly life is disclosed in our spiritual appearance without the body. "One star differeth from another in glory," so also do we differ as we enter the purely spiritual world. There is concealment of defects here, there is the parading of one or two prominent qualities, but the exact proportions will appear when once we stand on the farther shore. There will be no successful attempt to appear other than we are, and the wish will doubtless prevail in many spirits that a better use had been made of the opportunities of this world. But the privilege of enlargement will continue under more favorable circumstances.

The issue of the spiritual life here, then, is the opportunity of completing it in heaven. The finality of the earthly section of it is the redemption of the spirit from the guilt and consequences of sin, from all further contact with it, and the securing of a home where only the most inspiring and helpful influences shall be known. No sin that has ever been committed shall be suffered to cast its shadow on the life, nor mar its increasing beauty; no fear lest after all some blight should wither the being, some unforgotten evil should appear with its condemning voice, shall ever rise in any soul. All the baleful influences of this world are ut-



terly removed, the spirit is as sweet and clean as was that of Adam when he came from the creating act of God, and it is as full as its earthly growth has permitted. It is free from all self-condemnation, and is in such a state of harmony with God that intercourse is blessed since perfect love has cast out fear, gladness fills the soul, its eternal salvation is consciously secured, and the possession of the inheritance of glory has been obtained. There is no repining over the past, since God has wrought his glory from the ruins of this life; there is no anxiety for the future, since all things lie open for the soul's use and enjoyment. The great work of Christ satisfies the soul meditating upon the divine justice in thus cancelling the sin of the world, and the consciousness of the willing and active purpose of God to save all that will be saved removes the pain at the absence of any loved ones of this world. All the saving wish or purpose that can be in any soul is in the divine and has been wrought into its highest expression of activity and suffering in the plan of God to save. The soul is full of blessedness to the limit of its capacity, but assured that in ages to come it shall know and experience yet more abundantly of the infiniteness of the divine nature.

We have therefore no example of the real finality of the spiritual life. Faith alone makes it known to us. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, but God hath

revealed them unto us by his spirit." We see by faith the glorious outlines of our own future being and receive from the spirit of God new evidences of the things not seen. As Christ is the daily support of the infleshed spiritual life, communicating to it of his fullness, though the bars and fetters of the earthly condition prevent the acceptance of but a modicum of his provision, so to die is gain, the crumbling walls of this earthly house giving freedom and expansion to the escaping spirit; with this freedom from human limitations begin the richest experiences of the spiritual life.

A sagacious student of nature and revelation has said that the law of continuity throughout the space-worlds and the time-worlds teaches us that the future life will be the counterpart of this; an inheritance for which we are trained here, as the heir grows into acquaintance with the large and rich estate upon which he was born. And as the caterpillar becomes the butterfly by casting its skin and unfolding parts previously concealed and immature, as the petal of the rose is just its green leaf altered in texture, color and form to fit it for a higher ministry, the eye of the naturalist discerning the identity of type that exists between them, so this very mortal of ours shall put on immortality, and the life to come will only be the blossom of the life that now is. We are learning more and more through a clearer understanding of the law of continuity that heaven is not so much a distant bourne

towards which we are to move as a present experience which we are to realize; not a sudden giving but a gradual winning; that the kingdom of heaven does not come to earth, as we pray that it may do, but must grow on earth. All the correlations of the natural world with the spiritual are surely striking proofs that they are parts of one and the same great remedial scheme, and that they have the same great object in view, the one in a lower, the other in a higher form, viz., "the glory of God in the redemption of fallen man." We are even "led up the great aisle of nature to the altar of Calvary."

It is not in what we have, but in what we are that the divine being takes delight, so that all the tendency of his dealings with us and the plans he forms for us immediately affect the personal character. Even the glories of heaven into which the redeemed spirit is ushered are not spectacular for the eternal enjoyment of the spirit, but, like all here, promote its rapid growth into the likeness of God himself. The exalted forms of being, the strength and blessedness of cherubim and seraphim will not stir envy, but awake to the instant use of the means provided and at hand for the attainment of like power and beauty. The eternal glory of heaven, as hinted to us in the book of Revelation, is not sensuous but eminently spiritual and suggestive of spiritual growth. The jewels that are used as symbols of its beauty are all the complete forms of the crystal. In carbon we have coal, then bort, then

the diamond as the perfect form of carbon. In alumina we have clay, then corundum (or emery), then ruby or sapphire the perfect form. In silica we have sand, then quartz, crystal, flint, then emerald and topaz, the perfect form. So the spiritual glories of heaven are the perfected forms of life and the choicest and grandest forms of spiritual character, the dross removed, the beauty perfected.

The real joy in heaven is not in the place, nor the associations, nor the opportunities, but in the life, the glorified elements of worthy character. From the black coal pits of sinful being, the lustrous diamond shall appear flashing in the radiance of the infinite glory of Christ. The spiritual life advances to the perfectness of Christ. Not always will the buffeting storms of life drive you upon the rocks, not always will you bewail the weakness and littleness of your spirit, not always will you wrestle unsuccessfully with the prince of the powers of the air, not always will a faltering purpose give you pain, not always will conscience smite and honest sorrow over failings fill your hours, not always will your view of self give trouble and distress, but all the glory that is in Christ, all the sweetness and superiority of being that marked his life shall be in you, for "we shall be like him," "being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

The spiritual life, then, the real creation of God,

the real work of God, ultimates in godliness in the human spirit. He only who is created anew in Christ Jesus can look forward to such blessedness. It is predicted only of those in whom Christ is living in the power and beauty and constructiveness of his unique being. To be a Christian, then, is no trifling matter. To delay decision concerning the spiritual life is to imperil the soul's possession of these infinite possibilities. The day passes, the night comes, and the unrenewed man goes forth from the body. He has rejected God's claims, he has refused the provisions of Christ, he has neglected all the opportunities for securing the treasures of spiritual value. Dead to God, in that he has no communion with him, without a ray of spiritual intelligence, how shall he march into the glorified company whose presence, whose toils, whose thoughts, whose joys have been ignored in the world? We are all too near the borders of another world to treat this thought with indifference. Where the tree falleth, there it shall lie, and the finality of the spiritual life puts the very emphasis of its glory upon the darker portion of those who refuse the call of Christ and regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit.

During his last years, Strauss, whose "Life of Jesus" attained some celebrity from its hostile character, when wearing out under disease, wrote a confession in which he casts aside the associations and restraints of custom and tradition, honestly renounces all deceptive accommodations, denies to Jesus any de-

cisive part in man's religious and moral life, and concludes that a "fantastic fanaticism" is his chief characteristic, so far as we know anything about him. Of this work Professor H. B. Smith says: "His work entitled 'A Confession,' not in the sense of the older confessions, like that of Augustine depicting the wrestling of the soul with the powers of sin and unbelief, nor even like that of Rousseau, a frank revelation of a struggling natural life, beset by temptations, but an account of the progress of a desolating creed, until idealism is merged in materialism and pantheism in atheism. It is not a work of search or a scientific criticism; still less an inspiring revelation of ennobling struggles and aspirations; but rather a dissection of the slow and fatal process of spiritual death, of the utter extinction of all that philosophers and divines have called spiritual life, the life of God in the soul of man." Here is a sad but striking contrast to the truth we are presenting.

The blessedness of the spiritual life appears in a statement of its various conditions. On earth it gives the assurance of a secured glory hereafter. If that were all, the blessedness might be counted superlative; if all the danger were taken from the life plunge into sin, if all the fear lest the evil of this life be perpetuated beyond were taken away so that the duties of this life might be performed with a quiet spirit and the soul at length go forth with steady step, how grand a blessing were here! The spirit that is conscious of

renewed life in Christ has no need to worry or fret about the future; it is all safe, mansions are prepared; in due time the Lord will come for you, the gates swing open, the head-pieces be lifted up and the King of Glory as your conductor enter in with you. But this is not all. Let the comforted mourners tell their story, the strengthened strugglers sing their song, the delivered captives proclaim their joy, the supported millions in every condition rehearse the blessings of their spiritual helps. Youth and age declare in rhythmic verse, and solemn prose, in the matchless music of the symphony and on the speaking canvas, the story of the blessedness of the spiritual children of God.

Martyrs have told of their exultant feelings and triumphant joys in the midst of hostile foes. Prison cells have echoed to glad songs, and all forms of suffering have been ennobled by the sustaining power of the divine grace, while all the joys of life have been enhanced, its treasures multiplied, and its ordinary experiences enriched with constant favors belonging only to those of a spiritual mind. Death has lost its power, the pardoning grace of Christ has removed its sting, and the spirit, casting aside the body with a conqueror's cry, has risen to the larger blessedness of the heavenly world.

This blessedness may be said to consist:

1. *In the spiritual association.*

The spirit will be with him who bore its sorrows and

removed its sin, whose glorified personality in the midst of the ransomed multitudes shall stir their adoration and elicit their unceasing praise. The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. All the blessed and holy shall be in harmonious fellowship. "There shall in no wise enter in anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." The great and good, the renowned of every age, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, the sainted spirits of the Christian ages shall all invite to glad communion and delighted intercourse.

2. *In the widening of knowledge.*

The grasp of spiritual truths has been but feeble in the world; some have risen to a comprehension of the glorious thoughts of God, and kindly given the fruitage of their riper spirits to the narrower sons of men; but in that final stage of spiritual life there will be a broadening of the capacity of every spirit, and the dark and difficult problems will find easy solution; the reduction of the material world to a memory, and the substitution of a more complete instrument than that now used will enhance the blessedness of those whose fettered spirits have walked in ignorance of the sublime things of God.

3. *In increase of power.*

The struggle for a little self-control, for a victory over sin, will be remembered with wonder in a new



experience of perfect power to do according to the divine will. Never overcome by adverse power, never drooping through over-burdened hours, never wasted by expended energy, the spirit will be competent for all the allotted work, for all the attempted effort. In the personal vigor and might and not in a delegated strength will the glory of the soul be found. It will reach a condition in which every particle of dross is refined away, which responds in delicate harmonies to the softest whisper of the wind-like spirit, into which the finest atom of sinful desire shall never enter and whose beauty shall be that of him who is altogether lovely.

4. *In superlative enjoyment.*

There is no mockery in heaven. The spirit is made for joy, for delight in things delectable. These are provided in prodigal abundance. Every taste will be gratified, every desire will find its object. To the spiritual children of God there is given an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away. "The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it."

5. *In personal goodness.*

That which is satisfying to God is no less so to the soul, and the attainment of personal purity, the realization of the dreams of the devoutest hours of earth in a spotless character, an individual intelligence, a calm, sweet holy life, a personality in which Christ beholds himself as in a mirror, rejoicing in his com-

pleted work, this is both the finality and the blessedness of the spiritual life.

Once more I hear the voice of the Son of God saying to us each, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly."

THE END







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