THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

BRITAIN AND AMERICA IN THE GREAT WAR

BY

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TO

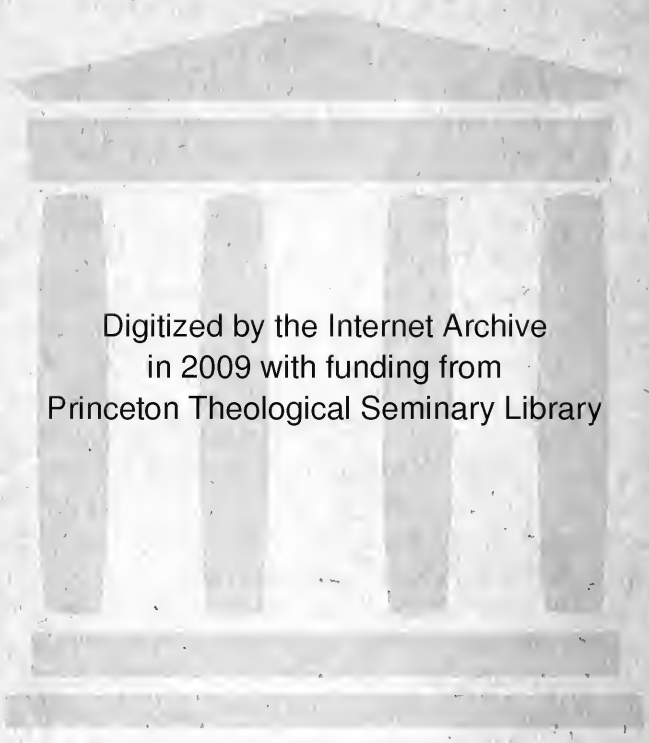
THE OFFICERS, MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

OF THE CITY TEMPLE

IN GRATITUDE FOR LOVE ABOUNDING

AND LOYALTY UNWAVERING,

I INSCRIBE THIS VOLUME



PRELUDE

IF the City Temple has been an international shrine almost from the beginning of its history, it is doubly so to-day, not alone from the fact that its present Minister is an American citizen, but still more because of the reunion of English speaking peoples drawn together by a common peril and a common ideal. The call of an American preacher to so famous a pulpit was itself an overture of friendship of good-will, and was so understood by men of all creeds in America; and in obedience to that spirit the Minister himself has been led to conceive of his responsibility in a two-fold aspect—as a Christian Ambassador and an Interpreter of one nation to another. But since these two great people are really one, having a common genius and a common historic inheritance, these two offices are also one, since we can best understand each other in the Christian atmosphere, which is the spirit of fraternity.

First, then, and chiefly, the present ministry would fain be an ambassadorship of Christian faith and fellowship, an apostolate of the Gospel of the Eternal Christ, keeping the continuity of faith while seeking to interpret it in the terms of to-day, for the needs of to-day, alike in personal realization and social application: never forgetting that a personal experience of things immortal is the permanent fountain of

creative Christian service and fruitful social enterprise. Second, and hardly less important, it would promote fellowship, sympathetic understanding and intelligent appreciation between two peoples who have drifted apart less through difference of ideals than through divergent development, in the conviction that upon their co-operation the future freedom and peace of the world, if not the very existence of civilization, manifestly depend; and in the further conviction that unless Christian principles are to be the ruling principles between nations hereafter, we can have no security and no civilization upon which we can rely.

There are those who say—as Mr. Galsworthy seems to say in his play "Foundations"—that the world after the war will be the same world that it was before, only worse, reaction from sublime self-sacrifice leading to sordid scramble for advantage. Surely that cannot be true. The war will end in time; but not so the thoughts it has awakened. Nor will the lessons learned at such terrible cost be forgotten in a day, albeit all the insight and sagacity we can command will be needed to direct the forces now engaged in destruction to the building of a better world-order. When London was burned in the Great Fire, Christopher Wren brought forward a plan for a new city with wide streets all converging toward a central shrine of common worship, which is to-day at once his monument and his memorial. The plan was accepted by the city authorities, but it could not be worked out because every householder

insisted that his house should stand exactly where it stood before and be the same size. Once again a great fire has swept over the City of Man, and it will be a vast blunder to attempt to rebuild a social order which had in it the possibility of the present disaster. Time out of mind we have been trying to build a Christian civilization on an unchristian foundation: it cannot be done. As Lord Grey puts it, either we "must learn or perish"; either we must find a way to abolish war or live under the threat and menace of wars still more frightful, until at last there will be "a famished race of men looting in search of non-existent food amidst the smouldering ruins of civilization."[1]

Even now epoch-making ideas, hitherto held to be iridescent dreams, are stinging the human mind like spray flung from the boundless deep, challenging us to adventure: A World Made Safe for Democracy, A People's Pact, A League of Nations, A United Christianity. These, with the ideals of Labour, which are at once passionate and prophetic, are expressive of a will for a more redemptive spiritual unity of mankind. Is Christianity dying, as Mr. Arnold Bennett and others tell us it is, almost as if that were a pleasing fact? Of course it is dying: that is its genius, which they do not understand: to die like its Master and rise again, radiant and reborn. Evermore it must die to its outworn forms of creed and rite, and rise to a new vision of the Truth: must die to its narrow sectarianism, and

[1] "In the Fourth Year," by H. G. Wells.

rise as "the Beloved Community." What are these new watchwords, so urgent with prophecy, but the rediscovery that the life of man is fundamentally spiritual and that brotherliness is the law of life, foretelling a day when nothing will be taken for Christianity but the religion of love of God and Love of Man; that the knell of the letter of Christianity has been struck, and that we must now inaugurate and enthrone its spirit!

At the onset of the world-war an English essayist said, in surprise, "The immoralists meant what they said," and so did the Christian moralists—only, alas, only a few believed either testimony save in a vague, indolent way. Then came the awakening! Now thoughtful men of every persuasion see that the realities are as Jesus said they were long, long ago, and that His principles are as universal, as immutable, as inescapable, in the end, as the laws of physics. Even a wayfaring man must see that if we had acted out in our lives the Christianity we profess to believe in our hearts, this inconceivable tragedy could not have happened. By the same token, "we are realizing as we never realized before that the Christianizing of men, of all men, in their relations, is not so much a matter of interest to the Church as a matter of life or death for the world." [1] It is astonishing, as a novelist has said, how we have come through blood and fire and tears to find how sound a meaning attached to the familiar phrases of the Christian faith. At last, after ages of tragedy, we come back

[1] "Jesus and Life," by J. F. MacFadyn.

with bleeding feet to learn that in the Mind of Jesus—so deep, so pure, so sane, so lovely—the Voice of the Universe found clear, sweet, authentic expression, and that there is no security until we obey His words.

What practical program lies to our hand, offering an opportunity for service and a promise of fruitful results? For one thing, our Christianity must realise and affirm its essential character as an International fellowship, as over against the false, sectional, class Internationals which have usurped its right. By this is meant not an organic union of Churches all at once, but their co-operation in behalf of a better mood, a finer insight, and the habit of thinking in terms of one Humanity and one Christianity. No doubt some form of catholic Christian union will come in time—it already exists, and needs only to be discovered—and it may come more quickly than we anticipate. But it cannot be hastened. If it is artificial, it will be superficial. It must come spiritually and spontaneously, in answer to a great yearning of the Christian heart for a wider fellowship and a deeper experience of the Truth. Else it will be a union not of the Church, but of the Churchyard. Nor will it come by erasing all historical loyalties in one indistinguishable blur. Its secret lies deeper—in the spirit of things. But meantime, and while that union is on the way to fulfilment, the finest, clearest, wisest Christian vision must be brought to bear upon the social and world-war that has to be built on the ruins of war.

What matters is a new spirit; in each nation men must make themselves felt and heard, who will say openly that there is no way out of this hell of madness unless we resolve to give up the old evil spirit that rules the intercourse of nations, and from the bottom of our hearts learn to love and think out a new world. From thousands of sanctuaries in many lands, week by week, year by year, witness has been borne on behalf of the Christian principles and ideals. Individually we have not been unfaithful to the vision, but the lack of a united voice, bearing fruit in a united eloquence, has been our weakness. What we need is to weave these many tones into a mighty World-voice, that shall utter the Christian insight and witness for the leadership of mankind in its task of reconstruction. And that voice should make itself heard, with all emphasis and appeal, equally against Militarism, Mammonism, and Anarchy, in behalf of Rightness as the truest Common-sense, insisting that the business of the world must be done in the open, and that straightforward dealing as between nation and nation in the spirit of brotherliness is the only way to realise equity and peace.

For example, if there is to be such a thing as a League of Nations and if it is to be anything more than a paper league, it must begin with a league between English-speaking nations. If we, who have one language, one religion, one historic tradition, and one ideal of civilization, cannot be brought together into such a league of friendship, then it is idle to talk about a League of Nations following the war.

It would be only an affair of diplomatic *dicker,* powerless against the promptings of self-interest and the competitions of commerce. In order, then, to help bring about a real League of English-speaking Nations, and as a basis and nucleus for such a league, we need a League of Churches, or at least their co-operation in a ministry of interpretation and fellowship. Isolation is at an end. The self-sufficient nation is a thing of the past. The old Declarations of Independence but give place to Declarations of Interdependence, in the spirit of mutual regard and in the knowledge that the common welfare of the race is the concern of all alike. Surely here is an opportunity unparalleled for the Christian Gospel, if the Church is clear-sighted enough to see it and sagacious enough to improve it, linking two peoples for the service of all.[1]

For, consider the problems that face us. One thing is clear: the future of the world is democratic, and nothing can stop it. Tokens could not be plainer, and farseeing religious leaders, who divine the curve of destiny, will seek to leaven the future now in the

[1] More specifically and in detail, it may be suggested: (1) As we in America must study English history to learn the roots of our own history and the origin of our institutions, so English schools ought to study American history to learn some of the fruits of their own history and genius. (2) Suppose it should be arranged that in every pulpit in both lands one or more sermons should be preached each year expressing the growing desire for a closer co-operation, if not alliance, between the two peoples . . . would that not do much toward making it a reality? (3) In his remarkable book, "The Invisible Alliance," Francis Grierson said, long before the war, "The forthcoming American understanding will include the religious element, working with the social and political—English and American preachers will exchange pulpits."

making with the spirit of the Gospel. The spokesman of the New World has said that we are fighting this war to make the world safe for democracy; but there remains the more difficult task of making democracy safe for the world. Democracy as such is no panacea. Left to itself, without discipline, without spiritual vision, it may become a plague. If democracy is inevitable, we must evangelize the inevitable—as Wesley, by his magnificent and ceaseless evangel, saved the England of his day from the red revolution, by capturing for Christ the men who else had fomented strife; and if this is not done the inevitable will come off without it, with what result none can foresee. But our evangelism, to be effective to-day, must not simply appeal to the individual, but must have as well a social emphasis and passion; and by the same sign, its methods must be such as are usable to-day, and its message uttered in terms that can be understood by the men of to-day. Issues of such pith and moment dwarf into nothingness the things that divided the sects in other days, and they call us to launch out into enterprises the like of which we have not dreamed before, much less attempted.

Manifestly we stand at the end of an era "condemned to something great." The high, ineffable will by which the world is ruled works by evolution, but also by revolution. As the grand divisions of geological history had their beginnings in stupendous upheavals, so the great epochs in our human world have their origin in overturnings. Such an epoch is even now upon us, dividing the story of Man into

before and after. Over the doors of our age an unseen Hand is writing, in letters of fire, that word which is the law of God and the hope of man. "Behold, I make all things new." Progress is by Divine authority, by Divine necessity; God is the great innovator.

I looked; aside the mist-cloud rolled,
The Waster seemed the Builder, too;
Upspringing from the ruined Old,
I saw the New.

Evolution is not automatic. History dates from the Eternal intention; it is the story of the deeds of God done in time. Here is the supreme sanction of human enterprise and expectation, the ultimate pledge of progress, and the inspiration of creative endeavour. Force, Fear, Faith, these three; but the greatest of these is the Faith that lays hold of the mighty will of God and reshapes the world after the pattern of the Ideal seen on the Mount. Evermore, as a wise teacher has said, the race must become partner in the moral enterprise, fellow-worker with the Eternal at His ethical task, if its heart of rhythm and soul of fire are to stand fully revealed.

Whatever betide, God lives, the human soul is unconquerable, goodness and beauty are in the world, and the living Presence which men call Christ. They are here in our human hearts. We feel them as power; we know them as love. Their touch upon us makes us idealists, altruists, optimists, and we dream. What though our dream be delayed in ful-

filment, it does but emphasise our obligation to put forth a more heroic effort in behalf of a finer issue of character and a nobler social order. The fact is undeniable. Mankind began low, and has been climbing higher through untold ages of pain, pushed upward by compulsions he could not escape, pulled upward by influences he could not resist. The ascent is inevitable, and not even the tragedy of world-war can stay it, much less stop it, because God is behind it, within it, above, and beyond it.

Surely the profound and underguiding thought of our time is the sense of the Divine indwelling, of the everywhereness of God, and of the growth of the Spiritual Life as the key to the history of the world and of the meaning of life. No other explanation really explains the uprising passion and desire of humanity, and its outreaching after the Ideal; it is the Life of God seeking new incarnation in the struggle of the race toward the Light. Such is "the increasing purpose" running through the ages, revealing itself in the aspirations and institutions of man. While one may not in a few moments trace in detail the ramifications and outworkings of this insight, we can at least follow some of its tendencies. Much is yet uncertain, but it seems certain that the future will be shaped by three forces: The Spirit of Science, the Democratic Principle, and the Christian Evangel: and these three must learn to work together as partners and friends.

Who is the Angel of the New Day, its dawn now red with sacrifice, but dimly radiant with the promise

of a better time to be? Who is it that holds out the only hope of a world made wiser by its folly and nobler by its suffering? Who is it that has haunted our hearts during these bitter days, His keen sword felt in our sharp questionings, His ineffable touch softening our sorrow, His presence made manifest in the new crucifixion of humanity? It is the Eternal Christ—the outcast Christ, so long despised and rejected of men, His face marred more than the face of any man amidst the horror of the strife—not the Christ of our subtle creeds, but the Comrade of men and women; no wraith of a far-off faith and a time long gone, but a Companion who "sorrows with indomitable eyes," yet still hoping all things, believing all things, even while enduring all things. He it is whom humanity will yet crown without a thorn—His spirit our salvation, His love the hope of the soul, and His laws the only basis of a world-order wherein dwelleth righteousness and peace.

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CITY TEMPLE, LONDON.

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THE CONTINUITY OF FAITH

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—HEB. xiii. 8.

FORTY-FIVE years ago—May 19, 1873—the cornerstone of the City Temple was laid; exactly one year later the Temple was opened; a year ago the present ministry began. Thus, by an interesting coincidence, we have a triple anniversary, and it seems well to observe it, because the past is a storehouse of inspiration for the present. Nowhere is the Bible nearer to the need of the human heart than in its frequent and wise appeal to the ways of God in other days; so that, in their perplexity, men may have the wisdom and prophecy of history. Our fathers were once as we are, active, aspiring, baffled, and deeply troubled; but they endured and overcame by the grace of God, as we may do by a like faith and fidelity—such is the message of the Voice from Behind.

Surely it is an arresting coincidence that this day of beginnings in our history should fall on the great Day of Beginnings in the history of the Church—the Festival of the Gift of the Spirit. The day of Pen-

tecost, if we may not say that it was the birthday of the Church, was at least its awakening, its transfiguration, its enduement, not with a doctrine, but with a dynamic. And nothing do we need to-day so urgently, so supremely. Power we have of many kinds, power of numbers, of wealth, of culture, but the pressing, aching need of the Church is for power of another kind, and a higher—the Power of the Holy Spirit. What we need is a profounder sense of the forces available by faith and prayer and unity, a new visitation of the Cleanser, the Teacher, the Comforter who takes the things of Christ and shows them to us anew. Nothing can save the Church and make it equal alike to the contradictions of war and the problems of peace but the Spirit which created it, and which has led it through the ages.

The Church was not born yesterday; it will not die to-morrow. Once, so runs a parable, a man came to a great city full of palaces of freestone and marble, vying with one another in their splendour. But in the heart of the city there stood an old House, ill put together, full of cracks, and apparently of no use. He wondered at it. It had no stays, no props, and he wondered how it kept standing. When, after a hundred years, he came to that city again the palaces had vanished, and other edifices of equal splendour and after a new style had risen in their places. But lo! the old House was still there, unchanged, as if the tooth of time which breaks everything else had broken itself on that. Again, after a hundred years it was so. The old House was still the same, while

all around was new. Out of the palaces came many sick people, and the streets were full of the weary and heavy-laden wandering about, whom no physician helped. But whosoever went into the old House that seemed, like them, itself to need a physician, came out sound and glad. Then he entered the House, and there he beheld One who laid his hand upon the sick and weary, and they were made well. Such is the Church of Christ, the House of the Eternal in the bright city of man—and it will not fail.

What is the Holy Spirit, by which the Church has been kept alive for nearly twenty centuries, but the living presence of Christ, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever? The Church is not an institution—it is a communion. It is an eternal fellowship, on earth and in heaven, of all those of every age and every land, who love Christ and seek to live in His Spirit. It is the union in Christ of all who have found Him to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life—"the portrait of the unseen God"—and their voices answer one another across the ages, antiphonally, singing His praise alone. Of that vast chorus the City Temple is but a tiny choir, but in all its history, from the earliest time to this day, it has struck that mighty music. Its ministers have had each his own insight, accent, and emphasis, but not one of them has failed to strike that redeeming melody—not one. For proof of this tradition of faith let us go back to 1873, back to the foundation in the days of Thomas Goodwin, in 1640. On his death-bed that noble preacher—the favourite preacher of Cromwell, and

perhaps the greatest pulpit expositor of St. Paul—left this testimony, as his friends prayed that all the comfort he had given to others might return to his own heart in his mortal hour:—

"'All these died in faith.' I could not have imagined that I should ever have had such a measure of faith in this hour; no, I could never have imagined it. My bow abides in strength. Is Christ divided? No, I have the whole of His righteousness; I am found in Him, not in my own righteousness. . . . Christ cannot love me better than He doth; I think I cannot love Christ better than I do; I am swallowed up in God. I shall be ever with the Lord!" [1]

There, in that far yesterday, the founder of this church, dying, put his trust in the Christ who is with us to-day; and this unity and continuity of faith we need to realise for our inspiration and solace. It is a great tradition, and more than a tradition; it is an abiding reality, a living force, a growing revelation, a tie that unites the centuries, joining a mighty host in a Divine fellowship—like the cord by which pilgrims in the Alps are tied together, so that if one slip and fall all may hold him up. "Our fathers were under a cloud," fighting for civil and religious liberty, as we are under a pall struggling for the liberty of the world; and what supported them will sustain us. What a reinforcement such a historic fellowship is, what an inspiration to those who walk alone in far places—linking the loneliest soul with a vast communion of the lovers of Jesus! Times change, and

[1] *Memoir of Goodwin,* by his son. *Works,* vol. ii.

earthly things pass away, but it fortifies the soul to know that the Christ in whom Goodwin found comfort and joy in 1678 remains to redeem and bless us in this far-off age.

There is such a thing as "an instinct for Christ," about which Goodwin wrote so eloquently in his day, by which the Church has been led both in its life and in its thought.[1] Carlyle was not far wrong when he said that if Arius had won, Christianity would have dwindled to a legend. No doubt; but what Goodwin had in mind was not so much the instinct which has protected the Christian faith from fatal fallacy, but that turning of the soul to Christ in its bitter need of cleansing or of comfort, "as a deer, when it is struck by a dart, runs to the herb called dictamnus." For, to say no more, the revelation of God in Christ is the greatest fact in human history, at once the hope of our healing and the master light of all our seeing; so great a fact that the discovery of a new hemisphere, or of a new constellation out on the edge of the sky, pales beside it. Ages, empires, and civilisations may pass away, but the vision of God in the mind of Jesus remains the pledge of our faith, the prophecy of our hope, and the ultimate rebuke of all the doubt and despair to which we may be tempted.

Forms of faith are not essential; the substance is. "And now abideth faith," wrote the Apostle in his hymn of the Eternity of love; but the same hand also described how the Spirit of God leads us "from faith

[1] *Works of Goodwin*, vol. viii., part III., book 4.

to faith." Both texts are true; a living faith abides and grows—abides, indeed, because it grows, unfolds, expands, taking all the myriad forms that life and power take. Yet it is ever the same in its essence, in its central insight and attachment. Never was this truth set forth more picturesquely than by Joseph Parker in his striking sermon on "Faith, Self-enlarging," in which he shows that faith must of necessity grow, by its own inner logic, and that it is only real when it does grow. His text was the words of the Master: "Had ye believed in Moses ye would have believed in Me"; inevitably so, by force of spiritual logic. That is, if a man really believes, if he has a living faith, he will recognise that faith in new forms. Hear these vivid sentences from the sermon:—

"Every man supplies the true test of his own faith. Faith always modernises itself, brings itself up to date, catches the last vision, and the last phase of the Divine movement. Faith is not final; faith is a beginning, a dawn, a spring with infinite summers in its soul. A man does not believe his own creed until he is prepared to add to it. Be progressive, therefore, and do not imagine that the statement of the creed is final. The spirit of faith longs for more worlds to conquer. Lord, increase our faith; give us vision after vision of Thy loveliness and majesty." [1]

In the *Letters of James Smetham*—and a fruitful and wise book it is—there is a noble page telling how each man, each type of mind, finds in Christ

[1] *The City Temple Pulpit*, vol. i.

what it most needs, the woman over the wash-tub equally with the philosopher in his closet. He "never expects you to be other than yourself, and He puts in abeyance toward you all but what is like you." What is true of the individual is no less true of a generation. Ages differ; one is rational, another mystical, and still another scientific, by its ruling impulse and mood. No matter; the same Christ ministers to each age in its need, revealing Himself in and through its intensest yearning, its reigning desire. "He appeared unto them in another form" is a text of which the whole of Christian history is an exegesis. Thus, the faith of an age is the fruit of the freest possible use of all those powers by which men obtain truth, its central point of deepest belief going out with equal radius-length in all directions. It makes no difference that the vision of Christ comes in a variety of ways and takes many forms, if only it grows and abides.

The editor of the *Works of Goodwin* warns us not to expect to find any "broad theology" in his pages, and the warning was well meant. What Goodwin lacked in breadth he gained in depth, a dimension we may lose in our eagerness to be broad, which may be only another name for shallowness. The perfect faith, like the City of God, is four-square, and "the length, and breadth and height were equal." The true measure of faith is found in the words of the Psalmist: "Thou hast set my feet in a large room," and "deep calleth unto deep." Our faith must go deep into the heart and high into the sky, and be as

lofty as it is broad; as high as the hopes of God for man, and broad enough to embrace the broadest, deepest, highest Soul of all the ages. So, then, if neither the dogmas nor the forms of worship of our ancestors satisfy us to-day, it does not mean that we have lost faith. No; men are free and broad, not because they believe less than others, but because they believe more—not more things, so much as more deeply, more hopefully, more nobly, with a sunnier and stronger confidence in the ways of God.

"Where is thy God, my soul?
Is He within thy heart;
Or Ruler of a distant realm
In which thou hast no part?

"Where is thy God, my soul?
Confined to Scripture's page;
Or does His Spirit check and guide
The spirit of each age?"

While the City Temple is a part of the universal Christian fellowship, it has none the less an atmosphere, if not an emphasis, of its own. It was so at the beginning; it is so now. Always it has been the home, not only of freedom in the things of faith, but also of a comprehensive and catholic spirit. Our fathers were firm in their faith, ready to fight for it, suffer for it, and, if need were, to die for it; but they never imagined that their form of faith was final. Much less did they seek to impose it upon others, save by suasion and the arts of appeal of which they were masters. The great men of 1658—Owen, Nye,

Goodwin, Caryl, and the rest—knew that creeds may become a fetter and an injury. Their Declaration, as they were careful to make plain, while setting forth their own convictions, was "not to be made use of as an imposition upon any." Force, they held, destroys a confession of faith by turning it into "an exaction or imposition of faith," and that, as they knew, destroys real fellowship. With which agreed the insight of the saintly and scholarly Richard Baxter, who, from his home in "The Saint's Everlasting Rest," must rejoice at the movements now going on among us, slowly fulfilling his prophetic vision of "the True Catholick Church." [1]

Not only does the City Temple stand, as it has always stood, for freedom of faith—not freedom from faith, for that way lies the saddest form of slavery—but it is the home of a forward-looking faith. Robinson exhorted his heroic flock, at parting from them, not to come to a period in religion, but to expect new light to break forth from the word of God. New light has, indeed, broken forth, not only from the written word, but also from the unwritten word of God; light so revealing as to the universe and the life of man that the men who lived before 1850, to say nothing of Goodwin and the men of his time, seem almost as remote from us as the ancients. In 1859 Darwin put forth his thesis, destined to alter our outlook and ways of thinking; ten years later Huxley coined the word Agnosticism, as describing

[1] *Baxter's Collected Works,* Orme's Edition, especially sermons on "The True Catholick" and on "Catholic Unity."

the attitude of the educated mind. Few realise what battles of faith have been fought and how profound has been the change of attitude and emphasis, since the corner-stone of the City Temple was laid. Nor do you need to be reminded how picturesquely, how effectively, Joseph Parker dealt with these issues, one after another, in this pulpit, now in wooing tones of appeal, now in thunderous rebuke.

Yet, in it all, through it all, there was a living faith in the Christ who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Happily both religion and science are less dogmatic, not because they have less faith, but just because they have more, science having become more refined and religion more reasonable. The lawless universe of a whimsical God is gone for ever, and with it many an unworthy notion which made the Father of humanity less divine than His sons. To-day a universe in which the Holy Spirit is immanent, pervaded with the Divine order, and reaching out loveward, is the possession of every thinker. Nor has all the wit of man found anything so adequate to the deep needs of the human soul, alike in its sin, its sorrow, and its seeking after satisfying truth, as the Christ whose name lingered on the lips of Goodwin as he went to sleep long ago. If that be true, if Christ alone, apprehended anew in every age, does meet the needs of the heart and mind, no one need fear for the future. Of course, no one can predict what forms faith may take in the far future, but we may be sure as to what its essence, its substance, will be.

Such confidence we may justly derive from the continuity of faith through the centuries, and, truly, we need that confidence to-day, standing, as we are, with trembling expectation on the threshold of a future none can foresee. Only one thing is clear—many things will be other and better than they have been, for the world cannot pass through such a whirlwind and fire without testing both the substance and the forms of its faith. A chapter in the history of faith which has lasted for many years has come to an end, and a fresh chapter, with an accent of its own, has begun. Already a few lines of it are legible, and we see that what is eternal in the religious life of man is beginning to appear in a new setting. Now, as of old, amid the overturning of history and the storms of human fate, our little systems rise and pass away, but the Eternal Christ lives, and we need not fear to follow the ways of the Spirit.

"The letter fails, the systems fall,
And every symbol wanes;
The Spirit overbrooding all,
Eternal Love remains."

ENGLAND AND AMERICA

"Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee."—1 SAM. XX. 4.

YESTERDAY the Lord Mayor of London marked with stately and appropriate observance the first anniversary of the entrance of America into the world-war. It was a memorable occasion, and no one who attended that historic function will ever forget its spirit of comradeship, its intense but quiet thoughtfulness, its resolute confidence, and its wide outlook and interpretation. Thinkers from both sides of the sea read the meaning of the day in its larger aspects and in its bearing on the future course of world events. Looking before and after, they agreed that no event in this vast tragedy is of profounder significance or more full of promise of blessing for the days that lie ahead.

Surely it is not inappropriate for us to remember that day in the City Temple, whose pulpit is itself a symbol of that which the day means—the solidarity of the English-speaking race. And it is altogether fitting and proper that we should do so on the day of prayer, because the issues involved in this war are not merely political, nor even social, but moral, spiritual, religious. As about the walls of Troy Homer saw two battles raging, one on the earth be-

tween Greeks and Trojans, and another in the viewless air between gods and goddesses, just so those who have eyes to see discern in the grim horror of this war, above it, through it, behind it, a contest of spiritual forces. It is not a mere scramble, not a brawl in the dark, but a clash of ideals, a conflict of influences that can never be at peace while God is God and man is man.

Think it all through, and at bottom, the war is religious. If our enemies are right, our religion is wrong, our faith a fiction, our philosophy false—yes, justice is a dream, and righteousness a delusion. Then might is right, the battle is to the strongest and the race to the swiftest, and the more ruthless and unscrupulous we are the better. By the same token, if our religion is right, if God is a reality, and the order of the world is moral, our enemies are wrong! The very stars in their courses are against them, and their seeming triumph can be only temporary. Thus, if we read this event aright, we shall make note of it less as a celebration than as a consecration, a sacrament—in the old and true meaning of the word—that is, an oath of allegiance, a high vow to a holy cause, renewing our pledge to strive unto death if need be for the security and sanctity of the world.

Such was the mood, the spirit, the faith with which America entered the war—reluctantly, it may be, but deliberately, in obedience to the obligations of righteousness and in the service of an ideal. Slowly, solemnly, with deep searching of heart, she dedicated

her power, her manhood, her resources, her all to the principle—a dream, if you choose to call it such—and not even the malignant ingenuity of our common enemy has so far been able to discover or invent a selfish or sordid motive for her act. There were historic reasons for her hesitation; but once she saw that the fundamental laws and liberties of humanity were in peril, everything gave way—prejudice, policy, pride, predilection, everything—and however long the war may be, however horrible, no one can now doubt that the advent of America in the grand Alliance of free peoples turned the balance, decided the issue, and sealed the doom of the most ambitious, barbarous, lawless autocracy that has defamed the history of the modern world.

Those who look below the surface of the present war discern three ideals struggling for mastery of the world. First, the ideal symbolised by Prussia, the doctrine of power, ruthless in action and unscrupulous in negotiation—power not only of the sword, but of a highly trained and specialised knowledge. Second, the ideal of Bolshevism, the doctrine of class war, equally ruthless, based on force, and ending in anarchy and red revolution. Third, the principle of the Commonwealth, the doctrine of "the application to the field of government and social policy of the law of human brotherhood, of the duty of man to his neighbour, near and far." There is no need to say what the choice of our common race is between these conflicting ideals. Already we have made it, and we mean to stand to it. If either of

the first two ideals should prevail, it needs no prophet to foretell that there would be neither songs nor dreams nor any joyous and free things any more, but only slavery to lawless and merciless power. Therefore, for the sake of an opportunity to grow the wings of the spirit, we must resist to the uttermost the Blonde Beast that would put an end to all the high hopes of our race in its struggle to be free. What though we fall and die in such a struggle, if our cause wins there will be songs again, and our sons will realise some of the beauty of the dreams we all have dreamed. Perhaps, by our sacrifice, the tie will be strengthened by which humanity will be so drawn together, and so consecrated, that war itself shall cease to be, following Him who came to give His life a ransom for many, and, losing it, found it. For surely there is something of His spirit in the heroic sacrifice of humanity for an ideal, in the willingness of men to lay down their lives for others and for a future their dying eyes will not see.

Now, consider. The entrance of America into the war was also her entrance into the world, the abolition of her historic policy of isolation, the linking of the Old World and the New, bringing to the council chamber of the future the new-world outlook, insight, and point of view. What this will mean no one can foresee in detail, save that both the Old World and the New will be different, drawn closer together with such an interchange of ideas and such an infusion of spiritual influences as no prophet can forecast. Not simply the map of the world, but

the spiritual geography of the race will be altered, in ways beyond our anticipation; but chiefly, perhaps, in the growth and ripening of a world-consciousness, a sense of the common interest and obligation of humanity. We shall think differently, feel differently, and nothing human will be remote or alien to us. Larger obligations will command us; deeper sympathies will stir us; national bigotry will give way before intelligent understanding; and our local loyalties will be lifted, without being erased, into a wider human fellowship.

Truly, it is nothing else than the turning of a new page of history, the opening of a new chapter in the social, political, intellectual, and spiritual life of mankind. As the Crusades of olden time unified Europe and from feudalism evolved nationalism, so this, the greatest humanitarian crusade in history, will unify the world, and from a narrow nationalism evoke an international mind, conscience, fellowship, co-operation. Not all at once, not without difficulty, but slowly, surely, inevitably racial rancours, national animosities, and sectarian pettiness will yield to the pressure of world-obligation and community of interest, and men will think in terms of one humanity and one Christianity. At any rate, the world will be smaller than heretofore, and the injury of one will be more keenly felt as the hurt of all, because by a common peril and a common sacrifice we have been made more aware of our kinship and obligation.

Naturally in this drawing together of the world in a new sense of need and sympathy and common un-

dertaking, we first discover those nearest to us in neighbourhood, in blood, in language, and ideals; and so when America entered the war her nearest neighbour was her motherland. Not for a moment do we forget our other Allies—least of all France, who aided us in other days, and whose dauntless valour and heroic sacrifice make it an honour to stand by her side—yet it is none the less true that the outstanding aspect of this event is that it proclaims the solidarity of the English-speaking peoples. It is like a dream come true, the answer to the call set to impassioned music by Lord Tennyson in 1852, in a poem entitled "Hands All Round," which he revised in 1882, when Queen Victoria escaped death, and, oddly enough, in its final form two thrilling stanzas were omitted. Let me revive one of them to-day because it is so timely:

"Gigantic daughter of the West,
Drink we to thee across the flood;
We know thee most, we love thee best—
For art not thou of British blood?
Should War's mad blast again be blown,
Permit not thou the tyrant Powers
To fight thy mother here alone,
But let thy broadsides roar with ours,
Hands all round!
God the tyrant's cause confound!
To our great kinsmen of the West, my friends,
And the great name of England, round and round."

While the Motherland was not fighting alone, she was fighting for her life, and what a revolution has

been wrought in our thinking and feeling! To-day the debates that divided us in times agone seem like the vague, half-remembered dreams of some previous state of existence. They are erased and forgotten. In the clearer light of time all see that in the war of the Revolution it was America that was fighting for the old British principle, and that it was never a war between the two peoples. Instead, it was the blunder of a German king and a stupid minister over the protest of men like Pitt and Burke, and England ought to have been defeated—if for no other reason, because she hired so many Germans and sent them to fight us. No matter; an empire so vast and with interests so diverse would have been top-heavy and unwieldy. But the real empire of a common culture, a common political idea, and a common spiritual inheritance remains, far more important, as it is more imperishable, than any political entity.

Of our second war the least said the better for both sides. No Englishman, no American, can look back upon the miserable muddle-headedness which led to the war of 1812 without a blush of shame and regret. The only good thing about it was the peace with which it ended, whereby the principle of arbitration was brought for the first time into our history, and it has kept us at peace for more than a hundred years.[1] Meanwhile, on the longest frontier in the world the guns kept rusting until at last they vanished, and if there are now two flags there is but

[1] *A Short History of Anglo-American Relations,* by H. S. Perrie.

one civilisation; and so it will always be. How ancient all this history is, how remote from the spirit and mood of the hour, and if we recall it to-day it is the better to see how far we have journeyed and how close we have been brought together. No man of us but feels that the future of freedom is more secure now that these two peoples are actually united in arms, as they have always been one in arts, aims, and ideals. Some of us recall the words of Emerson, spoken in Manchester in 1847, seeing them fulfilled before our eyes:—

"This aged England, with the possessions, honours, and trophies, and also the infirmities of a thousand years gathering around her, irretrievably committed as she now is to many old customs which cannot be suddenly changed, pressed upon by the transitions of trade and new and all incalculable modes, fabrics, arts, machines, and competing populations—I see her not dispirited, not weak, but well remembering that she has seen dark days before; indeed, with a kind of instinct that she sees a little better in a cloudy day, and that in storm of battle and calamity she has a secret vigour and a pulse like a cannon. I see her in her old age, not decrepit, but young, and still daring to believe in her power of endurance and expansion. Seeing this, I say, All hail! mother of nations, mother of heroes, with strength still equal to the time; still wise to entertain and swift to execute the policy which the mind and heart of mankind require in the present hour."

Mother of nations, indeed; mother of heroes, of poets, of prophets, and of saints; but mother of free and enlightened parliaments also, uniting the

aristocratic ideal with the democratic aspiration; love of liberty with reverence for law; sturdy, strong, enduring; nobly independent; with a genius for justice and a spirit of sportsmanship—fair play an article of her religion; a generous enemy, a faithful ally; a land of wealth and worth and worship, where men measure themselves against men for the mastery of the fruits of the earth and the trophies of thought under laws which all make and obey; the greatest empire the world has known, now in life and death grapple for the existence of the civilisation which it did so much to create and extend. And now the daughterland stands by her side, joining hands to defend the common historic tradition, the old high inheritance of liberty and of law.

"I think that all your years led up to this, and all your lives.
I think it was for this that, worlds ago, you came to greatness.
Your every man, of all your times, was born and lived and died to have his part in the great march of things that led to this.
It was for this you gathered lands and kept the seas.
Fires on the Druid altars burned for this, and strange ships learned your harbours.
For this you broke new roads and kept old faiths.
I think your winds have always told of this.
I think for this that all your rains were tears and all your sunsets banners."

If only you could know the admiration with which we saw Britain make her great decision in 1914,

casting cost to the winds on behalf of the civilisation of Europe in an hour of destiny! For some of us those three years were years of agony; but we never ceased to pay homage to our hearts in the heroic unselfishness of Britain, her scorn of base dishonour, her regard for the laws of nations, her grim tenacity, her almost superhuman endurance, and her unprecedented sacrifice. To-day we of the New World renew our vow that while there is breath in our bodies and blood in our veins, those dead—those innumerable and heroic dead—shall not have died in vain, and that liberty, justice, and mercy shall not perish from the earth! To this we have pledged our power and our sacred honour, and if we were slow in starting we shall not turn back nor turn aside until the world is fit for free men to live in, whatever the cost may be.

Our differences are superficial; our unities fundamental. In the tragedy of the trenches, on the grey solitudes of the sea, in the halls of a thousand hospitals, in blessed ministries of healing and of comfort, in the consecration of a common sacrifice of our best, we shall know each other even as we are known, heart to heart. United in freedom, in faith, in friendship, each loyal to the old, high ideal of our race, we shall together fulfil the mighty task which the God of History has committed into our hands, the keeping of the future freedom and peace of the world—not by conquest, but by co-operation, not by war, but by law.

Two Empires by the sea,
Two peoples great and free,
One anthem raise.
One race of ancient fame,
One tongue, one faith, we claim
One God whose glorious name
We love and praise.

THE RELIGION OF LINCOLN

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."—MARK xii. 30, 31.

MY talk to-day is in response to many requests, and I trust it is not altogether inappropriate in view of the celebration of the birthday of Lincoln during the week. He is the supreme figure, so far, in the history of the New World, its great prophetic character, and a discussion of the place of religion in his life may serve a double purpose. It will show us a mind of the first order grappling with the old eternal issues of life and faith, and it ought to give more than one sidelight on the spirit and growth of the land whose genius he embodied. For, when all is said, it is in the character of our great men that our holiest traditions and ideals are enshrined; and the spirit of Lincoln is the spirit of America.

There was never a truer word than that of Carlyle when he said that the religion of a man is the chief fact concerning him. By religion he meant, as he went on to explain, not the creed to which he subscribes or otherwise gives his assent; not that necessarily, often not that at all—since we see men of all degrees of worth and worthlessness signing all manner of creeds. This is not what he calls religion, this

assertion, which may come from the outworks of a man, if even so deep as that. No; by religion he meant that which a man practically believes, lays to heart—often enough without asserting it to himself —and acts upon, and therefore knows, concerning this mysterious universe, and his duty and destiny in it. That is in all cases the primary thing in him, and creatively determines all the rest; that is his religion. If you know that about a man you know what he is and what he will do.

What is true of a man is equally true of a people or a nation. Some of you recall the noble words of Emerson in the closing lines of his chapter on Religion in his *English Traits*. The religion of England, is it in the Established Church? he asks. No. It is in the sects? No. Where then does it dwell? Ask, first, where electricity or motion or thought dwell. They do not dwell or stay at all. No more can you put your finger upon the elusive thing called religion, which is the life of God in the soul of man, taking all the forms that life and duty take. And then follow the words: "Yet, if religion be the doing of all good, and for its sake the suffering of all evil, that divine secret has existed in England from the days of Alfred to those of Florence Nightingale, and in thousands who have no fame.

So, then, it is for this primary thing, this "divine secret" in Lincoln, that we are seeking; the faith and principle on which he acted, and which gave form and colour to his character. Where is it to be found! Not in his use of Bible imagery—though the cadences

of the Great Book echoed in his eloquence—nor yet in his words of good-will to the men of this or that sect; but in the fibre of his soul, the qualities of his mind, and most of all in the open book of his life. He belonged to no Church, he signed no creed—and he has told us the reason why. Yet he was profoundly religious, and his faith was so much a part of his very being that one must analyse the man to discover it. His mind was so moral, and his morality so intelligent, as Phillips Brooks said, that they cannot be set the one over against the other. Had he been a complex man it would be easy to solve the riddle. Instead, he was a great and simple man, and like all simple men there was a certain mystery about him—a mystery too simple, perhaps, to be found out.

Was Lincoln a Christian? The question has been much debated, but the answer depends on what we mean by a Christian. If by a Christian we mean one who holds to certain dogmas about Christ—the manner of His birth, the nature of His person, and the works He wrought, as set forth in the creeds of the Church—then Lincoln was not a Christian. He was a deist, if not a fatalist, in his thought, and did not attain to faith in the theology of the Church—such is the simple fact, and by that test he was not a Christian. But if by a Christian we mean one who honours Christ and follows Him as the Teacher of truth and the Way-shower of life; one who is just, true, merciful, a man who loves his fellow men and seeks to serve them in the spirit of Christ—then Lin-

coln was a Christian. If to have the spirit of Christ is to be a Christian, then, surely, if ever of any one, we may say of Lincoln that he was a Christian—a "Christ in miniature," as Tolstoy called him. It is a part of the surprise and grandeur of his life that, with his early scepticism and his growing cosmic piety, he should be accounted one of the most Christ-like men of his age.

Now it takes a long time to make a Lincoln, and he was still growing when he died. Indeed, the greatest thing about him was his capacity for growth. So that what may be said of his religious attitude in one period of his life would not describe him now.[1] He was a young man, and this unsettlement of faith was such as often comes to young men who think; but Lincoln was not a man to stop with a mere denial of the faith of other men. No great and deep soul can live on negations alone. In the midst of this uncertainty his sweetheart, Annie Rutledge, died, plunging him into abysmal sorrow. Thereafter, to the end, her image lived in his dreams, wrapped in the sweet and awful sadness of the grave. Then followed disappointment, defeat, baffled ambition, and hard struggle with the hard facts of life. Despite

[1] The story, so long accepted, that Lincoln as a youth wrote an essay attacking the religion of Jesus, which one of his friends burned, lest it injure his political prospects, is untrue. The document burned was not a theological essay, but a love-letter. For the facts see a book which it was my honour to edit two years ago, entitled *Personal Recollections of Lincoln,* by H. B. Rankin.

it all, or, rather, because of it, Lincoln grew in strength of mind and depth of heart.

After years of meditation, he came to a faith of his own—a kind of sublime moral fatalism, in which right and truth will win as surely as suns rise and set. This faith fed his soul and was the hidden spring of his strength, his valour, and his unbending firmness. It was the secret of his character, of his patience, of his prophetic insight, and of his melting pity. Holding to the moral order of the world, he knew that truth will prevail whatever may be the posture of the hour. Men may delay it, but they can in nowise stay its slow, inevitable advance. Upon this faith he built his life—a faith in which there was no accident, no miracle, and, in his earlier years, little profit in prayer—and, though wind and flood beat upon it with fury, he could not be moved. In his moods of melancholy, which were many and black —the shadow, perhaps, of some pre-natal gloom in the soul of his mother—he threw himself upon this confidence and found rest; not so much in formal prayer—though, in later years, that became first a necessity, then a habit—as a quiet, inner trust.

No doubt, to many of my hearers, as to myself, such a faith seems far below what we have a right to hold. But if you would understand why Lincoln found no other—until, perhaps, towards the end—you must know the quality of his mind. He had a profound and penetrating intellect, but it was a practical mind, more contemplative than speculative, and it took nothing for granted. Of the skyey genius of

Plato and Emerson he had none. Emerson he could not understand. For him the sunlit upland where our Yankee Plato walked was an unknown world. No, Lincoln, by virtue equally of his temperament and his intellect, lived in a dim, dun-coloured world, under a sky as grey as a tired face. He was a logician, albeit subdued, at times, by a wondering, meditative pensiveness of soul. His mind was slow, cautious, ultra-conservative, and such a mind sees life for less than it is. Still, it deals with facts as they are, not with theories, and is content to take one step at a time. Naturally, to such a man faith is difficult, and many things which seem clear to others are dim to him. One finds this type of mind most often among men of action. A thinker may take wings, but a man who does things must walk on the earth, sometimes in the midst of thorns. Lincoln thought from the ground up, thought as if no one had ever thought before him. Often his thinking carried him to the border of that awful darkness, that obscurity beyond knowledge which encompasses on all sides our little glimmering field of knowledge. Then it might be seen how he held aloof, how certain he was not to abandon the ground of facts, how little he was tempted to invade the Unknown. Always he fell back, trusting the reality of the moral law and the Will greater than himself, whose way he sought to know. For such a mind, when it comes to the edge of thought, three avenues are open—agnosticism, superstition, and faith; and while Lincoln was

tempted by the first two, he was wise enough to go forward led by a dim, great Hand.

Perhaps the humour of Lincoln has been exaggerated out of all proportion to the rest of his faculties —because of its sweetness and its exceeding aptness. Nevertheless, it was a part of his religion, as it must be of all religion that is sane. Even in the life of Jesus there trickles a rivulet of sweet, delicate, rippling humour. It was a part of His divine sanity, and some of His words cannot be interpreted without seeing between the lines a smile. Humour is a sense of distance, of proportions, of limits, of values, and properly to recognise values is not to be fooled or frightened in this valley of illusions. Some sects would vanish from the earth if their adherents had the saving sense of humour. Some dogmas are too funny to be true. As Cicero said of atheism, it is as if the *Iliad* of Homer had just happened as the result of tossing the Greek alphabet into the air. Pantheism, also, is open to similar attack. It tells us that all things are divine—which is, to say the least, a large remark—but when we come to meditate on divine oysters and crabs, it begins to be absurd. Humour pricks the bubble and it explodes—for humour, at its best, is of the very essence of right reason.

But that is not all. For all his fine poise of reason and his wise humour, Lincoln, like all other mortals, was at bottom a mystic—that is, one who felt that the Unseen has secrets which are known only to minds fine enough and pure enough to see and hear

them. His humour kept everything in its place—including himself. It taught him humility, and kept him from being too implacably wise concerning things whereof no man knoweth. None the less, there was a window in his mind open towards the Unseen, and through it came influences and intimations not justified by his relentless logic—influences softening his fatalism and teaching him things by sight and sense unknown, and giving his spirit a nameless grace. For example, one has only to study his dreams to see something of this mystery. He set little store by such premonitions; he even distrusted them; yet, as a fact, at times of danger and disaster he was warned. Some time before his death he saw himself stretched upon his bier, and heard the sobs of the mourners.

It was this seer-like quality of soul, so to name it, hinted to us in his dreams and forefeelings, that more and more swayed Lincoln toward the end, softening all that was hard within him and hardening all that was soft. For the spiritual drama of his life—like that of Thackeray—was the struggle to free himself from the clutch of fatalism. At last, after a bitter fight, he won his liberty—and he won it through prayer. In early life, as has been said, he felt that he was in the grasp of iron law, and the awful Supreme Power seemed deaf to human pleadings. But in the terrible days of Civil War, when the weight of a nation rested upon his soul, when foes were victorious and friends unstable—then he was driven to his knees, as he said, because he had nowhere else to go. And there he learned, not in theory, but as

a fact, that God is not deaf, but that He does actually hear and help those who seek Him with honest hearts. Words of faith in God, of belief in the power of prayer, more and more found their way into his letters, his speeches, and even into his State papers. Few men have ever felt more deeply the helplessness of man both as to strength and wisdom, and the helpfulness of God in both. Often his words moved with the very rhythm and cadence of the Bible music—for the Bible was his constant companion in those difficult years—and it is thus that they still walk up and down in the hearts of men. No man of state in his land ever made so profound a religious impression and appeal as Lincoln did in his last years. Amidst the wild hell of war he pleaded for mercy and the love that forgives, and the very soul of the man shone in his face which none who saw it can forget.

Carpenter, the artist who painted his portrait in the White House, asked him about his religion, and Lincoln replied: "I have never joined any church, but when any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the words of the Saviour, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and thy neighbour as thyself,' that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul." All churches inscribe these words over their altars, but they inscribe so many other things that the gem is lost in the setting—and, alas, the other things are too often regarded as equally important. Lincoln asked that all else be erased save love of God and love of man—and some day the

Church will be wise enough to do it. When she does so she will be following her Master, and men like Lincoln will not be kept out by dogmas and rites which they cannot honestly accept.

Nothing more noble than the character of Lincoln has ever been seen in the New World. The nearer one comes to him, the more one knows about him, the more stainless and just he seems to be. All men now know that the saving of the Union—without slavery if possible, with slavery if necessary—was the one overmastering passion of his life, and that whoever else might lose heart, let go of faith, or sink into self-seeking, that would Lincoln never! Here, in the elemental qualities of the man—his courage, his honour, his loyalty to the ideal, his melting pity and his delicate justice, his scorn of cowardice, his instinctive championship of the weak; here the faith on which he acted is unveiled as it could never be in any list of dogmas. His life, like the life of the Master, was founded upon love—and the justice born of love. That love made him suffer, as love always does, and in the fiery furnace of that suffering he was purified, exalted, and taught the truth of all truths the greatest—that God is love.

No man ever had a loftier conception of the sanctity of law, of the sacramental meaning of the State, than Lincoln had. His oath of office was a vow of consecration. As meditative as Marcus Aurelius and as blithe as Mark Twain, as simple as Æsop yet as subtle as an Oriental, a calm, grave, strong man, formidable and sad, he stood in the

White House a high priest of Humanity, an awe-struck ministrant in the temple of God performing the rites of liberty, justice, and pity—presiding over an offering of blood and fire and tears! He was a man of God, plain, homely, kindly, who knew that humanity is deeply wounded somewhere and tried to heal it—and of his fame there will be no end.

HOLDING THE WORLD TOGETHER

"He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."—Col. i. 17.

THE epistle to the Church at Colosse may not inaptly be called the gospel of the Cosmic Christ. It is a profound and wonderful letter, the purpose of which is to show that Christ, so far from being unrelated to the universe, is the clue, if not the key, to any satisfying interpretation of it. Written in a time of world decay, when the Roman Empire was reeling to its ruin, it proclaims Christ as the Divine life which not only created all things, but which holds the world together. Not as a proposition of philosophy does St. Paul state this truth, but as a vision born of a vivid fellowship with things immortal; and it will mean much to us who live in a beshattered world if we can lay hold of it and rest upon it. Here is a faith equal to any calamity, and we need its breadth and grasp and light to-day, if only to keep ourselves from going to pieces in the shock and tragedy of world-war.

What is the basis of this far-reaching, all-transfiguring faith? Happily it is not far to seek if we have a heart for high adventure, and may be briefly stated. One thing man, in his sanity, dare not think —that the low, the vile, the cynical, the selfish have

read the meaning of life aright, and that the lofty, the pure, the heroic and true-hearted have read it amiss. This, even in the folly which is our only wisdom, we dare not think; that way madness lies. St. Paul not only avoided this ultimate madness, but he dared to read the meaning of life and the world prophetically, that is through what is highest in it, which is the one sure path to the highest Truth. What is the highest fact of which man has any knowledge? Surely there is no one to deny that Jesus is the strongest, whitest, sweetest soul the earth has known, and that His life is the sovereign fact of the world. Hence the insight of St. Paul, and the daring of his faith which found in the life of Jesus a revelation of the eternal purpose of the world, the secret of its cohesive power, and the prophecy of its creative ideal.

Now, consider the validity of this vision as over against all materialisms, pessimisms, cynicisms, and scepticisms. In such a universe as materialism describes, the life of Jesus, His character, His spirit, would be not simply an absurdity, but an impossibility. There would be nothing to inspire it, nothing to sustain it, nothing to uphold and justify it. Indeed, it would be an effect without a cause, a stream without a spring, a melody without a motif. Therefore, for St. Paul, the very fact that the universe produced, or even permitted such a life, was the refutation of every philosophy of despair. What wonder then that the fact that out of the darkness such a Face could rise and shine, became the master-

light of all his seeing and the inspiration of his unconquerable assurance. With St. Paul the meaning of this fact was no thin theory, but an actual reality, victoriously tested in his own life of storm and stress, of struggle and triumph. The vision of God in Christ unified his nature; it held his life together, giving him strength in weakness, fortitude in trial, and victory in defeat—and thus it became his Gospel.

Here is the one adequate faith, if only we can realise it for ourselves; the only faith equal to the incredible tragedy in which we are groping our way, stumbling in the dark. How much we need this insight, as a thread of light to guide us through the bewildering confusion of to-day, no one need be told. Suddenly, by a terrible blow of world calamity, our little theories, policies, and expediencies have been brushed aside, and we are confronted by the fact that the forces in which we had trusted to hold the world together are impotent to do so. As some one has said, the hoops of humanity have been broken, and the barrel is collapsed. Slowly, tie after tie has given way until little seems left save the law of the jungle, brute Force on one side and wild Revolution on the other—to such ferocious cave-men issue have events led us. Think back a moment, and you will see how frail those ties were, like ropes of sand, and why certain clever dogmas, so talkative four years ago, are now silent and forgotten. What were some of the ties in which we had been trusting to hold the world together?

Let us see a little. On Mars' Hill the Apostle said that God has made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth, and has determined the bounds of their habitation; and that is literally true, shocking as it may be to our aristocratic vanity. Go back twenty generations, and you will discover that you have more than a hundred thousand ancestors; go back fifty generations, and you will find more than five million foresires. There is not in Western Europe a neolithic relic that is not a family relic of every one of us. The blood in our veins has handled it. Truly we are all akin, and our blood is mixed beyond tracing, but ties of flesh and blood cannot hold the world together, much less bring in the kingdom of heaven. From the military trenches abroad to the economic trenches at home, from the clash of classes to the divorce courts—the Haves warring against the Have-nots, and the riot of lusts, passions, envies, hates, and greeds—the world seems a discordant, struggling mass with nothing to hold it together. So much so, that the idea of any real unity and amity often seems like a dream

> Fit to take lodgings in a head
> That's to be let unfurnished.

Many had come to think that what we call civilisation had brought mankind to a point of moral refinement, to a degree of reciprocity, where it would no longer resort to brute force to advance its interests or settle its disputes. How vain this hope was the awful facts make plain. Others thought that the vic-

tories of science, to say nothing of the triumphs of social organisation, had made such a world-shaking war as that now raging impossible. But science, so far from uniting mankind, has placed new instruments of destruction in the hands of men, making the slaughter more hellish than ever before. In the same way, Education, in which so many trusted, has failed to hold humanity together. Indeed, the nations now locked in a death-grapple on the field of conflict are the most cultivated and refined nations of the modern world. The English people, whose culture is so broad-based, so finely poised and humane; the French, so keen of intellect, so quick and intuitive of insight; the great, patient, brooding mind of Germany, so rich in science and music; the genius of Italy, so fertile in shapes of beauty; the new, uprising culture of America, so full of promise—these are the nations now struggling on bloody fields in a fury of war. We do not chide, we only grieve, the while we lay to heart the fact that education may train men, but, unless in the future it is to be something different, it cannot bind them together.

Commerce has shown itself powerless to hold men and nations together. Times without number we were told that the war we were all fearing would never come, because the unseen empire of finance would not let it be. Norman Angell argued this thesis brilliantly, bringing forward a mass of facts to prove that war never pays because its advantages, even to the victors, are illusory; and the present war has not disproved his argument. Yet the present war

is a fact, and we now know that nations will fight regardless of cost, just because some things are priceless; and that some nations will deliberately go to war to defend or extend their trade. No; the jealousies of commerce are no guarantee against war, and another theory goes glimmering in face of the reality. Business does not make men brothers; it makes them rivals. Since we cannot rely upon ties of trade to unite humanity, we must turn to other and higher forces, if perchance we may find an influence strong enough to bind the race together.

Socialism, with its vague humanitarian mysticism and its fine rhetoric of a cosmopolitan philosophy, collapsed like a house of cards in a storm. The Church failed, having lost the power to uplift and guide the nations, to draw men together, and to base human life on love of man for his fellows. Indeed, the Church itself is split into countless sects, more schismatic than any state; it cannot hold itself together. Just now it is yearning for union, and some are busy with dicker and compromise looking to that end—but to little avail. Often its planning and dickering in the effort to find a basis of union resembles a horse-trade. Last autumn I heard a sceptic denouncing the Church on Boston Common, and a vast crowd applauded his eloquence. He used bitter words, most of which were terribly true, but he amazed me by arguing that it is absurd to say that the Jews crucified Jesus, because no set of men would be so stupid as to crucify one so lovable and so holy! Thus do men confess Him in whom our hope lies,

judging life by His standards, and denouncing the Church because it is so unlike Him; because it does not act as He acted, whose life was one of love and service, of pity and good-will.

Manifestly this much is clear: our race cannot be held together by outward pressure, but must find its centre of amity in some inward spiritual life. Here, then, is our clue, and if we are to find the ultimate unity underlying all the diversities and strifes of humanity, we must seek it, not in the welter of lower interests, but in the Divine life which haunts us while it indwells us. Far above the red fields of war, down below the din of the wrangling street, higher than all sects, deeper than all dogmas, there is a life of the Spirit common to all mankind—potential in all, realised by a few—and by as much as our poor, sad race is led and lifted into that life of invincible goodwill, it will attain to enduring unity and peace. God is the sky embracing all spirits, and the solidarity of mankind can be realised, as Tolstoy said, only as we discover our true kinship in fellowship with Him. If this seems vague at first, we have only to ponder it in face of the facts about us, and within us, to learn that, after all, it is the supremely practical reality.

There are influences in the world, of which the Cross is the changeless symbol, mightier than armies, vaster in their sweep, and more irresistible than the ruffian forces that destroy. There are things that cannot be shaken, though empires fall and cultures crumble; and at last, if not by wisdom, then by tragedy, mankind will learn where lie the holy foun-

dations upon which it may build its habitations of comradeship, its palace of justice, and its temple of vision and adoration. Thinking men see now more clearly than ever before that if the Spirit of Jesus, His truth, His laws, are not the leading principles of society, there is no civilisation to be relied upon. For, whatever theories men may hold as to the nature of Christ, they agree that the Divine Spirit of Him is our only hope. Without the spirit of His life all our plans go awry, all our hopes are doomed to defeat, all our dreams will fade. The Divine unites, the devilish divides; and only as men yield their hearts to the Spirit of Jesus are they drawn together into a union of those who love in the service of those who need.

No doubt such talk seems dreamy and far-off at a time when force rules and little can be heard save the thunder of great guns; but that is because we do not believe the faith we profess. Nevertheless, the hell in which we live is opening our eyes to many things obscure and neglected hitherto. Four years ago the Sermon on the Mount may have seemed quixotic; but to-day it reads like the Magna Charta of civilisation. Even yet there are those who ridicule Ruskin as one who wrote a political economy for the angels—the implication being, it would seem, that what we need is a political economy for devils. Verily, verily, we have our reward! Ruskin was indeed an angel-minded man, and for that very reason he has much to say to us to-day, the more so because we are more willing to listen to his golden

voice. Hear now these words that have in them the fire of the prophet:

"The form which the infidelity of England, especially, —albeit he might have said the same of America, if not worse—"has taken, is one hitherto unheard of in human history. No nation ever before declared boldly, by print and word of mouth, that its religion was good for show, but 'would not work.' Over and over again it has happened that nations have denied their gods, but they denied them bravely. . . . But we English have put the matter in an entirely new light. 'There is a Supreme Ruler,' we say, 'no question of it, only He cannot rule. His orders won't work. He will be quite satisfied with euphonious and respectful repetition of them. Execution would be too dangerous under existing circumstances, which He certainly never contemplated.' I had no conception of the absolute darkness which has covered the national mind in this respect until I began to come into collision with persons engaged in the study of economical and political questions. The entire naïveté and undisturbed imbecility with which I found them declare that the laws of the Devil were the only practical ones and the laws of God were merely a form of poetical language passed all that I had ever before heard or read of mortal infidelity. I knew the fool had often said in his heart there is *no* God, but to hear him say clearly out with his lips, 'There is a foolish God,' was something which my art studies had not prepared me for."

Yes, it is practical atheism—that is what it actually amounts to when we see it for what it is. When we really dare to believe our own religion, and not merely profess and sing about it—that is, when we

lay it to heart and act upon it—our problems will be solved. All of which, as you must feel, has a very personal meaning for each of us, lest our little lives go to pieces. Let a man look into his own heart clearly, honestly, unflinchingly, and he will find the cause and the remedy for the woes of the world. What promotes discord in our own hearts is writ large in the strife of humanity. By the same token, if we seek that which holds own own life together we have found the secret, for society is only two or more or many people like ourselves trying to live together in the world at the same time. What do we find when we look within, seeking the deepest fact hidden in this strange human heart?

There we discover a law of love, and the immutable duty of obedience to that law as the only way to the blessed life. Such joy as we know on this earth, as each of us can testify, comes of obedience to that sovereignty whose authority we cannot doubt and whose appeal we cannot hush. Not one of us but has learned that selfish living is an agonising, fragmentary life, fretful, futile, weary, utterly miserable. Not one of us but knows this as we know that fire burns. Therefore, the day of all days, the great, great day of the feast of life, is when we yield ourselves to the sway of a power, a passion, or a Person who reconciles and adjudicates among our warring motives, and shifts the centre of life from self to God. Then we discover that Christ is actually the redeemer of man, in whose spirit we find both concentration of self and escape from self—in a word,

salvation. This is what the old-time evangelists meant when they called us to "come to Christ," and they were right—only we may state it in other terms.

Let a man dare to trust and obey what he knows to be highest, truest, and most loyal, let him follow it faithfully and without fear, and he will actually come to Christ. Not only so, but Christ will come to him, and he will become aware of a fellowship dearer than life itself, and know the company of a Friend whose rebuke is more to be prized than the smile of the world. Nothing is more simple, more natural, or nearer the heart to do. No matter what blunders we may have made, how far we have fallen, or what a load of misery we may be staggering under the way is always open into this true life, this real life, and that way is the Christ-way. Living in this wild and desperate age, when so many ties are torn apart and so many hearts broken, let us give ourselves to Him of whom the Apostle said: "In whom we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins; who is the image of the invisible God: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or powers; all things were made by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."

THE INTERPRETER

"Which being interpreted."—MATT. i. 23.

SOME of us who are no longer young, can recall a time when it was deemed a sin a read a novel, on the ground that a story that is not a fact must be a falsehood. An exception was made, however, in the case of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress,* because it was a religious book, and that took the curse off. Sir Walter Scott would seem to be the next one admitted to this exemption. To one who grew up in the sweet air of piety, when the adventures of the soul were the topics of fireside talk, that great allegory was a book of absorbing charm; alike for its Saxon style and for its drama of the inner life. Alas, it is almost unintelligible in our day. Owing to our reticence in regard to the deep things of the soul, a boy of to-day finds that story unreal and remote.

Who can forget the day when Christian, on his way from the City of Destruction, came to the house of the Interpreter. On being admitted, he was led from room to room, and saw things strange and hard to understand. First a room where was a picture of one whom he did not know, then a room so dusty that he was well-nigh choked when it was swept, and another room where he saw two lads, Patience and Passion. The unquenchable fire fed by a hidden

oil, the fight at the gate of the Palace Beautiful, the man in the Cage of Despair—who can forget such chambers of imagery and the interpretation thereof? Truly it was a great dream, and one knows not which to admire most, its insight or its art. It painted the story of the eternal adventure of the soul, its starts, its stops, its baffllements, its besetments, as it pursues its heroic and shadow-haunted way.

After all, what is this strange world in which we live but a house of wonder? and happy is he who finds the great Interpreter. Each year, each period of life, is a room full of mystery, and we need some one to explain what we see but cannot understand. If Time is a great teacher, as evermore the present interprets the past to the future, his process is slow and often painful. Our parents, our teachers, are so many interpreters, yet much remains hidden. As Carlyle would say, it is like reading a "hieroglyphical and prophetic book the lexicon of which lies in eternity." As Sainte Beuve said, it makes little difference whether one opens at page 120, which is the integral calculus, or page 85, which is hearing the band play in the garden. Always we have to turn back and recover the context, and even then we can read only here a line and there a stanza. Yet some things are clear, and by the aid of the great Interpreters we can make our way towards home.

Back across the years comes the memory of a great teacher, beloved in England as well as in America, who discoursed so eloquently on "the will to interpret" as the secret of knowledge. He was not satis-

fied with the old dual process of concept and precept —conception being a banknote, a promise to pay, which is cashed on perception. No, "man is a being that interprets," he said, and the process of knowledge is triadic, always involving a third element. A concept may be a "leading" toward the truth, as James would say, and a precept may disclose a fact, a law, a principle. But if we are to know meanings, values, especially any ideal values, we must survey from above and interpret. Thus, as Josiah Royce held, knowledge, like life, may be a colloquy or a prayer, but it is essentially social, and to know at all is to know socially. Humanity is a community of interpretation; we look at nature through the eyes of a social world. Moreover, in the simplest knowledge, did we but realise it, another Mind enters as an integral part, as on the way to Emmaus the pilgrims were joined by One who interpreted to them the meaning of words long dim. So much for the insight of Royce, as he expounded his gospel of "The Beloved Community," in which we are joined in a fellowship of the truth.

Another favourite figure with Royce was that we are like travellers crossing a boundary into an alien country, and must have a care about the value of our money. On one side of the line our coins and notes are valid, on the other it is different. There another language is spoken, and there another system of values obtains. Just so, during recent years the mind of man has passed a boundary into another world of thought and outlook—a vast country hardly dreamed

of before—and we need the aid of the Interpreter. We walk to-day where no path is, where strange and terrible shapes confront us. If the allegory of Bunyan seems far off and unreal to men to-day, the fact is but a token of the change which has passed over the world. The dream is still true: it is the old eternal Dream of Humanity, which all the mighty seers have interpreted, each in his own tongue. But it must be interpreted in the terms of to-day. Here is the mission of the Church. It must be a Community of Interpretation, and its pulpit the place where a seer-like soul answers the unasked questions of the human heart. Twenty years ago John Burroughs wrote:

"The religious sceptics to-day are a very large class, and they are among the most hopeful, intelligent, patriotic, and upright of our citizens. Let us see: probably four-fifths of the literary men of this country and Great Britain; a large proportion of journalists and editors; half the lawyers; more than half the doctors; a large per cent. of the teachers, and a larger per cent. of the business men. They find the creeds in which they were nurtured no longer credible."

No longer intelligible, he might have added with equal truth; and if that was true twenty years ago, it is twenty times truer to-day. Time was when the task of the Church was to win bad men; now its task is to retain the good ones. Once the Church supported men, upheld the weary and sorrow-bound; now men are besought to support the Church. Why is this so? Who are the men who hold aloof from

the Church? Not simply the low and evil-minded, but many of the lofty of soul, the upright of character, who have the future in their hearts, and whose service to humanity puts many a Churchman to shame. Lincoln was of this class in his day, and Burroughs names the late Goldwin Smith as an example in our day. They are not irreligious. If not devotional, they are truly devoted. If they make no profession, they are most fruitful in performance. Men of science, men of letters, men of affairs, men aglow with social idealism and effort stand apart from the Church. They seem not to need it, not to be helped by it. When asked why, they say that casting their lot with the Church implies the acceptance of dogmas in which they cannot honestly believe. Perhaps it is true, and one respects their attitude; but one also recalls the words of Drummond:

"There are earnest and gifted lives to-day whose lips at least will not name the name of Christ. I speak of them with respect; their shoe-latchets many of us are not worthy to unloose. But, because the creed of the neighbouring mission hall is a travesty of religion, they refuse to acknowledge the power of the living Christ. Oh, the narrowness of such breadth!"

What, then, shall we do? Throw the historic dogmas of the Church out the window and over the wall, and devote ourselves to the gospel of "sweetness and light"? Such a method has often been tried, and as often failed. No mere confection of rose-water sentiment and intellectual beauty will satisfy

the deep cravings of our nature and the needs that gnaw at our hearts. Something profounder is needed if it is to reach the human soul and heal the infinite pain that throbs in it for ever. From a religion of sweetness and light men will turn, in their dire perplexities, to the crassest superstition, to the crudest dogma, accepting wonders which the intellect rejects for the solace which the intellect cannot give. No, it is all a matter of interpretation. Dogma, said Phillips Brooks, is "Truth packed for transportation," and it is of little use along the way. It must be unpacked and the living insight that gave it birth and made it worth packing brought into the light. No dogma was invented. Every doctrine of the Church was an effort to utter and interpret a deep and vital reality of experience. Its terms may be obsolete, but the truth remains, and our duty is to find the truth it was trying to tell and interpret that truth to-day.

Once on a time it was thought that men must get religion, as if it were a prize to be captured. Now we see that men have religion, and that it needs to be discovered, developed, and interpreted. Religion is not a rare exotic, a talisman, to be sought far and near. It is nigh to man, even to his heart, as he himself will discover when that chamber of half-light and mystery is interpreted to him. This haunting hope, this dumb aspiration of the race finds voice in the great prophets, and that is the secret of their power over their fellows. They reveal men to themselves, make clear what is vague in their minds, and

utter their stammering prayer; they are interpreters. Every religious movement shows that the leader and the led are swept along by the same tide, and that the one speaks for the many as well as to them, uttering the wish, the want that wells up in every heart, but which so few can express. Never were such voices needed more than to-day. Men are as religious as ever they were in days agone, but the old forms do not utter it, much less interpret it. Who does not feel this need in his own heart and the pathos of it in others?

We worship in the afterglow of the festival of Pentecost. The contrast must have been in many minds between the Tower of Babel, with its confusion of voices, its babbling, its heaven-storming aspiration; and Pentecost, with its one voice speaking the everlasting truth so that each man heard it in his own tongue. Brought together, Babel and Pentecost are a parable of our day. For a century and longer we have been trying to build to the heavens a mighty tower—the civilisation of which we boasted in loud-sounding words, achievement after achievement of science, in which we gloried. Suddenly there was a confusion of tongues, and a shadow fell over it all, and such unintelligible babblings as we have to-day! When the Church becomes of one mind in one place and of one accord, like the disciples of old, who met together in the upper room, the confusion of Babel will be answered by the eternal harmony spoken by tongues of flame and power and light.

How often, in these dark days, when one picks up

a book there is a note in which the publisher tells us that the author "was killed in action on the Western Front" on such a day and date. With infinite regret we read such a note in the last edition of *A Student in Arms,* by Donald Hankey, one of the rarest books that has grown on the red field of the war. Early in his ministry Hankey saw that the Church does not understand men, and that men do not understand the Church. An impalpable, if not impassable, barrier seemed to divide the two, which Hankey set himself to penetrate. For that purpose he laid aside his books and went among men, living with them in the dim and hum and litter of their labour, the better to know the lives they live, that so he might tell them of "The Lord of all Good Life"; a book in which he portrayed the failure of the Church and the power of Christ. Love of country, love of men, led him to the front as a soldier in the ranks, and his last book was made up of essays written in the trenches, which for directness of insight and vividness of style have very few like them.

Every one of those essays is significant, but the most pertinent to my purpose is the one entitled "The Religion of the Inarticulate," having to do with the work of the chaplains in the army. Hankey found the chaplains chiding the men because they did not say their prayers, did not come to Communion, and for not being afraid to die without making their peace with God. Yet there were the men ready any moment to pay "the full measure of devotion" for an ideal, a principle; ready to make the final sacrifice

that justice, mercy, and liberty should not perish from the earth. The chaplains saw nothing religious in that readiness to die for the right. Nor did the men. They had deep-seated beliefs in goodness, in right, in justice, in service, but they did not connect these beliefs with religion, much less with the rites to which the chaplains asked them to conform. They thought that religion was something else—believing in the Bible and setting up to be better than their neighbours, and by believing in the Bible they meant "believing that Jonah was swallowed by the whale." Surely, said Hankey, this is nothing short of tragedy; and he was right.

What is the remedy for this tragic misunderstanding, this failure to connect unselfishness, charity, generosity, and courage with religion? Again, it is a matter of interpretation. Long ago Tertullian said that "the human soul is naturally Christian," and that "no man can understand Christianity and reject it." While this may not be the whole truth, it has much in it that is eternally true. If, therefore, men reject Christianity, ignore it, or do not even recognise its presence, it is because it has not been interpreted to them aright. Else they would not think of it as something remote from actual life, artificial and unreal; would not identify it with the formalism and smug self-righteousness which Jesus spent His life in trying to destroy. One reason for this failure of interpretation, as Hankey saw, is that ministers know so little of men, live like "a third race" apart from the thick of things, and so cannot interpret men

to themselves and link the Christ-life of humanity with the life of Christ. Hampered by forms, blinded by dogmas, fettered by customs, they are unable to come close to the men whom they seek, sincerely and earnestly, to help. The author adds these words:

"It is certainly arguable that we educated Christians are in our own way almost as inarticulate as the uneducated whom we always want to instruct. In the hour of danger and wounds and death many a man has realised with a shock that the articles of his creed about which he was most contentious mattered very, very little, and that he had somewhat overlooked the articles that proved to be vital. If the working man's religion is often wholly inarticulate, the real religion of the educated man is often quite wrongly articulated."

Evermore our humanity, like Pharoah, is visited by a mighty dream of things eternal, and is troubled by it. Soothsayers and wise men read its meaning according to their interest or ignorance, guessing at its omens. The need is for the Interpreter, and the One who has most clearly and truly set forth the meaning of our dream is Christ. With what sure insight and revealing sympathy He shows us that His gospel is the explanation and the justification and the triumph of all that we do now believe in, hope for, and long to be. He begins by making our religion articulate in words so simple, so living, so vivid that our own souls seem to speak to us in His tones, the while we marvel at the wonder and surprise of His truth. Like some old ineffable

melody, His words seem to know what is in our hearts, the way we have come, and whither we seek to go. What joy is like having some one who knows us, understands us, loves us, redeems us. Truly His name shall be called Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us, God within us.

OUR FATHER

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven."—MATT. vi. 9.

NEVER upon this earth have human ears heard words more moving than the opening line of the prayer which the Master taught us to pray. No more pathetic cry has ever ascended from the shadowed earth to the shadowless heavens. Alas! our familiarity with the words hides from us their fathomless depth, their immeasurable height, their infinite sweep of meaning and promise. Sky-Father was almost the first name which man gave to the vast Power upon which he felt himself dependent, and even Jesus could not find a deeper, sweeter, truer name. If you would feel the force of that name and how far its echoes reach, go out some night under a clear sky of stars, and, looking up into that depth, repeat the words, "Our Father who art in Heaven!"

Some one has said that there are three stages in the growth and unfolding of a human soul. The first is when it wakes up from that strange "sleep and forgetting" which men call birth, and looks with the wide and startled eyes of infancy upon the big, buzzing world about it. The next stage is when the soul becomes conscious of itself as a distinct person, separate from others, with a life and duties of its

own. The third stage is when it becomes aware of God as the One with whom it really has to do in the adventure of life. But we may add a fourth stage, equally important as marking an epoch in the history of the soul: and that is when it passes, slowly or with sunburst joy, from the idea of God as a Power, a Ruler, to the sense of God as Father! Surely that is the supreme moment in the history of any soul, its real birthday, the date of a new life. Happy is the man who has advanced from the partialism of a Sovereign to the universal saving grace of a Father —then is he free indeed!

Ruskin was right when he said that the world is an orphanage so long as men do not know God their Father, and all wisdom and knowledge are mere bewildered darkness if they do not teach us to love Him. All religion, all philosophy, are enshrined in that one word, Father, in which the most ineffable truths are blended with old and simple and lovable things. The use which Jesus made of the deep and sweet word Father, unveils the secret of His life, His faith, His serenity, His incredible courage, and His undefeatable hope. With what unerring insight He took the ideas of causation, intelligence, force, righteousness, and the other fragments which men had found, and touched them with the light and glory and tenderness of His vision of God the Father! Everywhere He saw the presence of God who clothes the grass, weaves robes for the lily, and stretches out His hand when the sparrow falls. Indeed, the life of Jesus, His words

and works, seemed to have one deep passion, one ruling purpose, and that was to reveal God the Father as the sovereign reality and the solution of all the problems of life and death.

No one knew better than Jesus how full our human life is of intellectual and moral difficulties set as we are to follow the good in a world often rough and always baffling. He saw clearly, He felt keenly, and He knew that the secret lies in laying hold of a truth great enough to include little truths and half-truths, lifting them into harmony. As in the *Iliad* of Homer all is confused and confusing, until we find the reason for those marching armies, so life is bewildering until we find the Master Key; and Jesus found it in God the Father. Men came to Him with every kind of question, idle questions, curious questions, old mooted questions, and also those bitter, poignant questions which shake the heart and break it. Not often did He answer the questions put to Him, but instead He sought to put into the hearts of men the key to all questions: "Our Father." God is near, God knows, God helps—such was His key to all the riddles of mortal life and immortal destiny. Here, for once, common sense of a most uncommon kind found its fruition in a faith as simple as the trust of a little child.

What was the basis of this faith? From what root did it grow? Here, again, Jesus was so simple that He was wise, and so wise that He was simple. He found the key to His high faith, not in the sky above, but in the heart of man, in the creative, self-

giving, unwearying, death-defying father-mother heart. His fundamental insight was that the highest and holiest in man reveals what is more real in God, and since love is the noblest thing in man, it is also the noblest thing in God. Every truth, every duty, every joy, every hope of His gospel rests upon the sure foundation of this kinship of man and God, and is thus a truth that can be tested by each of us in his own life. His secret is thus so simple that men have overlooked it, and so near by that they have stepped over it. From the perversions of sense and the pollutions of sin Jesus appealed to the highest within us, telling us to obey it, trust it, follow it. He dared to make trial of this high and simple secret, and it is, therefore, that He is our Leader, our Redeemer.

What plummet is long enough to fathom the father-mother heart? When William Black, the novelist, was about to sail from New York to England a man rushed on board with a basket of flowers in his hand. He came up to Black and told him how, on his last voyage, his little girl had died and had been buried at sea. He asked the novelist if he would be so kind as to take the flowers and scatter them upon the waves when he passed over a certain latitude. Of course Black promised to do so, and very early one morning, when it was still dark, he stood on deck under the morning stars and cast the faded flowers upon the vast and wandering grave of a little girl. That was fatherhood reaching forth after the loved and lost in the darkness. The first

child of James Martineau died in infancy and was buried in the French cemetery in Dublin. Years went by, and all save the father and mother forgot that the little one had ever lived. Other years passed, and the mother died, leaving the father to walk alone. At the age of eighty-seven he attended the tercentenary of the Dublin University, and one day the lonely old man stole away from a brilliant function to stand once more beside the grave of his first-born. No other living soul recalled that little face long since fallen into dust, but the father did not forget.

Such is the deep and tender reality in the heart of man upon which Jesus rested His faith, finding in it a revelation of God. Hence His words reminding us that if we, being evil and imperfect, know how to love our litle ones, "how much more will your Father in heaven!" Truly there is something awful in the simplicity of His insight, as there is something ineffable in its disclosure. Nor is this love that unveils God a soft, yielding sentiment in which evil evaporates and law melts away. Far from it. It has its sterner aspect, its terrible austerity. Sin is never seen for what it really is until we see that it is not a rebellion against a ruler, but a blow at the face of a Father! It is the vision of the love of God that deepens sin, while giving the only hope of redemption from it. Even the harshness of love has in it a touch of yearning pity. Patmore has a little poem in which he tells how a father punished his little son and put him to bed, "his mother, who was patient,

being dead." Sore of heart himself, he went to see the child, and found him asleep with his toys beside him to comfort him.

"So when that night I prayed
To God, I wept, and said:
Ah! when at last we lie with trancèd breath,
Not vexing Thee in death,
And Thou rememberest of what toys
We made our joys,
How weakly understood
Thy great commanded good—
Then, Fatherly not less
Than I, whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,
Thou'lt leave Thy wrath and say,
I will be sorry for their childishness."

How can we hold this high and tender faith in the love of God the Father in such a world as this to-day? Often it seems like an exquisite dream spun on the loom of some kind heart, but too frail and fair to stand in face of a world at war when woes are so many. Pain, poverty, disease, cruelty, death, and a holocaust of hate desolate the earth. What before was accidental and occasional seems to have become normal and universal. How can the faith of Jesus live in a world so full of griefs and graves? Such is the question that pierces many a heart to-day, adding another pain to the agony of the hour. How keen must be the anguish of those who have lost those they loved and also their faith in a God of Love! Sorrow does not always soften. Often it makes men

hard and bitter of heart, secreting an acid that dissolves the pearl of great price. Many thoughtful people are in danger of this ultimate inner disaster, but they must not rashly let go of the highest faith.

Now consider. If ever any faith was tested by hard facts it was the faith of Jesus in the love of God. He drank the cup of desolation, draining it to its dregs. When we think of the countless young lives cut off in their prime, let us not forget that Jesus died at the age of a little over thirty.

> "He was young
> Who for my sake in silence hung
> Upon the Cross with passion wrung."

And such a muddy death! No woe that has befallen any one in this war has surpassed that dark cross outside the city gate. Think of the forces that brought about that tragedy! Religious hypocrisy, political cunning, and brutal force united to defame and destroy the noblest and loftiest being that has walked the earth. Yet that lonely Sufferer dying in the dark, despised and desecrated, did not lose faith in God the Father. From the Cross comes the final rebuke of all our doubt, all our despair: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!" Surely a faith so tested may be trusted unto the uttermost in storm and calm, in life and death.

When we think of that Sufferer outside the city gate, and the words of prayer upon His lips, the text comes to us with a new meaning: "After this manner pray ye: Our Father." Only so can we pray

at all. Prayer to a Destiny, prayer to a Hierarchy of Laws, prayer to an impersonal Force or Fate, is impossible. It is the word Father that opens a fountain of prayer in our hearts, solving the mystery of prayer, explaining its philosophy, and justifying its practice. Then we know that our cry of need is no empty wail blown across a wintry sky, unheard and unheeded! No, there is One who hears, and if His will is often other than our own, it is better so. Prayer is as natural as the homing instinct of a bird, and faith in God the Father makes it free, joyous, and uplifting. Those who walk the way of prayer know that life is from above downward, as the poet had learned who wrote those lovely lines whose insight is so deep and sure:—

"Let me no more my comfort draw
From my frail hold of Thee;
In this alone rejoice with awe,
Thy mighty grasp of me."

What a heavy load of loneliness faith in God the Father lifts from the human heart! It is appalling when we remember that, however rich we may be in friendships, and despite our most intimate and tender fellowships, we live alone, think alone, suffer alone, and die alone. Not even the nearest heart knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh. But when we hear the words "Our Father," our loneliness is broken, and we know that we are "never less alone than when alone." What a relief, what a joy to

know that, if we open the door, the One who loves us best will enter in and dwell with us, pervade us, possess us. No wonder Thomas Erskine, of Linlathen, used to ask those he met in the way, "My brother! my sister! do you know the Father?" How much we need to know Him, and the secret of His inner fellowship, in the hour of affliction, else we may sink under the sense that we are slaves of Fate, or whim, tossed to and fro without reason. One can bear much—anything, perhaps—if he knows that his sorrow is not mere ruthlessness, a blind fury walking with aimless feet. The cup may be bitter, but we know it is not poison when we take it as a sacrament from the hand of our Father.

On the evening on which he died, Chalmers was walking in his garden, when his daughter heard him repeat again and again to himself the words, "My Father, my Heavenly Father." In the morning he had vanished. Think it all through from end to end, and you will see that the real basis of hope of a future life is in God the Father! In this faith Jesus lived and died, and, dying, conquered death! How many have followed in His train, triumphant by His grace as they took their flight to His Father and our Father. Over the homes of our living, over the graves of our dead—now, alas! so many and so new—let us hold by the faith of the prayer the Master taught us. In face of the dark questions that tantalise or terrify us, let us be loyal to it. There is no higher faith, and it must be wise to trust the highest and

give ourselves to it. At last, when we leave this earthly scene and take our way along the hidden path, let us go bravely with the great and simple words on our lips, "Our Father who art in Heaven."

DIVINE GUIDANCE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

"I will guide thee with mine eye."—PSALM xxxii. 8.
"The very hairs of your head are all numbered."—
MATT. x. 30.

PERHAPS not one of you ever saw a copy of the most interesting journal in my country, a paper full of fairy stories, of weird things that never come to pass, and other forms of highly imaginative writing. Of course I mean the *Record of Congress,* the best journal of fiction in the land. In one issue it was related how, in the embarrassment of an early session, of which the worthy chaplain had not been advised, the Speaker called the House to order with this amazing announcement: "The clerk will please read the journal. We will proceed without Divine guidance." No protest was offered, no word was uttered, and all seemed willing to proceed without that guiding wisdom which cometh down from above.

After all how is the wisest Solon of them all to know when he has guidance from above in any of the sessions? Because he cannot escape it. There are many men, no doubt, who would be glad to proceed without it, if only they could; for this matter of Divine guidance, as the wise old Bible suggests, is not without terror to evil-doers. Nevertheless, it is inescapable. Evermore the good and bad alike are

guided to their inevitable end—Judas to his own place, and Jesus to His throne of mercy. Other things may be doubtful, but there are none to deny this fundamental fact. From the first man has felt that he was led by an Eternal Power, whose mighty hand he could neither resist nor escape—Something which he has called Fate, Force, Chance, Destiny, God. No matter how it is named, every man knows that without it he could not live out a day. So, then, the real question is not as to the fact of divine guidance, but as to its nature and the character of Him in whose great hand we stand. Let us discuss this matter together briefly, bringing to it such insight as we have, albeit unable to do more than touch the hem of such a theme in the appointed time.

Now, consider, God is the final reality; beyond Him human thought cannot go, short of Him it cannot rest in peace. Thought about Him is thought in its longest reach, as experience of Him is the deepest need of humanity and its highest joy. It follows, as a consequence, that a change in our conception of God means a profound change in all our thinking about life, its meaning, its method, and its goal. Such a change is now passing over the mind of man, surpassing all the more superficial and astonishing changes of this time of upheaval. Not for nought have men been talking of a Vital Urge, a Finite God, and other like forshadowings, as in other days they were wont to talk of an Eternal Energy from which all things proceed, and a Stream of Tendency making for righteousness. Men to-day are seeking not

simply a Sovereign who reigns in majesty, but a Sympathy which no vague Energy, no mere Stream of Tendency can give. They cry out for a God who not only reigns afar, but for a God who helps to bear the burden and shares in some real way the struggle and agony of the world. A God who is above all and merely a looker-on they find it hard to believe in, and harder still to love.

Of course, every such passionate aspiration may take crude and fumbling forms, but it is bringing men to see that God is somehow with them in the trial and bloody sweat of life. More and more they think of Him as ruling the world, not from without as the potter shapes the clay, but from within as a flower unfolds—the universe being the form in which the Divine reason and will are made visible. The old deism, with its ongoing world and an absentee Deity who made occasional inroads into the world to reveal Himself, is dead. By the same token, the growing sense of the divine indwelling renders many dogmas obsolete and many debates useless—as, for example, the debate about miracles. The commonest event, even the fall of a leaf, is as divine in its causation as any miracle could be, since in both alike the presence of God is manifest. The fact that God is in nature does not mean that He is here and there working wonders, but that the whole cosmic order depends every instant upon His will and power, and that we live in the presence of His living Will, which worketh hitherto and worketh evermore.

For ages our humanity, like the boy in the story of "The Great Stone Face," watched the face of nature, not knowing whether her smile was one of pity or of indifferent scorn. She presented two aspects—loveliness and severity. Amidst scenes of peace and beauty, when skies were soft and winds were kind, it was easy to believe that she was friendly. Even in the night, with its awful depth of stars, that faith was awake. But nature had other moods, when storms ran riot and the foundations of the deeps were broken up, outbursts of power when men were swept away like insects. Then it was that fear came upon man, and his faith wavered. The Lisbon earthquake was followed by an epidemic of atheism, unsettling the faith of the boy Goethe. Doubt of nature haunted the last century like an evil dream, and Stuart Mill concluded that either God is not strong enough to prevent its cruelty or not good enough to care. Even Tennyson was tormented by a vision of nature "red in tooth and claw," so careful of a type, so careless of a single life. To-day it seems a far cry back to such a mood, a memory of which lingers in the stories and poems of Thomas Hardy.

Happily, a deeper insight has brought us to a serener confidence in the beneficent and wise order of the world, as may be seen in such an essay as that of John Burroughs on "The Arrival of the Fit." At first glance, he tells us, nature may seem to be ruled by a law of disorder—collisions in the heavens above, waste on the earth below—but that is only seeming. There is something more than hit-and-miss

in nature, some guiding genius, else the course of evolution would never have arrived at man. Forests get themselves planted by winds and currents, but oak and elm and pine each finds its place with a certain fitness and system. Despite seeming waste, order and plan appear, and myriad forms of beauty, showing a spiritual intelligence. Often God seems to play His right hand against His left, but what one loses the other gains, and so nothing is lost. Man thinks that nature is stern, yet all the while she is his teacher, all his inventions being imitations of her devices, all his arts efforts to reproduce her beauty. Besides, we are here in a world good to be in, whose method we are hardly prepared to judge, because we cannot grasp a plan so vast.

Look down the highway of history along which our race has straggled, coming it knows not whence, going it knows not whither. Carlyle wondered how a race so dull that its eyes seem made of horn managed to stumble forward. Left to himself, man sits down and sings praises to the past, overcome by a strange inertia, not totally depraved, but totally lazy. If there has been progress from the beginning, as no one denies, it has come from a thought behind and above humanity; by Divine direction, not by human intention. That is to say, it has come in spite of man, or else by man acting in ignorance of the great design and the ultimate end. Any faithful account of history bears witness to the fact of Divine guidance in human affairs, so much so that its records, so long a bible of pessimism, have become scrolls of hope. Often, to

be sure, the fact of Divine guidance is hidden in the details of the story, but it is unveiled in the larger scene and the longer result. Not otherwise can we explain the progress of things from unreasoning elements, the turning of revolution into evolution, and the bringing to pass of that of which man never dreamed.

At last, we Americans, as Lord Bryce has said, hold by this fact with a faith that is akin to fatalism; no doubt going too far, as when he reminds us that "the belief in the rights of the majority lies very near to the belief that the majority is right." Whereas the voice of the people is not always, not often, the voice of God. For God is not with the many, unless the many are with Him, and they are sometimes far from Him. Again and again history has shown one man to have been right and a whole nation wrong. Divine guidance does not always come in the shout of the multitude, any more than in the thunder at Mount Horeb, but nearly always in the still small voice heard by a few lofty and valiant souls called prophets. Always it is the lonely seer who climbs the Mount of Vision, and returns to point the masses to the better way. Yet so heedless is humanity that it has become a refrain of history that the prophets are stoned and rejected, and, later, monuments are built in their honour. Still it is the prophet, not the historian, not the scholar, who is our best interpreter and guide, and in the end we must follow him, whether we will or no.

Buckle once thought that there might be a

science of history; that, if we could know all the facts of the present, we could predict the future accurately. But Froude, Fiske, and Smith took issue with him, showing that we can no more tell what a day will bring forth than we can foretell the shape the clouds will take at sunset to-morrow. A spirit plays over the scene, an incalculable element enters, and all our predictions go awry. Gibbon felt that he had lived to see the end of war, but if he had lived out the span of his days he would have seen Europe at the feet of Napoleon. The man of action more keenly than any other, perhaps, feels both the fact and the mystery of Divine guidance. A thinker can retrace his steps to where he went astray, but when a thing is done it cannot be undone. A man of action must decide quickly amid the stress of events, and as often as not when he has done what seems wisest and best, his plans are all upset. No wonder so many leaders, from Cæsar to Lincoln and Gladstone, have been fatalists—that is, men of iron faith —nothing certain to them but an unseen Hand put forth from the darkness, moving the figures on the board.

Nor is there any such Divine guidance in human affairs as prevents a temporary triumph of might over right, of evil over good. Surely Jesus was the strongest, whitest, sweetest soul this earth has known, and yet that radiant Being, who was so gentle, patient and heroic, whose heart was so deep that the streams of slander poured into it without echo, whose charity was so large that it folded like a mantle all

who wore our human shape, who talked of all men as His brothers and of all women as if He dreamed of His mother; this being, who sought to do good, and only good, always, everywhere to everybody, was falsely accused, betrayed by friends, crowned with thorns, and crucified between two thieves. Never was the history of brutality and wrong more complete, more crushing. And yet, not by man, but in spite of man, somehow, out of it came unspeakable good, as out of the new crucifixion of humanity to-day will issue untold good in times to be. It must be, then, that God guides our race by slowly incarnating Himself in it—that is, by educating humanity; that He is in history guiding it by slowly enthroning His spirit in the minds of the men who make history. If that be so, then His kingdom can come no faster than the Divine is enshrined in the soul of the race.

Also, if many must fail that a few may succeed a little, if myriads must fall that their sons may be free, what of those who die? What of the multitudes who are ground under the heel of tyranny, suffering, praying, fighting for the freedom of those who are to come after them! Are they lost and cast aside, as so much rubbish in the void? If so, history is a tragedy of unrelieved horror, a nightmare so terrible as to make life intolerable. No; over against this dismal dogma rises the religious vision of the world, the faith that nothing walks with aimless feet, and that not one life shall be destroyed, that the babe who died in India five thousand years ago did not fall as an autumn leaf to rot and be lost, but lives to

fulfil its ideal—yea, that the wise love of God is equal to the waywardness, the wilfulness and the pathos of man, and will at last lead every wandering human soul to Himself! As George Macdonald said, "Unless the hairs of your head are all numbered, there is no God," for what to you and me is the large truth of Divine guidance if there be no guiding hand in our little lives?

Indeed, the one truth implies and includes the other, and who can look over the years agone and not see, like the man who wrote the *Experiences of a Roving Philosopher,* little touches of a Hand that shaped his course—like that little stray dog that crept into the arms of Jacob Riis when he had gone down to the river to drown himself, and drew him back to a life of usefulness and honour. Biography is full of such incidents, telling how a letter, a handshake, the glimpse of a face, have made men over and altered their careers. Nothing is more wonderful in the retrospect than the fact that, despite our mistakes and the shadows that covered us, another Presence has been in our lives, and that the final result is in wiser hands than ours. It must be that the great sermon of Horace Bushnell is true—that "Every man's life is a plan of God," that there is something unique, particular, and precious in each soul; some work for me to do which no one else can do—my path being pointed out by my aptitudes and limitations; and that my business is to find my place, do my work, and trust the great God. As Stevenson said:

"If I, from my spyhole, looking with purblind eyes upon the least part of a fraction of the universe, yet perceive in my own life's destiny some broken evidences of a plan and some signals of an overruling goodness, shall I then be so mad as to complain that all cannot be deciphered?"

To realise that everything noble and to be desired, by pledge of our Divine inheritance, will be ours at last, if not in the tiny arc of to-day, then in the larger cycle of time when we are ready and worthy to receive it, surely this is a truth to bring peace and courage and hope! Divine guidance! This is it, and who would not rejoice that by the decree of Heaven we really cannot proceed without it? It makes life, even my little life, more worth while, and redeems me from the awful sense of insignificance; yea, it makes us fellow-workers with the Eternal, servants of His truth, helpers of His will, the while it begets in us the faith that He will guide us home.

"From Thee, great God, we spring,
To Thee we tend,
Path, motive, guide, original
And eternal end."

PROVIDENCE

"There shall not an hair of your head perish."—
LUKE xxi. 13.

NO truth is more precious, alike for strength in life and hope in death, than the truth of the Providence of God. It is the great roof over our human world, without which we are left shelterless and exposed. Next in importance to the fact that God exists is the faith that He cares for men. When that faith grows dim life loses most of its high meaning, and men seem like motes that float in the evening sunlight doomed to die in the dark. Even when our faith in the divine care is bright we are often enough baffled, but to-day that faith is terribly tried, and men everywhere are troubled by grave questionings. Never was there so much calamity, and not a few, giving way to an impulsive illogic, have lost faith in the divine care of men.

When days are overcast we must not chide one another, but surely it is unwise to let go of a high faith when it is so sorely needed. Least of all should we give up trust in Providence until we have inquired into its purpose, its nature, and its method. Much of our confusion may come of our not having thought things through, and we may be misreading the will of the Eternal and His way of dealing with us. Of

course, not a little will remain hidden when we have thought as far as our minds can go. Inevitably so, because no man can grasp the full meaning of his own life, much less the vast plan of which it is a part. But it is not all dark, and a little calm thinking will let at least a ray of light through the shadow. Let us discuss this matter reverently, but with the utmost frankness, evading no real difficulty, seeking to know the will of Him in whose great hand we stand.

Faith in Providence means that God is our Provider, our Protector, and our Preserver. As to the first of these, there has never been any doubt. Thus much we believe if we believe in God at all. Greek and Roman writers were eloquent in their praise of the wise and bountiful provision for the welfare of the human race, but beyond that fact their faith did not go. When they tried to go further, misgiving began. They seemed to think the Supreme Being too great to be concerned with the details of the life of man: whereas in the teaching of Jesus He is too great not to do it. Hence the pathetic refrain in classic lore, "The Gods do not care." In one form or another this idea of divine indifference pursued the classic mind like a Nemesis, casting a long shadow over it. Nor has that shadow entirely vanished yet, despite the modern vision of the universal reign of law and the increasing sense of the divine indwelling. Let a great disaster befall humanity, such as that which now beshadows us, and that white-faced fear grips many a heart with an icy grasp, and almost freezes faith.

Time out of mind it has been so. Almost from the beginning man has been puzzled by the apparent indifference of God to human affairs, and His seeming silence to the cry of the race. Job, sorely smitten and afflicted, wished that he might find God and argue the matter; and Isaiah, looking up from his page, said, "Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." Even Jesus on the Cross felt, for one bitter moment, that He was forsaken of God. Of this hiding of God there is no doubt, but the real problem is to interpret the meaning of it. Manifestly, if we are to find any clue to the arrangement of life, we must first ask: What is the purpose of the life of man? What is the Eternal Will trying to do with us here upon the earth? Then the second question follows naturally: Is the arrangement of life as we know it adapted to the fulfilment of that purpose? After that there remains but one other question, and that is, how can we work with God toward the realisation of the divine ideal and end of our mortal life?

What, then, is the purpose of human life? Man thinks he was made for happiness, by which he usually means health, wealth, home, kin, friends and other things of a sort similar. But happiness cannot be the chief end of life, as is shown by the fact that those who make it their first quest do not find it. What if the true end of life be something else, something higher, fairer, more worth while, to which all these things are incidental; an ideal in which happiness itself is a means, not an end? What if man was

made to be a moral creator in a world of his own—what then? As a matter of fact, does not this describe more truly than any other term what every man knows his relation to life to be? If so, do we not have to revise some of our hasty judgments as to the plan of human life in general, and of our own lot in particular? Our life here, so far as we can divine its purpose, is a process of divine education, meant to fulfil all the powers of our nature—that is, to awaken and develop the soul. How do we know that this is the purpose of our life? Because it is the only basis upon which life is intelligible, the only view of it which gives it dignity, worth, and meaning.

If such be the purpose of life, surely we can begin to see that its arrangement is admirably adapted to the fulfilment of that purpose. What is the arrangement? Let me illustrate by telling you of the George Junior Republic, in which a man of my country found a solution of a hard social problem. He set out to help the boys who are too often left to run wild and uncared for in our great cities, especially recalcitrant boys who defy the law. His plan was to gather them together into a little community of their own, where, under wise rules, they might rule themselves, and the tiny city took its name from its founder. There they made their own laws, instituted their own courts, elected their own officers, and in this way learned citizenship by the practice of it, their wise friend living with them the while. After this manner, boys who had no sense of law or re-

sponsibility were made into noble and useful men. Something like that seems to be the plan of this big Junior Kingdom which we call the world. Man seems to have been given dominion over a tiny kingdom within the Kingdom of God, a province, so to speak, within the divine providence in which to develop his life and work out his destiny.

Under the wise restrictions of universal laws the Divine Father allows man to have a real influence and power in the making of his own world, and prefers to rule men in and through men themselves. Hence the apparent withdrawal of God, in which lies the pathos, the terror, and the glory of human life. God is never far away—"in Him we live and move and have our being"—but things are so ordered that man makes his own world; wisely if he works in harmony with the law of God, unwisely and tragically if he works in contempt of it. At bottom the only question is, whether it is wise and worth while for man to have so large a share in determining his own life? To answer that question we should have to know "the far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves," and the ultimate end in view. That we do not know; but God knows it, and He thinks the end justifies the risk and peril and tragedy of the process. Even we can see that such a plan recognises the reality and worth of the human world, and provides man with a discipline such as he could not get in any other way. Not only so, but it evokes and develops qualities not otherwise to be developed, and makes for the attainment

of a character which would else be impossible.

Here is the answer, in part at least, to the many dark questions which rise up out of this theme. Why, with a good and wise God, is not our world perfect; why weakness and disease, wrong and suffering, when with such powers abroad in the universe there might have been only happiness? Why has a state of society been allowed in which the rich rob the poor, and measureless misery and woe prevail? Why the long story of man, saturated with blood and blistered with tears? Why should Love ever be crucified by cruelty and hate? Why do the innocent suffer with the guilty, and sometimes suffer when the guilty ostensibly escape? Why should truth be on the scaffold and wrong on the throne? Why the infinite horror of war, desolating, defiling, devouring the race in an orgy of blood and lust and ruin? That is to ask, why does not God do everything for man, leaving him to live at ease with nothing to evoke what is heroic and godlike in him? Would that be a better state than the one in which we find ourselves? Why should man be cured by miracle of his ills when, by learning to cure himself, he finds not only health but the laws of health?

Surely freedom, with all the risk of using it wrongly, is better than to be puppet slaves with no real life of our own. If it be the divine intent to grow pure, patient, heroic human souls, in which His own image shall be revealed, it is possible only in a world of hardship and struggle. When once we lay hold of this fact, the sense of divine guidance in our outward

life will grow as we realise this providence of the inward life. This does not mean that God is less near, or that prayer is less real and precious; but it does help us to see why, when we ask God to do for us what He meant we should do for ourselves. He is silent. Suppose that by some portent in the sky the war should be stopped to-morrow, what then? No problem would be solved, no dispute settled, no ambition changed, no hatred softened. The roots of war would not be touched. Horrible as it is, it is better that it go to the end that man himself may learn not only its horror, but its folly and crime. God will not do what man can and ought to do. Man can prevail against iniquity. Man can overthrow injustice. Therefore, man must, and in doing it he becomes not only more just himself, but he learns that justice is the ceaseless concern of God.

Thus God works for man in and through man and seldom, if at all, in any other way. If mankind is raised to better and nobler things, if evils are abolished, it is always through high and faithful human effort. By as much as righteousness is incarnated in human character and activity, by so much does it triumph upon the earth—and no more. Truth asks for human voices to utter its message, justice needs human hands to work its bidding—sweet voices and clean hands to join the streets of the city of man to the streets of the City of God. The divine does not invade the human world for conquest. He is here, moving us with inspirations, exalting us with dreams, alluring us with visions, and stirring

us with mighty hopes; but He does not intrude, except at times to overrule huge blunders and save man from destroying himself. Such seems to be the method of Divine Providence, and it throws a revealing light over the long tragic story of man.

Looking backward, one sees no lack of divine providence, but an amazing display of the most stupid, thick-witted human improvidence. What shortsightedness, what waste, what an enormous range of woeful experience, what immeasurable suffering; and the guilty party was man, not God. Visitors to Naples tell us that vineyards are growing far up the slopes of Vesuvius well within the danger zone. This, too, notwithstanding the tragedies of successive generations, and the ruins of buried cities nearby. Nor are those peasants the only incredibly stupid men now upon earth. The neglect of sanitation, the annual harvest of infant mortality, the crowding of masses into the slums to rot, the insanity of war, the spread of loathsome diseases which pollute human love and blight its offspring—these, and a thousand other ills, spawn of selfishness and stupidity, belong under the same head. Surely man will yet learn wisdom from the failures of the past, and not go on repeating them on a vaster scale. But he is still a gambler, thinking that by some chance or magic he can escape the results of his folly.

Therefore, for the defeat of ignorance, and all the woes that issue from it, we look to God as He works through man. By the same token, we must be His fellow-workers if our life is to have epic worth and

meaning. Your life and mine may seem to signify little in so large a world, but we can be, each to the extent of his ability and all with equal fidelity, labourers together with the Eternal. Our life, though it be a day soon done, can help to make all other days better, and add its breath to the making of an atmosphere in which injustice cannot live. Also, when human providence has done its utmost, we must rely at last upon a providence wiser than our wisest and tenderest wisdom. Life was meant to be heroic. We are in jeopardy every hour, and must daily face the final bereavement which waits for every man. When we have put forth all our foresight and skill, our light shines but a little way, and we must trust Him in whose wise, protecting care we live and die. Faith is the last, as it is the first, necessity of mortal life. But is there no higher word for us to take with us as we go to the duty and danger of the morrow? Indeed, yes; and for this we turn to Him who taught us that God cares for each one of us, despite our carelessness. The faith of Jesus rested, first, upon what God is, and, second, upon what man is, revealing the love of God which cares for a son made in His likeness. Holding this faith, in every age devout men have felt themselves in the hand of a living, personal, particular providence. No one can prove such a faith to another. It is to be argued about. It is a great and blessed experience open to all, and happy are those who win it in the midst of the years. No one has put this matter better than Browning in his *Christmas Eve*:

"I can but testify
God's care for me—no more, can I—
It is but for myself I know;

. . . . . .

No mere mote's breath but teems immense
With witnessings of providence:

. . . . . .

Have I been sure, this Christmas-Eve,
God's own hand did the rainbow weave,
Whereby the truth from heaven slid
Into my soul? I cannot bid
The world admit He stooped to heal
My soul; as if in thunder-peal,
Where one heard noise and one saw flame,
I only knew He named my name."

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW

"So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died."—EZEKIEL xxiv. 18.

ALMOST no facts of a personal kind are to be found in the writings of the great Hebrew prophets. Only here and there a hint is dropped that each had his own home, and that behind the majesty of his public ministry flowed a little stream of private affection. Once or twice the curtain is lifted for a moment, and we have a glimpse of the home of the prophet, his wife, his child. The two children of Isaiah, with their gotesque names, is an example; the tragedy in the home of Hosea is another. Always it is for the same reason that the fleeting glance at the prophet in his human relations is granted us. That is to say, when his personal experience serves his purpose as a symbol or a parable of his public message.

Who does not feel his heart ache as he reads the poignant story of the bitter bereavement of Ezekiel? Though so many dim centuries have flowed past, it moves us still: the anguish of a lifetime told in the studied reticence of a few words. It is doubly sad when we remember that there was never a lonelier soul than Ezekiel, who was doomed to live in an alien land, and to deliver a message to which there

was no response. Only one consolation was left him. At the end of a day of fruitless exhortation he was assured of a welcome at home, and "the desire of his eyes" was at his side. Vague is the figure of his wife, but this we know, she was greatly loved.

Suddenly the blow fell. Whether by some dark plague, or by mysterious failure of life, with but brief warning, he was left utterly alone. The agony of parting, shared or unshared, scarred for ever his memory of that day, and as the night fell he was left desolate.

Yet his public duty could not be foregone. As if to mock his grief, he was forbidden the poor resources for the alleviation of his sorrow. He had to appear next morning as if nothing had happened, as if he did not care, as if that black day was like any other day. Never was the hand of God laid heavier upon the heart of a man. But somehow strength was given him for that day, and if he suffered as a man he triumphed as a prophet. At last his fellow exiles, startled out of their impenetrable indifference, were no longer dull of ear and intractable in argument. They became inquirers, and the message of God could be delivered. The unutterable sorrow which shut Ezekiel into lifelong solitude, and made the joy of the hearthstone but a memory, had not been in vain. Surely it is worth while to recall this tragedy, when tidings of sorrow come every morning to more than two thousand homes in this land alone. Private griefs are the price

of the awakening of a nation and the liberty of the world, and God thinks it worth while.

Sorrow is more spiritual than pain, more exalting and more revealing—albeit the two are often interwoven in the web of our lives. While we cannot fathom all the mystery of sorrow, so far from being a cloud over reason, it illumines it, and may become a source of insight. This at least is true: whatever is higher than happiness is revealed to us only by the loss of happiness, and that which is highest of all finds little place in us until we have walked the sorrowful way. An old mystic said, speaking out of his deep and tender wisdom, "Were there anything nobler than sorrow, God would have redeemed us by it." Among the qualities which sorrow should foster in us let me name three—chief of which is Courage. Mark Rutherford was right when he said that courage is the root of every virtue, one of the greatest possible qualities of character. Who has purged himself of fear can look straight into the face of life and walk with soul erect and untroubled. Louise Wilcox, in her little essay on "The Road to Joy," which she is wise enough to know leads through sorrow, writes these golden words:

"When you come to think of it, courage is the one virtue never to be spared. Gentleness may be swallowed up in righteous indignation, pity in justice; truth may be set to one side by tenderness or tact. Only courage is unalterable, and stands by us and never betrays us. The body may sicken, but the indomitable spirit rides the storm. The brave soul may blunder, but never irretrievably; or if, worn

out, he must fall at last, he falls alone. Only the weakling drags others down in his ruin. Courage steadies the hand and clears the brain. It changes the odds. The brave soul has three chances to one. Once we have learned the trick, it is easy to be brave. Live one minute at a time. Surely you can stand a minute. If you give up, it is because you cannot bear the years, next month, not because you cannot stand the moment now. It may all change in a moment. It is so the brave man lives. Courage, after all, is but an adjunct of simplicity of mind, singleness of purpose."

What most of us are seeking is security, if not for ourselves, at least for those whom we love more than we love our own lives. But security is just the one thing a human being cannot have. Indeed, it is the damnation of him who gets it. It disintegrates a man. Why it is so is hard to know, but it is so. What we need is not security, but a mastery over life, and only courage can give it to us. Each of us should take every reasonable precaution, but we must never forget that life is the great adventure. Not love, not marriage, not business—they are only chapters in the book. The great thing is to take the road fearlessly, to have courage, to live out our life at its best. Mastery! It comes only with the knowledge of our power to endure; no one is safe until he can stand everything that can happen to him. Courage is security, and there is no other kind. It is not sorrow, but the fear of it, that unnerves us. When a man has felt the worst life can inflict, he is free. There is nothing then for him to fear, and he can be a helper of his trembling fellow mortals.

But to courage he must add that sweet healing grace of sympathy, without which no one can really help his fellows. From his sorrow Ezekiel learned sympathy, and when he was sent to the captives by the river Chebar, and found them hanging their harps on the willows, unable to sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land, he knew how to take his place dumbly by their side: "I sat where they sat." Surely that is the perfection of sympathy, to be able to sit where another sits, to see from his point of view, and to suffer with him in the silence of a sorrow too great for words. The bitter bereavement of the prophet prepared him for a ministry of sympathy, than which there is no service more needed in a world scarred by griefs and graves. The instance of John Bright is familiar. Bereaved of his young wife, he received a visit of condolence from Cobden. What words of sympathy Cobden may have uttered we do not know, but after a time he looked up and said: "Bright, there are thousands and thousands of homes in England at this moment where wives and mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never stop until the Corn Laws are repealed." And so it came about; he thought of others and bore his grief, and his sympathy lent wings to his words.

Often Ibsen seems to lose his wings and gives us only a sociological clinic, but when he wrote *Little Eyolf* his insight was deep and revealing. It is the drama of the tragical awakening of two intensely

self-centred beings to the moral responsibilities of life. As usual in an Ibsen play, the drama has begun before the curtain rises. Alfred Allmers has been writing a great book, but he concludes that the best of a man goes into his thinking, and that what he puts on paper is of little worth. His wife, whose intense absorption in him is partly sensual and wholly selfish, is jealous of their little boy, whose coming was unwelcomed and unwanted. Little Eyolf is a cripple, whose infirmity may be traced to the sin of his parents, and who is unloved save by the warm heart of his aunt. A frightful catastrophe falls and the boy is drowned, but not before the awakening of his father had begun.

"Can you conceive the meaning of a thing like this that has been done to Rita and me?" groans the father. "The meaning, I say, for, after all, there must be a meaning in it. Life, existence, destiny, cannot be utterly meaningless."

Soon dim meanings begin to glimmer through their woe, though at first they can only see that "sorrow makes us wicked and hateful." They begin to wonder whether the dead boy had been anything more to them than a "little stranger boy," whether he had not meant more to the gentle aunt who had taken him to her heart the moment he became a cripple; whether they had not gone on demanding more of life and of each other, and giving nothing. There follows a scene which, for reproaches, accusations, and pitiless self-torture, has hardly another to surpass it. Blind, bitter, and hateful, they grope

their way slowly to the word Retribution, and they begin to see that life means giving, not getting. Sensualism and selfishness begin to give way; sorrow ceases to mean only deprivation, and they know that their boy was not born, nor did he die in vain. The sun sinks beneath the waters of the fiord, and a crying comes to them from the village of fisher folk on the beach below their villa—the crying of children neglected and abused. The mother-heart of Rita opens wide, and she vows to take into her desolate home those little ones whose homes are desolate.

"I will take them to my heart in our little Eyolf's place. There is an empty place within me and I must try to fill it with something—with something like love."

It all moves slowly, tenderly, softly to a climax so exquisite that the pathos of it makes the heart ache. It is very solemn, very beautiful, very wonderful. The red sun sinks into the sea. The white moonlight envelops husband and wife as they look out from the terrace of the villa upon the waters beneath which their boy sleeps. They have found peace, "a Sabbath peace," the wife calls it, in the only way that mortals can ever find it; that is, by being lifted, through sorrow, into a wider sympathy and service. Such is the law of the world as read by all who walk the shadowy way with courage and faith. It is not tears, nor yet the clenched hand and compressed lips and the grim, tense silence that speak of a grief bravely borne and triumphed over. No, it is when from a secretly aching heart there is sent

the impulse to stretch out a heartening hand to another, and when words of sympathy flow from the lips that might have been written with their own grief—it is then that the victory is won.

If taken aright, sorrow has a deep religious mission; it gives us the power of insight, which adds a new dimension to life, unveiling what else would be dim. So all seers agree, from the far time when the teachers of India said that before the eyes can see clearly, they must be washed with tears; and before the voice can speak the highest truth, it must have lost its power to wound. That this is true, the life of the prophet Hosea—the Whittier of Hebrew poetry—bears witness. All through his prophecy we can trace the tragedy of his broken home, the infidelity of his wife, and how his renewed trust in women was shattered—how his love was wounded to death, but still lived on in pity. There is no other explanation adequate of his amazing insight into the thwarted tenderness of God for His people. When rightly read, the story that seems too shocking is the unveiling of sorely tried love, both in man and in God. The cost of revelation is laid bare before our eyes. Of many a page of the Bible it may be said, if the love of God inspired it, the sorrow of man was needed before it could be written down.

Courage, Sympathy, Insight; power to endure, a heart to feel, and eyes to see—if sorrow can give us these things, it has a benign and redeeming ministry to the soul. Not all win such trophies from their sorrow, but it is possible for all to do so. Fire burns

wood, it hardens clay, it softens steel. One man is ruined by a great sorrow, another is redeemed; it depends on how we meet it, and in what spirit. Weak yielding is as fatal as bitter rebellion, but if we meet our sorrow as George Matheson met his, there will be granted us a sense of "the love that will not let us go," and a new fellowship with Him who, being made perfect through suffering, became our Leader and our Saviour.

THE GOD OF COMFORT

"The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble."—2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

SOME one has said that the deep difference between men is their capacity for sympathy, and that the future is with those who have most of it. If that be so, surely St. Paul must be reckoned as one of the greatest of men, because his heart was a fountain of sympathy always overflowing. There was something haunting in the pity of the man, something healing in his tenderness, and the older he grew the richer it became. In nothing was he more like his Master, whose he was, and whom he served, and to reproduce whose life was his sacred ambition. Hence the words of this text, which touch the heart and melt it, turning its sorrow into song.

If taken out of their context, one would hardly guess that these words were written to a Church perplexed, divided, torn by scandal, and threatened with disaster, many of whose members had criticised the Apostle cruelly. Even so, instead of taking his critics to task, he strikes the note of comfort and compassion, as he would do if he were speaking to the Church of to-day, so sorely tried, so baffled

and confused. Too many hard words have been aimed at the Church. Criticism is too easy; anybody can indulge in it. Whatever may be said of the shortcomings of the Church, and no doubt they are many, it has not failed in its attitude of compassion towards the world-tragedy. And just now its ministry lies there, or nowhere. What we need is the triumphant faith of St. Paul, the song of one who had found a medicine for all ills, a solace for all sorrows, in the God of Comfort.

Here is a vision of God, the compassionate and merciful Comforter of humanity; and what a field there is for His benign activity to-day! Never was the world so full of tragedy, horror, and atrocity. The nations are wrapped in shadow and all life is darkened. The earth is stained with blood. Calamities sweep whole continents. Every household, every heart is pierced and suffering. Strong men go about the streets lonely, bewildered, yearning, wounded. The world is bereaved. There are thousands of dying children, and mothers who want to die. Death, disaster, and famine are comrades. Our human march is a requiem, and the sounds that fill the earth are the sounds of battle and mourning. At such a time, and in such a world, we must turn to Him who can comfort us, so that we may be able to comfort others. Across the ages, like the tones of an evening bell, come the words of the Prophet to the pulpit of to-day: "Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith your God!" What is comfort? Truly it is more than ease, more than consolation,

more than those influences which succour distress, soothe suffering, and alleviate grief. It is not simply a stoic resignation which submits, but the strength to bear and triumph. Unfortunately the finer, firmer meaning of the word has been well-nigh lost in the idea of consoling. To comfort, in the true sense, is to make another strong with our strength; to share our strength with him, because at the moment he has less than he needs and we have more than the occasion requires. Turning his thoughts away from his sorrow, reminding him that he is not alone in his grief, and recalling the memory of happy days agone or the hope of better days to be —surely that is a benign ministry. But we must return to the deeper meaning of comfort at a time when it is so much needed, if so that we may learn to give somewhat of ourselves to those smitten and afflicted. The derivation of the word is eloquent: it means that which we take alongside to support and sustain us —just as the word "tribulation" in the text means that which rubs, irritates, and makes the heart sore. An English essayist once said that if he could be reborn and live on earth again, he thought he should like to be a tug-boat. Of course, a tug-boat is very small, and its labour is confined to the harbour, but it can answer a signal for aid, and tow a great ship out of trouble into safety—coming alongside in time of need. To-day men are signalling for aid, silently, pathetically—longing for Something or Some one to come alongside and help. Now, God is ever

alongside each of us, closer than we realise, and, as a fact, we depend upon Him more than we are aware.

> "And thus by day and night unconsciously
> The heart lives by that faith the lips deny,
> God knoweth why."

Yes, unconsciously; for it is not so much that men deny God, but that they do not realise how much they trust Him in whom they live and move. There is in humanity a great unconfessed faith, to interpret which is a large part of the ministry of a teacher of religion. Every man has a mystic sense of God—dim, perhaps, but none the less real because dim—by which he is sustained in the often strange medley of his experience. All about us to-day we see folk who talk nothing of religion, and yet they display a sublime and heroic faith which neither they nor we can explain. Even those of us who fancy that we are religious often attribute to Time, and not to God, the benign influence by which a great sorrow is healed and at last changed into something rich and revealing. In answer to the question of a young clergyman as to her religious belief, Lizzie Case replied that it was the inherited faith of her fathers—the Friends. Whereupon the young zealot said that she was an unbeliever and would be lost. "Never!" she cried. "If there were no true God to trust I should still believe in the gods of the woods and the streams. In fact, I believe in everything—in God, nature, man—there is no unbelief!" And yet

she it was who wrote the lines, one stanza of which has just been quoted:

"There is no unbelief!
Who plants a seed beneath the sod,
And waits to see it push away the clod,
Trusts he in God.

There is no unbelief!
Whoever looks on when dear eyelids close,
And dares to live when life has only woes,
God's comfort knows."

Thus God comforts us in myriad ways beyond our tracing, even when we are unaware of His presence, as these lovely lines tell us. To be more specific, He comforts us, first of all, by the fact that He is. Often we are not able to follow His footsteps; but the fact that He exists, that His Hand is on the helm, that His will is working through seeming chaos —such a faith gives us strength to live. To a child wakened in the night and frightened by the darkness, the voice of its father in the next room is a comfort—just to know that he is there is enough. Just so, to know that God is there is the comfort and solace of mankind in the night of time: which may be the meaning of the mysteriously august and haunting name of God in the earlier books of the Bible, where He is called the great "I AM." Herein lies the bitter tragedy of atheism—there is no one there, and man is left to wander in a labyrinth homeless and alone. Surely there is no keener pain than a

loss of the sense of the reality of God, doubly so for a refined and sensitive nature, as witness the words of Nietzsche lamenting the loss of his right to pray —words which move like the overture of a great symphony of despair:

"Never more wilt thou pray, never more worship, never more repose in boundless trust—thou renouncest the privilege of standing before an ultimate wisdom, an ultimate mercy, an ultimate power, and unharnessing thy thoughts—thou hast no constant watcher and friend for thy seven solitudes—thou livest without gazing upon a mountain that hath snow on its head and fire at its heart—there is now no redeemer for thee, no one to promise a better life—there is no more reason in that which happens, no love in that which shall happen to thee—thy heart hast now no resting-place, where it needeth only to find, not to seek—thou refusest any ultimate peace, thou desirest the eternal recurrence of war and peace—man, of thy self-denial, wilt thou deny thyself all this? Whence wilt thou gain the strength?"

Few have had the courage thus to face the raw horror that lies at the end of the logic of denial, and the bereavement which it brings. Against this ultimate woe rises the fact of God, and because God is there, even when we cannot feel the touch of His great hand, we know that purity is not a delusion, that justice is not a fiction, and that hope is not a dream. Can we know anything beyond the bare fact that there is a Power not ourselves which shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will? Manifestly! Next to the fact that God lives is the faith that He

cares for us, and that all suffering comes finally to be endured by Him—the deep truth over which Dora Greenwell was wont to ponder. How can we know the sympathy of God, and that in all our afflictions He is afflicted? The flowers do not tell us this truth. They are as happy at a funeral as on a bridal altar. They do not know, they do not care. Nor do the birds tell it to us, although if it were not so it is hard to know why the birds sing. They were singing that day when I witnessed an unforgettable scene in Flanders—the burial of two hundred men at once! They did not know, they did not care. How can we know that there is one who knows, who cares, who feels for us and with us in our woe?

Sometime you must go out of your way, if you have not already done so, and study the memorial to sweet Margaret MacDonald in Lincoln's Inn Fields. She is seated with her arms outstretched, her robes so falling over her arms as to suggest a brooding mother-bird, and underneath the hovering wings little children nestle and play. Whence comes the brooding, hallowing love embodied in the life of that lovely woman, whose image recalls the attitude of the Master as He wept over the city of the people of his fathers? That is to ask, What is the source of this stream of pity which softens and sweetens the world, seeking to melt the hardness of its winter into the joy of summer? Is man an exotic upon the earth? Or is he a child of nature and a little brother of the stars? What wells up in his

heart must be in the heart of nature, else she could not give it to her son. Thus when we seek the source of the love that hallows human life we find its fountain in the compassionate heart of God, whence it came and to which it returns, whose love is the final solace of the world. Here is the basis of the faith that God is more than Power, more than Mind, and that there is, and must be, a heart of tenderness behind the seeming hardness of life and death.

Hence the words of the Master as He sat at table with His friends in the Upper Room, in which the very soul of His religion is revealed: "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me"—that is, believe that God is like Him, in Him, revealing Himself in and through Him. What more do we need to know for our strengthening and fortifying, for our support and upholding, even in the direst woe that can befall us? If we can be sure of God in Christ, there is nothing that we cannot bear! With St. Paul this assurance was no mere theory, nor yet a vision, but a verity attested by those inward realisations that belong to the life of faith and service. Here lay the secret of his triumphant and rejoicing discovery of the reality, the richness, the radiance of God the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, by whose grace he was sustained in his private sorrows and in his heroic and dedicated ministry. Hence, also, his insight into the purpose and uses of comfort, "That we may be able to comfort them

which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Sympathy, one feels, was not a ruling native trait with St. Paul, as it is with those who hear always "the great stream of human tears falling through the shadows of the world." It was a grace learned in the school of Christ, and made perfect through suffering. Perhaps he found this secret the more surely just because he did not seek it selfishly and for his own sorrow alone. Nor should we. However deeply wounded we may be, however sorely we feel the need of healing for our own hurt and heartache, if we are to find comfort in any satisfying measure it must be by ministering the comfort of God to others. Here is the finest of all arts, asking for all that a man has of tact, of tenderness, of skill, and of fortitude, so difficult is it to know what to say and how to say it. All words seem metallic, futile, and worthless, yet we must not be silent; much less forget those little tokens which help to break the awful stillness which death makes when it passes by. Any little token—a gift of flowers, a handclasp, a tender, strong word—is like the answer to a signal of distress, and God, from whom it comes, sends it through you to His needy child.

Who that lives to-day does not long for a finer art of sympathy, some exquisite skill and power whereby to lift wounded souls into the consecrating comfort of God! There is not a pulpit in this land that does not yearn for such a power, seeking it by prayer and tears, beseeching an outpouring of the

Spirit of the Comforter equal to "the Pentecost of Calamity" which has descended upon us. Oh! let us seek the God of all Comfort who, imaged as a Dove, broods over our sorrowing humanity, that so we may be able to comfort those who are smitten and afflicted in a world at war.

Like the dew, Thy peace distil;
Guide, subdue our wayward will,
Things of Christ unfolding still,
Comforter Divine.
Gentle, awful, holy Guest,
Make Thy temple in each breast;
There Thy presence be confessed,
Comforter Divine.
With us, for us, intercede,
And with voiceless groanings plead
Our unutterable need,
Comforter Divine.

THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

"Neither shall there be any more pain."—Rev. xxi. 4.

SURELY there is not upon this earth a book more compassionate, and therefore none more truly wise, than our great old Bible. It knows the life of man, how beset it is with ills, and through all its pages there breathes a sweet-toned pity that is not only haunting but healing. And of all its prophecies, not one touches us more deeply than this vision of a time when sorrow and suffering shall cease. It is uttered in a few simple words, but they are among the most beautiful and appealing ever written. Indeed, it is the only definite and distinct prophecy in the Bible of the final end of pain. There is nothing else so strong, so clear, and it is good to know that the book which feels the pain of life so keenly sees to the end of it.

Such an assurance is sorely needed in this world at all times, but peculiarly so just now when the whole earth is one vast hospital, and the fact of pain is so much with us. Of course, the problem of pain is new only in its magnitude and intensity. Time out of mind our suffering humanity has asked, of the surrounding mystery, Why? The contemplation of this question produced Buddhism, one of the three world-religions. Greek drama is full of it. It is the

thesis of the book of Job, the one great poetic drama of the Hebrews. Its most perfect expression, perhaps, is in the line of the Psalmist: "I cried unto Thee, O Lord, and unto the Lord I made supplication. What profit is there in my blood?" What a question in the light of the far-flung battle line! To-day men are acutely aware of the presence of pain, and they are troubled by it as never before.

Indeed, this was true before the awful apocalypse of war which has heightened everything and evoked all the old issues anew. Along about the middle of the last century the world seemed to wake up to the fact of suffering, and the horror of it. Of a sudden Darwin put forth a thesis which staggered alike the intellect and heart of the race. It was an appalling revelation of pain, of untold ages of blood and terror through which creation had already passed, with a new sense of the place of suffering in the order of life. The whole of nature, from a dewdrop to a star, was seen to be a battlefield. Huxley declared that he could imagine no sadder story than the history of sentient life upon the earth. War seemed to be the law of the world, and suffering its life. Tennyson summed up the feeling in his phrase, "Nature red in tooth and claw." What this disclosure meant as a shock to faith we of this age can hardly realise. Happily, a deeper knowledge of nature has brought us to a better mood, but the shadow is still with us.

Tender hearts there have been in all times, but it seems agreed that the man of to-day is more highly

organised, and therefore more sensitive to pain, than were the men of former times. When one reads the story of the Middle Ages, to go no further back, one is amazed equally by the brutality and the callousness of men. When a feudal magnate was suspected of treason to his overlord, all his servants were seized and tortured to death in order to extract evidence of his guilt. If, after the last shriek had died away, no evidence was forthcoming, he was congratulated by his peers. No one seemed to think of the poor wretches who had died in agony. King James I. presided over a case of torture for witchcraft the details of which are too horrible for description, many of which were suggested by the king himself. Imagine the king who reigns to-day being able or willing to witness such a scene, much less enjoy it! Mark Twain doubted his ability to see even a vivisector vivisected, because his own feelings would not allow him to get all the joy out of it which he felt he was entitled to.

Naturally, then, owing to the increased sensitiveness of the race, the problem of pain in relation to religious faith has assumed larger proportions in our day. It was not so with our foresires. In all their elaborate debates they seldom mention, much less discuss, the question. Sin vexed their thinking not less than their living, but it did not often occur to them to question the goodness of God because of the sufferings of the world, whereas with us it is almost the first thing we think of. Much of the scepticism of the last century had its sources in the mystery of

pain pressing upon sensitive hearts. One example out of many is the terrible indictment of the cruelty of nature by John Stuart Mill, which is a classic. Perhaps it is here, in a deep and sensitive heart, that we must look for the secret of what has been called, albeit not very wisely, the pessimism of Thomas Hardy. However that may be, to-day in many a heart there is the fear that our highest faiths are too good to be true in presence of the vast woe of life.

What has Science to say about the problem of pain? For one thing, and a very wise thing, it warns us not to read our own sensitive feelings back into the lower forms of life, as that only exaggerates a mystery which is large enough without being magnified; also, it reminds us that nature does not waste her methods; whatever she may do with her materials, and therefore that pain has a purpose and a service in the order of things. Indeed, it has a definite and benign purpose as a signal of distress telling us that something is wrong, and must be set right. Without it the race would have perished long ago. Sooner or later every wrong step, every false road, ends in pain and is revealed by pain. So that pain, instead of being a wanton torture, is a wise monitor, and even if the spiritual urge was strong enough in man to impel him upward, he would still need liability to pain to teach him the right way. Nor is that all. Science insists that susceptibility to pain is never developed beyond the point where it is needed, and when it has served its end it ceases.

Such teaching is worth keeping in mind and thinking about.

If sensitiveness to pain is never developed where it is not needed, it must be that the increased sensitiveness to it in our age is needed for the nurture of qualities not otherwise to be acquired. Surely this is a ray of light; and also, since pain ceases when it has done its work, we have a hint of why it still exists and a prophecy of the time when it will be no more. Pain is useful as a protection, as a punishment for past folly, as a spur to new effort, and as a warning against future error. So far—and it is not very far—the way is clear; but when we think of the seemingly needless tortures of the innocent, and the apparently gratuitously agonising forms of pain, we are oppressed. There remains a mystery into which we cannot fully enter, as Benson taught us in "The Angel of Pain," a study in symbolism shadowing forth many things. Merival in that story is a hermit who left London to live with nature, and the longer he lived with nature, and the longer he lived in the wild the more he became aware of mysteries he could not solve. Faint and far off he hears the pipes of Pan playing the Hymn of All Things, and he knows that no mortal can behold Pan without dying of panic. Still, he dreams that Pan will come to him, revealing in a blinding flash of joy how pain and death, which are everywhere, are a part of the divine perfection. Whether this was what he learned or not, nobody knows; for his friend, hearing a terrible cry in the night, ran to him and found him dead

—whether of too much joy or too much sorrow, no one knew.

Nevertheless, we are not left without light, and it may be doubted if any one has written of "The Mystery of Pain" with more insight and wisdom than James Hinton, an English physician born in Reading well-nigh a hundred years ago. The man himself is of interest, not only for his service as a man of science but for the seerlike quality of his mind. He was a medical mystic. Those who knew him intimately write of him with unusual reverence, as of a man in whom there was a haunting loveliness not often seen. His essay in study of Pain is rather hard to read, but it is rewarding. Its message to the sufferer may be stated briefly: "My thought was that all which we feel as painful is really giving something that our fellows are better for, even though we cannot trace it." There are many facts to show that suffering has a value beyond the sufferer, as when a mother suffers for her child, a martyr for his faith, a hero for his country; and these facts, he holds, justify a like faith in instances where no such value can be traced. Much depends, of course, on the way in which we bear pain, whether selfishly or not, since we have within us the power to transfigure it if we will. That is to say, Pain, plus unselfishness, equals joy. Hinton does not explain all the mystery of pain—no mortal can—but he does make it more bearable by showing how it may be turned into good for ourselves and for others.

Some of us may have known much of pain, but

most of us are standing outside the problem, talking about it, fearful of it, sometimes whining about it. When we appeal from our own sensitiveness to the lives of the great sufferers, wonderful is the answer that comes back. Oddly enough, the great sufferers have been, for the most part, the great believers. With them pain is a fact in favour of faith. They find a secret, unguessed joy at the heart of pain, which, as George Eliot said, "we can only tell from pain by its being what we should choose before everything." Such is the testimony of a host of heroic souls. Stevenson was one; Elizabeth Browning was another, and she never regretted having learned in suffering what she taught in song. Anguish instructed her in joy, and solitude in the value of society. The great sufferers do not deny pain—still less seek it—but they master it, making it serve for the enrichment of the soul; and therein they are wise. For progress is not going to abolish suffering; it is inherent in the discord between sense and soul, dream and deed. Therefore if it falls to our lot let us face it and vanquish it, finding in it something sacrificial both for ourselves and for the world.

No one ever stated the ministry of pain more vividly than did that mysterious Fra Ugo Bassi, who appeared in the streets of Rome in the early years of the last century. He was master of a strange eloquence which stirred men deeply. When he spoke of courage men followed him straight into the cholera hospitals and stayed there until the plague was ended. All that remains of his life is a frag-

ment of sermon in a hospital to those smitten with mortal ill. Fra Ugo took for his text, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches." He showed how the vine does not grow as it wills, but is tied to a stake like a martyr. When it begins to feel the sweetness of life, then comes the husbandman with his pruning-hook, leaving it bleeding and sore. At last comes the vintage, and out of its suffering and striving red rivulets of wine flow to bless and to refresh. Then the preacher turned to the long rows of hospital beds on either side, and asked, "Do I need to draw the lesson of this life?" Manifestly not, since it is as plain as day, and attested by the facts in every field of life, that "whoso suffers most hath most to give." The Roman Church, with its deep insight into the saying of St. Paul, "I fill up that which is behind in the afflictions of Christ," discovers in pain a power which in the extent of its working can be but dimly guessed at; a mighty power of expiation ever joining itself to the one Atonement—inseparable, indeed, from that Atonement, which has given value to all suffering so that not even a moth is "shrivell'd in a fruitless fire." Lacordaire, in words that do not at once reveal their awful depth of meaning, speaks of the mute and many sufferers of earth as being "the obscure victims of the Cross which has saved them." Deeper than that we cannot go into the mystery of pain. The revelation of our religion was made through it. When we look upon the Cross we know for a brief time that the turbid ebb and flow of human misery is not meaningless. There is One who

knows, One who feels, One who suffers with us in our pain; and of this faith was born the vision of the Christian seer on the isle that is called Patmos: "And God Himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST

"And Jesus saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them."—MARK vi. 34.

NOTHING is more interesting than a crowd. It attracts us, not from curiosity alone, but because we love the company of our kind and the joy that comes of sharing our feelings with our fellows. Often I go out into a London street just to watch the endless flow of people, and people, and people. I know none of them, yet I know them all, for are they not my kith and kin, with hopes and fears and faiths like my own? I am won by some and repelled by others for what their faces seem to tell me of their inward selves—faces that are like glimpses of a landscape in the mist, suggesting hidden vales and hills. And there they are, all trying to go somewhere, to do somewhat, to escape from something or other, or seeking that which is to be found in this world in no satisfying quantity or quality, if at all.

No matter how carelessly or indifferently or humorously one enters a crowd, if he be a thoughtful man, he will soon be watching it broodingly. There are faces that tell a tale of evil or suffering, cheeks scarred by sorrow or sin, betraying the deep-lying pathos of life which perhaps the sufferers have come

out into the crowded place to forget. Thus a crowd touches us, doubly so for me at least, when I see it by a seaside, against the grey background of old ocean that whispers, or thunders, or slides and slithers, or tumbles and crashes on the beach. The multitude will pass and vanish, but the grey sea stays, and will swallow them all back whence they came. Now it is ferocious, now felinely friendly, yet we need not be afraid of it, because it is of kin to us, restless as our souls are restless.

Thoughts such as these help us to interpret the text and the Gospel of Mark, from which it is taken, not inaptly called the Gospel of the Multitude. To read this book, the briefest and boldest of the four Gospels, is to look out over vast crowds of men and women, to hear the tramp, tramp of thousands of feet and the confused murmur of myriads of voices. Now a crowd affects people differently; some are amused by it, some disgusted, some entertained, some wearied, some harassed—but the writer of this Gospel tells us how Jesus felt toward a crowd. The words have all the marks of an eyewitness who had watched the Master when He was surrounded by a throng, and found His face more fascinating than the multitude, seeing it touched and lighted by an all-pitying, ineffable, yearning gentleness; and he never forgot that expression. If only some artist could have painted that face when He was deeply touched by the presence of a multitude, it would help us to know how an Eternal Love looks upon our pilgrim human race.

Jesus looked upon a crowd, not with indifference, not with contempt, not with mere curiosity, but with an exquisite and moving compassion. He saw the joys of men and women, their follies, their ways and habits, as His parables reveal; but His deepest concern must have been to discern the work of God in their hearts—a work always going on, always important, as various as the infinite varieties of man, as urgent as their need, as continuing as the return of night and day. We talk of the crowd, but there are no indistinguishable masses of men in the thought of God. He sees you and me, every man, woman and little child, as an individual pupil in His school of life. What we can only guess at as we look into the faces, not of strangers only, but of the members of our own household, He knows down to the bottom of the soul. There are no strangers to the heart of God, no outcasts to His mercy, save such as would make themselves castaways if they could—lost to themselves, but not lost to Him. Perhaps we make a mistake when we lump together the ways of God with men under one vast word, Providence, when we should use a more personal word, as Jesus did, confident that He loves each one with a love founded on a knowledge that embraces all that live.

Now, compassion lies at the root of all noble religion, the pity of God for man and of man for man. The chapters of the Koran, all of them, begin with the words: "In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful." The noble religion of Buddha numbers five hundred million votaries, and pity is the

keynote of it all—pity for man bound to the Wheel of Life, distracted by desire, restless, unhappy. So the compassion of Christ, so profound, so haunting, so healing, showed that He stood in the sublime tradition of those who feel for man and seek to lead him, as Good Shepherds, thither where He seeks to go. More than sympathy, more than pity, compassion enters into the very soul of humanity, feels what it feels, knows its yearnings, its perplexities, even the agony of its sin, and understands while it blesses; understands not only the facts but the causes. It is love at its highest, its deepest, its purest, as Balzac has shown in *The Alchemist.*

There is, however, a deep difference between Jesus and Buddha. If Buddha pitied men because they live, tormented by the fever of desires that can never be realised—and vain when realised—Jesus was moved with compassion because they do not really live. Life to Jesus was so wonderful beyond words, so deep, so full of divine meanings, and withal so close at hand, that He pitied the blindness that did not see it and the sin that defiled it. The people thronged about Him with their hungry hearts, their bewildered minds, their despairing hopes of this world and that to come, their sorrows, their weariness, their life-sapping diseases, and His heart went out in a tide of pity. He saw them wandering, forlorn, in a world full of the love and truth of God, harassed by fears of life, fear of death, fear of God, fear of the unexplained mystery of the future, and it touched Him to tears. Da Vinci has shown us a

Christ too much burdened by His own tragedy; but when the perfect artist has come, he will portray a sympathising Christ, a ministering Christ—a face with the finest lines of sensibility and eyes of fathomless, unutterable pity.

With us, alas, pity is so helpless, but not so the compassion of Christ. It is creative. Deeper than sin, deeper than its deadening power. He saw something divine in every man, something struggling upwards seeking the sunlight; and that precious thing He sought to reach—willing to forgive anything if only He could touch it to new life and hope. So He sees us still, sees that in the sinner of which the sinner is unconscious, or only vaguely aware; sees us as heirs of a life which is not yet ours—dreams of us as we are to be, imputes to us a beauty not yet our own. And thus, by His compassion, He creates within us a new spirit which blooms in new desires and aims and endeavours, and works out our salvation with us, both to will and to do. Down to the lowest depths His compassion goes, feeling the misery of sin even when the sinner does not feel it, knowing how it came to be, through some defect of will, some heat of passion, some desire perverted by self-will, some dulness of soul; knows it all and makes it His cross until we are redeemed from it.

Surely such compassion is a revelation of God, whose mercy endureth for ever. There is a famous painting by a Flemish artist, Leomprels, entitled "Humanity and Destiny," in which we are shown the human multitudes with hands uplifted—some

knotted with toil, some bejewelled, some emaciated with ill-health, old hands blue-veined and trembling, hands young and strong, some uplifted in prayer, same waving red flags, lovers' hands clasped, mothers lifting the chubby hands of children, seeking blessings. And when we look up to where the hands are reaching we see a benign face in the sky, from which radiates the light that warms and blesses. It is the face of God the Father of men, whose compassion never faileth. Humanity now, humanity for ever, is in the keeping of One most truly revealed in Him who went about doing good, laying His hand upon us in sickness, His fingers upon our eyes, breathing His blessing upon us, taking us by the hand as we sink, entering our homes, cooling our fever, teaching, chiding, enfolding, upholding, inviting, encouraging, drawing, controlling, commanding. So that when we think of God and wonder what He is, it always comes back to our thinking of Jesus infinitely enlarged in every way.

Of course, this is no new Gospel in the City Temple. The founder and first minister of this church was a noble preacher of the Compassion of Christ, as his venerable expounder has recalled to our minds in a fruitful and rewarding book.[1] He was deeply moved by the Greek word used by St. Paul to describe Christ, the Great High Priest, and rendered "who can have compassion," finding in it the foundations on which this Temple rests. In exegesis of that Greek word, he said, preaching to the City

[1] *The Spiritual Life,* by Alexander Whyte.

Temple congregation in 1640, preaching in his searching and deep-probing manner:

"This Greek word is exceedingly emphatical. It means much more than the English rendering 'who can have compassion,' means. For when this great Greek word of the Apostle is rightly rendered and rightly laid to heart, it reveals to us that Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, not only has a great compassion in His heart, but that He has a special and a particular compassion measured out according to every individual man's measure of need, according to every individual man's specialty, and particularity, and singularity, and secrecy of need. . . . I need my great High Priest to have not only all the abilities and all the attributes and all the great qualifications that you need in Him, but, over and above all that, I, Thomas Goodwin, your minister, need Him always urgently and, indeed, sometimes absolutely agonisingly, for certain special and secret and altogether individual needs of my own; needs of my own that no other mortal man knows anything about, nor would believe even if I confessed them to him; needs of my own that are so exceptionally and so exclusively my own that no other man before me, or now around me, or coming after me, will ever have needs exactly like them. It is absolutely inconceivable to me that any other man, past, present, or to come, could ever have just that combination and just that concentration and just that incidence of sin and sorrow that I have, together with all the temporal and spiritual intricacies of all kinds, of which both my heart and my life are brimful. No other man in all this sinful and sorrowful city of London has just my crosses and cups and thorns in the flesh. Not one man of you all."

So Goodwin spoke, in his great home-coming way, in the long ago; and his words come back to us across the years, telling what every minister of the City Temple must have felt. But the compassion of Christ is equal to all our temporal needs, all our immortal longings, all that we can think or feel or suffer, if we, like our first minister, "believe that it is so." Not one of us but feels that we have needs as unique and individual as his, separating us from all others; but the love of God in Christ can find its way into our lonely isolation, and heal us. There was a woman in a George Eliot story who was unhappy when dying, not because she was dying, but because she feared her husband would not find the key to the blue closet upstairs. Every one of us has a Blue Closet in his heart. No one knows what is hidden there, and we take the key with us when we go away. But God knows, and the compassion of Christ can reach even to that lonely corner of the heart and cleanse it, driving out the grey shadows that linger there. O my soul remember!

Pity is the quality which most deeply touches man, because it the most resembles God. How wonderful is the pity of Shakespeare, a pity that reaches beyond man and touches nature! It fills with its flood of light the whole expanse of his works, and is perhaps what makes them so living and healing. Even the characters that least deserve it receive it without stint, because it is the very spirit of his genius. At last all rancour is obliterated, all sin forgiven. The last word which hovers over the final chord of his

symphony is that of the luminous Spirit of the Air, with which Ariel inspires Prospero:

> The rare action is
> In virtue than in vengeance.

Here is the token of true greatness of soul. As Emerson said of Lincoln, "his heart was as great as the world, but there was no room in it for the memory of a wrong." Such words make real to us the magnanimity and compassion of Jesus, which reached its highest glory in that sublimest of all prayers which embraced His enemies; "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Even so, because we are followers of the compassionate Christ we must be compassionate one toward another, even toward our enemies in their madness and shame. Whatever may be our theology, or our lack of it, unless we have the spirit of Christ we are none of His. God help us! He knows what unutterable things we have suffered and what feelings are in our hearts! He knows that we are human, and if we cannot all at once forgive, much less forget, He will grant us the compassion to which we are unable to attain, and teach us how to win love out of hate and good out of infinite pain. Time will help to heal, for the longer one lives in this world the more does love and pity increase and attachment to party or opinion decrease. Yet, in the long last, both friend and foe alike will be drawn together and healed by the spirit of Him who, when He saw the multitude, was moved with compassion.

THE SWORD OF THE SAINTS

"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."—EPH. vi. 17.
"It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed."—EX. xvii. 11.

THERE is no doubt that we are now at a grave and critical issue of world affairs,[1] and every man among us must be subdued and thoughtful. Whatever his faith or unfaith, it is hard to imagine any man with heart unbowed. It is one of those times which sometimes befall when men stand so near the veil of the Unseen that they can almost hear the beating of an Infinite Heart. The magnitude of the issues involved, the awful sacrifice required, the agony of suspense as the battle sways to and fro, send us to our knees. There is no need to tell men to pray; they simply have to pray, else their hearts will break from sheer weight of sorrow and anxiety. The call to prayer comes not half so imperatively from the pulpit as from the human heart itself, torn by the anguish and stress of tragedy. Such a time is a great moral revelation, when little things are swept aside and the real voice of humanity is heard. These

[1] Preached during the great enemy offensive in April 1918, an ordeal no one will ever forget. London was tongue-tied; men looked on one another and understood. It revealed at once the heroic quality of a great race and the practical value of the power of prayer to fortify and sustain.

are days when we must gather up our final reasons for holding on in the battle of life, when for comfort, for courage, and for endurance we need the succour and support of the Eternal.

Nay, more. The hour has come when we must not only pray, but must be prepared to make the sacrifices and take the ventures of faith which real prayer involves. It is no time for panic, but for quiet and profound prayer, both personal and corporate, the fruit of which is effort-producing faith and a more adequate insight into the will of God. The question is not whether God is on our side, but whether, as Lincoln said in a dark hour, we are worthy to be on His side; whether we are fit instruments for the service of His purpose. Moses on the Mount, and Aaron and Hur upholding his hands of supplication while the battle ebbed and flowed in the valley beneath, is the picture that comes back to mind. What influence prayer may have upon the course and issue of events no one knows; but the experience of Lincoln just before and during the battle of Gettysburg, upon which the fate of a nation hung, must not be forgotten. As far removed from the stories of answered prayer to which we often listen as from the crude rationalism that denies them, it fills one with awe.

This at least is true: only the mighty grace of God is equal to an hour like this, when the faith of men is tried as if by fire. By the same token, it ought to be a time of great discoveries of the reality and adequacy of the Grace of God and the funda-

mental assurances of our faith. A shadow of mystery and awe is upon us. To-day, in the presence of an unparalleled ordeal, we have an opportunity to make trial of those forces of the spirit which we have not enough considered; and if it evokes in us a new sense alike of the power of prayer and of the hitherto unguessed resources of the soul, it will not have been in vain. Unless something fair and fine is won from it, enriching the times to be, surely we have not met it in the right way. For, to go no further, there are forces at our command, if we are willing and worthy to use them, which will turn tragedy into triumph, making us victors over doubt and dismay and masters of whatever may befall us in the fluctuating fortunes of war. Unimagined disclosures await us if we actually give ourselves up to the Divine Spirit to learn what He would have us be, knowing that the secret of being Divinely led is the willingness to follow and obey.

When we look below the surface, the real question is not, Why should men pray, but why do they pray? All men do pray, because it is a necessity of their nature, an instinct of the soul, like the homing instinct of a bird. Here at our disposal is a mighty force, a law of the life of man, the meaning and uses of which we have hardly begun to discover—the power of prayer. It is what Francis Thompson called "the sword of the saints"; but just as a sword is made of metal dug from the earth, melted, tempered and polished, so this instinct of prayer must be interpreted by spiritual intelligence, trained, puri-

fied, and applied to the uses of life and character. Men will not long continue in prayer unless they have a vivid sense of its value and relevancy; and for that reason we must not talk of prayer as if it were made up of pious hopes and good wishes, forgetting the law of its nature and the discipline of its use.

To-day my design is to pass over briefly the simpler forms of prayer, that so we may climb up the ladder toward that highest form of fellowship with the Eternal Will, which is alone equal to this awful time. What are the benefits of prayer? Chiefly two, according to the usual report, the first being the reflex influence upon the man who prays. As Meredith said, "Who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered," and it is a fact that the man who truly prays does rise a better man. Prayer does quiet the spirit, clarify the mind, and purify the heart. It does exalt and sustain us, evoking hitherto unguessed resources of the soul, not only resting us from fret and fear, but reinforcing us when we are faint and weary. So much even the psychologist admits; but prayer is able to do this because we believe it to be something more than a musing with ourselves, more than communion with our higher self. Indeed no one would pray very long if he did not think that it is more than a mere psychological exercise, for it is our higher self which most needs to be fortified.

That is to say, prayer in its deeper aspect and aspiration is communion with Another not ourselves in whose fellowship the soul is renewed and fortified

and exalted. For the Christian at least it is communion, not with a world-force, but with a world-Father; and as we know what it is to hold fellowship with good men and women, to breathe their aspirations, to learn to love what they love, so we can think what it means to commune with God, to yield ourselves to His desires, and to love what He loves. Prayer may take as many forms as men have moods—petition, confession, adoration, or "a wish directed heavenward," as Phillips Brooks used to call it—but no Christian prays simply to tell God what he wants, but because he knows that God knoweth what things he has need of better than he knows himself. He prays for the joy, and sometimes the pain, of pouring out his heart to the Father of all. His prayer is not so much for gifts as for communion with the Giver of all Good, desire of His blessing, petition for His presence, and submission to His will.

But it is with prayer in another dimension that we have now to do—prayer in its dynamic aspect. The will of God is complete, active, inevitable, but prayer is much more than mere submission to it. Indeed, it is possible to pray, "Not my will, but Thine, be done," and miss the high meaning and opportunity of the words; as if we asked God to put our will aside and let His will be done in spite of us. No, no; He does not ask such dumb, abject submission. What He asks is that we make room in our hearts and lives for His will to act, yielding ourselves to its pressure, its passage, its movement.

Of course, this means identifying our affections and purposes with His high ends, even when those ends cut straight across all our wishes, as they sometimes do. Sometimes; but not always. Once we have learned to give free way to the divine will, no longer obstructing it, so that it may enter, possess, and use us, there is no conflict. Then we discover the greatest of all truths; that the will of God and the highest good of man are one and eternally inseparable, and that spiritual advance and conquest can come only when men dedicate themselves to spiritual values.

Submission does not describe such an attitude and achievement. When we pray after this manner we do more than submit to the will of God; we energetically lift ourselves up to identify our lives with it, gathering up all the forces of our being and pouring them into its mighty stream. It is God Himself, in us, who inspires such a prayer, not only revealing His will in us, but evoking such trust in him and such mastery of ourselves that all our powers are at His service, and our lives become a part of His plan. The secret of availing prayer is that of having oneself so centrally held that in that high moment one does actually, and with concentrated conscious effort, will the will of God, in which is our peace. It is a moment of intense spiritual sensibility in which the direction of the pressure of the Divine purpose in us is vividly realised, and loyally obeyed. Thereafter the practice of life, in spite of its falterings and waywardness, is to the end that

we may live more nearly as we pray, laying hold of what is already our own, asking that we may be able, willing, and worthy to receive it.

Alas! few of us attain to this supreme and victorious life of prayer. One reads the life of Santa Theresa with a kind of awed fear, so eager, so daring, so profound was her quest and cultivation of the art of prayer. Like St. Francis, she prayed until her life became a prayer, and therefore a power, in which her rippling humour, her fine sagacity, and her tireless industry became the tools of God for the doing of His work. Such a height is attained only by a great surrender to the will of God, and a firmer loyalty to it, a quicker response, a fuller courage, a richer desire than we have won. It means a sustained endeavour, a prolonged aspiration and a gradual and growing insight. But we are weak; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is frail. Ever more we try a little and fail much, striving for the heights, but slipping back to the lower levels. But we must not give up until we learn the great language, until we catch the high accent, if only it be here a word and there a tone. Again, and yet again, we must come back to the altar and renew the disciplined motive, learning to give ourselves away a little more ungrudgingly to the blessed will. Hence the hour of prayer with its holy intimacies by which heart may draw to heart, and love answer to love.

If we are to wield the Sword of the Saints—the sword with which Greatheart tramped the world defending the right and protecting the weak—we

must first fashion it, and then learn how to use it. Yet what amateurs we are, half afraid of the weapon given us to fight the foes that besiege the soul and menace it! Even the best of us can do little more than to ask God to forgive the poverty, the pettiness, the folly of our prayers, and to listen not to our petitions, but to the dumb cry of our needs. Often we pray earnestly for what is already our own, neglected and unappropriated, not knowing that there must be not only the will to pray, but the will to receive and the willingness to listen for the answer. Often we pray for that which we must win ourselves, and then labour endlessly for that which can come to us only in prayer. There is no need to say that we frequently pray for that which can never be ours and would be our ruin if we had it. The disciples of Jesus were often foolish and faithless, but they were wise when they asked their Master, "Lord, teach us how to pray."

It is the testimony of the masters of the spiritual life that prayer, in its higher reaches, is not only something to be learned, but that it is a high and austere art. We who are beginners must begin at the beginning, and the first thing is actually to pray. The wish to pray is not enough; we must have "the wish that prays." Since prayer is the focal point of the soul, it is by the act of prayer—and the attitude of the body, even—that the soul commits itself to the highest. Things are hazy and uncertain, until reduced to words. The mind, thronged with a multitude of conflicting thoughts and desires, or waver-

ing between opposite decisions, is clarified by actual prayer, and selects one motive, one plan. Instantly the fog clears, and the thing uttered, the fact or principle, stands out in relief.

"Certain thoughts are prayers," said Hugo; but when we pray we pledge ourselves to them, and a vague thought becomes a star to light our path. God is seeking to guide us, but only to one who prays can He make Himself vivid, not merely as an idea in the mind, but as a living reality and Friend.

Prayer is not only "the practice of the presence of God"; it is the realisation of His presence. For that reason, it must be regular, "putting habit on the side of the highest life," as Gladstone advised his children. The human spirit is as mutable as the sea, rising and falling at the touch of vagrant moods which are difficult to control. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" cried the Psalmist in his dialogue with his fitful, restless soul. Such moods come we know not whence, but they will have less power over us if they have set against them the habit of quiet prayer in which, by lifting a spiritual curtain, we can enter into a House of Quiet, leaving fret and worry and fear behind. Thus our weakness becomes strength, our words deeds. There is a very real sense in which we can truly "pray without ceasing," a habit of the heart by which we may live for God, in God, to God every moment of the day, making the thought of Him a constant and holy attitude of the mind; and thus be armoured against many ills. Fenelon is a wise teacher here:

"Accustom yourself gradually to let your mental prayers spread over all your daily external occupations. Speak, act, work quietly, as though you were praying, as, indeed, you ought to be. Do everything without excitement, simply in the spirit of grace. So soon as you perceive natural activity gliding in, recall yourself quietly into the presence of God. Hearken to what the leadings of grace prompt. You will find yourself infinitely more quiet, your words will be fewer and more effectual, and while doing less, what you do will be more profitable."

By such methods the Saints realised inwardly a divine life inexhaustible in its fulness, indomitable in its power, by which they were able, not to alter things after their desires, but to become doers of the will of God. The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, says the Apostle. Not simply the Bible, but all that endless dialogue between God and the soul, whereby man learns what life is, what it means, and how to use it for the highest ends. For man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God; and prayer is not simply asking, but receiving, realising, achieving. No matter what the facts may be, if, deep down in our hearts, we utter the word *Father,* the way is clearer and the victory is won.

Then into His hand went mine.
And into my heart came He.
And I walked in a light divine
The path I had feared to see.

THE INTERCESSOR[1]

"If Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."
Ex. xxxii. 32.

"The supplication of a righteous man availeth much."
—JAMES v. 16.

"He ever liveth to make intercession."—HEB. vii. 25

AFTER more than three years of war we are bidden to keep this the first Sunday in the New Year as a day of solemn intercession to Almighty God. It is wise, it is altogether fitting that we should do so. Prayer is always timely, and never more so than in this dark time when we need strength for the thing that is to do, insight to lead us along a dim path, and comfort to sustain us under our crushing sorrows. We are sorely stricken, and, like Lincoln in his day of trial, we are driven to our knees because we have nowhere else to go. It is a day not only for honesty of thought, but for the frankest kind of speech, man to man, and the final candour of hearts laid bare.

Many humiliations are teaching us humility, yet much of the old arrogance, the old vanity, the old vainglory remains to distort the public temper. There will be further chastenings of spirit, further sorrows, further losses, alas, and surely they must bring us down from our towering pride, from our complacent self-righteousness, to the very feet of

[1] Day of National Intercession, 6th January 1918.

God the Father. To-day we are not Englishmen, not Americans, but human beings seeking to know the will of God and how to do it. There will be other days for dealing with men; to-day we must deal with God. Not the God of England, not the God of America, but the Father of humanity who hath made of one blood all nations and tribes, whose will is the law of the universe: a God so great that we in the City Temple, and our brethren in the Abbey, are like children playing with the toys of religion. Yet hath He put it into our hearts to pray, and if we seek Him with earnest minds He will show us His way.

It is a fact that the heartfelt prayer of a righteous man availeth much—how much we do not know, nor can we trace its influence. It goes too fast, too far, for us to follow. Only God could write the history of the prayer of a little child at eventide. To attempt to fathom the meaning of intercessory prayer would be to plunge beyond our depth into the profoundest mysteries of life and faith, and this is not the day for that adventure. It is the prayer of a *righteous* man that availeth—but, alas, we are not righteous men, much less a righteous nation. England is not righteous. America I know is not righteous. Our cause is righteous, but we are not. We are fighting for justice, but we are not just. It would be easy to bring in a bill of particulars, but it is not needed. Our conscience indicts and convicts us before God, and our social order confirms the indictment.

But enough: on this day we do not criticise one another, but all confess our sins, beseeching the cleansing mercy of God, that so our common prayer may be pure and true.

> Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
> He that hath clean hands and a pure heart.

Therefore our first prayer must be for that purity of heart which brings the vision of God, that our desires, purified of littleness, disinfected of selfishness, may be one with the desire of God. So, and only so, shall we have not only the will to pray—which is much more than a mere wish—but also the will to receive the answer of God and do it, whatever that answer may be. A Day of Prayer for a nation is idle make-believe unless that people, single-minded and faithful, is willing to do the will of God. To-day a nation—or at least an inner circle of intercessors in its name—rededicates, consecrates, gives itself anew into the hands of God, to be used as His instrument for the fulfilment of His purpose. If this is to be a real Day of Prayer, and not a mere form, we must think of what we are doing.

Think what intercessory prayer means, and ask yourself if we—if you—are equal to it. Prayer is not simply the uprising passion and desire of man: it is the spirit of God rising up in man in longings and cries which cannot be uttered, liberating the resources of the human personality for the uses of the divine will and work. The eternal purpose is wrought out upon earth, but not without human

co-operation; "we are God's fellow-workers." To-day, if our prayer is sincere, the surrendered will of a nation will be added to the sum of forces in the hand of God, working with Him for His kingdom. Are we willing to have it so? When the Master asked His disciples if they they were able to be baptised with the baptism He was baptised with, they said, glibly enough, "We are able"—little knowing what they meant. "It is the very nature of faith that it commits us to more than we are aware of at the time"; it involves us in the play of forces vaster than we know, and lays tasks upon us we did not propose to ourselves. Are we able to do and bear and be what we ask to-day at this altar, committing ourselves with that daring which is more than wisdom, to the ways of God? If the will of God be something different from our will, what then? If it means that we must endure further suffering, further loss and tragedy, are we willing to say, like the Master, "Not my will, but Thine be done"? If so, England will be a different land to-morrow from what it is to-day.

Prayer not only discovers God in new and undreamed-of ways, opening the heart to the control of the Divine Spirit in a manner beyond our imagining, it also discovers us to ourselves and to one another. A traveller crossing the Atlantic came to the Azores, and tells how he felt the isolation of those tiny islands in the wide expanse of waters. They seemed lonely, bereft of all kinship or connection with the great continents or with other islands of the sea.

But he paused to think, and knew that they were not isolated. They are but the tips of high mountains whose bases reach down to the bed of the ocean. Through this common base they are united to one another; and then, along the ocean bed, they are joined to all continents and islands everywhere. This is a parable of human life. Often, in this human ocean called London, we may seem lonely, but, like the Azores, we are joined with all men everywhere in the depth of our nature; and prayer is a discovery of the Life that binds us one to another. It reveals a community of life and need, and along the ties that unite us influences, messages, and power go to and fro.

Here is a realm of mystery, not explorable, but we may say that it is like the scale of registers in a wireless telegraph instrument. When we send a message in one register, all instruments set for that register receive it, if the power be strong enough. Just so, there is a common human register, if we can find it, which joins us with all men, and more surely, it may be, with those we love, so that in ways beyond our tracing we can send and receive help, hope, power. Who can tell what prayers, as units of energy, or as forces of love, may become in a world where all things lead out into mystery, and nothing is so unknown as the human personality. The question of natural law does not enter, since prayer is itself a law whose working we do not know and do not need to know in order to use it. Jesus did not argue about prayer—He prayed. Amid the mys-

terious forces at work upon us and within us, since they are of God, we may be sure not only, as Meredith said, that "who rises from prayer a better man, his prayer is answered," but also that other men are better too. When the earth record is read in the light of eternal values, who knows what a testimony it will be to the power of sincere, heartfelt prayer!

Thus prayer not only links us with men everywhere, but takes us out of ourselves, as it did Moses when he pleaded for his people in their sin. When the law-giver came down from the Mount of Vision bearing the Tables of the Law, he found the people dancing about a Golden Calf. Life always becomes a feverish, fanatical dance when it loses the vision of the Eternal—as it did in England before the war, and in America where we worshipped the horrible gods of sport and speed and splendour. Turning from the scene, the law-giver went again into the Mount of Vision, now become a Mount of Intercession, and offered one of the profoundest, sublimest prayers in history: "If Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written." If his people were to die, he wanted to die with them—aye, even to die in their stead—and have his name erased from the memory of God. Such a prayer compelled an answer, for that it united itself with the love and will of God, invoking His own nature in its behalf. If only we had the love, the heroism, the faith to rise to such a height, what wonders might not be wrought in this land, and in all lands, on the morrow!

Not yet have we guessed, much less tested, the incredible power that lies in prayer. Let us dare to make trial of it to-day, and all the days, if perchance we may learn more of its mystery and its uses, like Forbes Robinson—not the actor of similar name—albeit he, too, is a man of sincere and simple faith, and a noble Christian gentleman—but a young saint of the English Church. He was so radiant, so happy, so wise, as we come to know him in his *Letters to His Friends,* that the very thought of him is like a footfall, always light, of one untimely gone away. He was an apostle in intercession, and prayer was his very life. He discovered men by praying for them, finding in each one something unique, peculiar, and precious, not to be found anywhere else. Life, to him, was love, and love lived in prayer, and prayer was a perpetual discovery of both God and man. He learned that prayer abolishes hate, and that if we pray for a man we cannot have any feeling of ill-will, and that he will come to know the fact. He believed—he knew—that he could in this way bring to bear upon men an influence more effective than any word of direct teaching or advice. To-day there are Cambridge men whose eyes fill with a soft mist of memory and reverence at the very mention of his name.

What wonder that on a day like this, when our hearts are so deeply stirred, we cannot keep our thoughts from going afar, following those who have gone behind the veil. It is human, and God meant it to be so. My friend, if on this day your heart

asks you to offer a prayer for one who has vanished —do it. No matter what the theologians say. The human heart divinely touched is the best theologian. God will hear and understand, and what is in accord with His holy will, which is wider than we know, will be done. This is a matter about which to be reverent and reticent; but at least we can commend those whom we have "loved and lost awhile" to His Fatherly love, even as we commend ourselves, our nation, and our cause to which so many whom we miss have paid "the last full measure of devotion." Beyond this we may not go, leaving the things our poor stammering tongues cannot utter to Him "who ever liveth to make intercession," in whose name we offer our prayer and dedicate our lives.

THE SHADOW CHRIST

"The word of the Lord came unto me, saying: 'Jeremiah, what seest thou?' And I said, 'I see a rod of an almond tree.'"—JER. i. 11.

OFTEN it has been noted of late that the minds of men are turning back to the great prophets for light and leading in these difficult days. Some, to be sure, find in their pages amazing forecastings of the end of the world, but the deeper mind of the day turns to them for a deeper reason. They, too, struggled for faith in terrible days, in the midst of baffling perplexities, in the presence of unaccountable tragedies, and it is thus that no teachers have more to tell us than those voices that speak to us out of the old Hebrew centuries. For comfort and command, for moral insight and spiritual intuition, those mighty seers are still the masters and deliverers of mankind.

There are classic men as there are classic books. The classic man is one who, speaking to his own age, strikes a note so deep, and true, and haunting that it sounds for ever; and such a man is the great prophet. Isaiah and Savonarola may deal with civic affairs, St. Paul and Luther with the freedom of the soul, Ezekiel and Augustine with the outward altar, St. John and Bunyan with the passion for perfection.

But underneath all diversities of gift and testimony they bear witness for the Eternal, uniting the two tokens of a god-illumined man. They turn the hearts of the fathers to their sons, and the hearts of the sons to their fathers; that is, they dispose the old to moral forwardness, to reverence for the new, and the young to spiritual wisdom, to reverence for the age-long values of the past. All who truly speak in the name of God, and as for His will, unite a profound piety with an unconquerable hope.

No other race can show a nobler dynasty of moral genius than the Hebrew; and in their long, troubled, revealing history there is no figure more heroic, none at once more tragic and triumphant than Jeremiah. Unfortunately a shallow wit has misread his life, making him appear as a lachrymose weakling, tender and tearful, and so he is portrayed. He was indeed a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but he was no more a "weeping prophet" because he may have written the Lamentations that bear his name than Tennyson was a weeping poet because he wrote "In Memoriam," or Milton because he wrote "Lycidas." If his head was a fountain of tears there was reason for it, because he was doomed to the saddest fate that may befall a great, true-hearted, clear-minded man—the fate, that is, of living in an age of decay, ruin, and disaster, seeing it all, warning his people against it, but powerless to stay or avert it. History knows no darker tragedy, and therefore no figure grander, more lonely, more pathetic than the Suffering Servant of God.

All spiritual experience is mysterious, but with the prophet-soul the mystery deepens because his nature is more open to the Unseen—as we may see in the call of Jeremiah. In Palestine the almond-tree puts forth its buds early, and is the first tree to prophesy the coming of spring—the Hebrews called it the Watchful Tree. One day, stirred in spirit, the young Jeremiah walked in the fields, drinking in the early beauty of the Flowers of Watchfulness, and there flashed into his mind the thought of God as the Great Watcher. In a mood dross-drained and holy, wakefulness to natural beauty lifted him into the presence of One who never sleeps nor slumbers, and the prophet plighted his faith in a vision that never faded amid all the dark confusions of his life. Times came when the inequalities of life, the welfare of the wicked, and the downfall of his nation, forced upon him keen questions; but if his life was wintry, like the watchful tree he kept always the prophecy of spring.

Loyalty, a wise teacher has told us, is the approach to faith, and he might have added that it is also the fulfilment of faith, its vindication and triumph. Of this truth there was never a finer example than Jeremiah, of whose life we have fuller knowledge than we have of any other great prophet, owing to the love and fidelity of Baruch. No other prophet had so devoted a biographer, and the order, or disorder, of his book lets us see, not only the outward events of his career, but its inward struggle, taking us behind the veil and showing us the heart of the Saint.

It is made up of reminiscences, of Boswell-like reports of private talks, as well as of sermons and pronouncements. The record tells us little of the early days, having been written after the prophet had been twenty years in his ministry, and his message had been vindicated. That is to say, Jeremiah lived before he wrote, and we have here the spiritual struggle and achievement of his life. We see him as his neighbours knew him, gentle, refined, sympathetic, hungering for fellowship, responsive alike to natural beauty and spiritual suggestion, yet intense like fire, strong like a hammer—at once a white flame and an iron column.

Here is the inner story of a man who lived in an earth-shaking, world-transforming age like our own, in a period of upheaval when human things were "never at one stay." What Belgium and Serbia endure to-day his land suffered then, in the clash of empires amid whose conflicts it was crushed. He saw his people slaughtered and carried away into captivity; he saw the sacred city burned. Held by ties of care and religion and the promptings of a great soul, he pleaded, suffered, and endured to the bitter end, his genius shining like a star in the gathering clouds. An ardent patriot, he was summoned to interpret the purpose of God in the downfall of his nation, like the saint of Serbia in our day [1]—only, he himself suffered death at the hands of his people in the final disaster. What this meant as a feat of human courage and divine grace, as a victory of

[1] *The Agony of the Church,* by Nicholai Velimirovic.

faith and fortitude, is told us in a spiritual diary written day by day in his heart as he wrought and wondered, doubted, suffered, and dared.

Truly he was a man of like passions with ourselves, as all the great ones are, albeit endowed with the sorrowful and great gift of prophecy, responsive to God as an æolian harp to the wind, and eager to discover and obey His will. He saw clearly the hardships, the persecutions, the ostracism, and the defeats that awaited him, as they await every great and sane soul in a day of insanity. He was keenly aware of qualities in himself that hindered rather than helped his work, the questioning that weakened action, the hunger for a fellowship denied, the feeling of helplessness in the presence of his task. Yet he walked a straight course through a long, dangerous career, kept his faith in God, and his nervous, inquiring spirit brought him to grips with a question never faced before, and made him one of those sons of the Spirit whose influence never dies. Walking a hard and lonely way, he came upon truths unguessed by those whose path is smoother and whose heart is less torn by doubt and grief.

Like the men of to-day, Jeremiah faced the mystery of arrogant, organised wickedness and the seeming victory of might over right. He saw it clearly and without evasion. He did not solve it. No man can. Such mysteries have no solution on earth; but, when they seem about to block all further advance, God shows, now in one way, now in another, that life is still livable and faith still triumphant. This was

the only answer Jeremiah received. It was no solution; but it was a way out. Faith saved the situation, even if it did not solve the problem.[1] But not without bitter struggle, misgivings, and agony, which wrung from him cries that echo to this day. Only a man who was very sure of God could speak the words in the opening of the 12th chapter, and again in the 20th chapter, two of the most impressive pages in the history of the soul, revealing the depth of his pain and the daring of his faith. He rested at last, as we well may rest, upon the fact that his work was not his own, but God's, and found in that fact his sole and sufficient support for a hard-fought life.

What wonder that this tormented man made discoveries of the power and possibilities of prayer, such as no one had made before? none before him had so clearly passed beyond petition into that larger, deeper field of fellowship with God. Jeremiah asked little; he prayed much. He was the father of that truer, profounder prayer which does not ask for things, but for God; not for gifts, but for the Giver. It was this mastery of the uses of prayer that made him so clear-sighted a leader, who did not mistake a reformation for a regeneration, or the form for the reality. It was prayer that enabled him to achieve the most difficult task that falls to the lot of man, namely, that of enlarging and deepening the conception of God, which gave a new date to the history of faith. Prayer lifted him

[1] *The Prophet of the Spirit,* by L. B. Longaon.

above book-religion, above ritual-religion, into that eternal communion where men know the living word from the lips of the living God. Out of sorrow, out of ruin, out of defeat he rose victorious and became a prophet of the Eternal Religion. As we may read in words which are perhaps the summit of Old Testament vision:

"This is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord'; for they shall know Me, from the least unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Such words belong to all ages, all races, all tongues, all faiths. They outrun the senses and the deductions of the intellect; they are spiritual intuitions in which the human soul stands face to face with the Eternal, and deep calleth unto deep. "Enough that he saw it once; we shall see it by and by." Here is the New Covenant to the fulfilment of which Jesus gave His life, and it is therefore that Jeremiah is so often associated with Him. Indeed, the parallel is very striking between their lives, even in outward fortune and fate. Both predicted the fall of the Temple; both aroused the hatred of the priests; both were put to death by the people they tried to save. The words "Led as a lamb to the

slaughter" are used of both. Both taught the forgiving love of God, and both uttered words which are a part of the life of faith for ever. That is to say, Jeremiah, lifted by his sorrow into the shadow of a mighty, redeeming love, became, so to speak, "the almost Christ, the Christ of the night—a Shadow Christ."

And so, instead of taking you back into a far time, my aim has been to bring a much-suffering, victorious soul of times agone into the glare of the tragedy in which we live, that so you may see to what revelations we may be led by obedience to the heavenly vision and the power of prayer. What though the vision come in the bud of an Almond Tree, or in some other form, faithfulness to it is the secret, and prayer the unfailing strength to attain. What Job lived through in a drama, Jeremiah lived through in a human life like our own, and in days like our own. What helps us most is not what some one tells us, but the footprints of one who walked the dark way before us, saw what we see, felt what we feel, and did not let go of faith. To-day, when so many are trying to live, yet letting go of the things that make life worth living, no voice in the Bible, save the voice of Jesus, has more to tell us than Jeremiah.

It may be that the Second Isaiah, in the wonderful 53rd chapter, saw from afar, prophetically, the slowly coming Christ, since "thoughts beyond their thoughts to those high bards were given." However that may be, historically it would seem that Jeremiah was the inspiration of that sublime and haunt-

ing vision of the Suffering Servant of God, despised and rejected of men, scourged, imprisoned, and put to death. Just so, we who walk in these strange, dark days, must bear about in our hearts, yea, even in our bodies, the marks of the Lord Jesus, that we may show forth the sacrifice of Christ till He come—each in his own way, and in his own degree, a Shadow Christ.

Most sincerely
Let me follow where Thou leadest,
Let me, bleeding where Thou bleedest
Die, if dying I may give
Life to one who asks to live,
And more nearly,
Living thus, resemble Thee.

THE ETERNAL COMMUNION

"Before Abraham was, I am."—JOHN viii. 58.

HERE are words so strange that they not only startle our attention, but wellnigh confound us. A young teacher, not yet fifty years old, calmly tells his hearers that he lived before the days of Abraham. Not only so, but He speaks as if He were in some way exempt from the conditions of time, using the present tense; "Before Abraham was, I am." Obviously here is something quite unlike the ordinary paradox such as all mystical teachers employ, and must employ. Either these words have no meaning at all, or they have something very deep and true and wonderful to tell us. One does not wonder that the men who heard such words were puzzled, and we can hardly blame them for searching for stones to throw at the Speaker.

Truly, this is a tantalising text. With the dogmas founded upon it dealing with the life of Christ before His advent in the flesh, we have not now to do. They are alike dark and difficult, if not doubtful. So far as His own words were reported, Jesus Himself spoke of these things only in hints and paradoxes, in words cryptic and dim; and where He was so reserved it ill becomes others to be talkative. About the most ordinary person there is a deep mys-

tery, while above the spiritually great brood clouds and darkness which none can penetrate. If we cannot fathom our own nature, there is little hope that we can measure One who was the most majestic and appealing of all the masters and deliverers of life that ever came forth "out of the bosom of humanity." No, our interest to-day is rather in the tense of the text, as bespeaking a kingdom in which all seekers and lovers of God live in an Eternal Present.

Every seer, every prophet, every great idealist who has shed his light upon the darkness of this world, has borne witness to the reality of such a kingdom. With one accord, from Buddha, Socrates, and Aurelius, to Jesus and His Apostles, through a long array of saints, mystics, and poets, down to the Ruskins, Emersons, and Tagores of our own day, they prophesy of a realm in which the great ideals of Love, Justice, Truth, Service, Beauty have security and significance. To me it is the most eloquent and touching fact in human history that in every age men have sought citizenship in a kingdom where a thousand years are as a day, seeking to bring the power of eternal ideals to bear upon the ordinary life of mortals, and to send through that ordinary life the glory of the Eternal—as the sun shoots its transfiguring light through a great dull cloud. And when men speak of that kingdom of the ideal, time vanishes and they find themselves living in an Eternal Communion, as witness the words of a young poet of England, Charles Sorley, killed in France in 1915:

He had a yearning for the strength
That comes of unity:
The union of one soul at length
With its twin soul to lie;
To be a part of one great strength
That moves and cannot die.

If we turn to the Bible we find that it is the supreme Book of the Eternal Communion, not only in its whole outlook and emphasis, but in certain moving passages in which we see the spirit of man bridging vast gulfs of time and meeting the living God and its fellows in the events and voices of the past. For example, the prophet Hosea recalls the story of Jacob's midnight wrestling with the angel, and adds: "Yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed, and wept and made supplication unto him; he found him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake *with* us." Thus while speaking of that great and mysterious experience, the prophet suddenly felt that he himself had been there, and that what God signified to the patriarch He signified to him also. There are similar examples in the Psalms, as, for instance: "They went through the flood on foot; *and there did we rejoice in Him.*" Many ages separated the Psalmist from that scene, but those ages fall away, and he is in fellowship with his forefathers in their Divine deliverance. Still another striking example is the 132nd Psalm, in which the remote is brought near in the sudden discovery of the timeless. Not only in the rapt and lofty lines of poets and seers

do we find this peculiarity of the Bible, but in the calm prose of history as well.[1]

Surely here is a reality which, if it can be made real to our hearts, will mean much for our strength, our comfort and our hope. Everyday life gives us many a hint of it. When we listen to great music, or noble eloquence, time is forgotten and we taste the joy of knowing, if only for an hour, what the timeless life is. Emerson reminds us that there is one mind common to all men, whereby we live in the same world of truth with Plato and Aristotle. What is true to-day was true when the great Greeks taught in Athens, and it will be true ages hence. In literature there is a zone of song in which, if a man step, his words echo for ages. In the same way, those who, by loyalty to the ideal, attain to the final beauty of sacrificial character, never die. They belong to all lands, all races, all ages. Their names are a part of the sacred legend of the world. Such hints help us, it may be, but they fail of making the Eternal Communion real, vivid, and satisfying to our minds and heart. Let me go a step further and see if it cannot be brought home to us.

Terrible as the war is, unspeakably terrible, it has brought us many beautiful things, and none more lovely than the letters written by our men to the folks at home. Volumes of these letters have been published, and in almost every collection there is almost invariably one that stands out from the rest as particularly significant and moving. Such a letter is not

[1] Hosea xii. 4; Psalm lxvi. 6; Joshua vi. 1-3.

always a conscious last word, but something written in a more solemn and perhaps dimly prescient moment. These letters are nearly always to mothers, as we may read in the *Letters of Arthur George Heath,* with a memoir by Gilbert Murray. It is to the mothers the men turn when death hovers, not so much to seek comfort, apparently, as to give it. A precious collection of these letters to mothers could be made, and it would surely include the following letter written by Arthur Heath to his mother a few months before he was killed in France on his twenty-eighth birthday. At the hour of parting it is into the sense of the Eternal Fellowship that he seeks to lift her heart and faith:

"We make the division between life and death as if it were one of dates—being born at one date and dying some years after. But just as we sleep half our lives, so when we awake, too, we know that often we are only half alive. Life, in fact, is a quality, not a quantity, and there are certain moments of real life whose value seems so great that to measure them by the clock, and find them to have lasted so many hours or minutes, just, appears trivial and meaningless. Their power, indeed, is such that you cannot tell how long they last, for they can colour all the rest of our lives, and remain a source of strength and joy that you know not to be exhausted, even though you cannot trace exactly how it works. The first time I ever heard Brahms's Requiem remains with me as an instance of what I mean. Afterwards you do not look back on such events as mere past things whose position in time can be localised; you still feel as living the power that first awoke in them. Now if such mo-

ments could be preserved, and the rest strained off, none of us could wish for anything better. And just as these moments of joy or elevation may fill our own lives, so, too, they may be prolonged in the experience of our friends, and, exercising their power in those lives, may know a continual resurrection. . . . If what I have written seems unreal to you and fantastic, at least there is one thing with which you'll agree. The will to serve is in both of us, and you approve of what I am doing. Now that is just one of the true and vital things that must not be, and is not, exhausted by the moment at which it is felt or expressed. My resolution can live on in yours, even if I am taken, and, in your refusal to regret what we know to have been a right decision, it can prove itself undefeated by death."

Thus, a young man, about to die, seeks to comfort his mother by pointing her to the very same truth to which I am trying to lead your hearts. For the most part his letters are radiantly happy, like the man who would be a philosopher, but cheerfulness would always be breaking in. Of course, he does not use the phrases of religion, albeit the truth is the same. If one wishes it clothed in the language of the altar he can do no better than turn to that golden little book which to Luther was second only to the Bible in which he found, in his hour of darkest tribulation, "a certain truth"—the truth indeed which made his what he was:[1] If you wish to trace this certain truth—not esoteric at all, but translucently lovely and richly human—you will find it in the opening paragraphs of Luther's treatise, *The Freedom*

[1] *Theologica Germanica.*

of a Christian Man. The little book to which I refer is, of course, a book of mysticism, and it has come down to us dateless and authorless; fittingly so, because it is an eternal book. It may well have been the meditations of some deep-hearted woman—some clear-visioned Monica—in a cloister or by a hearth, researching the deep things of God in a circle of Quaker-like friends. Or it may have been the reverie of some obscure saint whom the angel of renunciation had set upon the pinnacle of the minster to peer into the lore of Eternity, or from the holy heights of humility to ponder the piteous supplication of the human heart. It is a simple book, telling us once more of the ancient, incessant need of purification, the futility of evasions, and the divine harmony won by prayer, discipline and service. As we may read:

"I would fain be to the Eternal Goodness what his own hand is to a man. As soon as a man turneth himself in spirit and with his whole heart and mind entereth into the nature of God, which is above all time, all that he ever lost is restored in a moment. And if a man were to do this a thousand times in each day, each time a real and fresh union would take place. And in this sweet and divine act standeth the truest and fullest union that may be in this present time. For he that hath attained thereto asketh nothing further, for he hath found the kingdom of heaven and eternal life on earth."

After this manner a wise teacher of the heart seeks to show us how near the divinest things are

to us, what the eternal life is, and how we may live it here in the midst of these tangled days. God is here; eternity is now. When we live for divine things we enter into the life of God in whom live the spirits of those who have left us. No matter where we are—on the battlefield, on the sea, at home or far away, in the city or in the field—as often as we turn our minds and hearts to Him we partake of this Eternal Communion. Again let me draw my example from the war, which has made so many real things seem unreal, and so many unreal things most real, rewarding, and redeeming. Some of you may have seen a tiny book of verse called *The Heavenly Tavern,* which the following lines make worth possessing, if it held no others:

"Here, in the No-man's land and in the dark,
By evil chance hard hit, dying alone
I lie, and the pain shifts from limb to limb.
Pain o' the body, durable enough. . . .
But now that pain merges itself at last
In one great longing for some human voice
'Mid this inhuman din of warfare loud;
Some human voice, symbol of lasting bond
That joins me close to every human soul
And drives this loneliness away from me. . . .
Now through the darkness and the pain a Voice—
'Ye are My Body closely joined to Me
And to each other; and in yonder world
Banished be loneliness and dreadful fear
Of solitude. Feed on My presence now.'
And at the word I stretch my wounded hand,

Unthinkingly, it seems, and there beneath
My finger feel the three short blades of grass. . . .
May this Thy Body be and this Thy Blood. . . .
There on my tongue my sacrament lies safe.
So, God, Thy Presence comes; and though I die,
I do not die alone. Rushingly comes
The sound of myriad voices in mine ear
Like falling water; and my place awaits
Me there. So as I chew the blades of grass
I know that all is well, and my small soul
Goes, 'companied with many greater souls,
To where, as at some heavenly tavern fair,
I greet my friends. . . .
I thank Thee for Thy blades of grass,
My Eucharist to me in loneliness."

Even so, across the strange deeps and distances of death, he is united in the Eternal Communion of all the brave and true-hearted, and finds fellowship. The experience here realised by the poet is far more real than the din and thunder of battle. It is what Jesus meant by the Eternal Life, which does not begin at death, but here and now—as the sky begins at the top of the ground. Indeed, if we follow His way, what men call death will be seen in its true light—a cloud-shadow wandering across our human valley. Jesus lived by "the power of an endless life," the eternal contemporary of all souls that love God and serve His name, talking with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Vision. Out of that eternal realm He spoke in the text, "Before Abraham was, I am." Into that world where we are

free from the tyranny of time He seeks to lead us, adding a new dimension to our lives which are so brief at their longest, so broken at their best. Oh, let us lay hold of Eternal Life in Him, and we shall know of a truth that our little lives are

> A part of one great strength
> That moves and cannot die.

THE UNBOUND CHRIST

"The time is at hand."—Rev. i. 3.

IN his recent book, *The Divine Aspect of History*, Mr. Mozley has this striking and suggestive remark: "With the death of Jesus our earthly life for the first time struck root in the fields of eternity." Not for the first time, surely, but more deeply, more clearly, and therefore more fruitfully. Something Jesus had which the prophets only sought and foretold; a seed which He implanted, or evoked, which has grown a richer harvest since He lived, and because He still lives. Of this new divine life, striking deeper root in the fields of time, the Book of Revelation is an interpretation, an unfolding: it is a Fifth Gospel—the Gospel of the Eternal Christ.

It is a Christian Apocalypse—that is, an attempt to expound, or body forth in symbols the meaning and final issues of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Its primary purpose is not so much to predict as to interpret. Like the Hebrew prophets, the writer is thinking most of the present needs of those for whom he writes, who were living in the cloudy sunset of an epoch. But, in interpreting the spiritual significance of his own age, he furnished the Church with the key to unlock the secrets of every age; for the spiritual forces behind all ages are the same.

Throughout the book human history is regarded from the standpoint of the eternal world, as if the writer were standing outside the time-order looking down upon the pageant. History is seen to be a contest between spiritual forces, of which the earth is the battle-ground: and if evil often seems to be stronger, it is doomed to defeat in the end.

There is a certain order in the book, but it is not chronological. Its visions overlap and blend, like the dissolving views of a cinema, and are less a series of events than a series of pictures, often strange and terrible, but sometimes lovely and grand, of the divine judgment working itself out in history. The indications of time in the book are not to be taken literally; they are a part of its symbolism. No attempt is made to foretell the length of the Christian dispensation; all the writer can see is that the conflict between the Church and the world will go on, and become more intense as the end draws near—but the victory of spiritual forces is sure. Three things stand out distinctly, and should be kept in mind:

First, that God is working out His purpose in all history, even in the darkest times of perplexity and evil. World-empires may defy Him for a moment, but their triumph is a brief prelude to disaster.

Second, the goal of human history is the final triumph of Christ: a victory to be achieved, as the writer sees it, not so much by the gradual improvement of society as by the intervention of God. If there is a law of growth and unfolding, there is also a Law of Catastrophe.

Third, the Church must never on any account, no matter what the temptation, compromise with the evil spirit of the world, lest by purchasing such favour she betray her Master.

Such is the ordinary outline of the spirit and purpose of the book, but some of us are not satisfied with it. Unfortunately, as matters now stand, not a few who try to read the book find it to be anything but a Book of Revelation. They go to it expecting a disclosure, as the title indicates, and come away confused. They discover good counsel, some bejewelled passages, and stanzas of haunting beauty and comfort, but they feel that there has been no actual revelation. The imagery is alien, the pictures seem more fanciful than real; and in looking through its strange art gallery they find more to bewilder than to enlighten. Some one said that the book, if it did not find him crazy, left him so. Luther declined to expound it. So did Calvin, and it had been better if certain others had followed their example. Alas! this golden book has fallen into the hands of the puzzle-maker and the prophecy-monger, to whom it is a divine almanac, and whose exegesis is as ingenuous as it is absurd. It has been used as a kind of cryptogram to prove when the world is coming to an end, as if that were startling information. Of course, the world is always coming to an end, and always beginning again, and so it will be till the end be ended. One recalls the remark of Emerson to one of these apostles, who told him that the world was about to be

burned up: "Never mind, never mind; we can get along without it."

The question of the authorship of the Apocalypse need not detain us. If it was not written by St. John the Divine, it was the work of some master mind who interpreted his faith and vision in the early time, as Browning did in our own day in "The Death in the Desert." Pursued by the foes of his faith, St. John took refuge in a cave in the desert, where his mortal hour came upon him. As the end approached, in rapt prophetic vision he foresaw, with his bright dying eyes, all the subtle attacks on the faith of Jesus, and disarmed them—as Tennyson in "In Memoriam" forfelt and fought out in advance the spiritual battles of the next sixty years. The teaching of David Strauss, at whose touch all things turned to allegory; the unctuous and persuasive doubt of Renan, in which one hears always an echo of irony; these, and the ruder forms of denial, the dying seer predicted and refuted. Let men deny what dogmas they will, let them tear the Gospel record to tatters, they do not so much as touch the basis of faith as Browning states it in that poem; and he is true to the faith and vision of St. John.

Let us assume, then, that the Apocalypse was written either by St. John or by his inspiration, and see if we can find the key to its interpretation. St. John was the only one of the Apostles who died a natural death; all the others suffered martyrdom in one form or another—but the Beloved Disciple lived to the great age of ninety, his gospel summed up in the say-

ing, "Little children, love one another." When he was very old and bowed with sorrow he was banished to the Isle of Patmos and made to work in the quarries. But that was not the worst hardship that befell him. Darkness seemed to settle over the world, and at Patmos the message came that Peter and Andrew had been put to death, and that the little Church which he had planted at Ephesus had been broken up by persecution. Other groups of disciples had been driven by the wind and scattered. Everything seemed lost. Besides the holy city of Jerusalem had been captured and destroyed, and with the fall of the Temple the world seemed to be falling to pieces.

Such was the setting of the Apocalypse, with its many windows of vision opening, not into the Past, not into the Future, but into the hidden, eternal Present; and the aged Apostle was shown that the Church does not depend on Peter, Paul, Andrew, or John, but upon the eternal Christ, who is alive for ever more. It is a vision vouchsafe to a soldier of righteousness, an apostle of love, sustaining his faith and fortifying his spirit. No matter how we may interpret it, glibly as the psychologist too often does, or reverently and profoundly as Maurice did, surely it is proof of two things—first, the power of the seer to go beyond the historian, to rise above the storms and disasters of history and read their meaning from above downward; and second, the all-conquering, all-transfiguring power of Christian faith, and its far-shining insight which sees the final victory of Christ.

Here is the message of the Book of Vision to us today, living as we are in a time of world-crisis and upheaval like that in which it was written, and we need to recover that message—or, better still, that faith—for our comfort and courage. In recent years there has been a strong tendency to go back to the Christ of long ago; but what we need in the confusions of our day is a sense of the Living Christ. It is not a question as to the coming of Christ, but that He is here, that we need to grasp.

Truly, the Apocalypse is a fifth Gospel, and the faith and spirit of this Gospel is essential to an understanding of the other four Gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John show us, from different angles, the Christ of Palestine, lovely, winning, heroic, tormented, but at last triumphant—painting the picture with incomparable art upon a simple canvas. But in the fifth Gospel we are shown the Living and Eternal Christ upon a background of clashing armies, shouting hosts, and burning cities, as if the seer-like artist had dipped his brush in earthquake and eclipse, and the shadows of the bottomless pit, using crags and mountains, clouds and seas, to supplement his art. Here is the Christ, not only of the four Gospels, but of the four corners of the earth; the "Christ of the militant kingdom and the kingdom of peace; the Christ of war and pestilence and disaster, as well as of holiness and of blessedness. It is the Christ of Christian history, not the glorified Christ, or the ascended Christ, but

the Christ of to-day." [1] Here His movements are not along the stony paths of Judea, but in vast ranges of mind, in long stretches of time, in stupendous overturnings of history.

It is a portrayal, a foreshadowing, an interpretation of Christ Unbound, released and set free to mingle in the life of the world in whose contests and tragedies the will of God is being wrought out. There is much to remind us of *Prometheus Unbound,* by Shelley, one using the background of Greek religion and the other the scenery of Jewish apocalypse with its fantastic imagery, much of which, no doubt, was designed to heighten the colouring of the great picture. Indeed, the parallelism between the Crucified One and Prometheus nailed to the cliff is very striking, and one feels that Shelley was richly indebted to the Apocalypse, and that his poem is more Christian than Greek. There is no need to say that the Apocalypse is not only truer, but profounder, as it is more august and awful in its imagery. Also, its imagery is entirely in keeping with the sublimity of the vision, the writer having exhausted heaven and earth, almost, in his effort to set forth "that unfinished life which shapes the world."

Never was there such a chamber of imagery, if once we grasp the key to it. Death and hell, lightnings and thunders, hail and fire mingle with blood, darkened suns, stars cast like unripe figs, the sky rolled up like a scroll, mountains uprooted, the pit

[1] *The Unexplored Self,* by G. R. Montgomery. Chapter VII., to which this sermon is indebted.

of the abyss opened, plagues, the sickle of diseases, horrors by day and horrors by night, metals gleaming in a furnace, a sea of glass clear as crystal, the whiteness of snow, many radiant jewels, the tree of life, seven-headed, ten-horned beasts, agonies unutterable, diadems of victory, the throne of God, judgment, voices like the sound of many waters of heavenly hosts, choruses, hallelujahs—how strange it all is to our eyes and ears, and how confusing at first! Yet, when we see the central Figure of the scene, now a King, now a Child, and always a Lamb slain in eternal sacrifice, one feels that it might have been written yesterday. Surely no book of the Bible has more to say to us to-day than the solemn Book of Vision, shutting up its scenes, as Milton said, between the stillness of heavenly silence and the echoes of Divine symphonies.

If the Apocalypse closes the Bible, it opens the book of the world, translating "Christ into the vocabulary of the larger efforts, the race problems, the social achievements" of history. It is the only fitting close of the Bible, being a vision neither of things past nor of future things, but of the eternal present. The Babylon of the book is neither Rome nor the city of the Euphrates. It is any centre of rebellion light. It is London. It is Paris. It is New York. The beast with seven heads and ten horns is not Cæsar alone. It is the unscrupulous Man of Power in every age, in every land. He may be a monarch, a millionaire, or a demagogue. The Christ whose presence is the glory of the book is the im-

manent Christ, in whom the human and the Divine blend—mighty, but merciful, His word sharper than a two-edged sword, yet redeeming, His face as the sun shining in splendour, His voice like music. Sometimes He is riding a red horse, sometimes a black horse, and at last the white horse of conquest—victor over all that is untrue, unclean, and unjust by "that strange power called weakness."

Such, in outline is the fifth Gospel, and we need to read it to-day in the flash and glare and thunder of world-tragedy, that so we may learn to see in Mammonism, Materialism, and Militarism the old enemies of the Christ, and in the immeasurable sacrifice of our race an unveiling of that spirit, that principle, in which lies our hope and healing. If we take this Book of Vision to heart, it will teach us to see the Eternal Christ moving amid the shadows and horrors of our time, His truth the only hope of our humanity to-day, to-morrow, and for ever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

TWO OR THREE AND JESUS

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."—MATT. xviii. 20.

SURELY no promise in the Bible is more precious than that contained in this text, and none has been more often fulfilled. How many memories it brings back to me from across the years! Out on the prairies of the Far West there were not many of us when the neighbourhood assembled, as its custom was, for the weekly service of prayer. Some of them had to ride for miles to be present, but they seldom failed. Then some old saint would offer prayer, in which he rarely forgot to give thanks for the promise of the Master that where two or three were gathered together in His name there He would be in their midst. And that promise was fulfilled, as we all felt when we turned our steps homeward refreshed and exalted, having learned once more that "in fellowship religion has its founts."

Forgive me for recalling another memory which clings to this text. In the front yard of our home there stood a great old tree, under which some who are fallen asleep were wont to sit on Sabbath afternoons and talk of the things of the soul. Nearly always they had their Bibles open in their laps, and sometimes they would argue a point of doctrine.

More often, however, their talk was of the inner life and its revealings and the things they had learned in the school of Christ. Some of their interpretations of Scripture texts, especially of the Parables and Prophecies, were no doubt fantastic. As examples of exegesis they would hardly pass muster among scholars, but as overflowings of the poetry of faith they had a rich beauty. How good it was for a lad to listen to that talk under the old tree, and to-day he is willing to forgive all errors of that humble exegesis in gratitude for a home of faith—as he forgives all the allegories of the Fathers of the Church. It recalls a page in *Grace Abounding,* in which Bunyan tells of a day he could never forget:

"Upon a day the good providence of God called me to Bedford to work at my calling, and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door in the sun, talking about the things of God. Being now willing to hear their discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker in matters of religion. But they were far beyond me. Their talk was about a new birth, the work of God in their hearts. They talked how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they were refreshed, comforted, and supported. And methought they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such an appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world —as if they were people who dwelt alone."

How beautiful, yet how far away it all seems—almost as remote as my mother and her friends under

the old tree five thousand miles away. Why do we not have such talk in our day? Why are we so reticent, so uncommunicative, so shy in respect of the inner life of faith? Is it because we have nothing to talk about, because we have no "dealing" in these matters, as Silas Marner would say? Or is it due to an unsettlement of faith which makes us less certain, and therefore less talkative, than our fathers were? True, the art of conversation has suffered sad decline since Johnson, Burke, and Boswell held high discourse in London town. Is that the reason for our dumbness? Perhaps, in part; but on other subjects we find our tongues and use them with some skill. Whatever the reason may be, some of us miss such talk as that under the old tree whose leaves still rustle in my memory. Indeed, the religious loneliness of our time is appalling. Never were human bodies so jostled in street and mart; never were human souls so strangely alone.

At first thought the idea of comradeship in the life of the spirit may seem like a contradiction. That life is so inward, so individual, so separate, so shut within the privacy of the soul, that we shrink from trying to share it. Even St. Bernard was wont to advise every one to have these words written in large letters over his room: "My secret to myself." Yet no one ever poured out the riches of his inner life in a more prodigal profusion than did St. Bernard, in whose sermons on the Love of God we may read one of the highest romances in the history of faith. While each one may have his unspoken secret,

it is also true that no one knows the ways of the Spirit in his own soul who knows only his own soul. The highest fruits of the life of the spirit ripen in fellowship, and he misses this fruition who keeps his experience in separateness from his fellows. Lack of tact, to be sure, is fatal in any field. Men resent any effort to intrude upon the privacy of the soul. "The soul of our brother is a dark forest," says a Russian proverb, and we must respect its veiled and shadowy mystery. Still, there is no excuse for our strange shyness in speaking of the truths that make us men.

Surely, as between utter aloofness and an intrusive familiarity, we can find a happy mean of gracious, genial, spiritual fellowship; frank, open, and forthright in our talk of the things of faith. Imagine a company of friends assembled in a spirit befitting such an adventure, each one telling what he actually believes, not what he thinks he ought to believe, or is expected to believe. The result would be startling at first, but it would make for mutual understanding and regard. Why cannot groups of kindred souls gather, no one trying to convert another, none taking toward the others any superior attitude, and talk of what is in their hearts, like my dear old friends under the tree? We do this in other concerns, why not do it in the name of the highest interests of life? My point, as you will see, is far-reaching in its possibilities, the while it points to a grave defect in our modern religious life. In our impatience to be doing everything at once and by wholesale we have for-

gotten a very important factor in the progress of faith and the teaching of truth.

First the man, then the group, then the multitude —that is the order of advance, whether the truth to be taught be one of art, of politics, or of religion. Take such a group as gathered at Alfoxden, when William and Dorothy Wordsworth lived in daily fellowship with Coleridge. Who can doubt that where those two or three were gathered in happy comradeship the spirit of poetry was present in power? No one can read the *Journal* of Dorothy and doubt that she had a part, and no small part, in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Not only are two heads better than one; they are better than two. Out of their union there comes, somehow, a something larger and wiser and deeper than either of them possesses alone. That little band of Pre-Raphaelite artists in England, led by Rossetti and Ruskin, were wont to meet often to admire, criticise, and help each other. After a time the public began to see something common in their work, a new kind of beauty. When attacked, they stood together, and left an unfading mark on English art. Darwin, Huxley, and a few friends wrought out the idea of evolution in science, and then fought it out in the forum; as Socrates, long before, gave his thought to a band of young Greeks, and through them to the world. In my own country Emerson, Lowell, Holmes, and their cluster of friends were called "a mutual admiration society," because they knew the uses and value of the group.

Always it is so. If a man has a vision of truth he draws a few kindred spirits into the circle of its radiance, and they test his insight while sharing it. They supplement his limitations, and in that way he discovers the meaning of his own discovery. Intimate fellowship is needed if men are to think things through, and intimate fellowship is limited. High truth cannot be mastered except by those bound together by a bond too close to admit the many. Within that circle, with all the give-and-take of friends, there need be no reserve, no fear of misunderstanding, no dread of extravagance. There a man may paint with a bold brush and be understood; he may use the language of exaggeration which is often the best exegesis of thought; he is not bound to go back at every turn to first principles—they are assumed. At last, after a truth has been thought out and tested, there comes a time when they are ready to publish it to the world and, if need be, to fight for it. Always it is first a man of vision, then a group made ready for service, and then the heroic journey in spreading the truth.

Of course, you have outrun me to my real point, but it must be emphasised none the less. About the Hebrew prophets there gathered little bands of men "who feared God and spake often one to another," and they kept the light aglow in dark times. Only a little band followed Jesus up and down the stony paths of Judea, and after His death waited to be endued with power from on high—yet what wonders they wrought! Elect young spirits, drawn together

by the faith and genius of St. Paul took up his work and carried it on when his head fell from the block. All down the ages it has been so, from St. Paul to St. Francis and his shining company, "fragrant with a wondrous aspect." Recall the five students gathered about Wesley in behalf of a method of spiritual culture, and who came to be known as Methodists. Think of the group in the common room at Oriel about the shy and winsome figure of Newman—how they put new life into a decaying Church and helped to stem the tide of crass materialism. They were centres of light, those groups of thinking, praying, seeking men adown the years, and their fellowship liberated influences to which we can set no limit.

Two or three and Jesus—that has been the secret of power since the Church began her morning march in the world, and so it must be to-day. Indeed, my thoughts to-day were brought to mind by a visit to an old shrine of the freedom of faith, the Pilgrim Church, in Southwark. There, in 1616, as often before, a little shattered band observed a day of fasting and prayer, asking for light and leading. Towards the close of the solemnity each renewed his confession of faith in Christ, and then, standing together, they joined hands and covenanted with God and one another to walk in His ways as He had already revealed, or should further make them known. And so, amid desolations caused by fire, plague, and persecution, the Church stood, holding a principle which, if it was ever true, is true for ever.

Strong in their weakness, fortified by prayer, they could not be subdued. What better can we do in this dark day when the world is shaken with strife and "the sons before their fathers die," than to join hands and hearts in a new covenant of love, loyalty, and prayer! To-day, if we gather in His name, the Christ who led the Pilgrim Fathers will lead their sons into a new day of faith.

Many have come to feel that the crisis of to-day is so dire that it can only be met by a divinely awakened religious life, similar to the great movements of the past, whereby again and again abuses were swept away, and the Church renewed. Not a few think that such an awakening is imminent, and that one of its features will be that great social ideals will be realised under religious influences, bringing a better social order and a deeper life of faith.[1] One thing is clear: if there is to be such an awakening, it will be felt first by those who are waiting for it, praying for it, and are ready to receive it. Therefore, if we would win from this war the victory we most need, we must seek aid beyond the power of man to give. Like the pilgrims on the way to Emmaus, we walk a twilight path, reasoning together, disappointed and sad. The things that have happened fill us with dismay, and we need an Interpreter. Luther used to apply this text to interpreters and translators of the Bible, who, he said, should not work alone, like St. Jerome, but in company. Even so must we work and pray and wait in

[1] *The New Spiritual Impulse,* by L. Swetenham.

company if we would interpret the teaching of events. Many dark problems lie ahead of us demanding to be solved. Many points of view will be needed, many true hearts, but most of all the calm, sure vision that comes of fellowship with One who sees it all with other and clearer eyes than ours.

For all these reasons we need to recover the idea and uses of the group; especially does the Church need to do so. What can be done by mass meetings will continue to be done; but we need the quiet, praying, seeking group, where a few meet together. Men go to a great assembly, not to discover truth, but to proclaim it. For the sake of the multitude we must leave it for a time and seek the power that comes of closer, more intimate fellowship. In every church there are a few who have the true spirit. Let these kindred souls find each other, form groups to think things through, to pray things through, in His name, and the promise will be fulfilled. Oh, it is blessedly true that where two or three gather in His name, in His spirit, the living Christ is there as truly as when He walked with men in days of old.

Faith hath still its Olivet,
And love its Galilee.

THE MOTHER OF JESUS

"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."—LUKE ii. 19.

NOW the festival of the birth of Jesus might also be named the festival of the Motherhood of Mary—the festival, indeed, of all motherhood. There was Mary, as well as her Child, in that picture which Art loves so well and about which Music has woven so many melodies. Gentle, chaste, clothed in sweet modesty, happy in the glow of a new wonder, yet pensive withal and brooding—how unlike Diana with her wiles and Venus with her empty arms! No single scene has done more to touch the human heart to tenderness, to disinfect it of evil, lifting us into the curve and mystery of beauty, and teaching us to think of the home and the family as under the shadow of God. Whatever makes for purity, pity, and piety is needed in this hard world, if only to rebuke the rude cynicism which befouls the fountains of life and degrades what is most divine in human nature.

How delicately reticent, how exquisitely reverent is the Gospel record of the Mother of Jesus! Half hidden by a veil of prayers and hymns, visions, and visitations—a mere touch here and there—she is obscured from us, somewhat, and we do not see her

distinctly. No doubt this is why some have exalted her beyond measure, and others have neglected her without reason. When we look closely at the narrative, putting together the scattered hints and glimpses of Mary, there is no figure in the company grouped about the Master more lovely, more heroic, more pathetic that His Mother. But we must not think that her life was all one clear vision that left no room for doubt, no place for struggle and misgiving. Far from it. That is to rob her life of reality, making it a mere piece of play-acting bereft of all adventure of faith. What is clear to us from the record was dim to her as she walked her untried and difficult path, leading she knew not whither. The narrative as we have it was her interpretation of her experience, not a prophetic scroll laid before her as she moved through the years. She lived by faith, and that was the pathos and the glory of her life.

At first we see her as a gentle peasant girl, albeit of noble heredity, modest and sweet, pious; praying, no doubt, as many a Hebrew girl prayed, that she might be the mother of the Messiah—her mind steeped in the poetry of her people, her soul attuned to the haunting echoes of prophecy. Then we see her as the wife of a carpenter; and when her Child was born in a manger she knew, as Hannah knew, that He was an answer to prayer—knew, what every spiritually minded mother knows, that there is something divine behind the birth of a child. Her motherly instinct, her poetic insight put to shame the cyni-

cal atheism which sees no heavenly mystery in the sacrament of birth. After the morning glow came the light of common day, and we see Mary the Mother of Jesus, and also of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, and the sisters; a dutiful wife, a wise mother—a sort-tried, often doubting, but finally believing woman. Blessed among women was she, lovely when she bent over the cradle, and unutterably pathetic when she stood by the dark Cross outside the city gate.

Few are the glimpses given us of the eighteen silent years of boyhood, but they are enough to show us that Jesus was a mystery to His mother, as he must be to every one else. Of course, this experience comes in some degree to all mothers, all parents. Our children are ours, and yet not ours. They are their own and must go their way in the world. Frequently this makes for understanding, all the more so when the mystery of genius is present —as we may read in that strange, sad book entitled *Father and Son,* by Edmund Gosse. Did the mother of Shakespeare understand the wondrous boy growing up in her home? Did the mother of Dante know that she held in her arms a lonely pilgrim of eternity? How could they? From the outset, Mary knew there was something mysterious about her Son, something which made a certain distance between them—something which soon or late was sure to lead Him His own way, which might be far from her way. Often He must have seemed like a little stranger in her home, aloof even when she caressed

Him most fondly, having ideas she did not grasp, chambers in His nature she did not enter, and intimacies she could not share.

How strikingly this is shown in that scene in the Temple when the lost lad—lost to His parents, but not to Himself—was found talking with the doctors of the law. The Temple was apparently the last place they thought to look for Him, which shows how little they knew One who was born to religion as to the love of His mother. His reply to their rebuke had in it all the pathos of His life: "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" They had misread His temper and the tendency of His nature, and there are few hardships harder than to be misunderstood by those near and dear to us. It puts a great loneliness round about us. Yet the service of Mary to her Son was ineffably rich and beautiful, the more so because He was her first-born into whose life the tender tide of her mother-heart poured. The tie between a mother and her eldest son is unique, particular, and precious—doubly so if she is left a widow, as Mary seems to have been, if we may trust tradition. Such a fellowship is deep and unutterable, and it leaves something fine in the soul of the son, blending the strength of man with the mercy of woman—and the two together bring us near to God.

Yet no one can read the Gospel story without seeing that there was an estrangement between Jesus and His mother, the nature of which it is not easy to make out. It was, perhaps, an inevitable part

of the tragedy of His life. Jesus, we may be sure, was remiss in no duty to His mother, but his nature was beyond hers and His work called Him afar. If Joseph died when Jesus was a lad, the entire support of the home fell upon Him until His brothers were old enough to take His place. Perhaps, for this reason, the beginning of His public ministry was delayed until He was thirty years of age. When that time came the rift was felt, and it widened with the years. After His temptation He returned to Nazareth and was nearly mobbed by His neighbours, and never visited the village again—so far as we have record. Even His family seem to have been against Him. There is deep pathos in the line, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." As if He had been driven away from His own home! More than once He repeated the old proverb that "a prophet is not without honour save in his own country," but He went further and added, "and among his own kin, and in his own house!" What tragedy is here! Nor is this the worst of it. There is yet another scene more heart-breaking still—a scene too sad to have been invented, and which we might have been spared but for the veracity of the record.

There was a day, of which St. Mark tells, when the multitude pressed upon Jesus to such an extent that He had not even time to eat, and His family, hearing of this, went out to lay hold of Him; for they said, "He is beside Himself." They thought Him insane, and His mother was among them! How could misunderstanding go further, how could

pathos be more poignant! Hence His words setting forth the higher fellowship: "Whosover shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother!" Faith brings the furthest near, and lack of it leaves the nearest far off. What was passing in the soul of Mary in those days of struggle and torture no words may ever hope to tell. Someone has said that the first Gospel of Christ was that written in the heart of His mother, but it took a long time to write it. Its pages were blotted with tears and blurred with misgivings. When the news came of sick folk healed, of the blind restored to sight, of the dead raised, she "kept these things, pondering them in her heart." But when rumours came of plots, derision, winebibbing, gluttony, blasphemy, and threats of death—how hard it was to keep faith with the visions and voices of other days.

Like most women, Mary was a conformist, and the public opinion of Nazareth was dear to her heart. Why could not her Son soften His words? Why denounce the rulers of the Church? So long as His teaching was mere words, it was not so dangerous. But He insisted in acting it out, much to the scandal of His family. He actually set forth a faith and a way of living that upset the stability of society, treating outcasts and even harlots with kindness. He was not respectable—not for a day of His life! If men of high position sought to talk with Him, they did so by stealth by night, as Nicodemus did. All of which troubled the woman-heart of Mary. Let us not chide her, lest we condemn

ourselves. Are we quite willing to follow the logic of Christianity? Are we brave enough to obey the Gospel, in every page of which the seeds of social revolution are slumbering? Have we not said that Tolstoy and others of his kind were a little absurd in taking the words of Jesus so seriously? What Woolman called "the evil custom of the world" makes men trim the truth down to fit the lower ends of compromise and comfort. Not so Jesus. He was tempted to do so in His battle in the wilderness, but spurned all bribes of easy victory and temporary success, and became the Redeemer of humanity—the Redeemer of His Mother!

Mother and Son—each walked a lonely way, often far apart, but their paths drew together toward the end. Then it was that the sword pierced her heart, as it had been foretold. She was in the Holy City when the shadow fell, haunting the outskirts of the angry throngs which clamoured for His life. She saw Him standing crowned with thorns, condemned. With painful steps and slow she followed Him to Calvary, groping her way in the twilight of tragedy —as so many English mothers are doing to-day. Of all the figures that stood at the foot of the Cross, she was the most forlorn and forsaken. For the politician the Sufferer was a dangerous agitator, for the priest a fanatic, for the Disciples their beloved teacher; but for Mary—He was her Son! Yet even on the Cross Jesus did not forget His mother, and made provision for her care, asking the beloved Disciple to take her to his home. No one else saw

the Cross as Mary saw it. The brief, broken, bitter words put into her mouth in the drama of "The terrible Meek" help us to feel her profound, unspeakable grief. If the Cross was the depth of her sorrow, who else received the first Easter news with so wild a leap of heart? Amid rumours and reports, fleeting glimpses and whispers of His voice, what must have been the quivering eagerness of her heart! At last, at last she understood. Was ever any story stranger—how, at the end, the Mother of Jesus became a member of His Church, humbly trustful of His spirit, sweetly obedient to His truth—her Son, her Saviour!

With right do we honour the Mother of Jesus, linking her in poetry and song with One who was her Saviour and ours. The early Church called her Theotokos, Mother of God, because through her a new hope and joy had come into the hard old world. But she was saved, not because she was the Mother of the Saviour, but because, like all others, she found her way at last to faith in His spirit and His truth. Salvation is moral, not magical. As we cannot attribute the spiritual supremacy of Jesus to a physical fact, no more can we think that Mary was redeemed by her motherhood. If any might boast after the flesh, she more! But those who enter the Kingdom are born not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the will of God. Mary, like others, came to victory by the faith that worketh by love, by the obedience that makes us free, and the love that lifts us into the eternal fellowship. If only we

had record of the First Gospel, as it was written in her heart, what a testimony it would be, what a revelation of the love of God unveiled in the love of a mother.

How long Mary lived we do not know. St. Luke knew her, and tradition has it that he painted a picture of her in later years. From no one else could he have heard the story of the Nativity which he set down in his gospel. It is her interpretation of her experience, seen in the light thrown back by the life of Jesus upon His cradle and her motherhood—and some of us hold that her insight was true. What is the value of that record? For doctrine, little. But for the truth that is deeper than dogma, as deep as the home and family, as deep as the heart of motherhood, it means more than men have ever dreamed. Once we take it to heart, it will rebuke the false shame with which we veil the beauty of birth and the sacrament of conception. It will cleanse our lips of the rude jest, and exalt our minds with a sense of the sanctity of life, purifying society at its source. Surely this is what the story is trying to tell us, and it could not be told in a better way, with more artless art, with more haunting suggestion, with more ineffable beauty.

Never was that purifying truth more needed than to-day when there is so much to belie it. In nothing has the war been more horrible than in its crimes against motherhood, dragging all the sanctities of life down in blood and lust and shame. How appalling—indeed, how ghastly—is the contrast be-

tween the beauty of the Christmas vision and the facts of the world round about us! What wonder that it makes us pensive on a day dedicated to joy! One of our poets has written some piercing lines entitled *Trench Thoughts, Christmas,* 1916,[1] in which he tells us what the lads are thinking about, with a bitter touch of realism:

"Not of the shepherds old,
Watching their flocks by night,
But Father, and Kate with a light,
Seeing the cows is right.

"Not of the Angel song;
Peace unto men of Goodwill;
Only my brother Bill
Dead, and he done no ill!

"Not of the Heavenly host,
Bringing tidings of great joy;
But my Mother's homely employ,
And her prayer, 'My boy, my boy!'"

Dark as the present is, overcast with sorrow, yet must we fight the good fight, keeping the faith of this high, prophetic day. Our struggle is for the very truths that make us men, for the sanctity of Mother and Child, and for all the holy things that sanctify our human life. We dare not let them go. When the vision of the Ideal fades, life loses its meaning, men become animals—and we are lost.

[1] *Work-a-Day Warriors,* by Joseph Lee.

Now as of old our hope lies in the re-birth of the Divine in humanity, as in the motherhood of Mary; the incarnation of that living and holy Truth to which simple shepherds and learned magi alike pay homage. On this day the prayer of Christina Rossetti should be our own, that each heart may be a manger for His birth, and Love become a Child on earth once more.

"It was not that I cared for Thee—
But Thou didst set Thy heart upon me,
Even me,
Thy little one.

Therefore it was sweet for Thee
To leave Thy majesty and Throne,
And grow like me,
A little one."

THE LITTLE SANCTUARIES

"Thus saith the Lord God, Although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."—EZEK. xi. 16.

SUPPOSE the City Temple should be destroyed to-morrow—as, indeed, it may be any day—how many hearts would be bereaved by such a calamity? For many thousands the very stones of this grey old building are sacred—and London would be lonely without it. Their minds would be thronged with thoughts of days agone, with memories of the multitudes who have worshipped here, with echoes of the sweet voices which have made the Gospel eloquent in so many keys and tones and variations of emphasis, of insight, and of temperament. Sometimes it seems to me that all those who have knelt here have left something of their spirit in this place in return for what they receive; and so through the years there has been created a tradition of faith, an atmosphere of free and reverent and forward-looking fellowship. For that reason, even if this building were destroyed, the City Temple would not cease to be, because its image and influence would live in countless minds—each a little sanctuary bearing its likeness.

After this manner we may realise in some degree

the feelings of the people of old to whom this text was spoken. But only in part, because no building in England, not even the Abbey or St. Paul's, can have the same place in the life of this great people which the Temple on Mount Moriah had in the Hebrew theocracy. Our historic shrines are noble and holy—one stately and beautiful, the other massive and impressive—but, if Rome is the eternal city, Jerusalem is the city of the eternal, and its Temple outtops all others. In a unique sense the temples where Isaiah prophesied and Jesus taught were the centre both of the religious faith and the national life of a race which had a genius for religion, as the Greeks had a genius for art. There the light of God shone in the Shekinah. There He was revealed in His unity, His righteousness, His spirituality, His awful majesty, and His unutterable love. There He told His will, forgave sins, and bestowed blessing. From that central sanctuary His light and His truth went forth, hallowing the life of a race and making its daily labour a ritual.

No wonder there was bitter grief when the Temple was destroyed, and all but a ragged remnant of the race led away into a alien land to endure the loneliness of exile and the indignity of captivity. It is true that God is equally present everywhere, but that does not mean that sacredness is spread indiscriminately over the earth. Nor can we find God everywhere until we have first learned to find Him more vividly, more blessedly somewhere, in a place made holy by His realised presence. Surely there

is no spot where God is nearer or more real than in a temple built by our fathers, hallowed by their prayers, its steps worn by their vanished feet, and where we can pray in the language that answers to the throb of our hearts. What it means to be denied this privilege, to have the temple demolished and the altar desecrated, is shown us in the sad fate of France to-day, where our friends suffer the same tragedy which the people of Israel suffered long ago. Hence the deep appeal of the text, which is as true to-day as when it was uttered, in which God promises that about every forlorn exile a little sanctuary shall be built, impalpable and invisible, shielding faith and sheltering the holy things that make it worth our time to live.

Truly he is a strange man who does not love the little sanctuary, the wayside shrine, like that at which the Merciful Knight bowed after he had forgiven his enemy. Italy is rich in such shrines; and so is England, as we may learn anew from a book entitled *The Priest of the Ideal,* half a story and half a sermon, in which Stephen Graham writes of the old holy places of this island with so much insight and feeling. Indeed, one chapter of the story is actually a sermon on the Sanctuary, suggested by the old knocker on the door of the cathedral at Durham, at which the fleeing criminal entered—sweat on the brow, dust on the feet, fear in the eyes—to find refuge in days of old. It is a noble sermon, too, as is so often true in our fiction, where we find some of the best preaching of the day and some of the worst.

A sanctuary, he tells us, may be the House of God, Christ Himself, a woman's love, the beauty of nature, the closet of prayer, or "even a beautiful poem like 'Innisfree.'" It is any place, anything, in which we find shelter from the hardness of the secular spirit in the sanctity of the realised presence of God. No man of us but needs the great cathedral, but we also need the little sanctuary, if only to bring the light of the altar nearer to our daily task, and so erase the atheism which severs life into the secular and the sacred.

Even so there is much in our life to-day by which we may be led to understand the necessity for the little sanctuary and its ministry to man. Every soul has its cathedral hours, its profound and central insight, and it is the fine art of the religious life to carry the light of those hours of vision into the home, the shop, the study, the social circle, making these little sanctuaries of the Most High. My countrymen are wont to say that wherever there is an American there is a little America, a tiny bit of the homeland, a little shrine where the national ideal lives and glows. In the same way, wherever the lads of England go over the earth, in whatever "far-flung battle-line" they fight and fall, there is a little England; and their graves become little sanctuaries of the spirit, the faith, the civilisation they fought to defend. As we may read in the thrilling words of Rupert Brooke, whose grave is now, alas! a little sanctuary in a far land, where in days to be men will bow their heads in reverence:

"If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven."

Surely what is true of our patriotism should be equally true of our religion so that wherever a Christian goes there ought to be a little sanctuary of the faith and spirit of Jesus. Here is a matter of vital importance, into which we cannot go in detail now, except to emphasise one or two aspects of it. First of all, and always, we must keep the integrity of the mind a little sanctuary holy and inviolate, if our religion is not to wither under the blight of unreality and insincerity; and doubly so at a time when the Temple of Doctrine is so shaken, if not actually shattered. The impression is widespread that the Church in general, and the clergy in particular, hold by a faith officially and conventionally which is often very unlike what they really subscribe to in their own minds. That is to say, we are accused of believing

one thing as ministers and perhaps something else, something less certain and satisfying, as men. How far this may be true only God knows; but the suspicion of it is doing endless injury to the cause of religion. No man must lecture another upon this topic; each must search his own soul, lest he fall into that hell which is the doom of those who lose what Dante calls "the good of the mind."

Only those souls on earth who struggle to liberate themselves can attain this good of the mind and hear "the voice the stars had when they sang together." If once they win it, they know, as Dante knew, as Saul of Tarsus learned when smitten blind by the knowledge that they must use it to liberate others. To refuse to meet that responsibility is "the greatest renunciation," and if the most enlightened man born makes that refusal he is no longer enlightened. An example in point is Thomas Cranmer, who knew more than has ever been learned in any inferno—a man who made the great refusal, and only escaped from everlasting cheapness through a great expiation. Threatened with the loss of dignity, if not with degradation and death, he says that he signed with his own hand things "contrary to the truth." [1] But before he died at Oxford, in 1556, he learned how to make atonement, and as the flames of the martyr-fire were rising about him he said in his last speech, as Strype reports it: "And forasmuch as my hand offended in writing things contrary to my heart, therefore my

[1] *The Memorials of Thomas Cranmer,* by John Strype, 1693.

hand shall be punished." So saying, he held his hand steadily in the fire, as no man could have done unless he had recovered "the good of the mind."

Such a temptation besets all men, and few there be who do not in some degree yield to it, especially men in public life. The President, said Emerson, pays dearly for his White House, just because he must often dicker and deal and compromise to win it. No figure is more forlorn than the man who has let the light of vision fade from his heart by inner apostasy to the truth. When a man sells his soul for place or power or wealth his genius becomes mere cunning, and no moral camouflage can conceal it. It is a peril to which, in some way, every mortal is exposed, and no one is safe unless he keeps his heart a little sanctuary of the ideals that make us men. Just now, indeed, we who fight for liberty are sorely tempted, by "sacrificing to the Gods that smote us," to win the conflict outwardly, only to lose it inwardly. If we lower the ideal, a war which began as a humanitarian crusade will become a brutal brawl in the dark. Surely that would be the saddest of all defeats. "Expediency is man's wisdom; doing right is God's." Therefore it behoves each of us to keep the altar-fire aglow, renewing our vows on our knees, lest we be untrue to God and betray those who died "for the new order of the ages." Never did the old wise words have a more urgent and tragic meaning, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

In the Revised Version the text has a slightly

different rendering: "I will be unto thee a sanctuary for a little"; and it is full of sweet and rich suggestion. Here the prophet speaks across the ages to all who walk alone in far places, all who are kept away from the sanctuary of common prayer by illness, and who feel so keenly their deprivation. God Himself becomes their sanctuary, and what they lose of the fellowship of social prayer is made up to them by the joy of His communion. Also, when we leave the dear sanctuary of our youth, to which we are bound by so many ties of love, memory, and tradition, and go to a new home or a strange land, this text speaks with appealing tenderness and comfort. It tells us of One who can go with those who go and stay with those who stay, and be everywhere blessed; One in whose love there is no distance and no darkness. In the same ineffable way, when those whom we love vanish from us "for a little," and our days and nights become a litany of desolation, God makes a little sanctuary round about us, coming softly into the stillness which death makes when it passes by. He it is who renews that heroic and holy hope that when the night is gone and the morning faces smile, we shall meet those whom we "have loved long since and lost awhile."

There is yet a further hint which we may wisely lay to heart in this day of upheaval, when the forms of faith, both social and religious, seem to be falling to pieces, leaving us shelterless. Even the wisest man cannot tell what the hidden future may hold, but all of us have the feeling that it will be some-

thing very different from the past. It may be that as the people of old attained to a more spiritual religion after the Temple was destroyed and its ritual withdrawn, so we of to-day, by the very shattering of our forms of faith, may win a higher, deeper, more divinely real experience of things immortal. Indeed, it will be so to our salvation, if each of us keeps his own heart a little sanctuary of the faith and spirit of Jesus, waiting for the coming of the Spirit who shall endue us with light and power; as did that soldier who sees with clearer light enow, and who left these haunting lines:

"I have a temple I do not
Visit, a heart I have forgot,
A self that I have never met,
A secret shrine—and yet, and yet.

This sanctuary of my soul
Unwitting I keep white and whole,
Unlatched and lit, if Thou should care
To enter or to tarry there.

With parted lips and outstretched hands
And listening ears Thy servant stands;
Call Thou early, call Thou late,
To Thy great service dedicate." [1]

At last, when our poor body, which is a temple of the Holy Spirit, is dissolved in the mysterious chemistry of death, and we must leave this earthly

[1] *Expectans Expectavi,* by Charles Sorley.

life "for a little," we have assurance doubly sure in Him whom we follow that God the Father, out of whose love and wisdom we were born, will be our sanctuary from the vanishings of Time—God the home of the soul here and hereafter, "from always to for ever."

THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS[1]

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."—
LUKE xxiii. 46.

ON this day, and in a world at war, the Cross of Christ is a reality; it is the heart of the world laid bare. It is no isolated fact in history, much less a remote horror set on a far sky-line, but a shadow near to each of us, vivid in its urgency, heavy in its pressure upon us. To-day we do not think of Jesus as a lonely Sufferer, for it seems to us, somehow, that we were with Him there on that dark Cross outside the city-gate, and that He is with us here. Time and distance vanish, and we are lifted unto a vision of an eternal sacrifice, we sharers of His victory then, He a partaker of our struggle now. Such is our solidarity of suffering, and the heavy weight upon our hearts, that we have a dim, faint sense, to the measure of our power, of the burden he bore.

Four years of blood and agony have given us a deeper, clearer insight, purifying our eyes of dust by a flood of bitter tears. To-day we read the stately stanzas of the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah with a new vision, a new wonder; and the Figure that moves through those lines—gentle, heroic, silent, haunting,

[1] Good Friday, 1918.

despised and rejected of men, smitten of God and afflicted—seems a living Presence by our side, looking at us with all-pitying eyes, touching us with hands of healing. Truly He is the Suffering Servant of God, revealing the redeeming truth that, as there is a law of the survival of the fittest, so there is a law of the sacrifice of the best.

To-day is this truth fulfilled before our eyes, and we realise as never before that not only the death of Jesus, but His life, was one long atonement, just because His love made Him one with humanity in its sin, its woe, and its destiny. Therefore, a cup of cold water given to a fellow man helps Him, and an injury to one of these little ones hurts Him! Surely He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and, in His dying, death is vanquished:

> "And all through life I see a Cross
> Where sons of men yield up their breath.
> There is no gain except by loss,
> There is no life except by death."

What a scene was that in which the words of the text had their setting, as the ordeal of agony ended, and the evening closed in. Never did the dying sun look down upon a scene more ghastly, not alone in its physical horror, but in its moral atrocity. Kindness crucified by cruelty, Love put to death by brutality, Justice defamed by cunning, malignant bigotry—tragedy can go no further! Outwardly the Cross was an utter defeat; inwardly it was the ultimate victory.

Whether these last words were a parting wrench of pain, a prayer of relief at the mercy of death, or a cry of joy that He had endured to the end, we know not. Perhaps they were all these in one, telling us that He had triumphed, not only over physical torture and moral outrage, but over those dark foes we know not nor can name which assail the soul in its extremity:

> "Friend, it is over now,
> The passion, the sweat, the pains,
> Only the truth remains." [1]

As men live so they die, death being an apocalypse of life, revealing its faith, its passion, and its ruling vision. If one has lived the sceptical life, critical, questioning, doubting, he will say with Hobbes: "I am going to take a leap in the dark; I commit my body to the worms and my spirit to the great Perhaps." If he has been a seeker after light, searching for it in high places and low, in far places and near by, he will say with Goethe, "More light, more light!" If he has lived as Wesley lived, dedicated to God and His service, and to man and his redemption, he will come to his end with the assurance: "The best of all is, God is with us." If he has lived the life of a jester, as Rabelais did, he will say: "Let down the curtain; the farce is played out." What determines the course of the life of a man decides his attitude in death; and so it was with the

[1] *Good Friday,* by John Masefield.

Great Life. The last words of Jesus were a quotation from the Psalms, the book of the poetry and piety of the people of His fathers, in which so many had found succour before Him and so many have found solace since.

What tender, trustful, triumphant words they were, breathing a prayer of peace after the storm: "Into Thy hands I commit my spirit." Some one has pointed out that this was the bedside prayer which every Hebrew mother taught her child as the evening shadows fell—like the little prayers we learned long ago, and have taught to our children; and so the first faith of Jesus was the last, as befitted One to whom the child-heart was the finest flower and essence of religion. Nothing is easier than to keep our first faith when the sky is sunny overhead and the path smooth before us. But when shadows fall, and storms beat upon us, it is different. The ministry of Jesus in Galilee was like a summer; but in Judea He met icy hostility, cold indifference, trickery among His enemies and treachery among His friends, "and it was winter." Yet through all trial, all temptation, all tragedy, up to the last bitter hour, He kept the highest and sweetest faith. Thus the evensong which His mother had taught Him long ago lingered last upon His lips, as He entered "the deep, vast, speechlessness of death."

Only, to this simple prayer—which to the Psalmist was a prayer not for death, but for life and its peril—Jesus added the one great, deep, tender word which summed up His life, His faith, His vision;

Father! Never has any word fallen from mortal lips having such meaning as the word Father on the lips of Jesus in the black agony of His death, amid the railing, revilings, and mocking of His enemies! God eternal, God paternal—in that faith Jesus lived, in that faith He died, testing it to the uttermost. *Father!* That was His own word, His key to life, His first truth and His last; it was His religion. In youth He was eager to be about His "Father's business," and He filled His swift and gentle years with that labour, ere the night cometh when no man can work. He lived to do the will of His Father. It was His meat, His milk, His labour, His rest, His exceeding great joy." Other work, other wish, He had none, and in that wise and holy Will He found a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Father! not Fate, not force; that was the word He taught us in the brief, universal prayer—and if you go to the traditional site of that prayer you will find a tiny marble chapel, and on its walls in all the languages that have learned its wisdom, the words: "Our Father." God all-powerful, God all-loving, by that faith Jesus was strengthened in life and sustained in death. While the Father was with Him all was well. When for one brief, bitter moment He felt Himself forsaken of His father, the world turned black. But it was only for a moment; the shadow passed, and the God whom He had served in life became His solace in death. It is the glory of our Leader that He faced the blackest mystery in this dark world and found the brightest faith,

bringing life and immortality to light by His faithfulness in life, His fortitude in death, and His faith in God the Father. If by His grace we would win a like victory on our little cross, it must be by trusting the Father whom He trusted unto the uttermost, and by resting in the love in which He rested.

What Jesus saw behind the heavy drapery of death He did not tell us, except that the Father is there. For Him that was enough. The vast and tender Power which cared for Him here He trusted hereafter and for ever. He was utterly confident, but in nowise curious, willing to wait the will of the Father into whose soft, fascinating shadow He went without fear. Here is a vision of death that is itself victory, for that it disentangles it from dread, disinfects it of terror, and makes it holy and beautiful. "Into Thy hands"—that is the Highest faith, as it is the truest wisdom; and we need not fear to fall into those Father-hands whose fingers formed our very being, even as they piled up the mountains and set the stars in their orbits. No, we do not sink into disease, decay, and destruction, but into the hands of Him who made us for Himself, and He will keep that which we commit to His care. By the same token, let us trust into those hands the keeping of our dear, pitiful, august dead, of whom we think so often and with such unutterable longing. They are His. He made them, He loves them, and He will do for them more than we can ask or think or dream.

Ever more it is "dust unto dust, and the spirit unto God who gave it," saith the Preacher of Des-

pair. But Jesus did not think of His body, nor did He fear them that kill the body; He thought only of His spirit, in prayer commending it to the Father of Spirit. "My spirit"—how lovely, how heroic, how lofty and pure it was, all-forgiving and all-enduring, the glory and sanctity of the world! What is spirit if it be not light and flame and beauty? More subtle than ether, more swift than thought, it is life at its highest, its finest, its holiest—that within us akin to God. It is the delicate and elusive essence of being, its bloom, its grace, its glory, that in us of the true and everlasting; that which touches dull matter and transfigures it into shapes lovely and haunting. God is spirit! Even so, dying, Jesus surrendered His spirit to the Universal Spirit, as a spark ascending seeks the sun, giving back in a last renunciation the precious thing God had given to Him.

Such was the victory of the Cross, and as we watch we do not ask for a justification for things happening so. Instead, somehow, in a way beyond words, we are not only subdued, but exalted and purified by it. For we are left with the impression that the heroic Victim, though in one sense and outwardly He failed, was yet in another and truer sense superior to the world in which He appeared; was in some way, which we do not seek to define, untouched by the tragedy, and was rather set free from life than deprived of it. Now this impression, this insight, really implies that the world of tragedy, of

sorrow, of sin is no final reality, but only a part of reality taken for a whole, and, when so taken, untrue. It means that if we could see the whole, and the tragic facts in their place in it, we should find them, not abolished, indeed, but transmuted, transfigured, explained, justified—find, that is, that suffering and death count for little, and greatness of soul for everything. Here, of a truth, is the faith that looks through the shadow of death and sees into the life of things.

All high wisdom, all heroic faith comes at last to this: victory over life, over death, over self, over sin is won by surrender to the loving will of Him whose we are and who made us for Himself. The dying prayer of Jesus only breathed out the spirit, the habit, the joy of His life. What He did on the Cross He had been doing all His days, offering Himself to His Father to serve or to suffer, to do or to bear; and in death He made a last offering. It is this that makes the Cross not simply a martyrdom, but a revelation of a Wisdom deeper than we can imagine, and of a love that is the keeper of unknown redemptions. Nor should we ever have known this truth in its height and depth and wonder but for "that strange Man on the Cross" outside the city gate, who by His surrender became our Saviour and by His suffering became our Healer. Even now we cannot truly know it until we take up our cross and follow Him, living the surrendered life, giving our utmost to the highest.

"O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee,
I lay in dust, life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

THE ETERNAL VALUES

"Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here; He is risen."—LUKE xxiv. 5, 6.

NO hour on earth is more bleak, more bitter, than when we go back from a new grave in which we have buried the fellowship of years. It did not need Lowell to tell us what it means in those poignant lines, "After the Burial." When the tie has been broken, and before we have had time to re-knit our faith, there falls upon us an utter and unutterable desolation. Death seems to divide Divinity with God. Such was the shadow which haunted that little band when they returned early in the morning to the tomb of Jesus, bringing spices to care for His body. Hope was dead, only love remained, and it clung to a Form familiar and holy which they had seen mutilated in death.

They found an empty tomb and shining figures sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. As Augustine said, that which was the place for worms had become a place for angels. But their report was held to be an idle tale. Let us not forget that the disciples were the first doubters of the Easter story, and had to be won to faith. If you were told that one whom you had laid in the grave had been seen alive again, what would you do? Whatever wild

wish might leap in your heart, not one of you but would first make sure that it was true. The disciples of Jesus were men and women with minds like our own. No more than we did they wish to mistake fancy for fact, shadow for substance. Surely only a fact could have won the faith of those who looked upon the ghastly scene of the Cross. As to the details of the Easter fact, that is a matter of testimony and record, but the fact itself has furnished its own proof age-long and triumphant.

Before we proceed further, let us ask what was the nature of the Easter fact which turned sorrow into song and changed a band of dejected disciples into flaming heralds of a new, victorious hope? Surely the life of Jesus, and still more His death and resurrection, is the supreme demonstration, to which there is no parallel, of the power of spirit; of that for which science has no term, and the secret of which it cannot know. Here is a fact, a force, an influence in perfect harmony with physical forces, but not of them, and only faintly do they symbolise it. True, we have tokens of the power of spirit everywhere, but the profound and special meaning of the life of Jesus is its revelation of spiritual power acting directly, not only upon inanimate matter, but upon man himself, effecting vital changes in his faith, his thought, his character, and even in his physical life. In the history of that Life it is seen restoring discordant minds to harmony, withered bodies to soundness, the sick to health, the blind to sight, and the recently dead to life.

Once we see that Jesus was the greatest, the most original, the most creative, the most dynamic of spiritual personalities, the facts recorded of Him are not only intelligible, but luminous. What men call miracles are but the graceful gestures of such a Being, bearing witness to the divinity of Spirit as creator, repairer, and master of matter. In such a history the story of the Resurrection may seem wonderful—as, indeed, it is—but, none the less, as natural as the blooming of a flower or the shining of a star, since even outside that history we can see no limit to the power of spirit. Jesus did not create faith in immortality: the path of early history is marked by the monuments of forgotten peoples, who left nothing but proofs of their faith in a future life. Jesus revealed Eternal Life. What was before a guess, or at best a hope, He revealed to be a fact by the power of spirit, a power that gives immortality its true character and shows it to be an ever more and more abundant life. Once for all, victoriously, by the power of an endless life, He revealed

> That life is ever lord of death,
> And love can never lose its own.

But there is another question with which we must deal, if we would know the basis of belief in a future life. Admit that it is an instinct, an intuition, an inspiration, alive from the earliest time and active in every land, what is its basis? At bottom it is a question of eternal values. If life is worthless, so is im-

mortality. If life has any excuse for being, if it has meaning, worth, value, actual or prophetic, it is a question of conserving those values. Here is the root of faith in the future life. Our healthy sense of the worth of life, and our instinctive clinging to it despite its sorrows, is the first intimation of that faith. All that man has achieved of intellectual power, moral worth and spiritual beauty is a justification of that faith. By the same token, the experience which realises those values confirms that faith and makes it victorious. Such is my thesis today, and it brings the whole question very close to each of us in a practical way.

Faith is the affirmation that life has value. It is not sight, but insight. It makes the venture and affirms that life is real, sane, worth while, and that things are not what they seem. It is "anticipated attainment." That is to say, it asserts that life has eternal meanings, and lives as if those meanings were present realities. As Coleridge said, it bids eternal truth be present fact. That which to knowledge is but a Word to Faith has become Flesh. Knowledge is patient; faith is prophetic. If knowledge is slow, the feet of faith are swift. It runs forward into the future, takes possession of ideals, and makes them immediate and commanding. It is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, and the power that makes dreams come true. Human brotherhood is a noble dream—but men have to be made brothers, and how long it takes

history tells. But to faith they are brothers now, drawn together into the unity and fellowship of a common worship. Knowledge follows after faith, slowly fulfilling its prophecies of things to be. What a picture science paints!

Whirling fire-mist cools and condenses into the earth; life appears, swimming in fish, growing in plants, and at last walking erect in man. Mind and character appear in thinkers, saints, seers. Moses prefers service to ease, Socrates chooses the high paths of truth and justice, David sings songs that haunt us still, Jesus dies for humanity. On a thousand altars humanity offers the final sacrifice for the sake of truth, liberty, righteousness. Through what travail, age-long and full of agony, nature toiled and aspired to these flowers of moral worth and beauty. By what vast struggles, sublime in their sacrificial heroism, has the moral life been achieved and preserved. Has it value, or is nature only blowing bubbles? Is it worth the cost, or did the Eternal when He took dust and made man simply play with it? Finally, the earth cools, its heat and light gone, and darkness falls again. Is all moral value erased as the last man dies in a world of graves, forgotten as a thing futile and foolish? Faith says no!

All human values were heightened by the life of Jesus. He brought life, as well as immortality, to light, bringing out its colour and its splendour. No fact, no fellowship but was touched by Him to finer issues. The home, the family, the life of woman and child, of slave and saint were exalted and glori-

fied by His gospel. In Greek drama a child was only a piece of stage setting. Humanity crucified Him on a Cross, but even the Cross became a symbol of sanctity. The hard old world was made larger, sweeter, richer, for ever because His great soul passed through it. The old, high instincts of the soul of man, burning dimly in the dark, became beacons of hope and expectation. Even a wayside flower is a teacher of wise and good and beautiful truth, since JESUS lived. More than an inspiration, He was a revelation: He made all good things better, all evil things more ugly, every sanctity more sacred, and every hope more radiant. His death evoked light from darkness, sweetness from bitterness—like an alabaster box of precious ointment broken to anoint a hard, ungrateful world. Jesus did not argue for immortality, He unveiled the value of life. By His faithfulness He confirmed the faith of humanity.

Religion is the realisation of the value of life. And this is especially true of the religion of Jesus, albeit He never used the word Religion, so far as we have record, but always the word Life instead —as if to say that religion and life are one or neither is of any worth. His gospel is a disclosure of the deepest reality of God through the highest nature of man. In Him our humanity found its Revealer, its Vindicator, its incomparable Teacher and Redeemer. Celsus, an early enemy of His faith, said truly that "The root of Christianity is its excessive valuation of the human soul, and the absurd idea

that God takes an interest in man." Exactly; as Emerson said, "Jesus alone in history estimated the greatness of man," his divine origin and destiny, and the vast possibilities of his nature. In the Gospel of Jesus men are sons of God here, now, always, and, if sons, heirs of all that is and is to be. Often men are wayward sons, sometimes wicked sons. Yet they are sons of God nevertheless, and to realise that fact and live accordingly is religion.

Jesus came, He said, that men might have life, and have it abundantly—life rich, radiant, overflowing, triumphant. Manifestly, if we are immortal at all we are immortal here and now. Knowledge of that truth, not as a theory but as a reality, sets us free from fear of death and the tyranny of time. It is to realise the Eternal life. Not mere duration, but a sense of the depth of life, its worth, its beauty, its splendour. What Jesus calls Eternal Life, is life in which man overcomes death by discovering his citizenship in the Divine society. He asks man to take his stand among the eternal things, and thus commit himself to aims and enterprises which exceed the short span of mortal days. The immortality in which he believes will thus become a reality. Life so lived will reveal its own eternal quality and prophecy. Faith is fidelity to our finest instincts; the fellowship of the eternal life is its fruition. As St. Augustine put it, summing up the truth in one flashing line: "Join thyself to the Eternal God, and thou shalt be eternal."

Since this is so, surely the whole question of im-

mortality is a question of the conservation of the values of life. First Affirmation, then Realisation, and finally a treasuring up of the ineffable wealth of moral and spiritual worth. What are the supreme values of life? Not in what we possess, not what we know, not even what we do, but what we are. They are personal qualities. The noblest thing earth has to show the stars is a pure, refined, valiant personality. The ideal and goal of the universe, so far as we can know its purpose, is the growth of heroic human souls. St. Paul saw in the groans and travail cries of nature the birth-throes of the sons of God, and his vision is verified by the science of today. What is evolution but a tracing of the age-long story of the struggle of nature upward out of mud to mind, out of matter to spirit, out of savagery to saintliness? They ask too much who ask us to think that these treasures, so high and hard-won, are cast at last as rubbish to the void. How then are they preserved in face of death?

There are those who say that personal immortality is not needed to conserve the values of life. Only God is eternal, and such values as our little lives have, return to Him, absorbed in His life, as a candle fades into the sunlight, as a dew-drop slips into the sea. No moral worth is ever lost. Such an idea seems very lofty and profound, but the poet who wrote the lines:

> The forces that were Christ
> Have taken new forms and fled,

wrote words without meaning. It is impossible for two reasons. First, they are personal forces, and if personality ends in death they end too. The notion of love as a quality of God, of which Jesus was a fleeting form, and the value of which He, dying on the Cross, surrendered, is absurd. Second, such qualities are not entities to be abstracted from persons and absorbed by another. They cannot be transferred. The goodness of Jesus was His own, woven with the fibre of His being, and can never be taken from Him. Moreover, it makes God a moral monstrosity, an infinite vampire, crushing the souls of men for their sweetness and casting them away. Besides, love, justice, mercy are social qualities and exist only in social fellowship. If they melt into God we have at last a vision of a God just, but just to no one, loving no one but Himself, His throne a universal cemetery!

No, if the bells are tolling a march to everlasting death in which Jesus and Judas sleep together, all moral value erased in dust, let us face the fact, and not attempt to muffle their tones with seductive phrases. Stately, grave and noble were the lines of George Eliot, who, when she lost faith in personal immortality, prayed that she might join the Choir Invisible

> Of those immortal dead who live again,
> In minds made better by their presence,

but they tell us very little. Our influence and example may impress our fellows for good or ill, be-

coming a part of the body of law by which the race is ruled. But what is the nature of that influence? It is not that our spirit passes into them, but that it evokes in them like qualities of their own. What though Sappho sing divinely and her song go sobbing down the years, if she be choked in dust? Wherefore the lives of saints and martyrs, if it be only that in a dim far time a few men shall be utterly good and wise? Then what? At last the earth will grow cold, the race will vanish, and the Choir Invisible will no longer be the gladness of the world! Death will reign and every moral value vanish!

What of it? some one will ask, seeking a last refuge from "the malice of obliterated life." Is not virtue its own reward, its own sweetness and satisfaction? Is not morality worth while, even if pity be the root of it? Assuredly; but what is the reward of virtue if it be not the glory and the opportunity of more virtue, the glory, as Tennyson sang, of going on and still to be, that we may be better. Else it were better if the earth had remained like the moon, "a mass of slag, idle and without a tenant." No, no; think it all through and you will see that personal immortality is the only imaginable way of conserving the precious values of love, mercy, justice, character—values which the universe toiled through long eras to achieve, and which humanity has aspired so long to realise. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" Over the grave made yesterday, not less than over the tomb of Him who brought life and immortality to light, and whose life was a victory

over death so that it revealed to what fine issues the soul ascends, it may be said, "He is not here; He is risen."

What is excellent,
As God lives, is permanent;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain
Heart's love will meet them again.

Holy Father, into Thy hands we commend the spirits of our brothers who gave their lives for their homes and as a ransom for the liberties of mankind. Accept them in the name of Him who poured out His life on the Cross for all humanity. Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord, and let Thy light shine upon them for ever more. Subdue us with a sense of the awe and tenderness of the Unseen into which they have entered, and may the nobility of their sacrifice exalt and purify us for Thy service. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

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