





BV 4211 .K47
Kern, John A. 1846-1926.
Vision and power

VISION AND POWER

VISION AND POWER

A STUDY IN THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING

BY

JOHN A. KERN

Author of "The Ministry to the Congregation,"
"Christianity as Organized," etc.

"There is a depth below the depth,
A height above the height,
Our hearing is not hearing
And our seeing is not sight."



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH

Copyright, 1915, by
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY

New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 125 N. Wabash Ave.
Toronto: 25 Richmond St., W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

To

my students in Christian Preaching
now scattered abroad in their own land
and unto the ends of the earth

I send
with grateful memories of twenty-nine years
this last word

“Couldst thou in vision see
The man God meant for thee
Thou nevermore shouldst be
The man thou art, content.”

PREFACE

IF I might begin with a request, I would ask the reader to turn from this page to the tenth and eleventh chapters of The Acts. Not that, in what is to follow, these two chapters of the New Testament shall be made the text of a series of expository sermons. But the story which they tell and re-tell of a certain epoch-making experience in the life of the first Christian preacher will be taken as a thread of guidance and suggestion for a study in Christian preaching.

Two words describe, as fairly perhaps as any other two that could be chosen, the men who achieve notably great results in the manifold work of the world. Such results are achieved by men of *vision* and of *power*, in some true sense of the two meaningful words.

To the minister of Christ these words are applicable in the highest meaning they can be made to bear. Because to him vision is vision of spiritual realities, and power is the power of God himself in the setting up of his kingdom in the world. It was so not only with such chief apostles as Peter and Paul, but with all the first messengers of Jesus; and it is equally true of his messengers to-day.

This vision and its expression in Divine power, as an equipment for the ministry of preaching, is our theme.

Any readers whom I may hope to win are likely to

be preachers of the gospel in the earlier years of their ministry; and none certainly could be more welcome. Such as these have already made me their debtor by not a few kind and appreciative words, and I want to be with them still in the companionship of the spirit.

But none of us, I hope, will forget that the whole endowment of God's truth and grace is alike for all his children—for those who are not named by the Church as its ministers as truly as for those who are. "The gifts and calling of God" are unto a universal Christian priesthood and ministry. And for the man who stands in the pulpit there is nothing better than to be a big brother to his fellows.

J. A. K.

RANDOLPH-MACON COLLEGE.

CONTENTS

I. THE MAN	13
1. Easily recognizable and most human. 2. An intellectual trait—impulsive speech. 3. A moral trait—responsiveness to a leader. 4. Faith and faults. 5. What did this faith in Jesus include? 6. A common man. 7. The opportunity and work.	
II. THE HOUSETOP	36
1. How Simon Peter had learned to pray. 2. Where to pray. 3. The Oriental housetop as a prayer room. 4. Prayer as a duty. 5. Prayerless activity. 6. Prayer a response. 7. "Wherefore didst thou doubt?"	
III. THE VISION	54
1. To sleep, which is to dream. 2. What worth has the dreaming mind? 3. The Divine presence in dreams. 4. The trance, non-religious, religious. 5. "In a vision" and "mouth to mouth." 6. The form of the vision. 7. The historic and the universal. 8. Conservatism and truth. 9. Religious aristocracy vs. the religion of Jesus.	
IV. THE INTERPRETATION	79
1. "What think ye?" 2. Simon Peter thought and was perplexed. 3. Thinking and mysticism. 4. A progressive answer. 5. Significance of the spoken "words" at Cæsarea. 6. A Gentile's prayer is answered. 7. "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." 8. The universality of Jesus.	
V. VISIONS AND VISION	104
1. Eyesight, ecstasy, insight. 2. What are our visions? 3. Vision is insight into visions. 4. What means the vision of childhood? 5. Simon Peter's vision of Jesus, and ours. 6. Spiritual vision of one's own life. 7. The soul perceiving spiritual facts and values. 8. The soul picturing spiritual facts and values. 9. Vision the faith of realization.	

VI. VISION OF NATURE	130
1. What did nature mean to Jesus? 2. The witness of little and great in nature. 3. The witness of utility. 4. The witness of beauty. 5. Nature's revelation of the immanent God. 6. Mystery and truth. 7. Nature's teaching through symbol and proof.	
VII. VISION OF MAN	152
1. How we know ourselves and one another. 2. What is it that makes man man? 3. Oneself in the light of Christ. 4. "The light that lighteth every man." 5. The fulfilment of the hunger for the Divine. 6. Sharing the vision of the Lord of Love. 7. What are the human possibilities? 8. The universalism of knowledge, civilization, Christianity.	
VIII. VISION OF JESUS	174
1. What is it to know Jesus? 2. Testimony of Jesus' witnesses, spoken, written. 3. Such a personality must be historic—hence Divine. 4. The Church's answer to the seeker of spiritual truth. 5. Vision in Jesus of our everyday life. 6. Vision in Jesus of our moral relation to God. 7. Nature's predictive symbols of the Cross.	
IX. THE OPPORTUNITY	194
1. Providence in the opportunities of service. 2. Opportunity alike in life and death. 3. Divine opportunity through human service. 4. The preacher's wide-open door. 5. "Many adversaries."	
X. ENLARGEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY	212
1. "I may, therefore I will." 2. Peter's worldwide opportunity and ours. 3. America and human brotherhood. 4. The peoples and the individual.	
XI. POWER THROUGH EVANGELIC TRUTH	227
1. Truth as facts and their meaning. 2. Jesus the Evangelic Truth. 3. The universal hunger for knowledge. 4. The universal antagonist of evangelic truth. 5. The distinctive motive power of the gospel. 6. Truth as personalized in Jesus. 7. The highest truth creative of the highest life.	
XII. POWER THROUGH THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER	250
1. The personality of the first Christian preacher. 2. The preëminent power of personality. 3. The	

CONTENTS

11

mediating personality of Jesus and his witnesses. 4. The Church founded on truth embodied in personality. 5. Personality and personal presence. 6. "In pretence or in truth." 7. A special reason for great personalities in the pulpit. 8. Personality transfigured and unconscious.

XIII. POWER OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT 278

1. The Spirit with and without the gospel. 2. Divine personal power in nature and in grace. 3. The Spirit and the free will. 4. Jesus as revealed by the Spirit. 5. The gospel preached by the Spirit. 6. The way of the Spirit in the truth. 7. The way of the Spirit in personality. 8. The mystery of the Spirit's speech. 9. The Spirit and the revival of religion.

XIV. EFFECTS OF POWER 301

1. The soul in the face. 2. The inner spiritual effects. 3. The mark of universality in Christian experience and character. 4. Perfection a gradual growth. 5. The new birth a reconstruction of the soul. 6. Spiritual discipline and healing. 7. The fruits of the Spirit bear witness. 8. Effects in the individual, the church, the community.

XV. CERTAIN SIGNS OF POWER 324

1. "He will fall down on his face and worship God." 2. The witness of psychology. 3. Interpretation and misinterpretation of signs. 4. Use and misuse of social excitement. 5. A transfiguration and its value. 6. The danger of resting in a past experience. 7. The danger of disheartening the true-hearted. 8. The new birth in childhood.

XVI. THE WAY OF POWER 355

1. Spiritual power not through imitation or office. 2. The way of vision and of power the same. 3. Prayer as a condition of power. 4. Obedience as a condition of power. 5. The kingdom of freedom and of law. 6. The everyday walk in the light.

XVII. THE CONFESSION 379

1. Why a form of baptism in the religion of the Spirit? 2. Personal benefits from the confession of Christ. 3. Not chiefly self-regarding. 4. The confessing Church. 5. A bearer of light and power.

I

THE MAN

Now there was a certain man in Cæsarea, Cornelius by name, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always. He saw in a vision openly, as it were about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in unto him and saying to him, Cornelius. And he, fastening his eyes upon him and being affrighted, said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and fetch one Simon who is surnamed Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside.—ACTS 10: 1-6.

AN invitation to preach may be the opening of a door to some infinite good. Always, even as an everyday occurrence, it is an honour and an opportunity. But here is an extraordinary instance. About the year 41 A.D. a Roman centurion at the military headquarters of Judea is divinely directed to send men on a two days' journey for a man to show him and his household the way of salvation in Christ.

What manner of man, in spirit and speech, is the preacher thus sent for? Do not say that it makes no difference—that the personality of the preacher matters nothing, just so he bring a true message. It does matter greatly. The messenger's words may or may not be a fitting vehicle of that inner Word which he must deliver. His spirit also may be no help but a hindrance; or, on the

contrary, it may be exceeding serviceful in making a way for his message.

When, therefore, it is asked who this chosen preacher was, it may be answered, No more signally honoured name than his in human history. For not only was he one of those whom Jesus chose out of the whole number of the disciples that they might be in constant companionship with himself, and be sent forth in due time to preach the Good News of God, but he was recognized as the very foremost of these apostles. When they are all mentioned together in the Gospels, is he not always the first mentioned? And the same is true when three of them are spoken of as taken apart from the rest for some special nearness to their Lord. "And he taketh with him Peter and James and John"—it was so in the room where the ruler's little daughter was lying asleep in death, and on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in Gethsemane.

Also, he was the first of the Eleven to whom the risen Lord was made known—"The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon"—and the announcer to the multitude at Pentecost, "devout men from every nation under heaven," that this risen Jesus was the Saviour Christ.

We recall, moreover, that it was by Jesus himself that this Simon was surnamed Cephas—which, being interpreted, is Peter, or Rock—and thus incited, we may believe, to aspire after what it lay in his power, through discipleship with the Master, to become. And it was to him, standing up first of all men distinctly to confess his faith in Jesus as the Christ, that the great

word was spoken, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah"—the only recorded beatitude the Master ever pronounced upon an individual—"for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." And then? "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church."

As faithful Abraham was called the father of all them that should afterward believe with a heart unto righteousness in the God of Israel and of Jesus Christ, so was Simon Peter called the first foundation rock of all them that should afterward be built as confessing disciples into the vast and invincible Congregation of Christian believers.

This was the man sent for by the devout centurion, a representative of the nations' call for the gospel of the Incarnation and the Cross.

Surely not in the whole elect brotherhood of men who had worn the prophet's mantle, nor in the long line of those upon whose heads had rested the crown of the house of David, nor in the Hall of Fame of any age or nation, has there been a personality or a career signalized by a more memorable distinction than was that of this fisherman of Capernaum.

On the other hand, it would not be easy to quote a more terrible word of rebuke than this same foremost confessing disciple suffered at the lips of his Lord. It was such a word as had smitten the evil one himself on the Mount of Temptation: "Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men."

I

Yet there is nothing awesome in our thought of this man. We should not have dreaded to meet with him, either alone or in company. He shows no kinship to those characters that constrain one to admire them at a distance but forbid familiar approach. Nor do we think of him as intellectually a genius, or educationally more than what the rabbinical schools of his day would have called an "unlearned and ignorant man," or morally an incomparable hero, or spiritually, except in the sense in which the New Testament applies the title to all Christians, a saint; but rather as a man of a certain large and lovable humanness, honest, self-confident, quick to receive impressions, sure to attract attention and to awake something of sympathetic interest, heartily religious withal, and of like infirmities with ourselves.

In Joppa the men who are to come for him from Cornelius will find him lodging in the house of a tanner by the seaside, and they will have to use no persuasion to induce him to go with them to Cæsarea. He will take six brethren along with him. In Cæsarea he will not consent that Cornelius shall fall down at his feet as before a superior being—"Stand up, I myself also am a man." No doubt he was likely in any company to be in spirit as in fact a *fellow-man*—an "I-myself-also." So, later, writing to the Christian elders of the Dispersion, he says, "I exhort, who am"—the foremost apostle of Jesus Christ? No; "I exhort, who

am a *fellow-elder*.” * Temperamentally he would fall into a class with the faulty and volcanic, yet masterful, leader of the German Reformation, of whom his latest biographer speaks as “one of the most human of the world’s great men.”

It is a point upon which one may speak confidently, because the Book in which his memoirs appear shows all its historical characters, not with colourless, washed-out faces, but as they actually were; and of them all Simon Peter is the best known. And this not simply because of the comparative fulness with which his sayings and doings are reported, but also because of his native transparency of mind and speech—the absence of the least shadow of reserve or suggestion of second thought.

Furthermore, wherever he appears upon the scene, in the Gospels, in The Acts, or in the Epistle to the Galatians, his conduct, be it much or little—one might add, be it in waking life or in trance—is unfailingly characteristic. Simon Peter is always recognizable, because always frankly and conspicuously himself—an incidental proof of the truth of the evangelic narratives.

“Thy speech bewrayeth thee.” Thus did they make answer, in the court of the high priest’s house, to Peter’s denial of discipleship with Jesus—“Of a truth thou also art one of them, for thy speech bewrayeth thee.” And in fact his speech, in a much more individualizing sense than that of his broad Galilean pronouncement, was always bewraying him. If ever a man

* Peter 5: 1.

habitually spoke with a tell-tale tongue, unconsciously disclosing the tone and temper of his mind, here was such a man. Whatever he uttered, at any time or anywhere, showed manifestly the manner of man he was. It has been said that "each spirit has its own voice." Beyond a question this spirit had. No shadowy or ghostlike figure flitting across the stage of human history was Simon Peter, but a red-blooded and outspoken man, self-depicted, self-confessed.

II

Now it is upon two personal traits of this very knowable disciple of Jesus that I would lay a bit of emphasis at this time. One is an intellectual and the other a moral trait.

The intellectual trait is the *impulse of utterance*. This, indeed, is a universal human endowment. Otherwise speech would not be a universal human achievement. Self-expression, which is almost always for the sake of self-communication, is an instinct of the soul. It may be unmistakably seen in the two-year-old child, who without it would never learn to talk. Through this impulse, then, giving rise to that mystery of outgoing power, the living word, soul comes into contact with soul.

But the difference between individuals with respect to this constitutional impulse is very marked. There are sons of silence. They have little or nothing, in any ordinary circumstances, to say. Nor is it necessarily because of lack of ideas or of suitable language in which to express them, or because of a conviction

that "in the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression," but simply because of there being no strong propensity of speech.

On the other hand, there are those whose thinking itself seems informed with a spirit of communicativeness. They think aloud. Their very ideas are an articulate effusion. In society they are ever conversers—unless, indeed, as is not infrequently the case, they become monologists. In parliamentary bodies they must practise restraint to keep off their feet. In religious meetings their counsel, or testimony, or exhortation may always be expected. Any perfect portrait of them would have parted lips.

And this was the temperament of Simon Peter. Ever ready to speak his mind, he spoke at times when "he wist not what to say." Whatever the thought or feeling of the moment, it tends to utterance. At once it becomes a word or some other kind of act. Why pause to cite instances? Familiar to every reader of the New Testament are such expressions as "Peter said," "Peter answered Him," "Peter answered Him and said," "Peter began to say unto Him," "Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren and said." "The mouth of the Apostles," Chrysostom called him. For he soon became spokesman of the Twelve; and we may be sure not through election by them, or through his own seeking, but simply through the spirit of speech that possessed him. At Cæsarea he entered the house where he was to preach, *talking* to the Roman officer who had sent for him—"and as he talked with him, he went in."

It is an excellent spirit—if united with the rare

grace of good listening, a most excellent spirit. Reti-
cence and reserve are no doubt called for at times in
the conduct of life, but it is far from desirable that
they should dominate one's everyday speech. Let a
man be sure to live in truth and love, and then let
him speak out, with no such picking of words as would
suggest the habitual fear lest he say something that
might be used against him.

To be silent in the presence of that which is too
sublime and awe-inspiring for speech, to keep back and
inwardly renounce the unkind or boastful or captious
remark, to say nothing under provocation to make the
angry and bitter retort, to refrain from idle or irrele-
vant words—that, it may be cheerfully granted, is to
be a kingly man. "He that refraineth his lips is wise."
But even such silence is at best masterly inactivity,
while speech, on the contrary, is action. The word is
a positive and aggressive power. To know how to be
silent is well, but to have the truth both strongly borne
in upon the soul and as strongly borne out in spon-
taneous speech means far more for the personal
effectiveness of one's life. There can be no doubt that
it is one of the good gifts to be cherished by the Chris-
tian preacher. Paul gave thanks for the Corinthians
that among other charisms they had that of "utter-
ance."

For the effective use of this gift of ready speech,
however, whether in public or in private, the guidance
and control of the thought must be as quick as that
of the vocal organs. Nor is this impossible; though
thought is quicker of movement than even the swiftest

spoken word. And here Peter was at fault. Not loquacious, yet under excitement he was prone to speak rashly or with misplaced curiosity. "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee upon the waters;" "Let us build three tabernacles;" "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" "If all shall be offended in thee, I will never be offended;" "Lord, and what shall this man do?"—these and the like were inconsiderate and inopportune utterances.

Nevertheless, the temperament out of which such expressions are apt to arise is not to be regarded by the speaker as in itself a hindrance, but rather as a help. It is an element of power in speech. "I have often had occasion to observe," says Richard Cecil, "that a warm blundering man does more for the world than a frigid wise man." Somewhat as one would rather have a friend who, though at times ill-tempered, really loved him, than to be treated with uniform loveless propriety, so the heart of a hearer will be more affected by the spontaneous and impulsive speaker, though the speech may be enfeebled at times by temperamental faults, than by the speaker who is free from such faults through lack of the ardent impulsive temperament which would render him liable to them. Spontaneity is at once the speaker's thrust-power and his snare.

III

The moral trait to be noted in Simon Peter is that of *responsiveness to a cause and a leader*. Let us remember the momentous time in which this man was

called upon to make his life-choice and fulfil his course. It was the day of all days that had ever been given to Israel or to mankind. Spiritually sensitive spirits seem to have felt that some great Divine movement had begun, whose depth and fulness of meaning, however, they knew not. Prophets were heard to speak again—a Simeon, an Anna, a John the son of Zacharias. What could it all mean?

When John came forth to herald the new age, his announcement was, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. But when Jesus of Nazareth appeared, as the fulfilment of that prophetic word, it was not in the glory of the Christ who was expected. He called for followers whom he might make his message-bearers, but foretold the suffering and danger that would meet them in the way. He promised them no earthly good, but quite the contrary. Their one aim must be the reign of righteousness, the supremacy of the kingdom of heaven, in their own and all other lives—"as in heaven, so on earth." And the law of personal allegiance which he laid upon them was absolute: they are to follow him, their Leader and Lord, though the path of advance be like that of the condemned man bearing his cross to a Golgotha.

Now, when among any people the voice of the masterful man of the hour is heard proclaiming some great and worthy cause and calling for followers, men are judged, and separated to the right hand and the left. The timid and selfish stand off, indifferent, irresponsive, afraid. But the nobler spirits, the men of ideality and vision, are thrilled with the high impersonal idea of

a cause and with the personal appeal of the leader in whom it has found embodiment. They want to be bidden and to obey. It is their glory to serve. It is their most uplifting hope to see the triumph of the cause and its leader.

Evidently it was to this latter class that Simon Peter belonged. Probably he had been a disciple of John; certainly he soon became an eager and outright disciple of Jesus.

First, by the Jordan in Judea, he went and made acquaintance with the new Master. For when his own brother Andrew came to him, after having first spent an evening in the company of Jesus, and said, "We have found the Messiah," Simon suffered himself to be brought to Jesus.

Shortly afterward, by the lakeside in Galilee, hearing this same Master's gentle yet authoritative "Follow me" (which involved an itinerant life), he at once obeyed the call. It was well to be catching fish out of the lake; it was better, he thought, dropping the implements of his craft, to become a fisher of men. It was well to live uninterruptedly in his own house and family circle at Capernaum; it was better to suffer protracted absence from home, if need be, for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Here, then, is a plain, impetuous fisherman who can respond to the touch of a higher life upon his spirit and does not have to school his lips painfully to say either "I seek" or "I serve." Here is a man who promises to illustrate in conduct the significance of both his names, that given by his parents and that given by his Lord—Simon, a *hearer*, Peter, a

rock. And throughout his subsequent course of both discipleship and apostleship, this same impulse of loyal love is shown. The Gospels leave us in no doubt that here was a disciple who loved the Master—that Peter was a lover of Jesus, with a fervent, glad, adoring affection.

IV

Not that the record is wholly clean and clear. Would that it were. But even through the gravest faults of this impetuous friend and follower of Jesus—the headiness of the “hearer,” the shaking of the “rock”—which have been so much commented on, there shines at least a fragmentary and disordered image of fidelity. When, for instance, he presumed to rebuke his Lord for declaring that the Son of Man would be rejected and put to death by crucifixion, it was because he could see nothing in the predicted cross but cruelty, calamity, and failure; when, at the imminent risk of his life, he smote a servant of the high priest with the sword, the motive, it may be believed, was the same; and we may even remember that when, just from the Upper Room, the Last Supper, and the scenes of Gethsemane, he fell into open-eyed and awful apostasy, it was in the court of the house whither he had gone, unlike most of the disciples, to be near his Lord at the perilous mock trial. Yes, even as the Master said of him, the spirit was truly willing, but the flesh weak.

Let it be granted, therefore, that what we find in this “brave and weather-battered Simon Peter” is an obvious commingling of strength and weakness, and not

an approximation to ideal character. Nevertheless, we find a man of faith; and to him who believes, hope, and love, and all things are possible.

For let us consider, What is faith? Such a word has, of course, too great a fulness and variety of meaning to be compassed by any single definition or description. But we might make the question more specific and ask, What is the very heart and essence of a Christian's faith in God? It is not belief of any one or more theological propositions; nor is it belief in the Divine revelation as recorded in Scripture; nor yet is it a persuasion that God hears some petition that I am offering and does now give the desired answer. Christian faith, in its most vital action, is opening the heart to the redeeming God, who waits ever to come in and take possession of his own.

It is illustrated in certain familiar human relations. Let some chosen teacher enter your life, with his spiritual and luminous mind, his wealth of knowledge, his patience and firmness and cheerfulness; yield yourself to his influence. The effect will be to reproduce his mind more or less in yours. Do you assimilate his teaching? Therewith you assimilate *him*. Or, let some magnetic politician so command your admiration that you accept his ruling ideas and his ambition as your own, and are ready to make effort and sacrifice to help exalt him to the seats of power. He is conforming you somewhat to the image of his own mind and character. Or, unlock the door of your heart to a friend, and let love do its perfect work within—you are coming under the personal power of your

friend and being changed unto his likeness. All this is faith, natural, instinctive faith, and its effects. Its pulse-beat, faint or strong, is felt in every human soul. Some of its loveliest forms appear in childhood, which is Jesus' chosen type of the believing, or divinely receptive, life.

For the lower faith is a parable of the higher; the child's faith, the pupil's, the citizen's, the friend's, a parable of the Christian's. In fact, more than a parable or analogue, the lower faith is a preparation for the higher. Receiving our brother whom we have seen may open the way for receiving our Divine brother whom we have not seen. For the Most High has verily drawn near, as Friend and Saviour, seeking to commune with us all in the life of Jesus. He is ever drawing near and speaking to us in Jesus, whom he has made both Lord and Christ, and whose word is: "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him." Therefore, to unlock the door of the heart to Christ, with his strong and loving mastership, is to have faith in God; and the result is that we enter into communion with him and are in the way of becoming like him. "Yea, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." Thus are we mortals made immortal partakers of the Divine life—"and will sup with him and he with me."

v

But let us look a little more closely at this faith of Simon Peter, as shown by his responsiveness to the appeal of Jesus. Was it simply such open-hearted con-

fidence as might have been shown toward a wise and winning teacher, or a trumpet-tongued reformer, or any great and good man—say, toward one of the prophets or that more-than-a-prophet, John the Baptist? No, it was not just the same. It was the faith of trust in One of whom John could say, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Doubtless Simon Peter and the other disciples had the impression from the first that this must be the Christ. Ere long he became sure of it—knowing as yet, however, very little of what the name implied. And when Jesus would make it known to him, he rashly resisted the interpretative word. But he did not turn back. This was the point of distinction—he *kept following*

“on eager feet,
On feet untired, and still on feet though tired.”

When other disciples turned back, and Jesus asked of the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” this disciple’s answer was prompt and undisguised: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God.” Sincerely believing in the Master, even when he least understood him, he never really withdrew from him the tribute of a confident and loving heart.

Was his faith, then, at this time, altogether such as that of spiritually minded Christians of the present day? Not so. Whatever its intensity, it was far less than theirs has become as to its content. Because, as already suggested, it failed to include the truth of the Christ’s atoning love. But it did not remain

thus limited. Under the Divine discipline and teaching, it grew unto the full measure of a Christian's faith in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Some have suggested that, as to distinctive spiritual temperament and attainment, Peter was the apostle of hope.* This as compared with his two great brothers, Paul the apostle of faith and John the apostle of love. But if this be so, let it also be remembered that the apostle of faith has said that "by hope were we saved," and the apostle of love, that he who has his hope set on the Christ to be revealed in glory "purifieth himself even as He is pure." Good reason, indeed, have we to thank God for the buoyant and heartsome Christian soul, hoping unto the end in the way of Christ. Hopefulness is sunshine and health. Welcome the touch of the sanguine Cephas upon your life. But "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas . . . all are yours."

VI

Note also that, among the original Apostles, Simon Peter appears distinctively as a preacher. In fact, he is the only one of the Eleven of whose preaching we have any record.

And now it is certain memorable experiences in the life of this first Christian preacher that have suggested our subject in these chapters. I mean his experience of spiritual vision and of its accompanying power, in Joppa and Cæsarea.

Nor was this the first time that Peter had such a personal experience. He had known it in himself

* I Peter 1: 3, 13, 21; 3: 15.

and had seen it in others at Pentecost. On that birthday of the Church of Christ, he declared to his multitudinous audience that the extraordinary signs which they saw and heard were in fulfilment of a prophecy of the Old Testament:

“ And it shall be in the last days, saith God,
I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh;
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall *see visions*,
And your old men shall dream dreams:
Yea, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days
Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall *prophesy*.”

What is this? They should see visions and should prophesy. Spiritual perception and inspired speech, flash of insight and stroke of appeal, light and utterance, vision and power, both of them gifts of the Spirit, both of them common gifts for all classes and capacities—such was the ancient prophetic and the present apostolic word. These were signs that the foretold Christ had come, and, after a manner which the farthest-seeing prophet could not foresee, had been exalted and glorified. And they were never to cease. They should be perpetuated through the coming ages—signs of the living Christ in the midst of the Congregation which he would ever be building.

Now, it may be distinctly helpful to have spiritual truth mediated to us in a life like that of Simon Peter. Because in him it is illustrated in the common man. It appears in connection with the ordinary rather than the extraordinary gifts of intellect and strength of character. When James in his Epistle would show the Christian people, one and all, to whom he is writing,

that it lies within their power to prevail mightily in prayer to God, he reminds them that even the righteous Elijah, whose supplication availed so much, was "a man of like passions [or, *nature*] with us." But the reader of the Gospels needs hardly to be reminded of such a fact as that with respect to Simon Peter. It is quite apparent that he was a man of like nature with us. Very fitting on his lips would have been such words as those of his great fellow-apostle to the Galatian converts who had not despised him because of an infirmity of his flesh: "I beseech you, brethren, be as I am, for *I am as ye are.*"

And this suggests that we venture to compare, as a further introductory word, the personal influence of these two men. For these are the only two of the Apostles whom we know as preachers—the one chiefly to Israel, the other chiefly to the nations—and the two with whose acts the greater part of the Acts of the Apostles is occupied. The influence of Paul no doubt appears by far the greater, as to both quality and quantity. But let it be supposed that the Christian people of to-day had only the Apostle Paul as a New Testament example. They would indeed have a greatly inspiring and instructive example. Think of our being without that splendid figure in the Church of the early age. But Paul was in every way extraordinary. A born leader of men, richly endowed in both intellect and will, intensely religious, with utmost zeal, though with heart-breaking failure, seeking justification through the keeping of the law, relentlessly striving in ignorance and unbelief to crush out the very

Church of God; then suddenly receiving the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, rejoicing in the fulness of joy in the Lord, living by a faith that seemed to grow more triumphant unto the end, latest called of the Apostles, yet laboring more abundantly than they all—he was indeed the Great Apostle. “Such a man as that,” the present-day Christian is ready to say, “might well receive visions and revelations from the Lord; he might well preach the crucified Christ with soul-subduing power; but I, I am too poor and low, I cannot attain.”

Here, however, on the other hand, is a man who, without the natural endowments, or the early religious struggles, or the subsequent attainments and achievements, of his later called brother, did nevertheless become a true Christian disciple and the foremost apostle of those who companied with Jesus. He loved, trusted, followed, and “spite of fears” did open his heart more and more to the progressive revelation of his Lord. So may we. The “God of patience and of comfort” was his God. Jesus bore with him, “remembered not past years,” continued, as Lord and Friend, to care for him. “Having loved His own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” And not only unto the cross, but beyond it, “he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.” So, likewise, may we be recipients evermore of the divine friendship and self-revelation of Him who is the image of the invisible God.

It matters not how crude may be one’s spiritual character at the outset. For all living things, as we

know, are valuable in their beginnings not so much for what they are as for what they have been creatively intended to become. Their potentiality is the true measure of their value. A single apple seed or grain of wheat may indeed be eaten, but its chief significance lies in the fact that it may be planted. A little child is of priceless worth; but suppose that through all the coming years he should remain a prattling child. Similarly, spiritual character is never a fixed quantity, never a finished product. The very least of it is, to be sure, exceeding precious; but it must grow. If it does not grow, it will die. Moreover, it is capable of growth and increasing fruitfulness evermore. It is astir with an infinite possibility.

VII

And now as to the providential opportunity and work unto which the Lord Jesus would prepare his faulty but true-hearted and improving disciple. It was the opportunity and work of an apostle, which was that of a gatherer and caretaker of the flock of the Chief Shepherd in a time when such apostleship meant privation, peril, and martyrdom.

Did a man, then, so lacking at one time in knowledge and self-poise as this man ever attain unto a trustworthy preparation for such an opportunity? Let the last chapter of the Gospel according to John, the first twelve chapters of The Acts, and Peter's own Epistles (which are not without the self-revealing element) make answer.

So we are prepared to meet with that Christian sense

of service which pulsates through this "fellow-elder's" own exhortation to the elders of the Church to tend and oversee the flock of God which is among them—even as he himself had been bidden of the Chief Shepherd, "Tend my sheep"—not because they must but willingly, not for money's sake but "of a ready mind," not lording it over their charge, but making themselves "ensamples to the flock."*

We are told that in our modern age the man on the street is coming to his own. The days of caste, intellectual, political, religious, are numbered. Some persons, it is true, are inclined to deplore its breakdown. "Life in our day is losing all its picturesqueness," said to me a cultured Roman Catholic priest—in criticism of the leveling influence of the democratic spirit. There is a modicum of artistic truth, no doubt, in such a lament. But the spirit of moral truth and spiritual humanness is conspicuously absent. Personality, freedom, brotherliness, righteousness, opportunity, not picturesqueness, are the ruling ideas of a Christian civilization and the demand of the human heart. A tatterdemalion may be picturesque, but one would prefer to have good clothes; and an Irish peasant's cottage or an American Highlander's cabin might well afford to exchange "all its picturesqueness" for a building fit for the habitation of a household. The picturesque feudal lord and his dependents are not to be accounted of beside a free, self-dependent, enlightened, industrious, and neighbourly countryside. So, there is a new appreciation of simple personality and human

* I Peter 5: 1-4.

worth, and a new account of them must be taken in the oncoming life of the world.

But whatever may be the conditions of such an awakening, we may be sure that the great historic cause of it is not to be found in the twentieth century, nor in the nineteenth, nor yet in the century of the Reformation. Its date is the day when the prophecy was fulfilled in a synagogue of Galilee, "The poor have good tidings preached unto them," and when they themselves preached it unto others. Its author was the Son of Man. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" "Is not this the carpenter?" Truly so, a fellow-Nazarene of the astonished inquirers, a worker with his hands—for

"The Lord of Love
Came down from above
To dwell with the men that work"—

untitled, without ecclesiastic office, uncrowned with the honors of ruler or scribe, but in deepest truth and reality the Divine Man. His day was the day of man as man. The Greatest of all would fain become the nearest kinsman of all; "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."

What we have before us, then, first of all, is simply a man in the common ways and circumstances of life. Not a man equipped with extraordinary gifts and graces. A working man, a wide-awake fisherman of a thriving lakeside town—as Hilary said of John the son of Zebedee, "dripping clothes, muddy feet, every

inch a fisherman." A man in some respects of an excellent spirit, but not without conspicuous faults and weaknesses. A "two-talent" man, like most evangelic preachers of our own time. But coming under the mastership of Christ, the eyes of his understanding are enlightened and his often hasty speech is new-made into a gift of power. The metal of his character, though genuine yet mixed, is tested, purified, and tempered, as iron ore may be made into finest steel. So, the gifts which he has received are used as he himself has taught that such gifts ought to be used—"According as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

Such was Peter the Preacher. Perhaps we can see more of ourselves in him than in any other of the New Testament people. It may be our blundering self; it may be our worse self; it may be the self we hope to become. In any case, for this apostolic "brother of the common life" we give thanks and are glad; because he is veritably our brother, and in him it may be seen that the blessing of the vision of God, with its attendant spiritual power, is not for a rarely gifted few. It is for the student with his books, the workman at his bench, the farmer following his plough, the preacher before his congregation. Some of its brightest manifestations are in the invalid of years, with her illumined face and chastened Christian speech, on the bed of pain.

* I Peter 4: 10.

II

THE HOUSETOP

Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.—Acts 10: 9.

TO witness prayer is to be touched with the sense of a higher world. You have come inadvertently where some one was alone on his knees—instantly there fell a hush upon your spirit, as upon an intruder on holy ground. A little child is repeating, not without some real sense of their meaning, the simple words of petition and thanksgiving that have been taught him. A silver-haired patriarch, compassed with infirmities, is bowed before the God of his fathers—

“For thou art my hope, O Lord God,
Thou art my trust from my youth.”

But more deeply impressive, perhaps, than the prayer of either infant or octogenarian is that of the strong man of affairs in the midst of life. What must be the meaning and worth of the hour of prayer to him?

I

Such a one, as we have already been reminded, was Simon Peter—neither youthful nor aged, certainly no cloistered pietist or lonely thinker, but an outdoor man

of speech and action. It would be difficult to think of him waiting through long years, as John waited in the wilderness till the appointed time of his appearing unto Israel. Had he been secreted for the saving of his life, like Luther in an out-of-the-way castle, he would have quit the enforced solitude, as Luther did, before the danger was over, and given himself to exhorting the people. "I go a-fishing," said he when, in the absence of the Master, there seemed to be nothing better to undertake; for he must be doing something. It was a mark of the man; and it showed him to be, certainly not less than others, in need of devotional retirement.

For he who is continually with the outside world, responding readily to its appeals, who speaks much with men, must also learn to be alone and to speak much with God. Otherwise the consciousness of the Divine presence will tend to fade out of his life.

See, then, this notably practical and energetic disciple of Jesus climbing the steps of Simon's house in Joppa for solitary prayer.

Besides, let it be remembered that here is the case of a naturally rash and self-confident spirit. A special need of Simon the son of Jonas on the way to become Peter the apostle of Christ was repose of spirit, equipoise, self-mastery. So far, therefore, as he might be lacking in these elements of moral strength, there was exposure to the sudden access of temptation and consequent need of both watchfulness and prayer. Was it not Jesus' perception of this very danger that called forth his own prayer for his imperiled disciple just

before the Betrayal—"I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not"? And it was in this same time of the power of darkness that, again singling out Simon Peter, he said to him: "Watch and pray, that ye [disciples] enter not into temptation."

No wonder, then, that such a man, amid the demands of a special ministry of word and deed in the towns of Lydda and Joppa, should have it to tell that he went upon the housetop to pray.

And it was no wonder, for still another reason. He had seen the Master in prayer. "It came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased one of his disciples"—which one, probably?—"said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Jesus praying—what a vision of the Way, the Truth, and the Life! Surely if anything could have awakened in the mind of disciples a keener sense of their need of prayer and of instruction therein, it would have been to see him, the Holy One of God, kneeling in prayer. "Does he need it? Then, how much more we. And does not this Prophet, this Master, know the way to the very heart of God? Then, let us ask him to show it unto us." It was a lesson which they could hardly fail to draw from such an example. So Jesus was ever illumining for them the path of prayer, not only by precept and promise and parable, but most tenderly and forcibly by his own prayers, alone or in their presence and the hearing of their ears, and by the life of communion with the Father which he lived among them.

Not, however, that Peter and the others perfectly

understood and imitated this side of their Lord's life at that time. As yet such wisdom was too high for them. One morning, for instance, during the Galilean ministry, when, after a day of crowds and of labor, to be followed by many other such days, Jesus rose up a great while before the dawn and went out into a solitary place to pray, "Simon and they that were with him" (note Simon's early leadership) "followed after him," and having found him said unto him, "All are seeking thee." It was no time, thought these novices in Christian service, for one whose work as teacher and healer were in such demand, to be alone in prayer; and accordingly they broke in upon that holy solitude. They did not understand the vital relation of prayer to service in the life of the Divine Worker. They did not see that in secret he received strength which he spent openly. But "Simon and they that were with him," then only beginning the Christian life, learned many things afterward through their discipleship. For had not Jesus himself said: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth"? And a part of this very truth which they were to know in him was the necessity of secret prayer to the fulness of spiritual vision and the peculiar power of a prophet sent forth from God.

II

Therefore, let us pray. And among other things it may be asked, Where may I find a fitting place for this time of communion with the Highest? "But thou, when thou prayest, enter"—where? Into a sanctuary

where no religion except Christianity sends its worshippers—"into thine inner chamber." Thanks be to God, there are many inner chambers and doors that may be shut. This old, old earth, the scene of so much sin and sorrow, has also been the scene of much calling upon God. Though daily reddened by the hand of violence and murder,

"And crimson with battles and hollow with graves,"

it is also daily sanctified by kneeling worshippers. It offers many a silent retreat beside its busy thoroughfares for those who would be alone with the God of their life. The secluded spot is still shown at Valley Forge, where in that darkest hour of his country's struggle for independence the great leader, who probably did not pray very much under ordinary conditions, was found upon his knees. "It was the custom of our fathers," says the biographer of Jesse Lee, "to retire to the woods at the close of the day, whenever circumstances allowed it, for the purpose of prayer." I had a friend who asked that he might be sent from a city pastorate back to the country, because, for one thing at least, he longed to be where he could "go into the woods to pray."

To many, indeed, "the trees of God" have afforded a veritable sanctuary. A spirit of life and of peace is there; God himself is there, speaking in a voice of gentle stillness—the God of nature, who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein." Was it not to such temples of the spirit that

our Lord was wont to go for secret prayer—to the solitary place, the mountain by the Lake, the Mount of Olives?

Most commonly the Christian's place of prayer is some room in his own dwelling-house—the Master had no dwelling-house, no room, of his own. Or, it may be at his place of business, a room where he withdraws, day after day, seeking strength, amid besetting temptations, to make his business a true service of God. In the case of the Christian preacher, the scene of his most strenuous intellectual exertion will at the same time be a scene of the outpouring of his soul to God, his study his oratory. Outside there may be the surging waves of a great city's population, but within he is alone with the heavenly Father. In John Wesley's house on City Road, London, the study, where he wrought with such tireless mental industry, opens into the bed-chamber, in which, from half-past nine o'clock in the evening—was it not?—until four in the morning, he received the gifts of God's beloved in continuous and restorative sleep. But the bed-chamber opens into another room, unfurnished, too small to be furnished—the *prayer-room* of that busiest and mightiest organizer of evangelism in modern Christianity. "Enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will recompense thee"—even there.

The most distressing evil attendant upon lack of room in the homes of the very poor—those of the crowded tenement, for example—is the denial of privacy. For this means denial of needful provision in

the culture of the individual human soul. Such provision is demanded for comfort's sake, for modesty's sake, for refinement's sake, for morals' and manners' sake; and not for these only, but also for the sake of private prayer. Somewhere and somehow the Christian must have his prayer-room. And shall not the city churches, also, like true houses of God, keep unlocked doors, that passers-by and whosoever will may come in to rest and pray?

III

All this because a chosen and secluded place is essential to the devotional life? No, but because it is needful. By the family fireside, on the street, at the daily employment, a prayerful heart will have its upward look, its song of praise, its quick petition for guidance and grace. The heart may be alone with God amid the jostling of any crowd. But such a worshipper will also be drawn to the still hour and the cloistered room. It was he from whose lips fell the words, "neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem" and "in spirit and truth," that commended the inner chamber and the shut door. It was the same Lord Jesus, full of grace and truth, who in the presence of others rejoiced in spirit and said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," that withdrew from his disciples, went into a solitary place, "and *there* prayed."

Now, the Oriental housetop was no unfit place for meditation and prayer. It represented detachment, though not complete seclusion, from the human world below, and communication with the God of heaven.

For this "inner chamber" was open to the sky; and instinctively we think of that visible heaven as symbolizing the heaven that is so "high," in nature though not in distance, as to be invisible. For what does it mean—this vast celestial dome above our heads, with the light of worlds innumerable from the infinite of space softly shining through—if it be not a symbol of the infinite range and domain of the soul?

In like manner we think of prayer as an ascending of the soul, a climbing heavenward for closer communion with God. Such is the form it takes in our pictorial thought and speech. "When we had vainly explored all other paths," wrote a victorious Christian witness, "we found God upon the Hills of Prayer. We were comforted. There is no word tender or blessed enough in human speech to explain how. All that we can solemnly affirm is that the great majestic presence of the Father abides upon those everlasting hills."

Thus it seems fitting that Moses should go upon the Mountain to receive the Law and behold the glory of Jehovah. And thus the homely city housetop, in a less sublime but no less real way, was significant of the spiritual heights of Prayer. It was fitting that Peter in Joppa should go up there to pray. Beneath were the house with its "many things" of bodily provision and care, the well-trodden streets of the town, the fruitful gardens, the shipping in the harbour, the sunlit sea; above were the unsearchable depths of heaven, "at the sixth hour" clear and radiant, its zenith aflame with intolerable splendour, at the

evening hour gathering the solemn mystery of the stars.

Here, therefore, was a blending place of earth and sky which might well help, after its manner, to prepare the mind of an apostle of Jesus to see in vision "the heaven opened" and to hear the Voice proclaiming the gracious will of God for mankind.

IV

And now, thinking upon the act itself, rather than upon the hour and place, we have to ask, Why should secret prayer ever be neglected in the Christian life? Some of the reasons are, unhappily, but too evident.

There may be a *lack of freedom in prayer*. Neither the heart-cry of the Psalmist, "My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God," nor the triumphant doxology of the apostle, "But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," is always the voice of our own hearts before God. Some may even be ready to declare that it is seldom, if ever, so. The conscious filial spirit may be wanting. The sense of hunger for righteousness and of gratitude for the great goodness of God in our daily life has somehow been dulled. The world enters even through the shut door. It is hard to lift up the heart unto the Lord. Neither the ideas nor the feeling nor the language of devotion come at command. Prayer is felt to be at best a duty, and the question arises, whether in such a spirit it is worth while to pray at all.

But it is worth while. Never insincerely, never as a meritorious or expiatory exercise, but under a sense

of obligation, if that be the only present motive, let a man pray. Let him meditate upon the things of the spirit, let him make confession of his sins, let him offer thanksgiving to the Father of mercies, let him tell as best he may the inmost desires of his heart—let him *pray*. For though it were nothing more, it would still be a debt to be paid. It is due from a man to himself, to his fellows, and to his God, that he seek through prayer the highest good, which only can fit him for the highest service.

Putting himself thus in the way of the Spirit, he may rest in the Lord till duty shall be glorified with love and praise. It was so in Israel when the statutes of Jehovah rose to the lips of the faithful as songs—"His delight is in the law of the Lord." Duty and love, indeed, are so near together, and in such perfect accord with each other, that duty may be quickened by love into a true law of the spirit of life in Christ. The true-hearted bond-servant may become a true-hearted lover of his Master; and surely the heart of the Master will turn in recompense and kindness toward him. "No longer do I call you bond-servants . . . but I have called you friends."

v

'Again, there may be *self-absorption in affairs*. In the affairs of the household, of business, of professional life, of favorite pursuits and associations? To be sure, and even in Biblical or ecclesiastic or ministerial affairs. "I am profoundly convinced," says Jowett in his Yale Lectures—having in mind a certain difference

he had noted between the British and the American pulpit—"that one of the present perils that beset the ministry of this country is a restless scattering of energies over an amazing multiplicity of interests which leave no margin of time or of strength for receptive and absorbing communion with God."

The Bible scholar analyzes and compares his texts, consults his authorities, gives his interpretations—and ought to do so. We are all greatly his debtors, for without him we should not even have the Scriptures to read in our own tongue in which we were born. But it is possible that, all the time, he himself may be declining rather than increasing in the knowledge about which his scholarship is most deeply concerned. The ecclesiastic cares little perhaps for learning, but he is taken up with the business of the Church; matters of policy and administration interest him greatly; leadership, with its exertion of both authority and influence, is gratifying; but even if he keep himself pure from personal ambition and the use of expedients, either direct or indirect, to secure the honors and emoluments of office, he may be caring less for the Lord's cause now than when he served in obscurity. "When I was in low condition," a Bishop of Rome is reported to have said, "I had a good hope of salvation; when I was advanced to be a cardinal I greatly doubted it; but since I have come to the popedom I have no hope at all." The minister in charge of a congregation attends to the duties of his office in the pulpit and elsewhere, thinking out many sermons, dealing as an organizer and a pastor with many people; and he "cannot bear

evil men," and is ready to try "them that call themselves apostles, and they are not." But to be spirited is not to be spiritual; and the Divine message to this caretaker of the Church may be: "Thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary. But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love."

Whatever the cause, the cure need not be doubtful. This will be found in the path of prayer—in the consciousness and practice of the presence of God. Only let his light invade the darkness, and it will heal and restore the soul. Would a man, whatever his sphere or line of life, really "do justly" and "love mercy"? He must all the while "walk humbly with his God."

When the Seventy returned to the Master, overjoyed that on their evangelistic tour the demons had been subject unto them in his name, they were graciously received; but together with the renewal and enlargement of their gift, this word of admonition fell from the lips of Jesus: "Howbeit in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." There was danger that in the exercise of gifts they might forget their personal relations to God. The joy of any position or of any notable work in the Church is nothing in comparison with the joy of being in spirit and character a son of God with one's citizenship in heaven.

VI

Still again, there may be occasional or lingering *febleness of faith in the power of prayer*. We hardly know whence or why, perhaps, but sometimes a chill of doubt falls upon the soul. The confession, "I believe," is followed by the instant prayer, "Help thou my unbelief." How can it be, we are tempted to ask, that flesh and blood should expect to lay hold upon the Infinite and Eternal God? Whereupon we ought rather to say, *Bethink thyself, O thou of little faith, and consider that it is the very greatness of the Infinite and Eternal that brings him so near. Were he less than infinite, we might be here and he there, and no intercommunication possible. But there is no here and there to him. Vast indeed the universe, myriad myriads the number of its inhabitants; but the creating Mind cannot be confused or overtaken with the multitude of his own creations. It is no multitude to him.*

Imagine this earth the only inhabited world, and yourself its only inhabitant. Behold, you are kneeling—one and alone. Would it seem strange in that case for the Maker of you to hear the cry of your heart unto him? But the prayer of numberless other suppliants can make no difference in such a matter to the Infinite Personal God. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself."

Then, too, we are not "flesh and blood." Essentially spirits in a world of spirits, we have affinity with the Father of spirits. Yonder within the small space of

a flat house-roof is an object still smaller, moving about, speaking or silent, unnoticed, insignificant. It is nothing—only a worm of the dust, only an ant of a troubled ant-hill “in the gleam of a million million suns.” But no; here is no insignificant object; this is no mere lump of animated clay. This worm of the dust, this “ant,” is capable of an infinite outlook and an eternal destiny. Through the pupil of his eye, a gateway not wider than a pin’s head, there enters the whole expanse of the heavens, to touch his brain; and the man within the brain questions the stars, discovers them as worlds, tracks them along their awful pathways, and measures the speed of their flight. He becomes an astronomer—reading “the time-table of the universe.” What is more and better, he becomes a worshipper. He can respond to the touch of the Eternal, he can know the Lord and Ruler of his own moral life, he can see the glory of God in the life of Jesus Christ; and his head is bowed in reverent wonder and adoration. He is kneeling. Shall we turn away in doubt that such a being can indeed draw near in prayer to God—or that God may draw near to him in Christ and the Divine Spirit?

Indeed, prayer itself is not an original utterance, but a response. It is the voice of the soul awakened by the voice of God in the soul. Early in childhood, when the innocent dawn was upon the hills, it was he who called us by his Spirit. When first we truly prayed, it was our listening and speaking to him who is ever speaking to us. Asking is listening.

Since, then, God has inspired our prayers, it is

surely not too much to trust him to hear them. For in very truth he has inspired them. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity; for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." The unutterable desires of our hearts toward God are incited within us by his own Spirit, and hence they are his prayers even more truly than they are our own—his "intercession for us" in the sense of being his inspiration in us.

VII

It is here that we gain the highest conception of prayer—that, namely, of filial communion with God. Ill-advised is that criticism of the leader in congregational prayer which complains: "Why does he not come to the point? Why not ask for the things we need, and quit?" A buyer approaching a salesman may properly enough tell in the fewest possible words what he wants. But should a friend be instructed that he must habitually do so in coming to his friend, or a child in coming to his father? If one whom we love and revere should desire to know at our approach, What do you want? he would be likely to have for answer, "I want to be with you." This is what friendship means, its supreme joy and most characteristic demand—to *be with you*. And this highest relation of a soul with its fellow soul is a sign of the highest relation of a soul with its eternal Father. Prayer is filial converse with him. From the Upper Room and the Garden of Gethsemane has been borne to the reverently attentive spirit its supreme expression.

Not that petitions, even requests for material objects, are excluded. On the contrary, they are invited. He whom the Father always heard prayed the prayer of petition and taught his disciples to ask for their daily bread. Moreover, he himself was the hearer of many petitions for bodily renewal; because prayer is an opener of the way for that Spirit of life in Christ of which both soul and body are the temple—"a habitation of God in the spirit." Wherefore, "in nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." It is the bidding of the Father of spirits that his children should ask him thus for the good gifts they have need of; and all "natural law" is the orderly and regular expression of his will, the continuous witness of his presence and infinite personal power.

But how much better was it to be with Jesus himself as disciple and friend than to be healed of any physical malady; and how much better is God himself than any such gift from his hands. Verily it is a good thing to come before him and offer petitions to him, but in the larger vision of God the soul may humbly and reverently walk *with* him. With bowed head and praiseful heart the sons of light have learned, from the beginning even until now, that the Almighty Ruler of the universe may also be—oh, wondrous word of grace—the Divine Companion.

It is more than probable, indeed, that in our personal religious history praying began as petitions. The motive was to get something by asking; and it is a

motive that will abide unto the end. But not alone. There is a holier and closer speech with the God in whom we live, even the prayer of communion.

“It is true prayer
To seek the Giver more than gift,
God’s life to share
And love—for this our cry to lift.”

In the truest sense of the word, we do not rest even in the promises of God. We may plead them, indeed, but not as if they were something apart from the Divine nature; not as if he were bound by them like an unwilling ruler or friend. He will ever be mindful of his covenant, but it is because his covenant is an expression of himself, the promises a revelation of the Promiser.

In the case of a man, our fellow, it may sometimes be that the chief claim with which we approach him is, “You have promised.” Somehow he committed himself in speech, and though he may repent it, yet we insist that he keep his word. But is it so in the case of a perfect friend? is it so in the case of a father or mother? Their verbal pledges are for our information only, showing us what to expect and ask for. Without any such committal, they will both hear and anticipate our requests. It is in their heart to do so. In like manner, let God’s children know the truth of his being, and they will trust him either with or without a specific word of promise. “They that know Thy name”—that know Him as revealed—“will put their trust in thee.”

Wherefore, Christian prayer is not a petty or a self-

ish cry. It cannot be such, indeed, since it must needs be offered in a loving as well as a trustful spirit. "Whosoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one." And that a man should habitually pray for himself and not for others, never for father, mother, child, never for any fellow-man, is to the Christian mind unthinkable. Spontaneously will the prayer of the heart pass into thanksgiving and intercession, rising in doxologies, descending in benedictions. It is faith and love, communion with God on high in a spirit of brotherhood toward men on earth—its all-comprehensive word, *Our Father*.

It need strike us with no surprise, then, if in prayer an apostle of Jesus should enter more fully into the mind of his Lord, and be prepared, calling nobody common or unclean, to offer the same hope of salvation to all men everywhere.

"For hearken! God saith, 'Pray!'
And he shall show his plan,
And lead us in his shining way
That leadeth on to perfect day
Each God-surrendered man!"

Yes, it is through communion with God that "his shining way," near and far, appears. It is from the housetop that the heavenly vision is seen.

III

THE VISION

And he became hungry and desired to eat. But while they made ready he fell into a trance; and he beholdeth the heaven opened and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean. And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed make not thou common. And this was done thrice; and straightway the vessel was received up into heaven.—ACTS 10: 10-16.

WHILE, in the living-rooms below they were making ready the mid-day meal for their guest, another ministration was at hand for the hunger of his spirit. A great truth, which Peter had already known something of, was now to become in a much closer sense his own. It was set before him, this living bread of truth, through the aid of a vision which he saw in a state of trance.

I

Now “trance” and “vision,” as here used, are not over-familiar words. The experiences for which they stand, while not restricted to the sphere of religion, are rare. If, not having had such experiences, we care to realize the idea of them, we shall have to

approach them through similar experiences of which we do have some personal knowledge. And it so happens that there are similar experiences which everybody is familiar with. For natural sleep is a mild trance state, a dream is a vision seen in sleep; and more than a fourth of every human life is lived in the world of sleep and dreams.

The busy day is over. In the midst of its affairs, heart and brain and hands all astir, the things of sense and of society were intensely real and engaging. There was no thought of withdrawing one's self from them. It was delightful to be conscious of ourselves, aware of the persons about us, sensitive, active, alive. Yet under the shadows of evening there comes a sensation directly the opposite of all this. Nerve and muscle begin to care for nothing now except to be relieved of duty. Their one demand is, "Incite us not to action beyond our time, let us alone, let us rest"—their one note that of the lotus-eaters' song, "There is no joy but calm." The eyelids droop and fall heavily; the senses, sight first and hearing last, refuse to act; voluntary motion ceases; and with an exquisite feeling of submission the body yields itself captive to the matchless witchery of sleep. For none the less welcome in its turn than the good cheer of the sunlight, and none the less needful, is this soft nightly sinking down into the semblance of death itself.

"Oh, solemn mystery
That I should be so closely bound
With neither terror nor constraint,
Without a murmur of complaint,
And lose myself upon such ground."

But no sooner does the pall of darkness and silence fall than an inner world of imagination, a picture show of sights and sounds, appears; for to sleep is to dream. For the most part, indeed, it is a picture show of dissolving views out of all true order, with no reasonable relation to the facts of life—the effect altogether discordant and illusory. With reason, will, conscience renouncing their supremacy, and imagination, disporting itself as mere fancy, in well-nigh complete control, is there any flow of ideas on this side of insanity, more incoherent, incongruous, fantastic than dreaming?

But what of it? What if the rest-time of the brain be the play-time of the mind? Let the rest and the play continue side by side for a season, inasmuch as they are giving the vital forces an indispensable opportunity to restore the body's lost strength of yesterday and tone it up for to-morrow. Thus, when waking time dawns, behold, the playground has turned out to be a harvest-field. Concerning a sick friend we are fain to hope that "if he is fallen asleep," whether dreamless or dreaming, "he will recover."*

II

The glance of the mind is in certain directions extraordinarily keen and penetrative in sleep. A dream may be a nightmare, but on the other hand it may be a revelation. Thus we sometimes become, as Sir Thomas Browne has put it, "somewhat more than ourselves in sleep." Because undoubtedly there are latent

* John 11: 12.

energies of the mind that tend to sleep while we are awake, and to awake when we sleep. Facts which have again and again eluded the waking memory come, without being called, when the intruding senses have been warned off. So also the best plan of a discourse, a strain of poetry, or, in the case of a story-teller, the plan of a story, is sometimes dreamt out in sleep. Robert Louis Stevenson tells of having the plot or even whole chapters of stories given in his dreams. They were given him by what he fancifully calls "the brownies" — a truer name than which, if not a more fanciful one, might easily have been chosen.

A classic instance is that of the composition of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream." In a note appended to the first edition of this poetic fragment, the poet remarks that he consents to its publication "rather as a psychological curiosity than on the ground of any supposed poetic merits," and tells the story of its origin, in part as follows: "The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid consciousness that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking, he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly to write down the lines that are here preserved.

"At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet with the exception of some eight or ten shattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast."

Similarly, the clue to an elusive problem, the determinative idea of a coveted invention, a happy artistic insight, or a sense of exalted self-consciousness, has

in numberless instances risen up of itself in some moment of leisure or of reverie, and has sometimes been the gift of the dreaming mind.

Such dream experiences, it need hardly be added, are for the most part exceptional and never to be forgotten. "The writer," says Mr. J. Brierly, "speaks again with some hesitancy, not sure whether on this point he is reporting what is to any extent a common experience. But he can testify with certainty as an individual to occasions, coming at widely separated intervals in the career, when the soul, under the conditions of sleep, has become conscious of itself with a power, a freshness as of immortal youth, a felt relation to the illimitable and the eternal, accompanied by a thrilling rapture, as of heaven's central life, to which no waking state can offer a parallel." *

It seems entirely true that in more ways than one "He giveth to his beloved in sleep." †

The fact is that both the materials and the spirit of our dreams seem to be drawn from the waking life, and to partake of its character. Allowing for exceptions that must otherwise be accounted for, this is the rule. The good man will be good in both thought and act, whether he wake or sleep, while on the other hand a disordered mind, like a disordered body, will yield evil dreams. Does the dreamer welcome and cherish impure images? It is a welcome reflected from his waking life.

No wonder that the half-crazed patriarch when,

* "Ourselves and the Universe," pp. 258-59.

† Psalm 127: 2, *margin*.

vainly seeking some intermission of suffering, he said, "My couch shall ease my complaint," * soon found himself scared with dreams and terrified with visions. Torture of body and bewildering agony of mind could expect little else. But Job, we observe, has no confession to make of having, even in such distracting dreams, been guilty of blasphemy or of any other direct disobedience toward God. For what a man is profoundly principled against doing he will not do, either awake or dreaming. He cannot be made to do it even in a state of hypnosis.

Think what would probably be the dreams of a man in perfect health of body and soul. Above all, let it never be feared or fancied that to fall asleep is to fall outside the realm of the Divine presence, providence, and instruction. "It is dreadful," says a morally sensitive youth in a Scotch story, "to think o' fa'in asleep without some ane greater an' nearer than the *me* watchin' ower't." So, one may devoutly ask in evening prayer:

"And when my thought is all astray,
 Yet think Thou on in me;
 That with the newborn innocent day
 My soul rise fresh and free.

"Nor let me wander all in vain
 Through dreams that mock and flee;
 But even in visions of the brain
 Go wandering toward Thee."

III

May I commend two not unfamiliar words of Scripture as adapted to enter, with peculiar light and power,

* Job 7: 13.

into the self-communing of the devoutly meditative soul? One is from the pen of a psalmist:

“Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the day-time,
And in the night his song shall be with me,
Even a prayer unto the God of my life.”

The other is from the lips of an apostle of Jesus Christ: “He is not far from each of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.” “The God of my life,” “In Him we live”—may I say that? Then let me once for all dismiss the thought that God is a being far away in time or space. He is here, in all the reality of his being, in all the plenitude of his power and grace, this moment.

Yea, let me reverently confess that the Lord of heaven and earth is the God of every need and every possibility of my nature, of sense and spirit, of the days and the nights, of my dreaming as well as my judging, of imagination as well as reason. His dominion embraces the shadow-world which emerges when the eyelids fall, as truly as this outer shadow-world which we are prone to think of as so very real. From no part of my experience, natural or supernatural, might I shut him out, even if I would, at any time from helpless infancy to helpless senility. If he will, then, in the seclusion of sleep and in the imagery of the dream-life, he may speak to the attentive spirit in some effectual sign of his thought or purpose or care.

It has been so from the beginning. The record of it may be found in both the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures; and not in them alone. Jacob went

his way, after the dream that had changed the name of Luz into that of Bethel, still uncured, it is true, of his self-seeking spirit, but with a greatly strengthened faith in the purpose and providence of the God of his fathers. When Paul had seen, in a vision of the night, a man of Macedonia standing and beseeching him to come thither, he straightway sought to set sail for the great Continent of the West, concluding that God had called him and his comrades to preach the gospel there also. But may we not believe the same good hand of God to have been in the dream which gave a new direction to the literary lifework of the learned Christian father, Jerome,—in which he seemed to see the form and hear the voice of Christ himself, who said, “Jerome, thou art a follower of Cicero and not of Christ”? or in that of Monica, the mother of Augustine, which gave her the assurance, amid unceasing prayers for her wayward son, that he would yet be found standing by her side in the same rule of Christian faith? “Whence was this but that thine ears were toward her heart, O Thou Good Omnipotent, who so carest for every one of us as if thou caredst for him only?” *

Or, coming down to our own day, may we not believe, with A. J. Gordon, that the dream in which he seemed to see in his congregation on a certain Sunday morning One whom he afterward learned was the Lord Jesus, though, as he says of it, “only a dream,” was “a vision of the deepest reality, verifying the statement often repeated that sometimes we are more awake to God

* Augustine, “Confessions,” Book III. sec. 19.

when we are asleep to the world"?* Whatever its origin or occasion, it certainly marked the beginning of the memorably fruitful period of his ministry. It made him another man—and his church another church.

“ In a dream, in a vision of the night,
When deep sleep falleth upon men,
In slumberings upon the bed,
Then He openeth the ears of men
And sealeth their instruction.”

IV

But it is time to pass from the nightly experience of sleep to the consideration of an experience much less familiar, yet no greater a mystery. Let us, then, suppose the bodily torpor to be still more profound—the soul retreating still farther from the outposts of sense. Let this experience not arise, like sleep, as a necessary means of physical rest and rehabilitation, regularly recurring, but as an experience wholly needless for any physical purpose; and not as the experience of every man, woman, and child on earth, but of one in ten thousand. Such sleep, which sinking deeper and deeper would become death, is a *trance*.

The New Testament word is *ecstasy* (ἐκστασις, literally, *out of a state*). In the Gospels it is used only in the sense of “astonishment,” “amazement.” In The Acts it is used once in this same sense, and three times in the sense of a state of “trance.” †

* “How Christ Came to Church,” chap. I.

† The passages are as follows: Mark 5: 42; 16: 8; Luke 5: 26; Acts 3: 10; 10: 10; 11: 5; 22: 17. For the Apostle Paul's account of a memorable trance, in which he does not use the word itself, see II Corinthians 12: 1-7.

Like sleep, trance is not exclusively a religious phenomenon. Nor is it a symptom of some diseased condition of the nervous system, or even of nervous instability. Moreover, it shows itself in sundry forms and in different degrees of completeness and significance.

Shall we look at some of these? To begin with, it might be noted that any such concentration of the mind on a subject of emotional interest as abstracts it from all else, so as to make the thinker practically unobservant of the external world, is the taking of steps in the direction of trance. Sir Oliver Lodge, who would doubtless be quite competent to give personal testimony on the subject if he chose, makes reference to "the rather hazy and absorbed condition which is associated with the quality of mind called genius," and remarks that "when a poet or musician or mathematician feels himself inspired, his senses are—at least his commonplace and non-relevant attention is—dulled or half asleep."

Various examples from the history of science, of learning, and of philosophic thought have been recorded. They are such as that of Sir Isaac Newton; that of the younger Scaliger, who, pursuing his studies in Paris at the time of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, and as a zealous Protestant in peril of his life, knew nothing of what was going on till the following day; and the still more celebrated example of Socrates, of whom it is reported that, while serving as a soldier, he was "seen by the Athenian army to stand for a whole day and a night, until the breaking of the

second morning, motionless, with a fixed gaze," and that thus he was wont to do when deeply absorbed in thought.

It is in view of these instances and the like that Sir William Hamilton, in his discussion of the power of abstraction and attention, remarks that the successful thinker must "even be able in a certain degree to emancipate himself from the dominion of the body, and live, as it were, a pure intelligence," and that "in some, indeed, the power of abstraction almost degenerated into a habit akin to disease."* No doubt the intellectual seer or discoverer will learn what it is to rise out of and above his ordinary self, and even to stand on the threshold of a kind of intellectual ecstasy.

Similar is the rapture of the musician borne aloft on his inner sense of new and wondrous harmonies of sound. It is related of Sidney Lanier—by the gift of God a lover and maker of music, if ever one was—that there were times when he would seem to lose all outward sensibility under the entrancing power of these musical conceptions. "Apparently unconscious, he would seem to hear the richest music, or again he would awake from a deep trance, alone, on the floor of his room, and the nervous strain would leave him sadly shaken in nerves."† It was the ecstasy of a child of song.

Now, it is matter of common knowledge that the capability of mental concentration differs greatly in different persons. So also and much more does the

* "Metaphysics," Lect. xiv, p. 180.

† Charles Forster Smith, "Reminiscences and Sketches," pp. 137-38.

capability of passing into the ecstatic state. Of the blending of these two powers the poet Tennyson was a notable example. By steadily occupying his entire attention with some one simple thing, he could enter at times into a mystical experience in which the outer world and even his own body seemed to him strange and unreal. On the other hand, the consciousness of himself was clarified and intensified to an indescribable degree of perfection. "Not a confused state," he says, "but the clearest of the clear," and yet "utterly beyond words." The thought of death at such a time seemed "an almost laughable impossibility." Yet his individuality seemed to lose itself in "boundless being." * What ray of truth or mist of error such an ecstasy may have yielded is not here in question, but only the example, in the case of a sincere and marvellously gifted mind, of a certain form of ecstatic experience.

Need we be reminded of the trance phenomena that, here and there, have marked the history of Christianity? They were not unknown in the Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century, with its repeated baptisms of fire, and in the earlier stages of the Methodist movement in America. Wesley, true to the habit of his mind, made careful observation of them as they occurred under his personal ministry, and has left on record some account of his inquiries. Of certain persons, for example, with whom he talked concerning trance experiences through which they had passed, he says: "What they all agreed in was, 1. That when they

* "Memoir," Vol. I, p. 320.

went away, as they termed it, it was always at the time they were fullest of the love of God; 2. That it came upon them in a moment, without any previous notice, and took away all their senses and strength; 3. That there were some exceptions, but in general from that moment they were in another world, knowing nothing of what was done or said by all that were round about them." *

In itself, then, a state of trance, like a state of dreaming, has no moral or religious significance. It is neither good nor bad. But the cause and the experiences of this out-of-self state may be full of significance.

v

And now from this little excursion in post-Biblical fields, we may turn again to the Scripture history. Here, when dreams and visions are spoken of, it is not clear, in every instance, whether these were experienced in an ordinary sleep or in a trance. It seems plain enough, however, that it was in some sort of trance state that such visions, for example, were given as that of Abraham, when "a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him," † of Balaam, "falling down and having his eyes open," ‡ of Ezekiel—"So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away . . . and the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" ||—or that of the Apostle of the Gentiles when he was "caught up even to the third heaven," whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell.§

* "Journal," Aug. 6, 1759.

‡ Numbers 24: 4.

† Genesis 15: 12.

|| Ezekiel 3: 14.

§ II Corinthians 12: 2.

But we are not to suppose that such as these are examples of a usual or a preëminent method of divine revelation to prophets and apostles. This would be to misinterpret them grievously. It was ordinarily in their normal state that the truth was taught to these men of old who "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Indeed, the vision and dream are described, even in the early days of Israel, as "dark speeches," in comparison with the clearer and more distinct utterance of the word of Jehovah to her great lawgiver and leader: "If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision. I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all my house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches." *

Similarly, while there were apostles who knew more or less of the experience of trance and vision, it was not through the teaching of these experiences that, for example, Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, or Paul at Antioch and Athens, or that the Epistles and Gospels of the New Testament were written.

Above all, the life of the Prophet of prophets, as we know it, was not marked by revelation in visions and dreams. It was not in sleep or in trance that Jesus saw, as none other has ever seen, the mind and will of Him that sent him. It was immediate knowledge. It was by oneness with the Father in the Spirit of all fulness of truth and grace.

* Numbers 12: 7, 8.

VI

But again as to Peter and the early apostolic age. "I was in the city of Joppa praying," he said some time afterward to his brethren in Jerusalem, "and in a trance I saw a vision." * What manner of trance and vision were these? As to the vision, its *form* seems to have been taken, as in the case of an ordinary dream, from the bodily state, the mental equipment, and the everyday circumstances of the percipient—reflections of waking experiences. Note some of these conditions. Peter was hungry; and what he saw was a concourse of living creatures of which he was commanded to kill and eat. He had long been familiar with the sight of wind-filled sails on Lake Gennesaret and had noticed them, it may be, only a few minutes before on the Mediterranean Sea; and it was some such sheet (*ὀσόνη*, linen cloth, such as sheet or *sail*) that he saw enclosing the "four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven." His last uplook before falling into trance was unto the open heaven—no ceiling overhead; and it was from heaven that the four-cornered sheet descended to rest upon the earth. He was presumably well acquainted with the number three as the Hebrew symbol of totality or the perfect doing of an act; and it was thrice that the sheet descended and the voice bade him kill and eat. He had always punctiliously observed the Levitical distinction of clean and unclean meats; and so he declined to violate it now.

* Acts 11: 5.

He declined, indeed, with characteristic bluntness. It seemed to him utterly out of the question to eat the unclean. The very thought of a son of Israel eating swine's flesh, for example—abominable! And with all boldness he said what he felt: "Not so (*μηδαμῶς*, *by no means*), Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." For Peter, observe, was altogether himself in the vision, and spoke as he was wont to do. Never out of character, he appears in trance just as he appears habitually in his waking life.

So simply and naturally does the imagery of the vision seem to have arisen.

All this, however, is but a matter of form, an outside matter, which is valuable only as a means in the way of expression and communication. Form is the sign of a deeper reality; it is the letters of the word. And in this vision of the Clean and the Unclean the spiritual reality, the inner word, is a world-embracing truth of redemption in Jesus Christ.

VII

Let us not fail to note the period in the history of the kingdom of God on earth when the vision was given. It was the age of the Christian revelation. Never before did God speak such a word to men as he spoke in his Son, who was himself the Word made flesh. For "God was in Christ"—the holy God and Father drawing near to sinful men in the at-one-ment of suffering love. And the Spirit of truth, interpreting these facts of redemption, was now making all things new—duty, religion, love, the world, life, death, the

future, all a new creation in Christ. It was indeed the "fulness of the time," the fulfilling and completing in Jesus Christ of the Divine self-revelation mediated through ritual, vision, elect spirits, prophetic word, all along the preceding ages.

"Because of the tender mercy of our God,
Whereby the dayspring from on high shall visit us,
To shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of
death;
To guide our feet into the way of peace."

That was the historic setting of the vision. And this man on the housetop, who was he? Not only chief of the Apostles of Jesus, but first a prophet—sent forth to preach because of his prophetic vision. A plain working man, but a Christian seer. For he could so understand the Divine Man as to answer him and say: "We have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God." *

Nevertheless, under this illumination, followed though it was by the completer illumination of Pentecost, here at least was a truth which would seem to have been still unclear even to Peter the Preacher: the truth, namely, that the gospel which he had been preaching in the Holy City and out in the land of Israel must be proclaimed, as identically the same gospel, to those who were not of Israel. Could this be so? Were sinners of the vast pagan world to be saved by simple faith in Christ, apart from any observance whatever of the divinely prescribed Judaic rites? Had not Jehovah made an everlasting covenant with Israel? Did not the Christ himself spend his life and min-

* John 6: 67-69.

istry among "his own"? Were distinctive age-long laws and sacred institutions to count henceforth for nothing? It is so hard not to feel that the form in which a truth has been clothed, and about which have gathered so many sacred emotions and associations, is somehow as enduring as the truth itself.

But, on the other hand, there was the apostolic commission: "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you"; and Jesus had never commanded as a duty of religion the observance of any Judaic rite. The whole spirit and trend of his teaching was in the contrary direction.

Above all, there was Jesus himself, the Son of Man, the Friend of sinners, uplifted on the cross that he might be drawing all men unto himself. And the new spirit of power which had descended upon the disciples, these men of Galilee, was it not urging them forth beyond the borders of Judea and Galilee, in all directions, to proclaim the remission of sins in One through whom all men alike might have access by the same Spirit unto the Father?

It was urging them overseas, even to the distant islands—Cyprus, Rhodes, Crete—and toward unknown lands beyond. In full view of Simon the tanner's house the Mediterranean was flinging its waves against the inhospitable shores of the Hebrews' fatherland. "And for the western border ye shall have the Great Sea." * There were the far-reaching guardian waters which had helped to isolate Israel in the period of her tutelage,

* Numbers 34: 6.

when her economy must needs be that of seclusion and defence. Let them now become a highway for the outgoing ships that should convey the preachers of an aggressive and universal evangel. So the sea itself, overlooked from the housetop, was suggestive of world-wide opportunity and obligation.

And yet, and yet the misgiving would insistently arise, whether one might not go too fast or too far in this direction; whether, for example, an uncircumcised pagan should be baptized and admitted to the homes and the tables of God's ancient people, and side by side with them to the breaking of bread at the table of the Lord. Rather it would seem in almost every instance to have been more than a misgiving. It was a stubborn denial. The ancient religious distinction, it insisted, must be maintained. To break it down would be to open a floodgate to all manner of scepticisms and abuses. It would be the destruction of the Church.

VIII

Now, there may somewhere be persons in our enlightened day who, by a combination of temperament and education, are so utterly free from anything approaching the tyranny of custom as to find it difficult to sympathize with such minds as those of Simon Peter and his brethren in Israel. But these would be rare spirits indeed; the vast majority of us are confronted by no such difficulty. In this spirit of the over-estimation of age-long distinctions, racial, national, social, ecclesiastical, religious, the fisherman Apostle

appears simply as one of innumerable fellows, East and West, ancient and modern.

It is the spirit which divided mankind at one time into the two great classes, familiar to all readers of the New Testament, of Greeks and Barbarians. Naturally enough, no doubt, the classic Greek, with his unquestioned superiority over all the other peoples in philosophy, art, oratory, and especially in literature and language, was disposed to look down upon the others as having no language at all. Their speech, he said, was a mere *bah, bah*, or, as he called it, *bar, bar*; and so he contemptuously named them Bar-bar-ians. It is the spirit of the High Churchman of all generations, who, in the very face of the New Testament, would exclude all other Christians from the Church of God. It is the spirit of all sectarianism, whether the sect be cultured or crude, numerous or obscure, a few years or a few hundred years old.

Saul of Tarsus bitterly accused his own earlier life of this sin of arrogant bigotry. And the cruelty which it led him to inflict upon others he himself was made to suffer again and again. We remember that the Jewish audience, for illustration, before which he was trying to make his defence from the steps of the castle in Jerusalem, gave a respectful hearing to the story of his conversion and subsequent spiritual experience, till he spoke of being sent to preach to the Gentiles—"I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Unto the *Gentiles*? That was too much—too shamefully heretical a word to be for one moment tolerated. It transformed the "fathers and brethren" of his audience

into desperadoes. It dehumanized them. Electric with rage and indignation, "they threw off their garments," they "cast dust into the air." "Away with such a fellow from the earth," "it is not fit that he should live."

It is true, we do not certainly know that this burning ritual question of early Judean Christianity was agitating the mind of Cephas on his present evangelistic tour. But one may not unreasonably suppose it to have been so. Lifelong custom and conviction were hard indeed to renounce—born in him through many generations of such a race as he belonged to. Yet the fact of having accepted the hospitality of Simon in Joppa may be taken as a sign that his face was toward the dayspring rather than toward the sunset; for the occupation of a tanner, involving, as it did, contact with the skins of dead animals, was classed by the Jewish people as unclean.

"I have never," said this son of Jonah, heart and soul a Jew. "Not so, Lord; for *I have never* eaten anything that is common and unclean." That is what he gave as a reason why he should not eat such food now. It is the voice of conservatism, still heard in every sphere of life and thought. After forty-five years of age the farmer in his field, the mechanic among his tools, the cook in his kitchen, the teacher in his classroom, the preacher in his pulpit, confronted with new knowledge or new aspects of truth or new ways of doing old tasks, or new methods of service, is not unlikely to answer and say, "I have never."

On the other hand, the spirit of radicalism, either

in thought or in practice, is that of the adventurer, who wearies of the things to which he has become accustomed and runs with open arms to embrace the new because of its very newness.

But life, ever obeying its own law and no other, is ever changing its forms; and true conservatism is not a body of death. It is astir with vital powers. "I was brought up," said William Ewart Gladstone, "to distrust and dislike liberty; I learned to believe in it. That is the key to all my changes." "I have never," John Wesley was ready to say at the first suggestion of an active public life for himself, of admitting Dissenters to the Lord's Supper, of field preaching, of laymen as preachers, of ordination by presbyters. But with respect to all such ways and methods of Christian service, ere long, despite early education and present preference, his note was changed to a cheerful and obedient "It is the will of the Lord."

IX

There is another word to be noted in Peter's instant refusal to obey the Voice that spoke to him in the vision. "I have never eaten"—what? "*Anything common.*" And if in the preceding words we catch the tone of religious conservatism, in this even more significant word we hear the speech of religious aristocracy. The opposite of common, as this thorough-going Jew used the word, was hallowed, religiously set apart. Flesh of quadrupeds, for example, that chewed the cud and parted the hoof was hallowed flesh—it might be eaten by the sons and daughters of Israel;

flesh of other quadrupeds was unhallowed, common—it might not be eaten by them.

But this was not the chief matter. The eating of only hallowed meats by Israel, while other peoples ate also the common, or unhallowed, became an occasion of evil as well as good. Through its proper use, it acted indeed as a preventive of contamination by the gross idolatries of neighbouring peoples. But in fact it was overused, which is to say, abused; and through this abuse it wrought contempt of the Gentiles as people whom God had decreed not to accept or care for. Israel only was elect, holy, the spiritual aristocracy of the world and the ages. All other peoples were “common,” unhallowed.

It was the same spirit in which the sons and daughters of Israel themselves have, through long centuries, been dealt with in Christendom. The race to which we owe both the Old and the New Testament, both the prophets and the Apostles, and of whom according to the flesh came our Lord and Saviour himself, has been treated by so-called Christian peoples and people with notorious injustice and contempt. Somewhat similarly has this or that church of Christendom been taught by its leaders to look down upon others as ecclesiastically “common” and not to be recognized as churches of Christ at all. It is the anti-Christian spirit of arrogance and pride, unchanged under all its changing forms, with which both social and ecclesiastical life have been corrupted even until now.

As concerns Simon Peter there at Joppa, however, thus much at least is certain: He wanted to be a Chris-

tian disciple as in days gone by. But many had been the questions and answers, habitual the speaking and listening between his Lord and himself in those blessed days; and might it not somehow be so still? For he is now a disciple with the added task of active apostleship on his heart. His need is greater than ever. He must know; and the world beyond the veil seems not far off. Oh, that its light might glimmer through the veil! He will pray for it. He will seek guidance. "I will ask," we imagine him saying, "whether the old bottles are intended to hold the new wine of the kingdom." He turns away from all else and draws near to God, even to "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." *

So it came to pass ere long, as we shall see, that the "I have never" of this disciple with the heart as well as the commission of an apostle was changed into a cheerful "Who was I that I could withstand God?"

The Apostle Paul spoke no word of deeper spiritual meaning, in his description of the equipment for Christian warfare, than when he said, "with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons *in the Spirit*." May we not believe that when his earlier called brother apostle, in his defence before the church in Jerusalem, said, "I was in the city of Joppa *praying*," it was of such a prayer that he told? "In the Spirit" he was lifted up, rapt, into a state of devotional exaltation

* I Peter 1: 3.

above even the awareness of surrounding objects. Not only did the curtains of the eye shut out the whole image-world of visible things—the housetop, the fruitful land, the unresting sea, the silent overbrooding sky in its noontide glory. That is essentially an everyday experience. But the sensorium itself lapsed into a heavy sleep, while the praying soul, insensitive to everything else, became all the more responsive to certain forms of the Spirit's teaching.

Then, in this ecstatic state, there came an answer not simply or chiefly to the present prayer of his lips, but to the prayer of his whole discipleship with Jesus the Christ. "In a trance I saw a vision."

What did this answering vision mean?

IV

THE INTERPRETATION

Now while Peter was much perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate and called and asked whether Simon who was surnamed Peter were lodging there.—Acts 10: 17, 18.

And Cornelius was waiting for them, having called together his kinsmen and his near friends.—Acts 10: 24.

Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord.—Acts 10: 33.

THE vision was not self-explanatory. Like any symbol, it called for an interpreter. Indeed, does not practically all our knowledge come to us in some sort of symbolic form? What is speech, for instance, but the use of certain invented symbols to be interpreted? Chiefly conventional sounds which this or that race of people have somehow through thousands of years agreed upon, they have to be learned afresh by every little child, and translated into the ideas they stand for by the mind which is back of every ear upon which they fall. A good part of our time every day is spent in listening; which means that it is spent in rendering for ourselves the words of our mother tongue, as used more or less accurately by this or that person, not indeed into the words of some foreign tongue, but into their own interfused ideas.

“An easy sort of translating this,” one might remark, “that goes on spontaneously in daily conversation between even the humblest minds.” To be sure, and yet it is an art so difficult as never to be perfectly learned. Because language is not an instrument to be used with the mathematical exactness of twice two makes four. The soul is too deep and affluent, too resourceful, too changeful, to be able, by any conceivable set of words, to communicate its ideas and emotions, with infallible exactness, to even the most discerning fellow-soul. “No rich personality,” it has been said, “has ever put itself wholly into speech.” Very true; but neither has any other. It is not only the poet of his age, looking upon the world-old sea breaking at the foot of its crags, who cries—

“And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.”

It is everybody's cry. In the poorest personality are depths of meaning which far surpass its own powers of expression or any man's powers of discovery.

Nevertheless, there is such true communicating done as to bring about that personal self-revelation, one to another, in which the possibility and joy of human society consist. Enough, too, is it not, until the day of those finer forms of converse and self-expression, unpicturable now, with which we hope to be entrusted hereafter?

I

Note, also, that a large part of language is symbolic in the stricter sense. That is to say, it is

metaphorical; for a metaphor is a symbolic image. And in this case a double interpretation is necessary: we have to explain to ourselves in the act of listening not only the metaphorical word, but also the image which it awakens in the mind. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you": the men who first heard these words knew what they all meant, let us suppose, either taken singly or united in a sentence. But what did the image of the knocking hand and the opening door which, at the utterance of these words, arose in the hearer's mind, what did that image mean? It was for the hearer to interpret.

As we all know, a marked characteristic of our Lord's way of teaching was his constant and inimitable use of metaphor and parable. He was often misunderstood, too, even by the innermost circle of his disciples. To Jesus himself all this was painfully apparent even unto the end. "Know ye not this parable?" "Are ye also even yet without understanding?" "O ye of little faith . . . how is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread?"

Yet it was the perfect way of teaching—"perfection beyond compare," as Tennyson said of the Master's parables. Is it not everywhere shown to be the Divine method? "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing;" but the faithful soul, through searching out such "a matter," comes ere long to know it indeed. For a man must needs have the chief part to do in his own education. Knowledge is an acquisition, not a gift. Every truly instructed man is self-instructed. We are to *get* knowledge, which means to obtain it by effort.

Only thus is it that the mind, thinking, endeavouring, praying, doing, assimilates the bread of truth and is prepared to grow thereby.

Indolent souls that we are, how we do have to be stung into mental exertion. Creeping on in our own easy way, we should only make our intellectual infancy perpetual. Rejoice and give thanks, ye disciples of the Master, for the stimulating forms as well as the substance of his holy evangel. Give thanks that the Divine library of the Bible invites to its exposition the best thinking, together with the deepest spiritual insight, of all who would learn ever more fully the heart and will of God. For it is thus in each single life throughout the successive generations of Bible readers. Each separate learner must read it for himself and really read it.

II

The vision in Joppa, then, was a thought-provoking symbol; but not just such a one as those metaphors and parables of Jesus which had so often fallen upon the ears of his disciples. Its peculiarity was that, without the present aid of any of the senses, it was made visible and audible to the mind. And facing such a vision, Peter, who was the foremost questioner of the Master in those days when he could speak to him face to face, finds himself a questioner still.

What could be the revelation embodied in this strange command to kill and eat?—that was the wondering query that rose in his mind. Could the intended lesson be that the Mosaic distinction between the kinds

of flesh which might and those which might not be eaten in Israel was henceforth to be disregarded, that literally both clean and unclean animals might now be eaten by Jew as well as Gentile—this, and nothing more? Was there no deeper truth? Or, was it a revelation of religious truth at all? Might it not have been a meaningless dream, a fantasy that had crept into the mind through an overtaxed and sleeping brain? On this point, however, Peter seems to have entertained no doubt. He knew the vision to have been given of God, and with some momentous meaning for its percipient. The only question was, What meaning?

A master artist may put upon a few feet of canvas the best that he has thought and felt in a lifetime. Your eye is caught by the painting and held with a mild, yet persistent, fascination. There is a great meaning in those wonderful fashionings of form and blendings of colors; and yet to you it is perhaps a hidden meaning. To declare that it is otherwise would be sheer affectation. You must think and ponder, entering by sympathy into the creative artist-mind, before the very soul of the picture comes forth at length to greet you like the morning. Somehow thus, we may imagine, did the spiritual truth and purpose of his vision attract the quick responsive spirit of Peter, while he must still do whatever lay in his power to find out more distinctly what that truth and purpose might be.

Like Moses, who, when in the desert of Horeb he saw the burning yet unconsumed bush, "looked" and "beheld" and said, "I will turn aside now and see

this great sight, why the bush is not burnt," and was thus prepared to hear the voice of God, who *when He "saw that he turned aside to see,"* called unto him with revealing words of grace—like that first great prophet and preacher of Israel, this first Christian preacher, on the housetop at the seaside, "thought" and was "much perplexed" at what he had seen, and in this interested and reverently inquiring spirit was able to receive the Divine interpretation of his vision.

Now, one might believe without extravagance that if Peter had by this time perfectly understood a certain word of his Master, in answer to a request once made by the disciples, he would have had no need of this vision in Joppa. The request, with its imperfectly understood answer, is given in the Gospel according to Mark, which has sometimes been called "Peter's Gospel," because of the strong probability that it was dictated by him to John Mark, his sister's son. At any rate, Peter could never have forgotten such a word of Jesus; and it was this: "There is nothing without the man that going into him can defile him."

It is a saying which, like many of the Master's sayings, was called forth by the occasion. In this case some Pharisees and Scribes had been complaining that the disciples had eaten bread with unwashed—that is, with ceremonially unclean—hands. In the eyes of those who held the tradition of the elders, it was a serious offence. We are told, for example, of one Rabbi Akiba who, while suffering imprisonment under the Roman government, had on a certain occasion an insufficient supply of water brought him. "Give me water for my

hands," he said. And on being informed that there was "scarcely water enough to drink," he replied: "What shall I do? It is better for me to die than to transgress the ordinances of my ancestors." But Jesus answered his disciples' critics with the truth that nothing that can be handled or put into the mouth is of a nature to defile the soul. And to the disciples it was a dark saying; so they "asked of him the parable"—asked its meaning. From Matthew's Gospel we learn that their spokesman on this occasion was Peter—as might have been expected: "Peter answered and said unto him, Declare unto us the parable." Jesus' reply was that no eaten food, however ceremonially unclean, can defile a man, because it does not even come into contact with the man himself, but only with his body. "This he said, making all meats clean"—declaring their cleanness.

It was a word which left no standing-ground for the tradition of the elders, as to eating bread with "defiled, that is unwashen, hands." Nor did it leave standing-ground for the perpetuation of the temporarily needful distinction in the written law between clean and unclean meats. In the mind of the disciples, could they have seen it in the whole breadth of its application, it would have been a fatal word to all Jewish exclusivism.

Not yet, however, had Peter—nor probably any other of the Eleven—grown into the ability to make so broad an application of such a "parable." But, lo, that very parable has now been acted before his inner eye as a vision; and with earnest thought, which is itself

a prayer to the Father of lights, he seeks at once an unveiling of its hidden idea.

III

“Peter was much perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean.” As on that more memorable day when, looking into the tomb of Jesus and finding it empty, he “departed to his home, wondering at that which was come to pass,” so here in the sanctuary which he had found on the housetop in Joppa he was in perplexity as to what might be the meaning of that which had been shown him; and “he thought on the vision.”

And in such thoughtful, questioning wonder, let it be remarked, this seer of Jesus Christ was showing himself akin to the goodly fellowship of the prophets who went before him. For they, too, knew what it was to be perplexed and to think on a vision. As he himself afterward said of them in his First Epistle, they searched into what the Spirit of Christ that was in them pointed to, “when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them.”* What is its significance? was a question of theirs, even as it was of his, concerning the form in which a great truth of redemption was set forth. Compare, also, the example of Paul after his vision of the Man of Macedonia. “And when he had seen the vision,” says Luke, one of his three travelling companions, “straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, concluding (*βιβάζομεν*, gathering the facts to-

* 1 Peter 1: 11.

gether in our minds and *drawing a conclusion from them*) that God had called us to preach the gospel unto them."

This, it might be noted, would not have been the way of a mere enthusiast. Such a percipient would hardly, like Peter and Paul, have thought on the vision and tried even in much perplexity of mind to understand its language. He would have yielded himself up to whatever extraordinary impression it might have made upon his sensibilities. A false religious mysticism, for example, might have held the trance and vision very dear, but it would not have encouraged the exercise of the reason upon it. The endeavor of a mystic of this type is to do nothing. He would fain quit both thinking and willing. He would become utterly passive. He would use no means either of grace or of knowledge. He would even lose the sense of personality, vainly dreaming that thus the soul may sink away into that union with God which is the perfection of life and being. Such mediæval phrases as, "purity of spirit and nudity of mind," "the ineffable transcendence of all knowledge and thought," "we die in God to ourselves and to all separate individuality," seem to be fairly typical of the lawless thought of mysticism run mad.

But is not this too mad and manifest an error to be deserving of notice? It might indeed seem to be such; but in some of its milder forms traces of it now and then appear at our own doors. I have known a young Christian preacher, my friend and comrade, bright-minded and sweet-spirited, the pastor of

a congregation, who, to satisfy a mistaken idea of spiritual perfection, gave up the habit of making preparation for the pulpit. "I used to do it," he said to a friend, "but I have quit that foolishness." Apparently he would have given himself up quite passively, without the use of means, without the exercise of judgment, reasoning, imagination, any intellectual faculty, either before or in the act of preaching—would fain have given himself up thus as a mouthpiece of the Spirit of God. It wrought weakness and confusion in an effective evangelic ministry.

But the true Christian mysticism is not so. It may be defined in a word as personal Christian experience, which is the consciousness of Divine life in the soul. Needless to say, the authoritative proof and illustration of it is in the New Testament. Paul testifies concerning it, as when he says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me," and John, as when he declares: "Hereby we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Not untruly has it been described as the "very heart of religion" and the "very soul of all most effective preaching." *

There have been periods in the history of Christian churches when religion, losing its inner life, degenerated into a mere confessional orthodoxy and an observance of rites of worship, with more or less of intellectual religious activity and seemliness of outward conduct. Then perhaps would be heard the voice of the Christian mystic, as a restorer of paths to dwell

* Brastow, "The Modern Pulpit," p. 11.

in—probably a very plain man, a Luther, a Spener, a Bernard Gilpin, an Otterbein—to win back the people to the truth and spirituality of the gospel.

But such a voice, unless it were greatly over-strained and spoiled, would not belittle the confession of the Christian faith, or the rites of worship, or the activity of the intellect, or practical ideas and employments. It would quicken all these with a true life from within. It would show them to be not hindrances, but means and manifestations of the life of God in the soul. The mystical an enemy to the rational? On the contrary, each needs and serves the other, twin imperial powers of the soul.

With them both, the mystical and the rational, must the Christian preacher be equipped, now as ever in the past. For here in his hands are the records of what evangelists and apostles saw in the kingdom of God. Here, in the language in which they were written and in his own present-day language, are the books of the vision of God in Jesus. Shall not the man who is distinctively to tell and interpret them to others be himself a student of them? Not by courtesy but in some genuine sense of the word shall he not be, with head and heart, a Bible *student*?

“I shall never forget,” says Phillips Brooks, in his “Lectures on Preaching,” “my first experience of a divinity school. I had come from a college where men studied hard but said nothing about faith. I had never been at a prayer-meeting in my life. The first place I was taken to at the seminary was the prayer-meeting; and never shall I lose the impression of the devout-

ness with which those men prayed and exhorted one another. Their whole souls seemed exalted and their natures were on fire. I sat bewildered and ashamed, and went away depressed. On the next day I met some of those same men at a Greek recitation. It would be little to say of some of the devoutest of them that they had not learnt their lessons. Their whole way showed that they never learnt their lessons; that they had not got hold of the first principles of hard, faithful, conscientious study." What spiritual powers are those which the Maker of intellect and spirit would have us exercise to the neglect or contempt of the powers of thought? Kinship there is none between spiritual activity and mental laziness.

In truth, to look upon any power of our being with contempt or suspicion, as if it were an evil thing, is to profane the handiwork and gift of Almighty God. Our reason, it is a higher expression of the Eternal Reason than are the heavens in all their splendour. Our will, its goal of perfection is not to be lost in God, but to have holy fellowship with him.

" Jesus, confirm my heart's desire
 To *work* and *speak* and *think* for thee,
 Still let me guard *the holy fire*
 And still stir up *thy gift* in me."

That is Christian mysticism.

IV

Now we have seen reason for an opinion as to what Peter, thinking on the vision, would have done if

the Master had been there in the flesh. He would have asked him what the vision meant. Was not this, in fact, the habit of the whole company of disciples in those sacred vanished days when they talked with him face to face? "And his disciples asked him what this parable might be;" "And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved?" "Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, Tell us, when shall these things be?"

Even in his discourse in the upper room on the evening of his betrayal, Jesus was interrupted (if that be the proper word) by repeated questioning. "Lord, who is it?" asked John—at Peter's request. "Lord, whither goest thou?" asked Peter. "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" asked Thomas. "Lord, what is come to pass, that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" asked Judas the brother of James. And it was in this very discourse that Jesus called them "friends." He wished them to ask explanations of him as a friend might ask of a revered and beloved friend—as a bond-servant, a slave, was not permitted to do. Their Lord, Teacher, Friend, would win his disciples to the habit of prayer.

Had opportunity been given, therefore, this quick-speaking brother, just now awakened out of a trance in which he had so strangely been bidden to eat the clean and the unclean alike, would doubtless have asked the Master's explanation. And the answer, if we may reverently venture to guess, would have been a progressive answer—first, enough for the disciple's pres-

ent guidance, afterward a fuller revelation of the truth.

Such was the answer, certainly, to the impetuous prayer of this same questioner in the upper room at the Lord's Supper. When Jesus, we remember, girded with a towel and bearing a bason of water in his hand, like one that serves, was washing the disciples' feet, Peter, as it came to be his turn, was quick with protest and interrogation. "Dost thou wash *my* feet?" Jesus calmly assured him that an explanation would be given in due season: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter." How soon thereafter? First of all, in a few minutes. For when the Lord, having finished his ministration as a servant-host to the disciples whom he loved, sat down among them once more, he said: "Ye call me Teacher and Lord [it was of their own mind and will they did it], and ye say well, for such I am. If I, then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."

With this explanation they were somewhat able to understand what their Master had done unto them. They saw that, in a manner most marvellous, he had taught them the lesson of ministering love. But this was not the whole answer. For when, through the teaching of the unseen Spirit of truth, light was thrown back from the Cross and Resurrection upon all the antecedent acts of Jesus, greater than ever appeared the unfolding mystery of the Divine love, as set forth in all that the Son of God had done at that last supper

with those whom he had chosen as its witnesses. Think what it must have meant then to remember and say: "It was in very truth the Highest, God manifest in the flesh, who, in love that would not let us go, took, even toward such as we, the household servant's place."

So it was a progressive revelation of himself in oneness with the Father, and of the new commandment of love and service ("as I have done to you") that lay enshrined in Jesus' word of promise, "Thou shalt understand hereafter."

Similar was the explanation of the symbolic vision in Joppa whose meaning Peter was thoughtfully and prayerfully asking for. First of all, it was given in a very little while. For in the midst of Peter's pondering and perplexity an answer is hastening on. Fuller answers will follow later, but well fitted to the present need is the answer even now at hand. Downstairs at the gate, men are heard inquiring for a certain Simon Peter—Gentile inquirers. Peter, alone on the housetop, may not have heard them; but a voice within, the voice of the Spirit, bade him go down and meet the callers and go confidently with them. They were three men, two of them servants of Cornelius the Roman captain at Cæsarea, and the third a devout soldier belonging to his retinue; and they bore from him an urgent inspired request that Peter would come to him with "words."

This, then, cannot but be the interpretation of the vision—so the perplexed apostle thought—namely, that God had cleansed the Gentiles, had declared that they were no longer to be treated as ceremonially unclean.

Being a preacher of the gospel, he must go to them even in their houses, when opportunity offers, and with such words as may be given him to speak. Is he not already a guest in the house of the Levitically unclean Simon? So he makes bold to do the un-Jewish act of lodging these three Gentile messengers overnight; and so again he will even fare forth to-morrow with them toward the home of a non-proselyted Roman soldier. He was in a fair way to learn, through obedience to the Spirit of truth, that great law of life which he should afterward write down for the Christian brotherhood—"Honour *all men.*" *

v

As both Joppa and Cæsarea were coast towns, shipping ports for foreign commerce, it might not unreasonably have been guessed that in both of them the foreign—which is to say, the Gentile—population would predominate. This was not true, however, of Joppa. That little city, though it had not wholly escaped the contamination of heathenism, was decidedly Jewish. It was the seaport of Jerusalem—as indeed it is still—and shared in Jerusalem's intense spirit of patriotism.

But Cæsarea, about thirty or forty miles to the north, was more of a Gentile city than any other along the whole coast line of Palestine. It was not an old city, but had been built under the Roman rule—built by Herod the Great, and named by him after his master, Augustus Cæsar. It was the residence of the Roman governor of Judea—of Pontius Pilate, for instance, at

* I Peter 2: 17.

the time of the crucifixion. The institutions and ideas of the Græco-Roman civilization—theatre, amphitheatre, temple, altars, idolatrous worship—prevailed. Jews were there, of course, but even they, in the synagogue worship, read their Scriptures in the Greek language.

Peter might easily, therefore, have felt himself at home in Joppa and a stranger in Cæsarea Palestina. Nevertheless, northward through the plain of Sharon to Cæsarea he is now journeying. And it is on a mission to those whom at one time in his life—before Jesus of Nazareth had found him, let us hope—he would no doubt have spoken of with hasty contempt as “Gentile dogs.” Yes, this Hebrew of the Hebrews is now on his way to Cæsarea, on his way with “words” to the home of a Gentile. For a great barrier-breaking word has been spoken to him from on high—“Unto me God hath shown that I should not call any man common or unclean.”

Here began the Christianity of the nations. And certainly no more fitting person could have been its witness-bearer than the foremost of the Twelve who had followed the Lord Jesus. “Brethren,” said he to the council in Jerusalem, “ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.” “God made choice among you.” It was a Divine election.

Nor can a more fitting place be imagined for this new beginning of the gospel than the city which was virtually the Roman capital of Palestine. We recall that David chose his capital at Jerusalem, Jeroboam

his at Shechem, and Omri his at the city of Samaria, all inland cities, which well represented the national idea of security and defence. For Israel was not to be aggressive. On the other hand, the national idea of Rome almost from the beginning had been distinctly that of aggression. Rome was to be a colossal world-power. And this idea was equally well represented in her subject territory of Palestine by the capital city of Cæsarea at the seaside; for here was a harbor for her ships, keeping military and mercantile communication open with the imperial City; and from here she could most effectually bear rule over an ever-turbulent people.

But the hour has now struck that calls the New Israel to take the aggressive. With a programme and a purpose compared with which that of the mightiest of world-powers dwindles into meanness, she must go forth to conquer the Roman people and all other peoples, with the word of the truth of the gospel. And what we see in Cæsarea is the opening of her many-centuried campaign at the representative seat of the pagan power in the land of her birth.

VI

Now Cornelius, though not a proselyte to Judaism, was a worshipper of God. Moreover, there is no doubt that, like many another Gentile of the time, he was indebted to Judaism for his religious faith. Not of course that the Jews then residing in Greek and Roman cities were, in any positive sense, missionaries of monotheism. They seem to have had little or no sense

of such a mission. They were more nearly the spiritual kin of Jonah than of Isaiah. Yet, whether or not these Jews of the Dispersion felt themselves entrusted with the truth of God for others' sake, there in the Gentile cities stood their synagogues, which were houses of teaching; and Gentiles were not forbidden to enter. Paul, for example, in his missionary tours, found both Jews and Greeks in the synagogues—in that of Iconium, in that of Athens, and in that of Thessalonica where “devout Greeks a great multitude” believed his word.

Accordingly, it is easy to imagine Cornelius—say, in young manhood—dissatisfied with the paganism in which he had been brought up, finding his way to such a house of worship and instruction, taking an inconspicuous seat, listening to the reading of the Law and the Prophets. Why should he not come and come again to hear these Scriptures? For where had he ever heard anything comparable thereto? They appealed to his reason and met the hunger of his heart. Away went the mythologies and the barren philosophies, now that he had found the one true and personal God.

By submitting to the Jewish rites Cornelius might have become a member of the synagogue, a proselyte, and enjoyed all its privileges. These, however, he does not seem to have asked for. But he was a seeker of God; and in the holy oracles of Judaism he found him whom he sought, and became, Roman soldier and captain of a rude soldiery as he was, “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”

Prayed for what? For more light; because it is he who has that wants, and to him, having and wanting, it shall be given more abundantly. Divers good gifts this devout soldier prayed for, no doubt; but we have evidence that the perfect boon of a larger knowledge of God was the chief of them. This he desired most of all. For when in vision the angel of God bade him send to Joppa for Simon Peter, who was to bring him a message of the Divine self-revelation in Jesus, the word was, "*Cornelius, thy prayer is heard.*" This, then, was his prayer, conscious, unconscious, but deepest and most real of all the hungering of his spirit—to know God as He had been made known in Jesus and to have his family, "all his house," sharers with him in such spiritual vision.

In fact, Cornelius and the others had already known something of the good news of Jesus Christ that had been published in Galilee and throughout Judea. "That saying ye yourselves know," Peter reminded them, when he had come and begun to speak to Cornelius' household and friends. From Philip the evangelist, then, who lived in Cæsarea,* or from some other source, this earnest and devout soul, while on garrison duty in the city, had heard reports of the words, the deeds, the cross of Jesus. But what could it all mean? Who was this crucified prophet of Galilee? What greatest word had he spoken? What new revelation of God, if any, had he brought? And what truth might be contained in that mystic word which

* Acts 21: 8, 9.

had been reported about peace by Jesus Christ? Be glad and thankful, Cornelius, truth-lover and servant of the living God, for "thy prayer is heard."

And now the apostle, with the six brethren whom he had brought from Joppa as witnesses of what might occur, was standing in the house of the centurion, and asking why he had been sent for. Cornelius related the story of his vision, and concluded with the proposal: "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord." Then the apostle "opened his mouth and said"—

VII

But let us linger here a moment. We are reminded of the word spoken some years before in Peter's presence (as we have good reason to believe) near the lakeside in Galilee, concerning a brother soldier of Cornelius—and of the same rank—the centurion stationed at Capernaum, who had built the Jews their synagogue in that city. Jesus marvelled at this Gentile soldier's faith—"Only say the word, and my servant shall be healed"—which he had not found the equal of even in Israel. Then, as if looking forth, from the heights of prophetic vision, unto the far-off horizons of the world and far down the highways of the great oncoming future, he declared: "I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Has that prophetic word just now come back to Simon Peter, with the illuminating touch

of the Spirit, here in this Roman household by the Mediterranean Sea? Or that later word, uttered a few days before the crucifixion, when it was told Jesus that certain Greeks who had come to the passover feast were desirous of seeing him, and Jesus answered and said, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. . . . And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself"—was that word of prophecy brought just now to this disciple's remembrance? It may have been so. At all events, here are Gentiles from the West, a centurion in the Italian cohort of the Roman army of occupation, with his household, kinsmen, and friends, coming into the kingdom of God.

The apostle then opened his mouth and said: "Of a truth I perceive [or, *I am perceiving*] that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." The larger light is indeed shining on "what the vision which he had seen might mean." For he now sees not only that he did well to make a journey of forty miles to enter into the house of a praying Gentile, but also that this man is verily acceptable to God, and moreover stands in a universal representative relation—that in every nation men like him are acceptable to God. Here is the interpretation of the common declared to be clean, given in a human and spiritual outlook, worldwide. "I am perceiving"—what? Seekers of God, many or few, Jethros and Jobs and Melchizedeks and Wise Men of the East, among all peoples—men of Egypt, Arabia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, Italy, Spain,

China, the isles of the sea—sons of light, obedient to what of the highest truth they know, faithful to walk in the fear of God and in righteousness of life, and finding acceptance with him.

“I have never eaten anything that is common”—*have never associated on equal terms with non-Jewish people.* Such had been this Galilean Jew’s rule of life until two or three days ago. But he is coming now to testify: “Unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common.” Which is to say that the people whom the Jew had been turning away from as “common” were his own brothers, and equally precious with himself to God. He is coming to see that Jesus of Nazareth is “Lord of *all*.”

Thus the New Testament, as it is written, portion by portion, out of the spiritual experience and life of that day of Divine revelation, bears concurrent and unbroken testimony to the universality of the Christian Congregation, in which the only height of distinction is that of humble and loving service in the name of the Son of Man. In this light of Christ every human personality, even the crudest and the worst, is sacred.

Common? Such a descriptive term (*κοινός*) was to be lost, as men learned of Christ, in the higher word (*κοινωνία*) com-munion, com-munication, fellow-ship, brother-hood.

The common faith,* the common salvation,† the common life-sharing in the gospel,‡ the sacredness of the soul ||—are these poor and mean ideas? The one Lord

* Titus 1: 4.

† Jude 3.

‡ Acts 2: 42; Philemon 1: 5.

|| Acts 10: 28.

Jesus Christ, could anybody dream of thinking of him more worthily as the Saviour of a nation or a class, than as the Elder Brother of us all, who tasted death for every man?

VIII

Yet there be some who are ready to ask: "If, then, those who in non-Christian lands fear God and live righteously according to such light and leading as they have are acceptable to him, why should we trouble ourselves to send them the gospel at all?" Oh, narrow and blinding conception of the grace and truth that have come by Jesus Christ. To suggest that the Christian gospel is not to be preached everywhere is to imply that it has no fulness of meaning anywhere. It is to make the offer of salvation in Christ selective, local, provincial, sectional, racial, whereas it is human and spiritual and universal. It is to say, on the one hand, to those who amid idolatrous fellows and surroundings are feeling after the living God if haply they may find him, "Your prayer is not to be heard." It is to deny, on the other hand, those who, content with their darkness, are making no effort to throw off the cruel oppression of pagan superstition, it is to deny them that heaven-sent evangel through which they, too, may be awakened to seek the heavenly Father and welcome the good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ. In a word, not only to those who wish it, but to all who need it the gospel of the Son of Man is due.

Accordingly, when this disciple whom the Lord is making a missionary stands before his inquiring little

Gentile congregation, to speak words whereby they shall be saved, he does not conclude with the idea of the fear of God and the working of righteousness. But beginning with that he goes on to preach unto them *Jesus*.

This is that which, nay, rather this is He whom, the whole world needs—even Jesus. “I came that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly.” To what people, therefore, near or far, shall his Church hesitate to go, in obedience to his command, with the words of this life?

But there are other visions, as personal as that of Simon Peter, and some, we may believe, as truly Divine. It is time we should think somewhat on them.

V

VISIONS AND VISION

I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision.—ACTS 11: 5.

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him.—ACTS 10: 34, 35.

NO small profit may be gathered from the story of Peter's vision, if it shall set us thinking on visions of our own. Ours, it is true, are not in the least likely to be given in a trance. Only in exceptional instances has a state of ecstatic self-consciousness been the medium of the Spirit's teaching. Peter's vision from the housetop was one such instance; but the visions which he had already seen with his eyes and heard with his ears, in daily companionship with the Word made flesh, were more than he could number. And although we, unlike this elect witness-bearer, have not enjoyed the singular privilege to know Christ after the flesh, our visions of the unseen and the eternal have also been very many.

I

Not that we have always "thought on the vision" or been "much perplexed" to perceive its Divine meaning. Too often doubtless we have seen and heard with the senses only, or at best with the intellect.

“Blessed are your eyes,” said the Master to his disciples, “for they see, and your ears, for they hear.” But it was to these same disciples that he also said: “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not?” The senses or even the intellections may be quick enough, while spiritual discernment lies fast asleep.

Along this same line of insensibility to the spiritual truth which God is ever offering us may arise an eager longing for some ecstatic vision. I have known more than one earnest Christian to cherish for years the hope of such an experience. For at least once in a lifetime they would fain be rapt out of themselves. Have they not heard or read of those that were? If some day, while kneeling in prayer, they might be so thrilled and uplifted by the revealing Spirit as to become insensible to the body and all earthly surroundings—that is the experience of the celestial truth and glory which they are craving. That, they feel, would once for all make them sure of God and of their acceptance with him. All in vain. For meantime in God’s world, in their own lives, in their own spirits, the same truth and glory are continually set forth; and the form of the revelation is regular, orderly, familiar. But partly perhaps on this very account it goes unnoticed and uninterpreted.

“Lord, show us the Father,” said Philip, “and it sufficeth us.” “Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip?” Day by day, month after month, the Father had been walking and talking with these men, in the person of Jesus his Son. Blessed

were the eyes of Philip and the others, for they saw. But *did* they see?

Poor indeed was the undiscerned or misinterpreted outward vision, even though its subject was the Man of Galilee and of Calvary.

So, the Christian prayer is for the perpetual inner light rather than for the extraordinary manifestation, for vision rather than visions. "I have often prayed my God," said Martin Luther, "that I might not see any vision or miracle, nor be informed in dreams, since I have enough to learn in his word." We, if not called upon to pray against such experiences, are certainly nowhere bidden to pray for them. "The fruit of the Spirit is"—ecstasy, vision, miracle? "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this"—a state of ecstasy, vision, miraculous achievement? "And hereby we know that we know Him, if"—we have felt ecstasy, seen visions, wrought miracles? Such is not the New Testament answer.*

II

But it is time that we should try to mark with some distinctness three or four different meanings of the word we have been using so freely. True, it is seldom altogether agreeable, to either writer or reader, to stop and define one's terms. But though it be somewhat grievous, nevertheless it is safe. First of all, then, there is a difference to be noted between "a vision" (or, in the plural form, "visions") and "vision."

What is a vision? The name may be given, as

* Galatians 5: 22; James 1: 27; John 2: 3.

already indicated, to a scene made up perhaps of a number of objects and events, like what appears to the mind in a dream, only with the senses sunk into a deeper state of torpor—a trance scene. Such was Peter's experience. "I was in a trance and saw a vision."

But in the more familiar use of it the name is given to any imaginative mental picture of the future—say, such an ideal as one's hoped-for home, or achievements, or associations—as when we speak of the "day-dreams of youth." These, it is true, may be mere dreams or vagaries; but in many cases they are genuine ideals without which the world would be poor indeed.

The daughter in the home where she has been loved and cared for with a love that gives and asks nothing again dreams of a far more beautiful home, in a future all radiant with love and joy. The busy tradesman in the midst of his years is planning for a competence on which he may retire for the fuller enjoyment of what remains to him of this life's short journey. Even in the case of the faithful and happy burden-bearers in the noblest walks of life, there may be comfort in forecasting a time when the tasks will be less exacting and the days more tranquil and free. "Ah," wrote Joseph Parker, "when I am in the thick of it, what a help my rose-covered cottage is to me." It is true, no such restful cottage home ever fell to the lot of the great London preacher—and it was well, no doubt; yet he felt the "help" of the heart's sweet picture of it amid the strenuous labors of his life. Thus the Bright Land is for most of us a morning or a

noonday land, while for a few it is the land of the setting sun; but we all have seen it at times just a little ahead—in vision. It beckons us on—“something that keeps calling, calling,” as Lieutenant Peary said of the voice that would not let him rest from his perilous exploration in the far North-land—and forbids our abiding with full satisfaction in any present condition.

Even the imaginative child is wont to fancy a time which is all play-time, in a wonder-world of beautiful sights and sounds.

“‘Where are you running so fast, so fast?
Now answer, my little boys three.’
‘We are going to live where they have no school,
In the Land of the Gingerbread Tree.’”

Truer and finer than any of these is the vision of personal goodness which arises, as the moral nature unfolds under the touch of the Spirit of truth. Often it is suggested by such goodness lived in the life of some one we know. “That’s the kind of man I believe in,” says the responsive youth—for adolescence is the chosen period of visions and ideals; “I should like to be like him.” “Unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:” that was Paul’s vision of personal goodness after he had seen the man Christ Jesus.

Nor should we overlook the fact that our vision of the future need not be simply personal. It may be social, it may be universal. Morally speaking, indeed, it must be so. Spiritual vision is necessarily social and universal—its Christian prayer, “Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth.”

To come now to something visible to the bodily eye, the word "vision" may mean some impressive scene in the natural world—say, the gathering of a harvest, a wood of budding or of leafless trees, a city by night, the star-strewn sky, a deserted farm, a restless multitude of people; or even a single person, one sweet and noble face abiding in the memory to waken formative ideas of goodness and truth. "I owe you a great debt, a debt far larger than ever I can pay," was said by a stranger on his introduction to a lady whom he had once chanced to see in a street car, and the look of peace and joy on whose face had scattered a sense of disheartenment which had been beclouding his mind. A glad and peaceful soul in a face—shall we hesitate to call that a vision?

And still again, some one else's vision of an outward scene or object may be reproduced in our minds by means of descriptive words, perhaps from the tongue or pen of an original witness. It may be written in the book we are reading. Above all, it may be written in the Gospels of the New Testament.

In such senses as these, then, we may speak of having a vision. It may be a trance scene; it may be an ideal, either personal or general, of the future; it may be a natural scene; it may be a reproduction of some natural scene by descriptive words.

III

And now, what is vision? Its best synonym, perhaps, is "insight." It is depth and breadth of view, forecast, intellectual or moral illumination, the sense of

the universal in the particular or of the eternal in the transient. With respect to visions, it is interpretation. What do my visions mean? what is their deepest and largest significance? I must interpret them; and this interpretation is vision.

It is in some such use of the word, for example, that we remark concerning this or that man that he is "a man of vision." Or, on the contrary, it may be remarked, "He lacks vision." The man may have his visions, but his knowledge of them is at best superficial. He does not penetrate to the heart of them. He does not adequately interpret. His sight is without insight. He is not a seer.

In looking upon a natural scene, for example, what the eye takes in is very little of itself. It is only colors, "a clever wash of bright and dark, of green, yellow, red, and blue." The eye of the deer or the swallow or the dog takes in that. The ideas and sentiments which it yields, being interpreted, these are the inner scene and greater reality.

What do you see, then, in looking, let us say, upon the star-strewn sky? It depends on who you are and what is your mood at the time. What did a Hebrew psalmist see? "The work of Thy fingers," "which Thou hast ordained," "what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" "Thou hast made him but little lower than God"—the unapproachable greatness of God, and the greatness of man, whom, notwithstanding his physical littleness and frailty, God has made his viceroy on earth, that is what appeared to the inner eye of the divinely taught psalmist. That was vision.

IV

Alone in prayer on Simon the tanner's house, Simon Peter "fell into a trance, and he beholdeth (*θεωρεῖ*, *is a spectator of*) the heaven opened" and a descending sheet filled with forms of animal life. Then, after it had been given him to interpret that which he had seen, there was a much greater experience to relate: "Of a truth I perceive (*καταλαμβάνομαι*, *I lay hold of with my mind*) that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him." That spiritual insight and outlook; the discernment of the universal goodwill of the living God, valuing men not according to their external circumstances of race or ecclesiasticism; the religious aristocracy of Israel doomed to vanish before the spiritual aristocracy of man: that was vision.

For an illustration from object-lessons in the teaching of Jesus, recall the incident of the child in the midst of the disciples. As they were questioning among themselves as to which should be greater than the others in the kingdom of heaven, "he called to him a little child and set him in the midst of them." It was in Capernaum, the city of Simon Peter, and therefore not improbably in his house. Only a child that chanced to be near? Yes—though, if one might so guess, a wee son or daughter of that singularly honoured fisherman's household—only that lovely thought of God, childhood, looking forth from the face of some

one little child. The Divine idea realized once in the child Jesus, and present potentially in every other.

“Unto us a child is born”—the Christ-child, who was to become, in a truer sense than it was given the ancient prophet to see, the Lord of life, Saviour and King of men. In him the world is learning, though all too slowly, the reverence due to childhood—in his life and explicitly in his word of teaching. To the eyes of sense, indeed, the infancy of a human soul may seem like a commonplace affair, but Jesus’ word to the sincere yet sense-bound disciples, on this and other occasions, showed something of its infinite spiritual beauty and significance: “Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven;” “Of such is the kingdom of God;” “And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.”

All unconsciously to themselves, how much do our children teach us.

I have heard General Clinton B. Fisk tell the story of his conversion. He had been a prayerless man. One evening it fell to him, in the mother’s absence, to hear their little daughter repeat her evening prayer. Kneeling at his knees, she prayed as a child may, and among others for him. Then, as he put her to rest, she asked, looking into his face with the simple-hearted earnestness of childhood, “Papa, do you pray?” Nothing had ever so touched him. A prayerless father of a guileless, praying child. He tried to dismiss the unwelcome thought, but in vain. He took up a book

to read, but laid it down and walked out beneath the stars, the night wind in his face, that he might shake off the spell that had somehow bound him, and so come to himself. But the pure, sweet voice persisted, repeating the words, "Do *you* pray?" The vision refused to fade from his mind—that veritable vision of one of God's innocent young angels, standing white-robed before him, and making known in reverent love, more wisely than she knew, the one eternal Father of them both. It brought the strong man to his knees, and he did indeed come to himself, which was to come into a great and beneficent Christian life.

It was a noteworthy experience. But there is another in which very many of us may share. I mean that it is by the hand of a little child that the father and mother may be led into the clearer light of the eternal fatherhood. For what does it disclose—this new, strange type of sacrificial love which the baby's coming inspires in the parent's heart? Whence could it arise but out of the heart of the Father in heaven? Therefore, his giving is also a self-giving, his love a sacrificial love. Thus we come to understand as never before such a word of Jesus as the parable of the Prodigal Son. Look up from a parent's love to its Source, and behold in vision the father-heart of God.

It may also befall that the depth of one's love is revealed only by the pang of grief at the loss of its object.

"Fold the hands across the breast
So, as when he knelt to pray,
Leave him to his dreamless rest;
Baby died to-day."

Then, in the anguish of wounded parental love, one begins to learn more really the love of the heavenly Father to his children, and his will that none of them perish.

A simple little child a vision? Yes, a vision of the Highest.

v

For an illustration from Peter's own earlier history, let us turn again to the Gospels and read the narrative of an event that took place before his bodily eyes and at once disclosed something of its meaning to his mind and heart. The scene was on the shore of Lake Genesaret. The time was before this fisherman had committed himself to discipleship with Jesus. See the multitude pressing upon the new and wonderful Prophet to hear the Word of God. Entering into one of two boats, which was Simon's, Jesus asked him to withdraw a little from the land. There he taught the people; and when he had left speaking he said to Simon: "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." "Master, we toiled all night, but at thy word I will let down the nets." And the ingathering of fishes was so great that the boats began to sink.

What could it all mean? The vast congregation of wonder-stricken people hanging attentive upon the speech of Jesus, the tranquil and authoritative command of nature and of man, the superhuman wisdom, grace, and goodness—like a sudden flame from some unseen fire it lit up the soul of Simon, and he fell down

at Jesus' feet, crying out: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He had beheld a sign, cumulative in its awful yet glorious power, of the presence of the Eternal. Who was he, with all his faults and sins upon him, to stand in such a presence? He had never been so self-revealed before. Down on his knees he prays to be spared this contact with the insufferable light of Divine holiness and power. It was a flash of spiritual vision. May it not have been the vision that determined him at that very time to leave all at the Master's word and follow him—follow the Holy One of whose presence and leadership he felt so painfully unworthy? Nor do we wonder that long afterward he should write to certain of his fellow-disciples of Jesus: "Like as He who called you is holy, be ye also holy in all manner of living;" * and, "If ye call on God as Father who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear." †

The world was then in its first Christian century. It is now in its twentieth. Changes innumerable have occurred. The believers in Jesus of Nazareth have not become an extinct sect. On the contrary, they have increased unto multiplied millions. But do they still have visitations from the Most High in visions and in the interpretation thereof? As truly as ever in the beginning. Among the numberless changes there has been none in spiritual truth, none in the everlasting Christ, none in the heart and will of his Father and ours.

* I Peter 1: 15.

† I Peter 1: 17.

Year by year the procession of Christian pilgrims is passing through the coast town of Joppa and by the lakeside in Galilee, but they see not the face of Jesus of Nazareth as did Simon Peter in his day. Hence they have no such personal witness to offer as had Peter's fellow-disciple John, who, in old age, the last survivor of the twelve that had once lived with Jesus, began his letter to all the Christians whom he might reach, with the great informal greeting: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands have handled, concerning the word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." Yet through John's word we all may know Jesus. In our far-away land and with two millenniums intervening between the days of his flesh and our own appointed days, we may make acquaintance with him and walk with him in paths of love and duty, day by day.

With what manner of face and figure did Jesus appear? No word concerning it has been transmitted to us. It may be better not to know. But we may know *him*, as truly as did his earliest called disciples. For John, writing to those who had never seen the face of the Lord as they had seen the faces of their kindred and friends about them, declares as his purpose in this very letter: "That ye also might have fellowship with us, yea, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." And Peter in his first letter has written concerning this same Eternal Word made flesh: "Whom not having seen ye love; in whom,

though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly." *

Through the testimony of such personal eye-witnesses, then, we too have our vision of the Man of Galilee. And through the interpretation by the Spirit of his mind and person and teaching and sacrificial life and death and life triumphant over death, and of his atoning love which passes knowledge, we too, not having seen, may love and greatly rejoice.

VI

I am writing on New Year's Day. What is likely at such a time to be one's re-vision of the Old Year? A routine of daily affairs, business successes or failures, meetings and partings, domestic joys, journeyings here and there, humdrum, seasons of storm and strain, perhaps a sorrow that has left its ineffaceable scar on the soul; and withal the whole succession of scenes and events melting like a cloud into the irrevocable past. And what the pre-vision of the year just now knocking at the door? About the same as the retrospect of its immediate predecessor, with probably the added hope of some larger achievement and the recognition of the possibility that the cycle of the New Year may be broken at any time by the hand of death.

But if that be all, alas for our eyes, for they see not, and our ears, for they are deadly dull of hearing. It is not all. It is not worthy to be compared with the great reality. To the spiritual mind both the departing and the coming year are sacred with the

* I Peter 1: 8.

presence of the ever-living God. Both are not only nominally but really "years of grace." Every one of the seven hundred and thirty days of them is a day of God. Law and order and providence, a Divine education of the soul, truth and love, unceasing gracious ministries, unceasing opportunities of Christian service—that is what the loyal child of God sees in the successive cycles of this fleeting, troubled, and joyous life.

Even to eyes like ours, so poorly able to make out the Divine handwriting, "last year" spells Providence and "this year" Opportunity. Oh, the glory of it! the ineffable gladness of a single year of life in the name of him who in oneness with the will of his Father loved us and gave himself up for us!

Are we growing old? The days drawing nigh in which it may be declared that, from the viewpoint of physical comforts, "Thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"?

"Gone, they tell me, is youth.
Gone is the strength of my life;
Nothing remains but decline,
Nothing but age and decay.

"Not so: I am God's little child,
Only beginning to live.
Coming the days of my prime,
Coming the strength of my life,
Coming the vision of God,
Coming my bloom and my power."

Heaven-wide is the difference between that knowledge which is by the senses and that which is by the intuitions and judgments of an inner life of the Spirit. The two contrasted views appear in the Scriptures, as also in everyday observation and experience. Put the

non-spiritual view of life, as chiefly set forth, let us say, in Ecclesiastes, side by side with what this same time-life is to the faithful soul, as interpreted by the psalmists:

“One generation goeth and another generation cometh; and the earth abideth for ever. . . . All things are full of weariness, man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.”—**ECCLESIASTES 1:4, 8.**

“How precious is thy loving-kindness, O God. And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.”—**PSALM 36: 7-9.**

Which of these two is a picture of that “which is life indeed”?

It has been a good many years since I read Mark Guy Pearce’s racy little book, “Mister Horn and His Friends”; but one of its pictured experiences is still rememberable. Mister Horn was a laboring man, with a specialty. His specialty was giving to the Church for the conversion of the world. He believed that a man ought to plan for giving, as for getting. Acting on this principle, he determined to live one year on what he had already saved, and give the whole year’s earnings to the building of a new chapel in his neighborhood. He always insisted that this was the very happiest year of his life. Never, he said, had he felt so much like being one of those who in the heavenly glory rest not day nor night from the service of their King. “I used to think that they up in their glory and I down in my well [which he was digging, a good part of the time]

were both doing the same thing, for all that we were such a long way off; we were both working for the same Lord and we both wanted to do as much as ever we could. That *was* a happy year."

From the bottom of his well Mister Horn could see the pure light of the stars in the daytime; but neither that nor the sunset glory in which he walked to his humble home when the day's work had ended was to be accounted of in comparison with his vision of the glory of giving one's self in Christian service. Drudgery was it, to be digging a well? What Mister Horn saw in it was what we believe Jesus saw in his carpenter work in Nazareth. To him it was nothing less than the sweet and holy will of God.

As truly, then, as men have been gifted with a power of eyesight, enabling them to see that which is visible, so truly have they been gifted with a power of inner vision, enabling them to see the invisible. Every day, in fact, they see incomparably more without their eyes than with them.

But let no one ask how it is done. Both the eyesight and the inner vision are simple and sublime facts of the soul, utterly beyond human comprehension. It is also true that while this inner vision may be intellectual, as that, for example, of the mathematician, the scientist, the historian, the philosopher, or æsthetic, as that of the artist, or personal, as that of any one who forms an ideal for the direction and regulation of his own life, it may also be distinctly spiritual.

VII

Now, it is spiritual vision with which our attention is occupied in the present study. Let us therefore note, as briefly as possible, the two principal powers which it may be said to include.

The first is the power of *spiritual discernment*. Which means the soul in the act of perceiving spiritual facts and values.

Such perception is possible to man as man. It is a capacity of the soul. There is a moral nature that recognizes righteousness as actually as the social nature recognizes society, or the æsthetic nature, beauty. There is a pressure of moral obligation upon the conscience as real as the pressure of the atmosphere on the flesh—and often more sensibly felt. There is One who is nearest to that which is highest in ourselves. There are fellow-men to whom our innermost relations are moral relations, our innermost obligations moral obligations. There are ideas, hints, glimpses, foretokenings, of that which is best in life, what ought to be, the supreme good. There is an ever-rising discontent with attainments and doings. What does Aristotle mean when, speaking of the energy and blessedness of Deity, he declares that “that which is most nearly allied to this must be the happiest,” and speaks of a man’s living “not so far forth as he is a man, but as there is in him something divine”? “Although it be small in size,” he says, “yet in power and value it is far more excellent than all.” In some form or

other it makes itself known to all men in moments of contemplation, this sense of something higher, of something Divine, the haunting sense of an Infinite Perfection.

For the most part, however, men are slow of heart to understand such spiritual facts and values. They need the fuller light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. To have the mind of Christ, the spirit of the kingdom of heaven, this is to know indeed.

What mean such words as "sin," "repentance," "faith," "sonship to God," "the kingdom of heaven," "the love of Christ," "the Christianizing of the world"? There are those who are fain to speak of stealing as "swiping," of fighting as "scrapping," of lying as "romancing"—in a word, of sin in any or all of its forms as no deeply personal and serious matter, but rather as an ignorance or a misfortune or, at worst, a fault. To such minds it would seem that repentance can mean little more than a feeling of regret, followed perhaps by a certain prudent or decent change of conduct. And shall we go on to say that faith to them will probably mean the acceptance of a doctrine, sonship to God the natural and inevitable relation of a soul to Him by whom it was made, the kingdom of heaven the organized Church, the love of Christ little more than a theological formula, and the Christianization of the world a doubtful sectarian undertaking?

But unless the evangelic reading of the New Testament be a deplorable misreading, sin is the breaking of a moral being's relation to the holy heavenly Father,

grieving his Spirit, bringing guilt upon the conscience, issuing in spiritual death, and to be put away only by the sacrificial love of God in Jesus Christ; repentance, the turning, in contrition of heart, with full persuasion of the will, from all sin unto the forgiving God; faith, the opening of the whole heart to the Saviour; sonship, the filial likeness in spirit and character to God our Father; the love of Christ, the deepest and greatest fact ever embodied in human flesh; the Christianization of the world, sharing with all men everywhere the personal and saving knowledge of God as revealed in Jesus.

Here, then, is the sphere of those things of the Spirit which, according to the very nature of them, must be "spiritually discerned." "We want to know with our brains," says Grenfell, the heroic missionary-physician of Labrador, "we want to distrust the monitor in our hearts. But both faith and experience are needed to make knowledge." As well might one expect to understand friendship or beauty or parental affection by an act of pure intellect, as by such an act to understand spiritual experiences and realities. They are known only through the life of God in the soul. "We received not the spirit of the world but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God." "He that lacketh these things"—such as "faith," "temperance," "godliness," "love of the brethren," "love"—"is blind, seeing only what is near."* "Every one that loveth . . . knoweth God . . . for God is love."

* II Peter 1:9.

VIII

The other power is *spiritual imagination*. Which means the soul in the act of holding up and picturing to itself spiritual facts and values.

Need one be reminded that the power to imagine is always astir, from infancy to old age, whether we wake or sleep? It takes a hand in all mental activities. Without it, there could be no proper perception of the external world; for it is only a part, often a very small part, of the surface of objects that we see or touch at any one time. Imagination, which has been aptly called a second sight, supplies the rest.

It is a constructive power. It gathers and builds. It gives form and colour to thought so as to make it image-like and realizable. It fits ideas together, under laws of reason or of beauty, into some new and larger unity. Thus it is that the mechanical engineer mentally organizes his steam-engine or flings his suspension-bridge across the river for thunderous freight trains to pass over in safety; that the musician, like deaf Beethoven imagining sounds, constructs his anthem or his oratorio; that the speaker knits together his discourse; that the poet (a *maker*, the Greeks called him), with his preëminent originative and constructive genius, makes his poem.

Great works, these; nevertheless, there is something of this creative power given of God to us all. That is to say, every one may be and is a maker of *personal ideals*. Yet more, he may be a maker of moral ideals. And without some commanding vision of moral good—

of that which *ought to be* as distinct from the existing fact—the moral, which is the only true, life is impossible. “Where there is no [such] vision the people cast off restraint.”

I knew a young man of rare intellectual endowments who declared his proposal to taste every species of sensuous pleasure. In his outlook that was life indeed—sensuous pleasure the supreme good. One need not be told what manner of man he was and became. To lead such a life is not to live. Whether the physical gratifications which make it up be coarse or “refined,” those of a Caliban or those of a “gentleman,” it is worse than a brute existence. It poisons and degrades the soul.

Nor can I believe a life so lacking in purity and nobleness to be a common youthful ideal. But what of the commercial ideal a few years later in life? To dream and plan and labour and order one’s life from youth onward for the attainment of wealth, and thus become a partaker at the altar of Mammon, where the heart’s lifelong idolatrous devotion is paid—this apparently is not an uncommon conception of the best that life has to offer. And it is only another fateful abuse of the priceless power to create ideals—a deliberate living for money at the sacrifice of the soul. It is to be what Christiana and her company saw in the Interpreter’s House—“a man who could look no way but downwards.” Just above, One offered him a celestial crown. Alas! in vain. He saw “no way but downwards.”

Equally notable is the good ideal’s power for good.

“I had perceived by experience,” said William Tyndale, “how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue.” But it was in the early part of the sixteenth century, and there was no printed English Bible in all the land. Then it was that Tyndale had his vision. He foresaw such a Bible in the churches and homes of the people—even in the hands of “a boy that driveth the plough.” And to the realization of that vision the gifted and learned young linguist devoted his life. In poverty and exile and imprisonment, through all difficulty, danger, and disheartenment, he kept on, steadily toiling year after year, till the enemies of the truth led him forth to die. But while they were burning his body to ashes, his New Testament was passing into circulation among his countrymen, sure enough “in their mother tongue.” By the grace of God he made his life’s dream a fact; and every one of the millions of English Bible readers, from then till now, has become the splendid dreamer’s debtor.

“Where is So-and-so now?” I was asked by a man working with a hoe for his daily wage. “Why, he is in charge of our largest church in Washington City—one of our most useful preachers, hundreds have been converted under his ministry.” “Well,” remarked my friend in reply, “I went to school with that boy, and he always said he was going to be something like that. The other fellows used to make fun of him for it; and now of all the boys that went to that school, he is the only one that is doing anything more than—than

just what I am doing now." So there it is, I could not but ponder; twenty boys sitting side by side on the benches of a country schoolhouse; nineteen of them perhaps supremely interested in the visible and the present, or in a future projected on the same plane; but one with the pre-vision of a higher life, which to him seemed the happiest and the best and to which he believed himself divinely called. That determined his course of conduct even from childhood. The light of that inspiring moral ideal shone upon his path: he followed, and attained.

Such as these, and side by side with them God-given dreams of love and home, are the great dreams of youth.

It is not meant, of course, that those only who are to occupy some conspicuous position need to form an ideal of their particular life and work in the world. All alike may do so, if they will. All alike ought to practise such forecast of head and heart.

And now if it be asked what is that vision of the future which every one, no matter what his place or occupation, should make his own, there can be but one answer to the question. It is the Christian ideal; and this is, to do with a filial heart the will of the Father in heaven. A life of sonship to the Lord of heaven and earth—think of it. Nothing greater can be imagined; yet nothing less is worthy of the supreme human purpose and endeavour.

“Teach me to do Thy will,
For Thou art my God;
Thy Spirit is good,
Lead me in the land of uprightness.”

And it is simply declaring the same truth under the fulness of the Divine self-revelation, to say that the Christian ideal is Christliness of mind and character. For the will of the Father was ever the one law of life to Jesus his Son.

This for each man individually, and equally the ideal for the community, society, mankind. A Christianized social order and an evangelized world—never perhaps so distinctly as at the present time has this been the prophetic vision of the Christian man.

“‘Dreamers of Dreams’! We take the taunt with gladness,
Knowing that God, beyond the years you see,
Hath wrought the dreams that count with you for madness,
Into the substance of the life to be.”

And the meaning of this evangelization, this Christianization, this bringing in of the kingdom of God, the unveiled mystery of it all is that men shall learn and do the will of that God who has made this earth the abode of a rational and moral world.

IX

Such, meagrely illustrated, is spiritual vision in its two interblended powers of discernment and imagination.

Call it, if you will, another name for a certain activity of faith. Not for the faith of assent or of trust, but for the faith of realization—as when it is written that “we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen,” or that Moses, man of vision in darkest days, “endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

Out of such a realization of spiritual facts and forces has arisen the power of many a spoken word. For both in action and in speech the men of vision are the men of power.

An old friend wrote to Wesley, after hearing him preach at Epworth: "Your presence creates an awe, as if you were an inhabitant of another world." And in a very true sense that is indeed what Wesley was. He lived in the habitual and vivid consciousness of "another world." The kingdom of heaven was more real to him than the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, loyal citizen though he was of both realms. It was in spiritual conviction and vision of the facts of God in Christ, the soul with its possibilities and perils, sin, redemption, a holy and loving life, eternal judgment, that his busy days were spent. His message, therefore, smote men's consciences and touched their hearts as that of a messenger from the immediate presence of God. Similarly it has been said of President Finney, one of the greatest of evangelists, that "he looked and spoke and acted like a man who was handling the invisible and impalpable realities of the eternal world, there in the living presence of his congregation." The effect was often overpowering. Strong men were brought to their knees under the pressure of that ever-present holy will of God, whose reality they had never so felt before.

But it has well been asked, When the prophets have no vision, how shall they have any word to speak?

VI

VISION OF NATURE

Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven.—
ACTS 10: 12.

What God hath cleansed make thou not common.—
ACTS 10: 15.

THE materials of Peter's vision came from the natural world. They were various forms of sentient life that throng earth and air, walking things, creeping things, flying things, strangely grouped together. Nor did they appear as an accidental and meaningless crowd, but rather as a divinely ordered scene whose meaning must be learned.

So also does the natural world itself appear to whoever will rightly regard it. To the outward eyes, indeed, which are only a mirror of surfaces, it shows no more than physical appearances; but to the eyes of the spiritual understanding it would fain disclose, portion by portion, an inner truth and teaching.

I

It is George Herbert, I believe, who says that the most important step which a man takes in his natural life is his first step out of doors. This most important step is taken in infancy, to be sure, and may not enable him, even with the full and wondering eyes of the infant, to see very far. Nevertheless, it is the step

which may be said to introduce the young adventurer to the world of nature; and that is "the vision splendid" which may attend his steps unto the end of life's journey.

Meanwhile, however, daily familiarity with it will probably hinder him from seeing its lovely mysteries as he might. Were a person who had been born and brought up inside a windowless room—say, in a dungeon of the Middle Ages—permitted on a bright day in June to spend a morning out of doors in some luxuriant land, and then at midnight bidden to look upward as long as he would to the starry heights of heaven, no tongue could express his sense of the wonderfulness of the world. Could any agnostic interdict prevent the question from arising in his heart, Whence came it all and what does it mean?

We may know something of what it meant to Jesus. He was the Son of Man. He lived not to dream away life in a devout solitude, but as Seeker and Saviour of the lost. In the awful conflict with sin for which he came into the world he laid down his life, slain by human hands, in the conquering love of atonement, with the prayer on his lips: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "As Thou walkedst," said a saintly mystic, "a man amongst men." He was a friend in their homes, sitting at their tables, going in and out. He gathered great multitudes about him. He gathered a household of disciples very closely about him as their teacher and revered companion. Yet we do not think of Jesus as living an indoor life. Reading the Gospels, we see him oftenest in the open air.

He walked through the fields, sat by the well, sailed on the lake, journeyed on foot here and there through the land, went up into a mountain for prayer and for the transfiguration glory. He spoke in his teaching of natural objects, great and small—the earth, the sky, the sun, the rain, the wind, the rocks, the seeds, the plants, the wheat, the fig-tree, the vineyard, the thistle, the running water, the birds of the air, the lilies of the field. “And every day He was teaching in the temple; and every night he went out and lodged in the mount that is called the mount of Olives:”

“So through the world the footpath way he trod,
Breathing the air of heaven in every breath;
And in the evening sacrifice of death
Beneath the open sky he gave his soul to God.”

What was it that Jesus said concerning the God of nature? “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without *your Father*.” The birds are God’s birds—our Father’s birds. Therefore, as we, in our little measure shall share in the vision of Jesus, the heavenly Father will to us also be the God of nature, one God, the true, the ever-living, the ever-present, whose will is holy law and whose heart is redeeming love.

The very nature of nature is the presence and purpose in it of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. This and nothing less is

“The glory pushing in the blade of grass,
That hidden soul that makes the flowers grow.”

And the response of nature, heard by the sympathetic ear, is a song of praise to that ever-living Creator.

“Among the birds”—wrote Martin Luther at the close of a letter to his friend Melancthon from the lonely Wartburg—“singing sweetly in the branches, and praising God day and night with all their might.”

Call nothing in nature, not even its “creeping things of the earth,” common and unclean. Have we ever cherished so narrow and superficial an idea? Let the biologist teach us a better. To him the weed which the gardener tears up by the roots to throw away is no less interesting, rather more, than the showiest cultivated plant. To him even the slimy swamp or the stagnant pool is by no means common or repellent, but a wonder-realm of order, beauty, law, manifold forms of marvellous life. Let the pure-minded artist show us, above and all about him, the glorious creations of the Supreme Artist from whom his own sense of the beautiful derives—

“The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colours, lights, and shades,
Changes, surprises—and God made it all.
—For what?”

Henceforth may it be truly declared that the whole creation is, in our eyes, “what God has cleansed.” “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.” “All thy works give thanks unto thee, O Lord.”

II

Not content with what the unaided eye can see, men have invented means to supplement its power, and have thus found their way into a world otherwise quite

beyond their knowledge. It is nearer to us, this recently discovered world, than the ground upon which we tread; it is inside every breath of air we inhale, and every drop of blood in our veins; it is close above, beneath, around, and within us all the time. All-encompassing seas of water and air, occupied by innumerable hosts of plants and animals—800,000,000,000 of them able, we are told, to live together within the space of a cubic foot with as much room for their growth and movements as the trees of the forest or the fish of the sea.

Nor is it a separate and distinct world from that which everybody sees. The two are one, they constitute a vital unity. Think of the millions of white blood corpuscles coursing through one's veins, fighting and destroying the multitudinous disease germs that intrude from without. And through this realm of the infinitely little—of yeast-plants, diatoms, bacteria, amebas, and what not—there enter into our own personal life health and sickness, the strength to labour and the weakness of death.

“How great are thy works, O Lord!
Thy thoughts are very deep.”

Or, the observer may look toward heaven and tell the stars, as God bade Abram do—“if thou be able to tell them.” He may note a nebulous appearance somewhere in the sky—say in the constellation of Orion. Supposing him to be an astronomer, he will turn his camera toward such a nebula; for the camera can catch what the most powerfully aided eye without it must fail to discover. After a little while the image of a

star will be imprinted upon the sensitive plate of the camera; then another, another, another, a profusion of enormous worlds, photographed as distinct and perfect stars.

How far off are such innumerable astronomic worlds? Let us remember, were a ray of light to go travelling round the earth, it would make as many as seven such circuits in a second. Very well; the astronomer will tell us that the rays of light which pencilled these pictures which he has to show left their own worlds on their journey to his camera thousands of years ago—"and the worlds sweep on profuse as spray from the hidden ocean of creative power." Any serious attempt to lay hold in imagination upon such dizzy movements and distances, with such numberless worlds at home in them, would be the height of folly. But the barest glimpse of the facts may well bring the astounded thinker to his knees not only with the ancient doxology, "The heavens declare the glory of God," but also with the accompanying prayer to be cleared from "hidden faults" and kept back "from presumptuous sins."

Paul and Barnabas, on their missionary tour, proclaimed to the people of Lystra the good tidings of "the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is." And further they declared that God had "not left himself without witness" even in the idolatrous nations of the world. Wherein, then, had he borne witness of himself from the very beginning to these Lystrans and other pagan peoples? Even as he is doing everywhere this good hour, in the vision and the gifts of nature.

III

Verily God is here ceaselessly self-revealed; for that which is created, be it inconceivably small or inconceivably great, be it near or far, be it one or myriad myriads, will bear witness for its Maker. The gift must needs tell of the giver. And as to the laws and forces of nature, what are they all but the ever-present expressions of the ever-present Eternal wisdom and will? Alas for the mind that cannot see in nature, through and through, the supernatural. The perpetual causality and purpose must be found in rational creative Will. The Psalmist of Israel, the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the philosophic poet of the nineteenth century are here at one—

“For here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can, Existing behind all laws, that made them, and lo, they are.”

So the two apostles at Lystra went on to say: “And yet He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness.” Nature of her own power could no more send down rain from the clouds of heaven and propel the whirling earth in her orbit so as to produce the fruitful seasons, than you and I could do it for ourselves. In fact, such an expression as “nature of her own power” is but an empty phrase. Only a person can be a cause—first of all, the Divine and Infinite Person, then such created beings as man, to whom he has imparted a certain measure of freedom and creative energy. It is

the living God who ministers through nature every drop of rain—"sendeth rain on the just and the unjust"—and every grain of wheat or rice or maize—"giveth it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own"—it is he who ministers it to humankind, filling their hearts with the gladness of food and of life. With the gladness of physical food that becomes a very part of our physical selves—entering into our bodies to feed the vital flame, climbing up to become eyes for seeing and a brain to think with.

This we may call the *utility* of nature. But the same natural world has another aspect, quite distinct from its utility, that calls for a moment's consideration. Let the fruit of a tree stand for the idea of utility; the blossoms may equally illustrate the twin idea of *beauty*. One is unquestionably as outstanding and incontrovertible a fact as the other.

IV

And is it not possible to discern the deeper meaning of both beauty and utility? Science will explain, in an instance here and there, how it may be that things come to be beautiful. Bees and other insects which, for example, have been shown beyond a doubt to have something to do with the propagation of flowers, may at the same time have something to do with their colouring—though "what worlds away" from showing how all the beauty gladdening the earth and glorifying the heavens came to be.

But it is the purpose, not the process or the mechanism, toward which our inquiry is directed. Why, then,

should there be such a thing as beauty? Unlike certain fruits, it is manifestly not a thing to be eaten. "Can you get pretty flowers in your town?" It was asked me by an untaught German girl in a plain and lonely mountain home. "Well, they are very nice," remarked her mother; "but they don't put anything on the table." No, not anything to eat; and if we were made to live by bread alone, beauty might well be slighted as an intruder. Nor can we weave it into wearing apparel or build it into a roof overhead. Moreover, it is a subtle, mystic, indefinable thing. Still, must there not be some satisfactory reason why it has been created—the *why* of the loveliness of the flower as well as of the nutritiveness of the fruit? Science has no answer. Only a theistic explanation is possible. And the unschooled country girl was far enough from blameworthiness in wanting flowers as well as bread to feed upon. "If you have two loaves," says a Chinese proverb, "sell one and buy a lily."

But shall we not give the hungry bread rather than lilies? To be sure; but preferably let us give them both. It is reported by a mission school in a city slum that "the sending of a flower in the name of Christ, more even than the offer of bread, opened to the Christian teacher homes where little children had been born to want and were educated to sin."

At all events, it is certain that man is a being who responds to both fruit and flower, both utility and beauty. Not some peculiarly cultured individual, but man as such is a lover of the beautiful.

The father of English poetry—man of affairs and

action, soldier, courtier, ambassador, diplomat, though he was—tells us how that “when comen is the May” he is up early in the morning, walking in the meadow, and gets down on his knees to see the daisy, “that is of all flowers the flower,” uncloset to the light, “upon the small and soft and sweté gras,” and how that—

“The blissful sight softeneth all my sorrow.”

But one might say that what the daisied meadow was to Chaucer in his island of the West, such are the cherry blossoms of Japan to whole populations in that island of the East. Not an artist or two, but the whole village or countryside may be seen laying business aside, making whatever pecuniary sacrifice may be necessary, and year after year going forth from their homes, in some instances for many miles, to enjoy the simple sight of trees that bear no fruit, but are splendid in clouds of pink-and-white bloom. I have heard a missionary from Japan tell of a journey he was making in which the jinrikisha man, without the knowledge of his passenger, took a most circuitous route, going miles out of his way, in order to see certain blossoming cherry-trees as he trotted toilsomely by. Hard probably beyond anything that we are familiar with was that man's struggle for bread; yet would he also toil for beauty. Poet of the West, coolie of the East, they were of one and the same æsthetic nature—in this, as in other respects, brother men.

Great Britain and the United States did well to interpose for the protection of the waters of the Niagara against any further exploiting for mechanical purposes.

For while the right to use the useful, though claimed by only a few, is to be regarded, the whole world must be protected in its desire and right to see the glory of the Thunder of Water.

But the question recurs as to the Divine purpose of beauty. Is the experience of it an end in itself—a mere matter of refined enjoyment giving no vision of anything higher? There are those no doubt who so regard it. And even the finest sense of the beautiful in nature may coëxist with an unspiritual mind. But if there be the spiritual mind, the sense of the beautiful will have its own true revelation to make of an unseen glory. Adding as it does to the gladness and well-being of life, it is as true a sign as are the rain and the fruitful seasons that God is good. Indeed, is it not a hint and a prelude of something yet to be revealed, of something in the faith and hope of which the heart leaps up in joy, of something lovely and glorious in the nature of him who has given the vision of beauty as so universal an experience of his human children?

It is reported of Bernard of Clairvaux that, when asked, after having travelled all day by the Lake of Geneva, what he thought of the Lake scenery, he replied by asking, "What lake?" It reminds one of the remark concerning John Calvin, that he "could live for years by the Lake of Geneva without noting its exquisite blue, or alluding in all his writings to the white summit lifting itself into the sky beyond." An explanation might have been found, no doubt, in the great monk's relentless asceticism and the great

theologian's exclusive devotion, even from his youth, to the intellectual and moral aspects of religious truth. What sense of the beautiful they were born with suffered through lack of use. Yet we dare believe they would both have been happier men and better theologians, if in the glorious beauty of Alpine lake and mountain they had heard the speech of the same God who spoke from Sinai and Calvary and is ever speaking in the reason and conscience and spiritual yearnings of man. For not only Holy Scripture but "the whole world is full of His glory."

v

Now it could not but be that men, being such as they are, would in all circumstances, even under the disabling conditions of the least developed life, have gained some awareness of a Presence in nature, a Presence of power or beneficence or awfulness or beauty, that the outward eye could not see. It seemed to look forth from the face of things, but was not their very own. Not *of* them, it was in them and somehow looking through them. "In the pauses of work," said a busy and thoughtful man, "when a glance through my window reminds me of nature's silent, steady power, or in the evening when I have a moment to look out into the measureless star-filled spaces, I have the most real sense of God."

Thus in part may the universality of religion be explained. Take as an example the earliest faith, so far as can be ascertained, of our Indo-European ancestors in Middle Asia. Their name for God was the

word Sky (Dyaus). For what vision so impressive had ever greeted their eyes as the overarching heavens—so soft and tender, so terrible, so majestic, so varied in its appearances while remaining ever essentially the same? The black clouds might arise and the storm threaten widespread destruction, but the thunder would cease, the storm-clouds pass, and the sky was still there. The darkness of night might gather, but through the darkness the sky looked forth with its stars in still greater grandeur. The people in their nomadic life might lead their flocks far up on the mountains for the summer and down again in the autumn upon the plains; but they never did leave the sky behind them. They might migrate to new pastures many leagues away; but there in their distant home the same sky shone above them, strong and unapproachable as ever. So they stood beneath the ever-encompassing dome of heaven, radiant, far, and fathomless—"the groves" do not seem to have been "God's first temples"—and under that symbol worshipped the Invisible. Or perhaps they identified him somehow with the sky, making it an idol—we do not certainly know.

But we do know that theirs was a less corrupt form of religious faith than that which prevailed, say, in the Græco-Roman world in the time of Barnabas and Paul. The Lystrans believed in various gods of imperfect and sinful nature like themselves—in Jupiter, father of gods and men, and in Mercury, his swift-footed messenger; and the priest of Jupiter, who served at a temple just outside the city, made preparation to offer sacrifice to Barnabas and Paul, taking them for

Jupiter and Mercury come down to earth in the form of men.

Shall we say, then, that the generations of mankind were untrue to their best knowledge of the Divine? They were thus untrue. God had made them all "of one" and had provided for their personal and political maintenance, "that they should seek after him, if haply they might find him." And so they did; but through the sinfulness of the heart darkness came upon them, and consequently even "knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful." "To the eye that can see, to the heart that is not paralyzed," says Frederick W. Robertson, "God is here. . . . But what men do is this: They put the dull quicksilver of their own selfishness behind the glass, and so it becomes not the transparent medium through which God shines, but the dead opaque which reflects back themselves." So did ancient Greeks, notwithstanding their fine mentality, in their way; and so do present-day Americans, notwithstanding their intelligence, in theirs.

But it is not so with the men of spiritual vision. They have not put their own opaque selfishness back of the glass, and thus received only a reflected and idolatrous image of themselves. Something of the light of God shines through upon them, and they do glorify him as God. They do give thanks for this or that gift—the rain from heaven, the fruitful season—but chiefly for the Infinite Giver himself. Because there has come upon them, through inward renewal by the Holy Spirit, the blessedness of the pure in heart—"they shall see God." And as to their own relation

to the God of the natural world, it is enough for them to have learned that one word of Jesus concerning themselves and the birds of the air, "*Your Heavenly Father feedeth them.*"

It is not as if they believed in a limited, or a localized, or an absentee Deity. Such is not the Christian vision of God. It is not as if he had opened his hand on some creative day in the far-distant past, for that day alone—opened and closed it once for all. Did he say in the beginning, Let there be light? He said it this morning. Did he set forth the order and beauty of the world in the beginning? He is making the outgoings of the morning and the evening to rejoice to-day. Did he once in the history of the earth, perhaps millions of years ago, give life to the lifeless, introducing a new and higher order of existences and of history? He is just as truly the Fountain of life this passing moment. "*Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; they are created.*"

Here, therefore, in all men's outward eyes and ears, is revelation, speech—day and night in their sublime procession down through the ages bearing witness continually. Not in conventional or articulate language. In this sense, "there is no speech nor language," "their voice is not heard." Form and colour and movement, light and sound, these are nature's language; and the interpretation is for the sensitive and reverent thinking mind.

Shall we try to look further or more minutely into this vast vision of the sense-world with which our lives

are so closely intertwined? If so, we shall feel its *mystery* no less than we have learned its utility or seen its beauty. A revelation of the Eternal Reason, undoubtedly; but who will tell its whole varied meaning?

True, we know that such questions are unanswerable; for the questioner had as well ask, Who will explain the universe? Nevertheless, we cannot but look at times with still wondering sight, with still questioning spirit, upon the ever-present outspread mystery of earth and sky in its incessant appeal to the understanding, the imagination, the heart. Passing through the rooms of an old homestead in which successive households have for generation after generation gathered, and abode together, and parted, one is fain to imagine, Were these time-stained walls endowed with speech, what life-stories might they tell. But what vastly greater secrets are hidden in any far-away star or wayside tree or flower in the crannied rock—or in the rock itself. There is so much to which the inner ear would eagerly listen, if any, even an infinitesimal, object in nature could and would tell its story. In certain moods one feels that the silence must somehow be broken; and some day perhaps it will.

Meantime enquiring minds are bent on finding out what they can; and this, too, they may well believe to be in accordance with the will of God. Let them enquire. The Master has spoken in one of his parables of a man who should cast seed on the earth, "and the seed should spring up and grow, *he knoweth not how.*" Let the sower, then, ask the scientist. In vain. The

mystery of life and growth is as inscrutable to the one as to the other, to the man who spends his life in the laboratory as to the man holding the plough. And it is the most knowing and thoughtful that are most tantalized or stricken dumb with wonder by the near Unknown—

“that true world within the world we see,
Whereof our world is but the bounding shore.”

Unto what far heights of thought is this new-old “world we see,” with its myriad fellow visible worlds, winning our minds: through the story of the heavens unto illimitable space, through the story of the rocks unto illimitable time, through the story of unceasing motion unto illimitable energy; and “brooding impenetrable over all, an infinitude of mystery.”

Not, however, that all research is vain. Have we not noted some of the great things which the genius of observation and experiment has discovered? Adding to our unaided powers sundry instruments of discernment, it is still, with skilful and penetrative thought, making discoveries which give intimation, suggestion, of greater wonders beyond this world-shore. Have we ceased, through familiarity, to feel the marvel of telephonic speech? Imagine a speaker with a voice so loud and distinct as to be audible all the way from the city of New York to San Francisco. It would require five hours for his words to traverse the intervening distance. Five hours after speaking in the one place he would be heard in the other. But any one of us could now speak into a telephone in New York and be heard in San Francisco instantly—that is

to say, in about one-sixtieth of a second. Geographic distance is practically annihilated—thought, news, will-power, joy, grief, one person's mental state which may change another's to the most momentous issues, transmitted over three thousand miles in less than the twinkling of an eye. It seems the speech of spirit to spirit, with but the slightest dependence upon material mediums or organs of flesh and blood.

Our patient explorer, penetrating with his search-light into the thick darkness, may be able also to bring some report, tentative at least, about the material elements themselves; while the scientific imagination pictures every atom of matter, even in the granite rock or the bar of Bessemer steel, as swiftly vibrating among its fellow-atoms, never going wrong and never at rest. In fact, strange as it may appear, matter is even spoken of as, in the last analysis, simply force.

The atoms, they tell us, seem to be made up of electrons, thousands of electrons perhaps to a single atom. Accordingly, the atoms manifest themselves as electric force. "But these electrons"—so I asked a friend who had devoted his whole life from boyhood to the study and teaching of chemical science—"must there not be a certain thread or core of substance about which the electricity gathers or flows?" The modest answer was, "We do not know." But there is a truth here disclosed which it would be gratuitously modest not to believe and declare. For all these minute and orderly researches into the hidden facts of nature unite with common observation of the useful and the beautiful to show that the power from which all things in earth

and sky proceed is power directed by mind. Otherwise it would be folly to make it a subject of study, for the very good reason that there would be nothing in it to understand. Only the product of intelligence can be intelligible. It is not a jargon, but a language which the lover of natural knowledge is trying so laboriously and faithfully to read. How could he ever hope to read it, if it were not a language? It is a system of thought. Who did the thinking? Yes, a system of localized thought; and it requires the best thought of the best thinkers to trace out a little portion of it through successive generations. Could any one less than a thinker have put it in?

By what name ineffable, then, shall the Creative Thinker be called? The supreme revelation of his heart and moral will has been given in Jesus his Son: "When ye pray say, Father, Hallowed be thy name."

VII

How rich also is nature in *symbols of the spiritual*. True, Jesus saw a fitting figure of the kingdom of heaven in the outward human world—in domestic and social relations, in trade and industry, in financial transactions, in houses built on the rock and on the sand, in proprietorship and stewardship, in children's games, in grown men's riches and poverty. But he found it also in the world of nature. "From the fig-tree," he says, "learn her parable." The fig-tree, then, is a symbol. She has her parable to tell of truths or events in a higher sphere. So likewise do the other trees. So does the light of day without which they would all

perish. "It is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts"—God's light without a figure and foretold of his light within. So is the whole visible creation a parable. "Our natural is matched ever with the supernatural," so that what we call "nature" is symbolic, typical, of the spiritual sphere.

Follow a mathematical demonstration at the black-board. The demonstrator is dealing with mathematical truths, which are pure intellectual conceptions. Nevertheless, you will see him draw a line, straight or curved, then another and another—perhaps a whole complicated diagram. Now, is that geometric figure, white on a black surface, of the nature of mathematical truths? No more than it is of the nature of hope or love. And yet it is a constructed symbol of a certain group of such truths, and helps us no little to understand them and to communicate them to other minds. So with natural symbols and the truths of the spirit which they are fitted to illustrate.

Nor need any one shut his ears to the words of God in nature in order that he may listen more intently to the greater words of God in the Scriptures and the soul. The truth is one, the witnesses concur. "He who while he walks abroad repeating the law to himself," said a Jewish scribe, "interrupts himself and exclaims, 'How fair is this tree' . . . to him it is accounted by the Scriptures as if he were forfeiting his life." I should greatly prefer the teaching of a psalmist of Israel, when he sings of "the cedars of Lebanon" which Jehovah "has planted," and of the earth as

“full” of his “riches.” I should prefer the answer of the flowers to a poet-scribe of to-day:

“They said, to every flower He made
God’s thought was root and stem—
Perhaps said what the lilies said
When Jesus looked at them.”

We know at least that to Jesus the lilies were a sacrament—a visible sign and pledge of God’s gracious care. And we know also that he opened his mouth in parables and likened the kingdom of heaven to the Creator’s handiwork in earth and sea and sky.

Furthermore, the symbol may have a deeper than its mere symbolic meaning. It may be a sign, an assurance, a proof. A familiar instance would be the grass and flowers of the field. These have in all ages been the chosen symbol of human mortality. “All flesh is grass.” “He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.” But does not the grass contain a more spiritual and significant meaning than that of mortality? It contains the very opposite truth—that, namely, of immortality. Because it is the Divine provision for the flocks and herds of the pasturage; and we know that he who cares for them will “much more” care for us. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle.” Much more, then, will the God of nature, our Heavenly Father, provide for the needs of his children—the need of bread, the higher needs of knowledge, beauty, friendship, and love, and highest of all, incommensurably greater than any other, the need of that communion with himself in which is spiritual and eternal life.

We are not surprised at the story told of Galileo, that when questioned, during his imprisonment for heresy, concerning his faith in a Supreme Being, he remarked, pointing to a simple straw on the prison floor: "From the structure of that little tube alone would I infer with certainty the existence of a wise Creator." The grass of the earth, with stem and blade and bloom, is indeed an exquisite living contrivance. Every eye that looks upon it is pleased, every reverent mind that studies it is stricken with wonder and admiration. But it is not accounted of God too good for his cattle on a thousand hills, since they are so made as to need it and to hunger for its enjoyment. Nor will he account any gift, even the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, too good for a need and a hunger which his own Spirit has created in the hearts of his children.

Such is the voice of reason and conscience. Such is the instinct of the heart. Such is the teaching of Jesus. And even the short-lived grass at our feet, chosen emblem of mortality, offers, alike to ordered thought and spiritual vision, its proper proof of *eternal life*.

VII

VISION OF MAN

And a voice came again unto him the second time, What God has cleansed make not thou common.—ACTS 10: 15.

And when they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.—ACTS 11: 18.

WHILE the materials of Peter's vision were drawn from the world of physical nature, its meaning related it far more closely to the world of human nature. For the manifold animal life which appeared so prominently in it meant, being interpreted, the various races and conditions of men. It was for their sakes and not for the sake of beast or bird or creeping thing that the Voice forbade this Judaic apostle to call that common or unclean which God had pronounced clean.

We have caught a glimpse of the perpetually unfolding greatness of nature. Earth is indeed crammed with life and fruitfulness, with marvels and treasures; and this upper region of light and air in which our earthly days are spent is equally full of things exceeding precious. Beauty and utility, side by side or interwoven, with ever-attendant mystery, are everywhere. More and more are they gaining human recognition. By observation and industry, by that patient common sense which

has been called *science*, or by that fine mystic insight of imagination called *poetry*, men have ever been coming to their own in this kingdom of nature.

And the truth hereby suggested is the supremacy of man. For the knower must be acknowledged greater than the unknowing object of his thought—even though that object should be ten thousand solar systems. So, a larger and still a larger meaning has been found in the inspired doxology—

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands.”

May neither the student nor the lover of nature ever forget that by as much as the works of God in the natural creation are seen to be great and wonderful, by so much must the seeing soul appear greater and more wonderful.

I

Of recent years the vision which any civilized man may have of his fellows has been notably enlarged. Through opening gateways of knowledge, speech, self-interest, and brotherhood, strange peoples have been passing to and fro and becoming acquaintances. By reason of ever-multiplying travels, literature, commercial relations, through not waiting for the swiftest mail but writing and speaking at a distance, through the world-wide diffusion of ideas on all subjects of human interest, through a growing spirit of humanity—in all such ways the world of man has been disclosed in an unprecedented manner to the individual imagination. Well may it be said that “no other century has ever

heard the heart-beat of humanity so distinctly as ours hears it.”

And as much as ever, much more than ever, this human world is seen to be a unity. The imaginative child making his first visit to a distant part of the country is likely to meet with disappointment at finding things not so new and strange as he had been led to expect. In his dreamful little brain he had pictured all things—trees, streams, houses, skies, people—as looking decidedly different from what he had been accustomed to; but now he finds the new to be very much the same as the old. A somewhat similar disillusionment awaits the inexperienced mind in making acquaintance with people of other lands. Our antipodal neighbours—I have occasion to talk with some of them from day to day—on acquaintance remind us very much of ourselves. The story of the “inscrutable East” may be told, as it has been said of some others, in very few words: There is none. What a commentary has been written by our modern world on that word of Paul in ancient Athens, that God “made of one every nation of men.” To be sure, everybody is inscrutable, if by such a term we mean not perfectly knowable either to his neighbour or to himself—but no one people, East or West, any more than another. “Of one” humanness God has made them all.

But how does a man come by the knowledge of his fellows? We cannot see one another. True, the man who would deny the existence of other persons besides himself might well be regarded as superlatively frivolous, or, if serious in his egoism, as insane. But it would

not be because he had ever, except of course in a figurative sense, seen any of them. The face that we are so glad to look upon is not our friend. Alas if it were. It is only a bit of featured and coloured surface—a symbol, to be sure wondrously expressive, but nothing more. Take out of it that which thinks and loves and wills, and there is nothing left to speak to or hold communion with. Yet that soul, that thinking, loving, willing self, is as invisible as a passing angel.

“ I have not seen thee, though mine eyes
Hold now the image of thy face;
In vain, through form, I strive to trace
The soul I love: that deeper lies.”

Neither can we reach forth a hand and touch it. It is absolutely secure from either caress or blow.

All along through life we find that, in our eating and drinking, our breathing, our sitting still or moving about, our seeing and hearing, we have a place in a visible order of nature, and are subject to its laws. All along through life we find it equally true that in reason and conscience and will and personality and spiritual vision, we have a place in an invisible moral order, and that our truest life is realized only in obedience to its laws of righteousness and love.

Listen for a moment even to a pagan philosopher—Epictetus: “ Betray secrets? ” “ Indeed, I will not, for that rests in my own hands.” “ Then I will put you in chains.” “ My good sir, what are you talking about? Put *me* in chains? No, no; you may put my leg in chains, but not even Zeus himself can master my will.”

Or, if you please, hear Justin Martyr, an ardent student of philosophy who became a Christian, in his Apology to Antoninus Pius, the Roman emperor: "For us [Christians], we reckon that no evil can be done us, unless we be convicted as evildoers or be proved to be wicked men; and you, you can kill but you cannot hurt us." So, the headsman's axe, under whose stroke Justin in old age yielded up his body for Christ's sake, did not "hurt" *him* at all. Wherefore it is no idle boast for one to say, Nobody can injure me except myself.

But this soul, this self, invulnerable, invisible, and far more real than its bodily form, can communicate with other souls at will, showing that it is and that it is a person. It can declare itself by certain signs which it puts forth. These we see or touch or hear, and through the interpretation of them we know that our friend is standing before us—that other persons coexist with us. It is mediate knowledge.

But we do have immediate knowledge of ourselves. Here are no such signs to be interpreted. It is a matter of self-consciousness, simple, direct, indefinable. Hence, proverbially difficult as it is to heed the ancient maxim, "Know thyself," a person may be expected to know himself better than he knows other persons. Not that he can be any surer practically *that* he is than that they are, but it is his own fault if he does not know more truly *what* he is than what they are. "No man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him." In fact, it is only through knowledge of our own powers and experiences that we can

interpret the signs of like powers and experiences in other persons.

II

What, then, is man? how shall we regard one another? The question is suited to evoke a multitude of answers. All of them, too, may be true enough from the standpoint of the answerers, yet most of them sadly superficial and incomplete.

In general, it may be said that the self-seeker, so far as he interests himself in people at all, sees them as the prey of his own unhallowed desires, while the lover of his race recognizes them as companions, friends, brothers.

More specifically, the spirit or motive, whatever it may be, with which a man regards his fellow-men necessarily affects the vision of them which he gains and the course of action toward them which he pursues. The scheming politician, for example, sees men as voters; the crafty salesman, as buyers; the military leader, as a fighting machine. And they deal with them, in each case, accordingly. Or, again, in a compassionate mood one sees only the sufferings of humanity; when optimistic, only their joys; in a moment of keen appreciation of the shortness of human life, only their mortality—as Xerxes, according to the ancient story, looking upon his vast invading army, was suddenly moved to tears at the thought: “A hundred years, and not one of all this mighty host will be alive.”

Or, if for individuals we substitute great bodies of

people, and ask how the nations of the world regard one another, the answer will be contained in such like and unlike words as War, Subjugation, Commercialism, Diplomacy, Humanity, Arbitration, Peace.

But there is a deeper insight. It is the recognition of that in a man's nature which makes him a free and accountable intelligence toward God, and not simply a fellow-creature but a brother toward the whole world of mankind. Without a recognition of this moral life, man as man is not really known. An eagle can walk; but to think habitually of him as simply a walking animal would be to pay this king of birds a very inadequate honour. Take no note of those broader relations which he sustains to earth and sky through his matchless powers of vision and of flight, and you rob him of his high preëminence. It is his eyes and his wings, not his feet, that make him an eagle. And what is it that makes man man? It is his power of spiritual vision, deep and far, and of correspondent daily action. It is his capacity to know God and to serve his fellows in God's name.

And such vision is to be gained, first of all, through self-knowledge. For the unity of the human race is a unity in spiritual and not simply in physical or intellectual or emotional quality. To know one, therefore, is to know all; and that one with whom such knowledge must needs begin is, in every case, not the neighbour, nor the other man whoever he may be, but one's self. *What am I?*

III

We come to the truest knowledge of ourselves through the knowledge of Another—through self-judgment in the light of Christ.

When Simeon, the aged seer, worshipping in the temple, saw, in the person of the child Jesus, the Christ whose coming had been so long awaited by the faithful, he said: "Behold, this child is set for the falling and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign which is spoken against . . . that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." Jesus, therefore, was to be a revealer of men, first to themselves—then, indeed, to others. In the light of the truth shining forth from his life of stainless and unflinching love, they should fall down at the realization of their sinfulness and should rise again in the peace of forgiveness and immortal hope.

There is no better example than this of Peter the fisherman in process of training as a seer of Christianity. How he fell beneath a sense of sin and shame! "I am a sinful man, O Lord." "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord. . . . And he went out and wept bitterly." But how he rose up again in the strength of that love which healed his backsliding! "Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep." "And do thou, when once thou hast turned again, stablish thy brethren."

In the presence of Jesus the listening heart will make full confession of itself. Jesus will break it up, that he may form it anew.

“O Life of Jesus—the unseen
Which found such glorious show—
Deeper than death and more serene!
How poor am I! how low!”

Now, while the sunlight does a great deal more for the earth than to illumine it so that things may be seen as they are, yet this simple bidding away of the darkness means very much. In like manner, while Jesus, the Light of the world, would fain do a great deal more for a man than to show him the facts of his spiritual self, yet this revelation is of inestimable value.

Indeed, was not the Eternal Word, even before the incarnation in Jesus, the true light of men—“the light that lighteth every man”? “He is the Word”—so Justin, philosopher and Christian martyr, did not hesitate to say—“of whom every race of men were partakers; and those who lived reasonably (*μετὰ λόγου*) are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists.”*

IV

Now, let us suppose that a man either of the Orient or of the Occident, anywhere on earth, with this light of God shining into his darkness, should bid it welcome. Not wilfully blinding his own eyes, let him, on the contrary, will to believe and do the truth. What would be such a man’s inward vision? What would he learn about himself and the moral order in which

* I Apology, xlvii.

he is living his life? The answer is not a matter of conjecture, but of experience abundantly testified to.

For one thing, he would perceive a distinction between right and wrong, the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of duty. He would know, as it has been expressed, "There is something in me that demands something of me." He would feel the authority of that law which, as Cicero has told us, was not thought out by human ingenuity or created by "a mere decree of the people," but is "a certain eternal principle enjoining or forbidding all things in wisdom." * Thus would he be included in the outlook of the Apostle to the Gentiles, who says: "By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to *every man's conscience* in the sight of God."

At the same time such a man would be sensible of having done wrong instead of right—of having been cruel or unjust or disobedient or profane—and would feel a consequent sense of guilt and moral disapproval; and there would be an inner conflict—when he would do good, evil being present with him.

He would also be conscious that he was not sufficient unto himself, and would stretch forth hands of prayer, seeking help where he hoped it might be found—like the African chief, Sekomi, praying Livingstone, "I wish you would change my heart, give me medicine to change it, for it is proud and angry always"—seeking God, if haply he "might feel after him, and find" the ever-near, though unseen, Helper.

And together with it all, he would become aware of a

* De Legibus ii, 4.

certain possible moral goodness and spiritual satisfaction, an ideal of character and conduct.

Of such a soul, then, these would be, as more or less distinctly felt, the most momentous facts in personal experience. And now it is to such a one, thus proved capable of spiritual illumination, that the Eternal Word, once made flesh and dwelling among men, is offered in the gospel.

Does any one ask as to the need that the Word should have come in the flesh, and should come again and abide through the gospel and the power of the Spirit? It would be to ask why, since God had already done a great work for the world, he should do another and a greater—why the dawn should be followed by the morning. It would be to ask why Cornelius and his household, who already feared God and did righteousness, could not have got on well enough without the gospel of the Heavenly Father and the Elder Brother. "I have not written unto you," says the Apostle John, "because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it." They had made a good beginning; he would lead them on, because they were ready for it, in the truth of the Infinite Love.

It was the Master's way. It is the way of God in all perfecting of the soul. Childhood, for illustration, is a beautiful thing in itself, with a grace and winsomeness all its own; but no one enquires doubtfully why it should be followed in due season by youth, early manhood or womanhood, and maturity. Spiritually, likewise, the ultimate aim is not childhood. It is the making of a man.

Furthermore, for the realization of this aim the presence and friendship of men who themselves have the life of the Spirit is demanded. It is not good that one should be left wholly to one's own endeavours after a holy life. On the contrary, it would be disastrous. We need to see the true and good personalized in our fellow-men. Not a little are we all dependent upon prophetic spirits whose enlightenment is greater than ours to clarify our own spiritual vision. Do we need others to enlighten us intellectually, notwithstanding the fact that we as well as they are rational beings? Then, why not also spiritually?

But, on the other hand, it must be remembered that they too, even the saintliest of them, are not sinless. At best these good Christian men and women are broken lights of the Divine righteousness; and what we need is the Sun. We need to see the morally right and the spiritually true in one who is himself morally right and spiritually true without defect or stain. Such a one would be the absolutely trustworthy Guide of the conscience and Master of the spirit. To know him would be to know both what we actually are and what we ought to be. To enter into fellowship with him would be to become indeed sons of the light. In this fellowship a soul might grow unto perfected spiritual manhood.

v

Yet more, yea, most of all, it is in this Righteous One that God himself enters with mightiest power into the human heart, responding to its cry, fulfilling its

desire for a grace that brings salvation, and making atonement in suffering love for the sin of the world. "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God." "Giving thanks unto the Father . . . who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." To this supreme end came he into the world, and to this end is he abiding in it evermore. Is there a single soul of the millions on earth that needs such Light and Salvation? If one, then all.

I have an intelligent young Christian friend from Korea who was brought up a Buddhist. A few days ago he told me something of what his spiritual experience was before he had heard anything of Christianity. He had some perception of right and wrong, some sense of sin, failure, and insufficiency. He had an unrealized ideal of personal character and conduct, and would think of it as embodied in the great teacher, Confucius. He had a longing for Divine power in his efforts after a better life, which prompted him sometimes to continue in attendance for several days at a Buddhist temple, and it seemed to him not wholly in vain. Such, as nearly as I can reproduce it in few words, was his story. "When you heard the gospel," I asked, "did it seem like something which you had nothing to do with, something foreign to your need and experiences, to which therefore you could make no response?" His prompt and eager reply was, "No, no"—it approved itself as the fulfilment of those needs

and experiences. That was his word, "the fulfilment." From Buddha and Confucius to Jesus Christ—here was indeed both redemption and fulfilment. Christianity to him was an answer to spiritual longing, a homeland of the spirit.

So was it long ago in Israel with those who were of the truth. When the Christ, the faithful and true Witness, came among them setting forth the kingdom of God, they heard his voice and found the fulfilment of their law in him. In like manner, Clement of Alexandria and other Greek fathers spoke of philosophy as a preparation for the gospel—"being, as it is, a stepping-stone to the philosophy which is according to Christ." * So is it to-day in every nation, when unto those who will to fear God and work righteousness is set forth that same kingdom of God and his righteousness. "What therefore ye worship in ignorance," said the Apostle of the Gentiles, "this I set forth unto you." And the result, even in Athens? "Certain men clave unto him and believed; among whom also was Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them."

Here, therefore, is to be found the way toward the deepest spiritual knowledge of one's self—and thus of man. It is through sharing in the mind of Jesus. No other man ever saw the evil and the condemning power of sin as He who did no sin. It stood revealed in his presence, "for he knew what was in man." No other soul ever felt the pain and sting of it as did the sinless soul of the Redeemer. He forewarned them that

* Strom. VI, 8.

heard him that it cannot be forgiven except on condition of a forgiving spirit toward an offending fellow-man; and that, although it be held as dear as a right eye or a right hand, it must be utterly cast out on pain of perdition. So he appears among men, the Searcher and the Revealer of the heart. "For from within, out of the heart of men [out of *the man himself*] evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness; all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man"—what a vision to him who was of too pure eyes to bear the sight of sin, and yet must bear it in holy sacrificial love.

Jesus read the record of the heart. More than that, he saw the potential in the actual. He discerned the man that might be, that was divinely intended to be, in the man that was. He saw the man within the man whom the demons of falsehood, lust, and cruelty were striving to make their own.

VI

Such was the vision of the Lord of love, which it is his good pleasure to share with all them who, however their minds have hitherto been darkened, are now willing to see.

It is shared and shown, as a matter of fact, by many a wise and loving soul in the present-day world. It was shown by David Livingstone in the heart of Africa. Gladly did the great explorer lay down his life for the Christianization of the primitive black folk in whom

he saw the possibility of becoming God's own children walking obediently in the light of Christ. It is shown by men and women of like missionary spirit in our own American communities. In them the mind of the Master is still among us, discerning the filial possibilities of the soul toward the God of its life.

An evening or two ago I chanced to learn that Mrs. Maud Ballington Booth had come to town in the interest of her lifework as the "little mother" of prisoners. In an address in one of the churches of the city, she told that for fifteen years she had ministered within prison walls, and went on to say:

"A wonderful revelation has come to me in my work. When I went into it I believed two great truths—first in the redeemability of human nature—that there is some chord in every heart that will respond to the music of heaven. . . . And then, friends, I believed in power divine—the power that could go to the very abyss of hell and draw men up to the very threshold of heaven, a power that could change the darkness of the night into the glory of the day. And these things I have come to know more firmly during the fifteen years I have laboured within the walls. . . .

"To me the audiences I address Sunday after Sunday are not just crowds of convicts, murderers, thieves, burglars, but they are just a crowd of human hearts. . . . I believe it is our right in the name of Christ to shut the door to the past. We should not ask what this man has been, what he has done, but rather what can he be and what can he do."

The Salvationist's word, though received sympathetically, attracted no wide attention in the city. Why should it have done so? It dealt with nothing strange or unheard-of. It was only the story of a miracle—a miracle of grace. It was only a noble-minded woman telling of what possibilities of sinful souls she had come to see, with increasing conviction, as a pupil and follower of Jesus Christ.

VII

The question, then, may bear repetition, What is man? The materialist would say, as a recent philosophic writer has phrased it: "He is merely the highest of animals, having essentially the same history and destiny as they—birth, hunger, labour, weariness, death . . . simply an incident in the condensation of dispersed matter, or the cooling of a fiery gas."

The Buddhist would say: A migrating soul, now in a human and now in an animal body, the victim of desires to be extirpated rather than gratified or controlled, his individual existence an evil, no God in heaven or earth to help him in his struggle for self-sanctification, the final goal of his endeavour the sinking of personal being in Nirvana—the uneasy self annihilated as a candle-flame snuffed out.

A new type of teachers and leaders has recently arisen who would say: Man is a fighting animal. He is to gain his ends by skilful and unrelenting force. His prototype is the beast of prey. Selfishness is his supreme motive. Sympathy is weakness, humility abjectness. To practise self-sacrifice is to renounce one's life—loss only. "Self-assertion at all costs." "Let the weak find their place—at the bottom." And it is this human animal's wisdom to hunt in packs like the wolf. War is normal and necessary. Peace means decadence. The clan or the nation is to move out, whenever its interests seem to demand it, upon other peoples, and bring them into subjection—to crush them utterly, if

they continue to resist. For them to plead their rights would be for the fawn to plead its rights under the paw of the tiger. They have no rights before the stronger power. "Right is respected so far only as it is compatible with advantage! Might is right." Man, either as an individual or as a community, is the highest form of the fighting animal.

The agnostic's answer would be conspicuously brief: A conflux of appearances of whose origin, destiny, or inner nature I have no knowledge.

The Christian, on the contrary, confessing his faith, declares that man is a child of the Eternal Reason, Love, and Will, a son of God. In his nature there is a capacity for the assimilation of spiritual truth. Touched, quickened, called by the Spirit of God, he may answer, if he will, "Here am I." His lifeword is not quiescence, nor is it self-assertion, but *fulfilment*. Sin, it is awfully true, paralyzes his spiritual powers. But it is not for us to say concerning any brother man, "He is irretrievably lost to all that is good." Rather let us endeavour to touch "the chord in every heart," free or behind prison bars, "that will respond to the music of heaven." And the redeemed man may ever go on unto purity, personality, and power.

Ancient Jerusalem was an unholy city. "Ah, sinful nation," said her great resident prophet in the vision which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, "a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that deal corruptly, they have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel." But Isaiah had also seen a vision of the Thrice Holy as the sender

of willing messengers to the sin-laden people, and had answered, "Send me." A messenger of judgment? Verily, of judgment to those who persistently refused to obey: "I will not hear; your hands are full of blood; wash you, make you clean." But a messenger of forgiveness and cleansing to those who would forsake their evil ways: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

In the same city, some hundreds of years after Isaiah had finished his work and entered into rest, the Church of Israel's teachers and leaders, with a shouting mob of their followers, crucified the Prophet of prophets, its own divinely sent Christ. Yet it was this very city that, according to the instructions of this same Prophet and Christ, should first hear the message that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations." "*Beginning from Jerusalem.*"

Thus, then, in its two most signal instances—that of Isaiah and that of the Apostles—under the Old Covenant and the New, appears the home missionary work of the Church of God.

But the rest of the evangelistic field, in the bidding of the Risen Christ, was "unto the uttermost part of the earth." Truly the largest possible field. But let the Christian, if he dare, imagine it smaller. Where shall any line of delimitation be drawn?

Might such a line exclude, for example, the white race, or at least the English-speaking people? If not, why any other people?

VIII

Civilization is ever tending toward universalism. Even without a distinct purpose or a common programme, the stronger peoples are steadily communicating their ideas and institutions to all others. And herein are they unconsciously working together with God. In all diffusion of knowledge and truth, in every beneficent movement (whether it be *benevolent* or not), they are contributing, wittingly or unwittingly, to an unceasing Divine purpose. Indeed, shall not each people come, from the East, from the West, with its own contribution thereto? The foretold end is the universal coöperation and enrichment of the race—the commonwealth of the world. For which consummation it is both Scriptural and scientific to hope.

There is, for example, the promise and foretelling of industrial oneness. Discoveries, inventions, business enterprises, multiplied improvements in the production of all that the three prime necessities of food, clothing, and shelter represent, are occupying the world; and the best shall have dominion. So with civil government. Because as moral personality develops, despotism and lawlessness become intolerable; and here, too, the best ideas and forms of government shall have dominion. So notably with knowledge. Whoso would bind it with chains, or restrict it to private or professional or provincial boundaries, is spending his labour for nought. As well might he bid the sunlight beware how it persists in completing its circuit of the

earth. The knowledge of one people shall be the knowledge of all peoples; the truth shall prevail, the best shall have dominion. Must there be a colossal exception, then, in that which looks toward the best of all in the life of man—toward religious faith and practice? Shall industry and government and knowledge, with unmistakable step, be making for the oneness of the race, and religion, the one greatest thing in life, have no prevision of such a goal? Have the kingdoms of industry, of government, of knowledge inherited a law of progress toward universal prevalence, while the kingdom of righteousness knows no such promise of a triumphant future? On the contrary, this kingdom of God is also ever coming; and His will shall be done.

It is one of the dicta of present-day science that "everywhere nature is throbbing with suppressed magnificence." If so splendid a figure be simple truth with respect to the material creation, in what terms may we speak of the interpreting and purposeful soul? Who shall foretell its growth and greatness or show the glory of its Divine redemption? "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God."

Man as Intelligence, lower orders of life and of the unliving yielding themselves more and more to his service, has gained possession of the earth. Man as Moral Will is doing the same. It is, therefore, no strange or abnormal word, unillumined by the light of God in human history, that the Master has put upon his disciples' lips, in bidding them pray, "Thy kingdom come."

Moreover, it is a prophetic word of which the Lord Christ himself is the great assurance—the same as the prophets which were before him spoke, according to the wisdom given in vision unto them. On the point of his departure “to receive for himself a kingdom and to return,” when the Eleven asked him about it, did he not declare to them that they in the power of the Spirit should be his witnessing messengers unto all the world? It was in accordance with that ancient word of Jehovah: “I will give thee . . . the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

Will give them to whom? To Jehovah’s Son and Representative. To the Sovereign of the soul. To him who came to fulfil the law and the prophets of the ancient Church of God. To him who is the fulfiller of the prophetic voices in the deeps of the human heart—even of that word which is “not in heaven,” nor “beyond the sea,” but “very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart that thou mayest do it.” To him of whom it is written: “He will not fail nor be discouraged till he have set justice in the earth.”

Turn we, then, to the vision of Jesus.

VIII

VISION OF JESUS

And I heard also a Voice saying unto me . . .—Acrs 11: 7.

Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not to all the people but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.—Acrs 10: 38-41.

IN the truest sense, that which appeared to Simon Peter in the ecstasy that came upon him was a vision of Jesus. It was an expression of Jesus' mind. It was vocal with his truth and purpose. The voice which forbade the making of that common which God has cleansed was the voice of him who had declared in the days of his flesh that the food which a man eats cannot defile him—"making all meats clean." *

And the incomparable vision of spiritual truth, even of the very God of truth, was given in the life of Jesus. It is that in which all others find their fulfillment and interpretation. The Apostle of the Gentiles called it by an appropriate name, as he told of that memorable noonday when the arresting light of it flashed upon him from on high: "Wherefore, O King

* Mark 7: 18, 19.

Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto *the heavenly vision*”—unto the voice which spoke out of the glory of that light and said: “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.” But with still larger measure of meaning may we call the life of Jesus, as lived visibly and most humanly among men, the heavenly vision for the Christian ages. Jesus in his own Person is the supreme Divine revelation. “Neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.”

Not a private or special revealing—an apocalypse like that to the conscientious yet “exceeding mad” young Pharisee outside the gates of Damascus or that to the Christian seer on Patmos—Jesus’ revealing of the Father is a purely spiritual gift, the same for all. It is suited to enter into the Sunday-school lesson of the four-year-old child, and it has infinite significance for the maturest spiritual mind.

I

Now, such was the vision which Simon Peter and his fellow-disciples saw with their bodily eyes. And as an eye-witness he told of it, as well as of the trance scene in Joppa, to Cornelius—this vision of “Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

It was a sight, as the Master himself reminded his disciples, such as the highest men in Israel, prophets, kings, righteous men, had indeed desired, but never

seen. Blessed above all men who had gone before were these twelve men who abode with Jesus. Not, however, let us remember, because of the outward vision in itself, but because of what it meant, being interpreted.

All the while, even unto the end, Jesus of Nazareth was to most of those who saw him the unrecognized Christ. "The gravest charge," it has been said, "which can be laid at the door of the learned Pharisees of that day is that the most significant events in the history of the world were taking place before their eyes and they did not see it." In Jesus' Galilean ministry "even his own brethren did not believe on him." They were probably chief among the "friends" who came at one time to protect him against what they regarded as hurtful zeal in teaching and healing. Apparently they would have had him come home and abide there again at work with the carpenter's hammer and saw. So they came to lay hold upon him and bring him back to himself; "for they said, He is beside himself." * On Calvary the soldiers who had nailed him to the cross could sit down and cast lots for the seamless tunic he had worn. "In the midst of you standeth One whom ye know not."

The Twelve, even the most receptive and enlightened spirits of them all, had but little vision of Jesus till the Spirit of truth interpreted to them his daily words and deeds, his person, his cross and resurrection. What is said of one particular occasion in his life might doubtless be said of many others—namely, that "these things understood not his disciples at the first," but afterward,

* Mark 3: 21, 22.

“when Jesus was glorified,” then they had better knowledge of them.

At one period of their lives, certainly, they supposed themselves to be believing on him with a truer knowledge and faith than they really had. When, for example, he asked the two sons of Zebedee, “Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink? or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” they answered, apparently without the least hesitation, “We are able.” Alas for their knowledge at that time of the “cup” and the “baptism” that were awaiting the Redeemer of the world. On their last evening with him, indeed, the disciples seemed to feel that now at the end of the days they did understand him and believe in him very truly: “Lo, now,” they said, “speakest thou plainly. . . . Now we know that thou knowest all things. . . . By this we believe that thou camest forth from God.” But Jesus answering said to them: “Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is come that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.” What could have been their knowledge of Jesus, when in time of peril they were ready to turn their backs upon him?

We remember the smallness of Peter’s Christian knowledge as so painfully shown soon after the Great Confession. “Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee.” What should never be unto their Lord? The cross, the culminating act of redemptive grace, the sacrifice of atonement. Peter knew not then the mystery of suffering sacrificial love.

But he rightly saw it ere long. Because, loyal at

heart and a learner, he kept, though not without occasional stumbling, the path of discipleship, which is the way of preparation for more perfect knowledge and larger service. Accordingly we shall hear him proclaiming to his fellow-Hebrews in Jerusalem the saviourhood of the crucified Jesus; and here in the house of Cornelius he declares: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." Still later he will write it down in his First Epistle General: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness." For Peter to know Christ now was to know the power of that resurrection and the fellowship of those sufferings in which he had once so impetuously refused to believe.

In the light of so transforming a vision, it must have seemed a strange and unreal day when he could have taken his Lord aside and rebuked him with the protestation, "This shall not be unto thee." Spiritually that was already a far-off time.

II

These disciples and friends of Jesus, then, whom he had called to be continually with him, had heard and seen what it behoved all the world to know; and it was through them that the world was to learn these same great facts. Such was the mind of the Master; and hence the name *witnesses* by which he called them. "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth." Accordingly we find Peter declaring in

the house of Cornelius, "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem"—as indeed he had already declared to Jewish people of all lands on the day of Pentecost: "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." And on into old age the last surviving disciple is writing: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life . . . and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us."

So they kept telling and interpreting their vision of Jesus. Moreover, many received their testimony and passed it on to others; and by such means the life-bearing evangel made its way among the people of that generation and the generation following.

Now this word of Jesus' witnesses has found written form and is read far and wide in the world to-day. What language or dialect is without it? The Gospels are ours, and in them we too may see Jesus—following and learning, step by step, if we will, in the very light of life. The experience of the first-called disciples which set them apart in blessedness from even prophets who desired in vain to see the day of the Christ did not set them apart in the same way from us who should come after them. For through them the heavenly vision has been mediated across the intervening centuries even to our own time.

Suppose it had been given us to see for ourselves

the eye-witnesses—Peter, John, Thomas, Matthew, and the rest—and listen to the personal testimony from their lips. Had some of us fallen in, for example, with the little company of brethren from Joppa who went with Peter on his two days' journey to Cæsarea, we might have heard many things about the Master that would have filled our hearts with wonder and gladness. Or, had we talked, as Polycarp, the pastor of the church in Smyrna, did, with John, the venerable and beloved, we should doubtless have had many an eager question to ask. Or even had we known Papias, that "ancient man" who made it a point, whenever he met with any one who had been a follower of the first disciples of the Lord, "to enquire what were the declarations of the elders," we should have received with a glad and grateful heart whatever he might have to relate. But have not Peter and John and the rest told us enough, and is not the word of their testimony in all our churches and homes?

There are those, it is true, who find occasion of stumbling in these Gospels. Jesus himself was to many in his own day a stone of stumbling. They could not accept his appearance and manner of life as befitting one for whom was made the unexampled claim of sinless sonship to God. They were unable to see the Divine in the natural and familiar. They could not harmonize the simple greatness of Jesus of Nazareth with their poor grandiose ideas of what Messiah should be. They were looking upward, perhaps, for some blazing portent out of the heavens. As if to be dazzled were to be instructed!

There was no halo about the Master's head such as painters have been pleased to depict. One with men in the common things of life, by no preternatural sign was he distinguished from them. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking." When they coarsely derided him, no flash of Heaven's indignation struck them blind or dumb. Could this be the Christ, the Son of the Eternal? They would not believe it. "Whom makest thou thyself?" angrily they asked, and took up stones to stone him withal. They would put to death the Divine Man moving so humanly among them.

Moreover, the word of such a teacher made great demands upon life. It searched even unto the secret springs of action. When he spoke, it was men's consciences that woke to condemn them and their innermost spirits that heard the call to a life of self-denying love. "And upon this many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him." Over the very Stone which God had elected for them to build their lives upon they are stumbling and falling.

Somewhat in like manner, then, may men fail to see the true glory of Jesus in the written Gospels. They would fain ask that the story of his life should be set apart in its mode of composition and its literary form from all other writings. The Spirit of inspiration, they think, should secure an ideal historic and constructive perfection.

But we do not find it so. Not until twenty-five years or more after the death of Jesus do these writings appear. They embody the evangelic tradition, oral and apostolic. They are memoirs rather than biographies—

“memoirs of Christ and his Apostles,” Justin Martyr calls them. The order of events is not in every case the same in them all. Their reports of the words and acts of Jesus are more or less variant. They reach our hands to-day through transcriptions and translations. But all this only means that it is by the way of the human that the Gospels convey the divine. The form in which they come before us, with its unmistakable marks of simplicity and sincerity, is the work of men’s minds and hands, yet by the Spirit, under the providence, and in the purpose of God; while the recorded facts stand alone in their significance on the page of human history.

III

Does any Christian fear lest the progress of historical criticism may rob the Church of her Christ? Let him give such fears to the wind. They are vain for sundry reasons, and even were there no other, for the reason that there is no way of accounting for the personality of Jesus except on the ground of its historicity. “In the end of the day,” says Dr. Johnston-Ross, “the unity of the Central Figure in these stories will point to the unity of the One Mind that inspired them, and the conception of the Universal Divine Man which they enshrine will bear to candid eyes the seal of its own Divine origin.” Who could have imagined Him? Not the Evangelists, not the Apostles, none of his contemporaries, no mythographer, no painter or poet or thinker of humankind. To depict the transcendent character of Jesus, as it comes out in clear,

artless, self-consistent portraiture from the four writers of the New Testament Gospels, is far beyond the power of either the single or the collective imagination. Such a character, such a person, must be historic, and if historic, Divine.

IV

This, then, is a most fitting answer of the Christian Church to any seeker of Him whose name she bears—or, what means the same thing, to any seeker of spiritual truth. Let her put into his hands the Scriptures of the New Testament—the fourfold Memoir of Jesus and its apostolic interpretation. There was a time when the entire property of a Christian congregation consisted of little or nothing more than the four Gospels. A priceless treasure then, they have never been less precious—thanks be to God for their custodians and transmitters—than in those early years of Christianity; and everybody may have them now as a personal possession.

What James said to the council in Jerusalem concerning the Mosaic law may be much more fully said of the Gospels. From generations of old in every city, James reminded his brethren, the law had been “read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” The Gospels also have been read, Sabbath by Sabbath, from generations of old in our Christian “synagogues.” But they are in our homes as well, in our hands every day, if we will have it so; and that which they offer is the vision of God in Jesus—the Heavenly Father speaking to us in Him who was “the very image of his substance.” Did

not Jesus himself declare to the people, "He that beholdeth me beholdeth Him that sent me"? Did he not say to the disciples, on the evening before his death, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also"?

So that Peter might well write to the Christian believers of the Dispersion concerning Christ as manifested at the end of the times for their sakes: "Who through him are believers in God." *Through Christ to God*—such is the way of that knowledge in which is eternal life.

This knowledge, then, may come from the written word of the gospel, if so be that the word is truly read. But it has been the plaint of many a sincere seeker of truth, with whom, while the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak,

"I read the Bible with my eyes
But hardly with my brain;
Should this the meaning recognize,
My heart yet reads in vain."

Surely if it is ever due that we should read not with eyes only, nor with brain only, but with an uplifted heart and a consecrated will, we owe it to Holy Scripture—the Gospels and all the rest—to read it thus. Let us give heed to Jesus' own question, "How readest thou?" Is it in this spirit? Then indeed may we hope to see Jesus in spiritual vision that will make his Father and our Father, his God and our God, the most vital and formative experience of our lives.

Thus also may we have some word of interpretation for listening souls in the congregation.

v

“Who through Him are believers in God.” What are some of the truths to be seen in this revelation of the Divine in Jesus?

It may be seen *how God regards our everyday life*. Does he know it in every situation, circumstance, and event, and really care for it all? It is made up of such a multitude of little things. Much of it seems perhaps to be commonplace and poor. Here in this flesh and blood, this organized dust, in the daily humdrum of one obscure human existence out of a thousand million others,

“I wonder if He really shares
In all my little human cares,
This mighty King of kings;
If He who guides each blazing star
Through realms of boundless space afar,
Without confusion, noise, or jar,
Stoops to these petty things.”

Jesus makes answer in his word concerning the lilies in the unfenced fields of Palestine. To be sure, their garments of blue and purple light are woven for them—or rather for us—by means of the sun which rises at its appointed time, day after day, to shine upon them. But these numberless little garments of glory are really from the Source of the sun—“*He maketh his sun to rise.*” It is God’s sun; he makes it rise and shine. And there is not the simplest wild flower climbing up for a few days of exquisite life in the sunlight but is a handiwork of God and his gift to whosoever is able to receive it.

Thus does the Master, in accord with the prophetic witness of the Old Testament that there is One who is acquainted with all our ways and hears every word upon our tongues, and in accord with the theistic insight that the Almighty Creator of the universe is equally the God of the atoms and of the worlds—thus does the Master of life bid us open our eyes upon the perpetual world-wide picture of God's care for each and all of his human children. "Consider the lilies. . . . But if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

It was not only in his teaching, however, that our Lord gave expression to God's caretaking. It was also and chiefly in his own personal life. That is to say, Jesus cared for people individually, and in so doing gave a life-picture of the Divine care. For it was what he saw the Father doing that he himself habitually did. "Verily, verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner."

There was no aloofness in Jesus' attitude toward the souls—men, women, children—gathered about him. On the contrary, he entered with sympathy and help into life as it was to them. Had he not himself lived from childhood in a village home and wrought with his hands for daily bread till he went forth to preach the kingdom of God? And thereafter did he not know what it was to be hungry and athirst and tired, and to have no certain dwelling-place? He sat at peo-

ple's tables and called them by their names—Mary, Martha, Simon, Philip, Zaccheus, and others. He said that any one who received a little child in his name received him. Dying, he commended his mother to the filial kindness of John. Even after he had risen from the dead, “he was known of them”—of two unnamed disciples at Emmaus—“in the *breaking of the bread.*”

All the while it was the will of his Father for which Jesus supremely cared. Accordingly, we hear him counsel the unburdening of the heart of anxiety about earthly things and the seeking of the kingdom of God and his righteousness as the supreme good.

And the significance of it all, from our present point of view, is in that one word, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” Did Jesus care for the things of common life? Then the Father in heaven cares.

“So, to our mortal eyes subdued,
Flesh-veiled but not concealed,
We know in Thee the fatherhood
And heart of God revealed.”

We cannot wonder, then, if Simon Peter, in whose life Jesus abode as he did, to humble and to honour him, to serve and save and govern him, should have gained a heartfelt appreciation of the truth of God's own caretaking. For he did gain it, and write it down in his shepherding of others: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.”* Indeed, of what

* I Peter 5: 6, 7.

word from this apostle's pen might one not truly say, Learned in the school of Jesus?

VI

It is also evident that the vision of God in Jesus is a vision of *the Divine healing compassion in the inevitable sorrow and suffering of life.*

But that which far outweighs both the everyday circumstances and the great sorrows of one's life is *the moral relation to God.* Sin, the awful possibility of moral freedom, has become a fact. It has risen up in our hearts; it has defiled our consciences; it has spread through our lives, separating between God and ourselves so that we cannot look upon his face in peace. For "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." What can be done about it? Has any messenger from heaven appeared to tell the Divine attitude toward one who, like ourselves, is a sinner?

It needs only to ask what was the attitude of Jesus; and this, we know, was that of unsparing condemnation. He detected sin under all its disguises. He showed the guilt of the secret sinful motive, altogether apart from any embodiment in outward act. He saw and declared, as neither lawgiver nor prophet before him had declared, the exceeding sinfulness of sin and its inevitable penalty here and hereafter.

Indeed, the law as set forth by Jesus was not less, but greater in condemnation than as set forth even by the psalmists and prophets of the Old Covenant. It shows sin to be a violation in heart and deed of

the Infinite Love—"an offence so awful in its guilt as to involve the passion of God and the death of his Son." And goodness, holiness, is obedience from the heart to that violated law of love.

Who, then, can stand before the face of the Heavenly Father and pray, "I would be heard for my goodness' sake, O Lord"? Tell me that I must honour my parents and keep holy the Sabbath day and must not lie or steal or covet, and I am condemned; but tell me that I must love God with my whole heart and my fellows as myself, and I am, oh, how much more deeply condemned. In the presence of this law of love shining forth from the words of Jesus, verily every mouth is stopped and the whole world stands guilty before God.

Still further, that which Jesus taught he lived. So, the holy love of which he was lawgiver and prophet was to him not as to others an ideal, but an actual and perpetual realization. He was the Law because he was the incarnate Love of God. Thus it was in the light of his life that men's lives were judged. "Our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance:" that was the light, that the presence, in which Moses, the man of God, saw even his secret sins. No Greek or Roman idolater could use such language; but this man could use it, because there had been given him a vision of the Most Holy. And that is the vision which, in the fulness of its revealing and convicting power, has been brought nigh to us all in Jesus.

It was through the life of the Son of God, therefore, that he whom in prayer he called "Holy Father" and whom a prophet had called the "high and lofty One that

inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy," was shown to be near, even in human personality, to the believing heart.

But there is another side of this truth to be seen in Jesus. As holy love, and that alone, most effectively reveals and condemns sin, so the same holy love, and that alone, can save the sinner. "He was manifested to take away sins; and in him is no sin." Here, therefore, in the unity of eternal truth are both the law and the gospel of God. The law is Christ—"in him is no sin"; the gospel is Christ—"he was manifested to take away sins." The sinner cannot save his fellow-sinner—cannot lift him above himself. But the Holy One of God may lift him up to himself and in the holiness of redeeming love may cleanse him from all sin.

VII

What more can be sought or declared? Before the unveiled mystery of redemption in Jesus Christ we bow the head, and lift up the heart in grateful joy. It is the eternal truth of Divine sacrificial love. Hidden from former generations and ages, it was revealed in him. "Who was foreknown indeed," says the Apostle who once could not receive such a word even from the lips of the Master himself, "before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God." *

* I Peter 1: 20, 21.

“Hid from all ages and generations,” the revelation of God’s eternal purpose in Christ was nevertheless prepared for and predicted. It was prepared for by the age-long teaching and discipline of the Church of God. It was predicted, as Peter proclaimed in the temple, “by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began.” *

But not by these alone. It was foreshadowed by world-wide symbols, ere ever a prophet of the kingdom of God had spoken. Wherever a simple flower, blooming in beauty, put forth utmost effort, even at the cost of its life, to ripen the seeds which should enshrine the life of flowers to bloom when its own little day should have ended, there was a predictive word, spelled out in lowly yet lovely letters, of the giving of life for the sake of other lives. “For reproduction alone,” says Henry Drummond, “the flower is created; when the process is over it returns to the dust. This miracle of beauty is a miracle of Love.”

And as we ascend in the scale of creation there appears a succession of such signs, more and more significant.

It is true, the animal kingdom is a scene of perpetual and pitiless self-seeking at the expense of the lives of others. Each is endeavouring to sustain his own life, not simply careless of others, but in a myriad instances feeding directly upon them. Therefore, is it a world of unceasing struggle and of mingled joy and pain—as a despondent spirit complained, “a world of plunder and prey.”

* Acts 3: 21.

But this is far from being the whole picture. Side by side with the instinct of self-preservation appears the mysterious power of instinctive self-sacrificing love. A mother dove drops from her nest in the low-branched tree and flutters in apparent disablement, broken-winged, almost under the feet of the passer-by. What could have induced a happy winged creature thus needlessly to expose her life, except a feeling of devotion to the helpless nestlings committed to her care? It is a scene to touch any thoughtful mind with a sense of awe, as if in the mystic presence of a Divine truth foretoking its revelation in the moral sphere. And the very existence of all the higher orders of animated nature is conditioned, like that of the gentle dove, upon the twin principles of self-preservation and uncalculating parental affection. Yes, upon the latter as truly as upon the former—conditioned upon care for others as truly as upon self-care.

In the human world these same two coöperant forces appear in various familiar forms, instinctive and moral, as self-love and love to others. And of the two the greater and diviner is love to others. How it ennobles the spirit of the mother, the friend, the patriot, the philanthropist! Without it where shall we find the true nobility of spirit? Without it we who are rejoicing in life to-day could never have been. Without it one cannot so much as imagine the existence of a human world. "Seekest thou great things for thyself?" Seek the greatest of all, which is simply love.

'All of which is a parable, and the interpretation thereof is the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our

world is indeed a world of suffering and sacrifice whose whole meaning even the most illumined spirit is not prophet enough to tell. But we do know that it is through suffering and sacrifice that love, greatest of all things that can enter into the life of man, is made perfect in power and achievement. And when on Calvary the Sinless One, hated, scorned, put to agony and shame, gave himself up for this world of sinners, sacrificial love told its meaning—told what place it holds in the mind and purpose of the Eternal.

Blessed, indeed, is the man to whom is given the opportunity to tell and interpret to the world, in living words, this vision of innermost spiritual truth.

IX

THE OPPORTUNITY

Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.—ACTS 10: 9.

The Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee. But arise and get thee down and go with them, nothing doubting; for I have sent them.—ACTS 10: 19, 20.

And on the morrow he arose and went forth with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And on the morrow they entered into Cæsarea.—ACTS 10: 23, 24.

Who was I, that I could withstand God?—ACTS 11: 17.

THE vision of the Clean and the Unclean had a practical import. As with the devoted Mary of Magdala, not permitted to linger with the Risen One, but sent forthwith as a bearer of his message, so with the Apostle Peter on the housetop, thinking and wondering. Very soon he must go down from that sacred solitude, and then forty miles away, to tell the truth of Jesus which he was now learning. His ecstatic experience was not simply a thing to be enjoyed or wondered at. The heart of it was an evangel to be proclaimed.

Indeed, is not this true of whatever knowledge is gained at any time by the truth-lover? It is not for him alone. Its value is universal. All truth is for all men, according as they have ears to hear it and conscience to use it aright—none of it the exclusive privilege of a certain educated circle or student body

or priestly caste. Hence the scholar owes a special debt to society. He has more to give than others, and must give proportionally. "If the readiness is there, it is acceptable *according as a man hath.*" "What you know you owe."

I

Peter's vision, then, was intended to equip him for larger service. It was for others' sake, that they might become sharers with him of the Good News in Christ. And behold, the Giver of the vision has already provided an opportunity for the communication of its content to a prepared soul—even now are the men from Cæsarea downstairs, calling at the gate. For to Cornelius, a devout man who "prayed to God alway," there had also appeared a vision, in which it was bidden him send men to Joppa for a man named Simon Peter, who would tell him what he ought to do. Thus the two lines of providential training and guidance, one from Rome and the other from Jerusalem, are converging at Cæsarea; and the word of eternal life in Christ is about to be sowed in a heart made good ground for its reception.

It may serve as an example of what is taking place continually in the world about us. There is nothing more common in human observation and experience than such converging lines. There is nothing taken apparently more as a matter of course than the opportunities, occurring and recurring, of getting good for ourselves and doing good to others.

Not indeed that these everyday occurrences are usu-

ally through the intervention of unprecedented visions or affecting signs. Far from it. But such a sign may awaken in the percipient's mind a dormant sense of the Divine presence, providence, and control; and this providential presence and control, we need have no doubt, is all about us continuously and everywhere. How otherwise could there be a dependent world-life at all? From one direction God in nature is, through long ages, preparing the soil; from another direction God in humanity is preparing the sower; and at the appointed time, lo, the sower is seen going forth to sow—shortly afterward, a harvest. It is true literally and it is true as a parable of the kingdom of heaven. There is the prepared hearer and the prepared teacher and the hand of God bringing them together.

Have you met with this account of a sermon in the history of Christian preaching?—

“I sometimes think that I might have been in darkness and despair until now, had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm, one Sunday morning, while I was going to a certain place of worship. When I could go no further I turned down a side street and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there may have been a dozen or fifteen persons. . . . At last a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker or tailor or something of that sort, went up into the pulpit to preach. . . . The text was, ‘Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.’ . . . The preacher began thus: ‘My friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, ‘Look.’ Now lookin’ don’t take a great deal of pains. It ain’t liftin’ your foot or your finger; it is just “Look.” Well, a man needn’t go to college to learn to look. You may be the biggest fool on earth and yet you can look.’ . . . Then lifting up his hands he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist can shout, ‘Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothing to do but look and live.’ I saw at once the way of salvation. . . . There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away and that moment I saw the sun; and I could have risen that instant, and sung, with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ and the simple faith which looks alone to him.”

The name of the preacher no one knows; the name of the young man was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Have we no better word in which to describe the relation of that Sunday snowstorm to that historic conversion than the word "accidental"?

Nor is it an exceeding strange experience for the Christian preacher to be impressed with a real sense of the Divine providence and guidance in the opportunities of his personal ministry. I remember to have had it in mind during a certain week to preach, on the next Sunday, from the petition, "Lead us not into temptation." It was difficult, however, to decide. There was reason to believe that to many persons in my congregation this petition of their daily Christian prayer was practically meaningless. What a good thing it might be to make it luminous and real to them. But it was a difficult theme, and I distrusted my ability to set it forth effectively. Then, almost at the point of deciding in favour of another, I turned back to my first choice. On the next Sunday a devout Christian woman, the wife of a retired minister, came to me after service and said: "I wanted you to preach on that very text to-day, and was about to write a request that you would. But I talked with my husband about it and he said that perhaps I had better not. Then I made it a subject of prayer and asked the Lord that you might do so." She believed that the Lord had heard her prayer and granted her request—had sent her the interpretative word which she had felt the need of and had asked for.

Simply a coincidence? Some would certainly say

so. "Supposing that both the good woman and yourself have given an accurate and uncoloured statement of the facts, it was a mere coincidence after all." Possibly it was—if one could get a satisfactory idea of what the phrase "a mere coincidence," in such a world as ours, really means. But if God in his providence is ever near them that trust him, and if God by his Spirit abides ever in their hearts, awakening prayer, imparting grace, teaching wisdom, who will undertake to say how much or how little of that wondrous providence and of that Spirit's guidance appears in the converging lines of any two Christian lives?

"It chanced—eternal God that chance did guide."

May we never be numbered with the generation of them that are ever seeking a sign; or that conceive of providence as favoritism; or that do not distinguish between the specific request and the real prayer. May we never fail to realize that the Ruler of both the physical and the spiritual realm is the author of order and not of confusion or of caprice, and that his ways and thoughts are higher than ours even as the heavens are higher than the earth. But let us also unite in confession of faith with those who believe the God of law and love, in his providence and by his Spirit, to be as truly present in the hearts and lives of his children as ever in the earliest day of the world or in the spring-time of Christianity.

"And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear."

II

It is, however, with the constantly occurring rather than with the exceptionally marked opportunities that we are chiefly concerned. And these everyday opportunities are numerous indeed. Numberless the open doors to willing doers of good. For God means good for us all, one toward another, in the whole economy of the world.

He means it, rest assured, by one's daily work. Think not that we should be better off without this regularly recurring task. More probably we should suffer serious moral loss. "A whole lifetime of idleness, amusement, and dissatisfaction with life," was Count Tolstoi's description of the circle of the envied children of leisure in which he had been born. Thanks be unto God for his great and beneficent ordinance of labour.

Various circumstances, indeed, that seem least favourable, or even antagonistic, in the course of any common day, may be offering a needful discipline to the spiritual powers. "He exercises me," said Epictetus of a reviler, "in patience, in moderation, in meekness. . . . Is my neighbour a bad one? He is so to himself, but a good one to me. He exercises my good temper, my moderation." "Count it all joy," says the New Testament, "when ye fall into manifold temptations [or, *trials*], knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing."

Nor is the opportunity of service to others any less an ever-present feature of human life. In the home, where life begins, it is exemplified not only in the obvious case of what the parent may do for the child, but also in what the child may do for the parent. It is an invariable attendant of all human relationships. When God made man so that he could not live his life alone, he made him so that he should perpetually be a neighbour to his neighbour, a brother to his brother, a servant and benefactor to his fellow. Talk not of narrow circumstances, limited spheres, meagre opportunities. Complain not that the commonplaces of life so greatly outnumber its sublimities and its crises. Human personalities all about us are open to the touch of our own. "Quivering with possibilities, eloquent with invitations" this moment, is the human world in which we live. Let but the man arise, living the life of the Spirit, at any time, anywhere, and opportunity for some Christly service will be there to greet him.

A farmer had a seedling pear-tree whose fruit was worthless. A near neighbour asked permission to graft it. The farmer, though indifferent and probably sceptical as to the results, granted the request. The scion "took." For more than half a century the transformed tree has borne abundant harvests, and it is bearing still. Hundreds upon hundreds of men, women, and children have found health and enjoyment in its delicious fruit—some of them from childhood to old age. So much for the fruitage in human comfort of a single thoughtful neighbourly act. Who would not like to have been the doer of it?

But suppose that one might engraft some word of truth in a neighbour's soul, whose years shall not be half a hundred, but shall never fail. And this, too, is more than possible to whosoever has the wisdom to do it and the neighbourly heart to recognize his opportunity.

One's very last hour on earth may bring no less an opportunity than any that have gone before. "Now this He spake"—Jesus spake concerning Simon Peter—"signifying by what manner of death he should *glorify God.*"

"So he died for his faith. That is fine—
More than most of us do.
But say, can you add to that line,
That he lived for it too?"

We can. This man lived for it; and true enough, that was better than simply to die for it. Nevertheless, what a shining testimony was that when he stretched forth his hands to be bound by those who were putting him to death as a witness for his Lord. The surrendered lives of heroic souls, how it has wrought in all lands and in all ages for the kingdom of God. "If any more are burned, burn them in cellars," it was said to the persecutors of the Scotch Covenanters—so effectively did the death of the martyr advertise his faith among the people.

We of to-day are not incurring the least risk of being burned by the enemies of our faith. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that we may pass out of this life, even as we may pass through it, so as to glorify God. For, under the most ordinary circumstances, death may be

met, not with a slavish yielding to inevitable necessity, but in the spirit of such free and trustful acquiescence in the will of the Heavenly Father as to make it a singularly serviceful Christian witness. To die well is to do good. Death may be the crowning opportunity of life.

III

Moreover, men are adapted—it is a sweet and awful thought—to co-working with God. They may work together with him in gaining good for themselves. Put these two words of apostolic teaching side by side: “Ye are God’s building”—God is forming your spiritual character; “Building up yourselves on your most holy faith”—forming your own spiritual character.

Of the oldest of us, as of the youngest, it is manifestly true that as yet we are only in the making. Let us, therefore, be patient toward the incompleteness of our neighbour. Let us also not misjudge his Maker and ours; for it is the end that proves the work. “When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.” But we are still imperfect, inhabiting a world of the imperfect, and in passing judgment upon the plan and work of the Maker, in case of that which is still in the making, we show ourselves as judges to be very imperfect indeed. Sometimes it is said in congregational prayer, “when Thou art done with us on earth.” And we may devoutly give thanks to the Maker of us that he is not yet done with us on earth, and for the hope that he will not be done with us in the life immortal.

“Do with us what thou wilt, all-glorious Heart!
Thou God of them that are not yet, but grow!
We trust thee for the thing we shall be yet;
We too are ill content with what we are.”

I had a house in building. Returning to inspect it after a somewhat lengthy absence, I was displeased. There were features of the half-finished structure that seemed an affront to both good taste and good judgment. “Why did you have this and that so?” I asked. “Wait till it is finished,” replied the builder; “that is what I always tell them, Wait till it is finished.” And sure enough when the house was completed the apparent fault proved to be a most attractive feature; and I could not but rejoice that the unexpected planning had been done by a higher architectural wisdom than mine. Since which time I have seen it written in a book, that “criticism of unfinished architecture is proverbially false.” But infinitely higher than any of ours is the wisdom of the Eternal Architect of the unfinished soul and the unfinished world.

Moreover, the Maker means, let us ever bear it in mind, that we shall have a part in our own making. Ten thousand things will he do with no coöperation of ours, but in the building of character we are God’s fellow-workers. Otherwise “the liberty of the glory of the children of God” would be impossible. Awakened and interpenetrated by his gracious power, there must be our own choice, our own effort, our own diligence. And for this there is given an hourly opportunity.

Then as to one’s work for the world. Imagine the

world coming this hour from the hand of its Maker without the free coöperating hand of man. How would it appear? No civilization, no Bible, no Church, no letters, no civil government, no handicraft, no dwelling-houses, no grain-fields, no human life. Is it not the will of God that these things—life, civilization, literature, Christianity—should be?

Take, for instance, our relation to material substances and forces. Would the Maker of the ground have it cultivated to increase of fruitfulness and made the habitat of happy households? Would he have fruit-trees planted and grafted, wells dug, roads constructed, bridges builded, ships sent forth upon the great waters? Would he have deserts incited through irrigation to blossom into beauty, or to yield up their stores of food and drink through removal of the no longer needed "spiny armour" of their native plants? Would he have typhoid fever, diphtheria, the "white plague," traced to their microscopic hiding-places and confronted with the forces of prevention and cure? Would he have flames of fire come forth at command as our familiar household servants? Would he have the all-encompassing air a whispering gallery in which souls may intercommunicate across a thousand miles of trackless seas? Would he have the Roentgen ray discovered, and employed in the cure of physical ills? To come to every one's daily life, would he have the air we breathe moulded into music and articulate speech? Then must man, dweller in the dust though he is, constantly cooperate with him of whom Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto."

It might have been the will of God, so one may imagine, to sustain the life of his human children wholly, as he has done partly, by the immediacy of "nature" to their bodily wants—to give them food and raiment as he gives them light and air. But such is not his chosen method. Count, if you can, the number of hands through which the bread of this morning was laid upon your table. Yet, in the truest sense, it was from One Hand through innumerable others. Of just such things has a prophet of old declared: "This also cometh forth from Jehovah of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom."* So, then, the opportunity offered the farmer, the miller, the baker, the housewife, is God's own chosen and ordained opportunity as the giver of our daily bread.

Hard work for human brains and hands, is it, and age-long, time-long, all this striving after the goods of life for ourselves and our fellows? Grievous oftentimes to the flesh, no doubt; but seen from the Divine side, joyous and uplifting to the spirit. "Praising we plough and singing we sow," wrote Clement of Alexandria for the Christians of his day. And what other spirit, pray, is suitable to the man who realizes that the work of his hands is not common or unclean, but contrariwise a bit of God's work in the world? His work itself becomes a song. It is done in the power of the heavenly vision that lifts drudgery into glory.

It is well also to bear in mind that only in the way of active effort to gain his objects of desire, the good and the useful, can man become man. Without it we

* Isaiah 28:24-29 (margin, *effectual working*).

should be idlers, weaklings, savages. No exertion, no growth. No struggle, no strength. No striving toward a great conscious aim of personal achievement, no attainment of the great unconscious aim of personal development.

IV

Especially notable is this fact of opportunity in the life of the Christian preacher. Has he seen in Jesus the vision of God? Then the truth which it is given him to minister is a veritable word of life. It is that which of all things it most concerns sinful souls to hear. And surely if it is given any one, it is given him to tell it. He is recognized distinctively as a guide of souls, a "light of them that are in darkness." To him was Cornelius bidden to apply for instruction—the particular preacher in this case being one of those who had been with Jesus and had been sent forth by him. "Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded thee of the Lord." Thus an audience will gather about the preacher for the very reason, even if there be no other, that he is supposed to speak the word of God.

Not that the preacher's audiences are likely to be wholly composed of such recipient souls. Many of his hearers will show a different mind. They will be living for the enjoyment, gross or refined, which can be got out of the world, and not for the service they can render. It is an anti-Christian, a pagan, philosophy of life. They must be won by speech, persuasive and commanding, to look upon life in the light of Christ.

But more and more the preacher's audience will become a congregation—not an occasional assembly of hearers, but a gathered flock, regularly waiting upon his ministrations.

“This is my opportunity;
I stand, O Lord, 'twixt these and Thee:
Grant me Thy light that I may know
How best the seeds of truth to sow.

“The weary man, the little child,
The vigorous youth, the mother mild,
Lift up their eyes and wait for me:
What shall I say to them for Thee?”

To the preacher-pastor, also, as to no other man, the homes of the people, from the lowliest to the palatial, are opened. He will be honoured for his office' sake and esteemed highly in love for his work's sake. Cornelius, the Roman captain, fell down before the fisherman apostle to do him homage.

And not only is the preacher's word a ministry to the highest interests of the soul, but it is a concentrated and a continual ministry. He does not need to spend his strength in the earning of a livelihood. On the contrary, all his time and energy may be devoted directly to the saving of his brother men and the building of the kingdom of God on earth.

I noticed in a newspaper this morning that a church on the Congo is reported to have made an arrangement for nine out of every ten men to unite for the support of the tenth, in order that he may give his whole time to preaching the gospel. So there would seem to be an illustrative fact from even the heart of Africa—an example of the large and honoured place which the

Church of Christ is disposed to provide for him who would "continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word." To him verily the door of opportunity is flung wide open.

v

Not, however, that opportunity is always found to be an easy door to enter. The word (*ob-portus*) does indeed mean "at the port"; and it is a great word in the vocabulary of life. But it does not imply that all difficulty and danger are here left behind. Such an idea would be a capital mistake. To reach the port is indeed to get off the barren waters and on the fruitful land; but the toiler of the sea is not the only toiler. Even the peace-loving farmer must overcome many difficulties and wage warfare with many enemies before he gathers his wheat into the granary. Opportunity means, among other things, labour and conflict. A new country may offer an inviting prospect to the well-qualified settler, but only at the price of a pioneer's peculiar self-denials, discouragements, and efforts. The same country may offer a similar prospect to the preacher who would have the joy of laying the foundation of churches that will live to bless the land through coming generations; but let him not be surprised when the similar offer meets him with a demand for a corresponding price.

"A great door and effectual is opened unto me," says the Apostle of the Gentiles, writing from Ephesus, "and there are many adversaries." So, because of the open door and despite the adversaries, there the evangelist-

pastor remained, labouring both publicly and from house to house, for the space of three years—his longest pastorate; “so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.” A church was gathered and an inspired epistle written it which is in the Church Universal to-day. And what else? “*I fought with beasts at Ephesus.*”

So too at Philippi, where the church which he and his fellow-itinerants had founded was ever after the joy of the great apostle’s heart. “Come over into Macedonia and help us:” “And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent their garments off them, and commanded to beat them with rods.”

As then, so now. About every open door of the gospel in pagan or in Christian cities of the twentieth century, the same first-century foes, the same unbelief, sensuality, worldliness, self-interest, superstition—old foes with new faces—are ready to gather.

As for the Apostle Peter, it was not long till the adversaries rose up against him for entering the open door in Cæsarea. In this case they were some of his own brethren, the Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem. For they contended with him, face to face, for entering the house and sitting at the table of a Gentile. Peter made a satisfactory defence, “expounded the matter unto them in order,” so that they held their peace and glorified God. But there is a note of warning in the fact that on a subsequent occasion Peter was drawn back by the same type of adversaries into reactionary behaviour. It was in Antioch, at that time the center

of Gentile Christianity, where, under the influence of certain ultra-conservative brethren from the less enlightened yet loved and respected mother church, he withdrew for a while at least from such social intercourse as eating at the same table with the Gentile Christians—the old-time vacillating temper once more emergent. For then as now was the heavenly treasure borne in earthen vessels; and not even of a chief of the Apostles, whether Paul or Peter, was “the excellency of the power”; but of God only.

Who is habitually spoken of as having a wider or more open field for evangelism, at least within the last three centuries, than John Wesley? Think of his journeyings to and fro among the neglected and unevangelized millions of the poor in his native England. Think of the assistants he won, the literature he published, the organization he developed. Nevertheless, whose pathway of unsurpassed success was more noteworthy for disappointments and failures, or more thickly infested with all manner of opponents? An open door, many adversaries.

In any event, the obligation abides to share the knowledge of evangelic truth with others. And the obligation is measured by the opportunity. “*As we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men.*” As we have it, not as we see it; for the opportunity may be present, easily within reach, and through inattentiveness unrecognized by us. “Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest. Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already unto

harvest." May we have the will to see in order that we may lay hold of the ever-present opportunity. Fidelity is clear-sighted. Here, therefore, appears the greatness of the Christian preacher's obligation; for, as already noted, the field offered to him in which to sow the good seed—or to gather the ripening grain—is extraordinarily great and effectual. "Thou canst, then thou must." For what is duty? Nothing less, whatever more it may be, than "the harmony of will with opportunity."

Nor is such opportunity to be greeted with a sense of obligation alone. More and more, as the inner life deepens, will the sense of duty be interfused with a spirit of freedom and gladness. Thus not only "I must," but also "I may," shall be followed by "Therefore I will." The fact of one's obedience being dutiful does not prevent its being free. Conscience may be growing more penetrative and luminous, and love at the same time more discerning and masterful. To do the will of our Father in heaven—is it not being felt, as the years hasten by, less as a task and more as the sweet and wholesome food of the spirit?

X

ENLARGEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY

Ye yourselves know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to join himself or come unto one of another nation; and yet unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common or unclean.—
ACTS 10: 28.

“**I** CAME,” said Peter to Cornelius, “without gainsaying (*ἀναντιρῆτως*, *not speaking against it*).” Had he been unwilling to go, there is good reason to believe that he would have spoken against it—being temperamentally the man he was. He went freely, and thereby added to the effectiveness of his personal bearing and his message.

I

Is there conscious constraint on the soul of the preacher? What is it? What is the inner word that wins him and impels him and will not let him live at his ease? Happy is he if it be no selfish ambition but that Christian zeal, that sacrificial enthusiasm, which is the aggressiveness of Christian love. Let him attend faithfully to his round of daily duties, like the typewriter at his machine or the bookkeeper at his desk. This cannot be blamelessly neglected. But if this be all, there is but half a preparation for the opportunities of his ministry. The apostle of Jesus is not to be a

numberer of strokes, so much work for so much pay, like the workman who drops his uplifted hammer at the first sound of the quitting bell.

It is so in any great and effectual preaching, whether evangelistic or pastoral. There must be eagerness, devotion, heart of love and tongue of flame. Perhaps no more striking example can be cited than that of the early Methodist circuit riders. They went forth, along make-believe roads or Indian trails, across the swollen streams, into town or settlement or lone cabin, in the spirit of the Messianic psalm:

“I delight to do thy will, O my God;
Yea, thy law is within my heart.
I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the assembly.”

They found occasions to preach or made them. It was not a new method—not distinctively American or Wesleyan. “Preach the word,” wrote Paul in his farewell charge to his “child” Timothy; “be instant in season, *out of season.*” Which might be rendered, “whether the time be opportune or *inopportune.*”

When Freeborn Garretson, a devout and sweet-spirited practical mystic, was sent out by Coke and Asbury, “like an arrow, from north to south,”—as Dr. Coke described it—to send messengers, in his turn, to the right and left and call together all the preachers to the unexpected task of organizing the Methodist Episcopal Church, he recorded in his journal concerning this suddenly imposed duty: “I set out for Virginia and Carolina, and a tedious journey I had. My dear Master enabled me to ride about 1,200 miles in six weeks [it was in the

months of November and December], *and preach going and coming constantly.*" The "arrow" seems to have turned aside freely for evangelism's sake, without forsaking its prescribed course or failing to reach the mark. It was a sign of the apostolic spirit and an augury of success. For many a congregation was gathered and many a soul saved by such free out-of-season urgency of convicting and evangelic speech.

II

The Christian preacher may very well go forth "without gainsaying," if he have some true vision not only of his task but also of his opportunity. And now, this vision of opportunity, how great may he expect it to appear? Manifestly as great as the world of spiritual need to which he may minister. Need is the giver of opportunity. "When there comes a despondent brother"—thus have I heard a wise and gentle master speak—"and paints the present age, with its mammon-worship and worldliness and mad race for pleasure and reckless commission of crime, when he comes deploring the dearth of spirituality in the Church and the unbelief outside, I say to him, Go on, paint the picture never so dark, but do you not see that what you are painting is a door, that all the while you are painting the great and effectual door of Christian opportunity?" Who is this that calls himself a prophet of God and has no heart to speak because of the largeness of the demand for prophetic speech? What sort of apostle is it that abides indoors because the field of his gospel is so wide and the soil thereof so stubborn? The greater the need

the greater the opportunity for the messages of the Spirit through the lips of the living man.

As to the opportunities of Simon Peter, there was Pentecost, with its unprecedented baptism of fire within and its multitude of wondering hearers "from every nation under heaven" without—the birthday of the Church of Jesus Christ. We may pass it by, in this connection, as incomparable. But here at Cæsarea, in a private house, with a congregation made up of the household and near-by friends, we may recognize another opportunity of world-wide significance. No wonder that so large a space comparatively should have been given it in the book of Acts. For the question of the admission of Gentile believers into the Church of God without the Jewish initiatory rite was settled at Cæsarea with the sign and seal of the Spirit of truth. And this was indeed a world-question.

Think also what might have been expected from Cornelius the Christian, as a captain in the Italian cohort (enlisted in Italy) of the Roman army of occupation, and from his household and friends. Such witnesses as Roman soldiers, women, and slaves would ere long appear, in their respective spheres, from the land of Israel to the islands of the West. Indeed, what an irrefutable procession of witnesses, ever to multiply its numbers and so to pass down the coming ages, might be starting, under Peter's spoken testimony and the power of the Holy Spirit, there in the Roman barracks at Cæsarea.

That Peter himself realized the full significance of this visit to a Gentile soldier's home may well be

doubted. What great leader in the world's work does realize the full significance of his acts and undertakings? What lowliest Christian worker in our own time, or in any other, knows how great the end may be? Certainly if any of us should be inclined to covet such an opportunity in life as that of this chief Apostle, it might pertinently be suggested to him that he open his eyes upon the world-wide opportunity which he stands facing here and now. Let him awake to the realization that his own age is preëminently an age of opportunity. Have we not seen that it is given to the least of us to touch the moral life of the world to finer issues, both at our own doors and in the regions far beyond? At our own doors? It might be said that the whole world is now becoming an open door to us all.

A far larger and at the same time a far smaller world is ours than that which our fathers knew. It has been expanded, in that we have come to know so much more about its territory and its peoples. It has been contracted, in that the interchange, both of things and ideas, products of the fields and factories and products of the mind, has become so facile and so constant. A gift from the hands at the present moment holding this volume may, at the giver's option, fall into a hand at the distance either of an arm's length or of six thousand miles. The letter you write may be mailed for five or perhaps two cents either to the nearest village or to the antipodes. It has come to be almost a matter of course with many of us to have business or social or church relations with people at their homes a thousand miles away. Since, under present methods of

communication, the world has become our neighbourhood,

“What is half o’ the world between?”

III

When there comes to the soul of a young Christian a vision of the moral and spiritual needs of his own land, he is ready to say, “Here in the homeland I must invest my life.” When there comes to him a vision of any one of the great causes that are here calling so loudly for leaders and helpers,—the cause of the young people, of the poor and backward classes, of civic righteousness, of temperance and the destruction of the liquor traffic, of whatever is included under the title of Home Missions—he would fain respond, “To this one cause shall my whole life be devoted.” He could wish not only “a thousand tongues to sing” the Redeemer’s praise, but a thousand lives to devote to some one particular service in the Redeemer’s cause.

As to our homeland, whose name has been called a synonym of opportunity, we are constrained to ask, What does God in history mean by America? Our teachers of history are able to show how this or that nation, notwithstanding its many failures and crimes, has made some one most conspicuous contribution to the welfare of the world. May we suppose that America will ever have such a contribution to offer?

Some have answered that it is her providential mission to exemplify, as this has never yet been done, the splendid ideal of human brotherhood. It may be so. At any rate, it would seem that here is America’s

most noteworthy opportunity. A nation of immigrants, scores of millions on the way to become hundreds of millions of various races gathered and mingling together under democratic ideas and forms of government,

“Tongues melt in hers, hereditary foemen
Forget their sword and slogan, kith and clan;
’Twas glory once to be a Roman,
She makes it glory now to be a man.”

A country of enormous undeveloped resources, men increasingly valued for what they are rather than for whence they came, a greater inheritance than any other nation from the past and yet without the embarrassment of age-long traditions, the wide diffusion of intelligence, free churches awaking more fully to the practical acknowledgment of their social and civil obligations, “a rapidly decreasing death rate of bigotry,” the gospel of the Son of Man preached everywhere—these are some of the promiseful features of the United States of America. Do they not promise that more and more our people shall respect each other’s humanity, legislate for the common good, render social service, administer industrial justice, love as brethren?

Not only so. According to its Maker’s idea, the world may be and ought to be a fraternity of nations. Hitherto, however, the fact has been far different. The stronger instead of helping the weaker have exploited and oppressed them. Of Christian as of pagan nations, this has been too true. But in recent history there have been signs of better things. In certain notable instances, at least, America has shown herself a friend in need to other peoples. A true American, says a

recent Jewish immigrant, Mary Antin, is "one who acknowledges all mankind as his brothers and tries to give them a fair chance." Certainly nothing less than the realization of such an ideal can satisfy the demands of human brotherhood. And what if the United States of America should both be called and prove faithful to a moral leadership in promoting the federation of the states of the world?

If it is to be so, there must needs be, first of all, for America herself men of light and leadership. There must be spiritual vision.

What made the little nation of Israel such a one as God could use as he did for the highest welfare of the world? It may be truly answered in familiar language, "Moses and the prophets." Egypt, out of which the tribes were led that they might become a nation, was a land of groveling superstitions and low ideals; and Israel was in slavery to these as well as to the Pharaoh himself. But Moses was not. Here was a leader with the vision of God and of a people who should accept the will of God as the law of their national life, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a church. Now and for centuries they were prone to low-minded idolatry. At the very foot of Sinai they were dancing unto Jehovah round a golden calf. But their great and inspired leader and the succession of prophets that came after him declared, passionately yet patiently, the reality, the presence, the holiness of God and his purpose for them, and through them for the other nations. This was their salvation. This was their equipment for service. This was the means whereby, notwithstanding the

tremendous obstacles in the way, it became possible, at the very beginning of their national history, that there should go forth from them a light to lighten the peoples of earth unto the end of time.

And "the prophets," who were they? Men who saw with singular brightness of vision what a people should be, because they saw what God is and what he means the individual soul to be. They had understanding of judgment, of righteousness, of loving-kindness—its transcendent excellence and its effects. They saw from the highest height of prevision the Christ and the effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh. At times they felt the thrill of the foreordained Cross, even of that Divine suffering love in which the Christ was to take unto himself the bitter griefs of his people and bear the iniquities of them all. Not the priests, nor the kings, nor the hundreds of thousands of people, but their inspired leaders dreamt the dream and saw the vision; and the others might, if like-minded, share it with them.

They saw the Christ, with the government of the world on his shoulders, as the Prince of Peace. Did the times foreshow it? or, did some Eastern sage somehow drop the suggestive word into their ear? Quite the opposite. That was far enough from a day of peace in which they prophesied. War was universally accepted as the natural condition of man. Nation against nation, people against people—nothing else was known or expected. But even in that day there were seers of Israel, taught of God as no other religious teachers on earth, to whom it was given to depict a new and Divine order of national life. In an age of the unchallenged

sword, it was given them to foresee the reign of peace not only within their own elect little land, but between nation and nation, the world over.

From Isaiah and from Micah there has come down even to our time the record of it: "And He will judge between the nations and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

But what does America, two and a half thousand years thereafter, care for such a vision? Is she not increasing rather than disarming her armies? What does any nation care? Have not men been recently shedding their brothers' blood in warfare as freely as ever? What does Christendom care? Instead of lifting off her peoples the already depressive burden of armament, has she not been enormously increasing it, to fling her vast armies now into the deadliest war of the whole world's history. Embattled millions of "Christian" Europe, on land and sea, with engines of destruction that laugh to scorn the weapons of the forefathers, in the death-grip of relentless fratricidal strife—is this a time for prophets of world-wide peace? It is such a time. Our lot has indeed been cast in a day of unprecedented war. But it is also true that the Hebrew prophets' vision of universal peace is believed to-day as by no preceding generation. The imperative of that heavenly vision is coming to be felt. It is a day of unprecedented appreciation of international peace. War must cease, international disputes must be

settled, like personal disputes, by righteous judgment and not by the shedding of the disputants' blood; let truth and not force, righteousness and not wholesale slaughter, arbitration and not the crushing of the weaker by the stronger nation, pronounce judgment: such is the voice of the seers of the present movement for world-wide peace.

They have told us the vision they have seen: "A world-order held together, not by the threat of bristling fortresses or cannon loaded to belch forth destruction, but by the strong bonds of mutual good-will, an order in which savage and backward peoples or cruel and avaricious tyrants are restrained from murder and rapine by a police force representing not the mailed hand of any single nation, but the conscience and righteous judgment of world-federation." And it is fitting that on their splendid Peace Palace at The Hague should be inscribed that word of the Lord by the mouth of his ancient prophets: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks." It foretells the doom of war.

For the reign of the warmakers is not to be perpetuated. The recurrent madness and wickedness will spend itself; it will turn again to their overthrow. Men will look upon the multiplied fields of human slaughter with more enlightened vision and more condemnatory judgment. Out of the horror of blood and tears shall come, under the reign of the living and loving God, the peacemakers' day, who shall be called the children of God. Instead of organized carnage, world-peace alliances and organizations. Instead of the heroism enkin-

dled by war, the higher moral heroism of devotion to the higher life of the world. "There is a new kingdom," says Edward A. Steiner, confessing his faith in the coming unity of mankind, "a new kingdom within the old. It cannot be destroyed. It has a new language—the language of the spirit; it has a new patriotism—wider than nation and race. It is now emerging out of this new baptism of blood. We can all hasten its coming by letting it come into our hearts." May not the Master's own word find even here a partial fulfilment?—"Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity. . . . And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh."

As for America, may the God of all peoples mercifully give her for moral leadership men whose love for their country shall be illumined with the vision of his own idea of a nation and his own eternal purpose of righteous brotherhood.

For if the fraternity of nations shall be in any large sense America's achievement, it will be in the most real sense an achievement of Christ and the gospel. "He will judge between the nations." And as matter of fact the clear-sighted Christian preacher and teacher, illustrating in his life the truth on his lips, is in the forefront of the personal forces making for this and for every form of helpful human fraternity.

If, on the contrary, one should be reminded that in the Church as it exists among us, denominationally divided, unbrotherly rivalry is sometimes more in evidence than brotherly coöperation, the answer is that by

the grace of God the movement in the churches is now toward oneness of emphasis in teaching and fraternity in conduct. It has been said that "while the force of Christianity has been separating itself into *forces*, the forces of evil have been uniting into a combined *force*." But whatever of truth there may have been in such an indictment, the churches are now moving toward a unification of their forces in the name of the one Lord Jesus Christ. Their rivalries put to shame, they will be vitally federated for the gigantic task before them; and to be an organizer and leader in that militant host is the vocation and opportunity of the Christian preacher of America to-day.

IV

Meanwhile there comes the call to the unevangelized peoples. Let any man read the history of the Christian Church and then, if he can, point out the period or the circumstances in which such a call was more instant or such an opportunity more inviting than at the present hour. Changes of surpassing religious significance in pagan nations have been taking place under our very eyes, others are imminent, still others will follow. In the first century of Christianity the West had to a considerable extent outgrown its religions; in the twentieth century the same is true of the East. In the first century the vast extension of the Roman empire facilitated the spread of the gospel; in the twentieth century the "open door" of the nations does the same more freely and securely. Think, for instance, of the oldest and largest of the nations, one-fifth of the whole

world's population, arising out of the slumbrous exclusivism of the ages as the Republic of China, and welcoming Christian physicians, teachers, and evangelists to the towns and schools and homes of its four hundred million people. Looking backward no longer for her golden age, she would feel after it if haply she may find it in the ideals of Christian civilization. The thoughts of the hearts of those multitudinous children of the East are in solution. They are vigorously taking form. Shall it be in the moulds of Christian or non-Christian or anti-Christian ideas?

But whether at home or abroad, the mission of the preacher, let it ever be borne in mind, is neither more nor less than *to make Christians*. By whatever means or methods, directly or indirectly, it is this that he must do. Was it not the Master's way, and that of his first sent-ones? Must not the souls for which the rightful Lord of all gave his life receive his kingdom one by one? Said Alexander MacLaren, on the occasion of the presentation of his portrait to the city of Manchester: "My work, whatever yours may be, is, and has been for thirty-eight years, and I hope will be for a little while longer yet, to preach Jesus Christ as the King of England and the Lord of all communities, and the Saviour and friend of the individual soul." Lord of the community, Saviour of the soul—such is the Christ of the Christian pulpit.

The Church is indeed to redeem institutions, to purify politics, to save society, to make a new world. This must she do in England, America, China, every land beneath the sky. But why, unless it be to create

souls anew in the image of God and enrich their lives with truth and love? And this is first of all an individual work. Society itself is for the individual—apart from whom it cannot exist even in imagination—and not the individual for society. The preacher with his gospel approaches each soul as distinctly and personally as if there were no third soul on earth; and the outcome of such an opportunity is not simply or chiefly in time, but unto the endless ages.

Therefore, to be a preacher for the times is to lift men to the heights where they shall see for themselves the vision of eternal facts and values.

XI

POWER THROUGH EVANGELIC TRUTH

That saying ye yourselves know which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth.—ACTS 10: 37, 38.

Him God raised up the third day and gave him to be manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he charged us to preach unto the people and to testify that this is he who is ordained of God to be the Judge of the living and the dead. To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.—ACTS 10: 40-43.

Send to Joppa and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall speak unto thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house.—ACTS 11: 13, 14.

UNDER the growing light of his vision of world-wide redemption, Peter told the “words” with which he had been entrusted—and not in vain. There was a good congregation, gathered by Cornelius—“having called together his kinsmen and his near friends,” “many come together.” And under the spoken gospel there fell upon them the power of the Holy Spirit, so that they spoke with tongues and magnified God.

Well might the unsympathetic brethren in Jerusalem, after Peter had recited the occurrence to them, feel constrained to acknowledge, “Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.” The baptism of the Spirit, the turning from sin unto the mercy of God in Christ, the repentance that opens the way into

eternal life—have not the like signs in all ages marked the word of preaching as a word of power?

Was spiritual power an accompaniment, then, of spiritual vision? It would seem so. In fact, the two Divine gifts are close akin. Of this, more as we go on.

One need hardly be reminded here of the ultimate Source of all power, physical, governmental, spiritual, in heaven and on earth. Whether the word be used in the sense of authority or of energy, "there is no power but of God." "Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." "Thou [Pilate the governor] wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above." "Create in me a clean heart, O God."

I

But there are two means or mediums through which the Divine power is commonly brought to bear upon the soul. They are both implied in the familiar phrase, "a *preacher of the gospel*"; for one of the two is *truth* (the gospel) and the other is *personality* (the preacher). Let us take note of them in this and the following chapter.

In a broad sense of the term, truth may be defined, I suppose, as *facts and their meaning*. To illustrate. We see the sun rise, making the day, and having completed his prescribed course, descend out of sight, leaving the world in darkness. We notice also a regular variation in the solar movements throughout the year, from the shortest course of the winter to the longest of the summer, and back again. What does this simple and majestic process mean? The eagle from his cloud-

less cliff sees it more distinctly perhaps than any of us, and to him it has no meaning—and he no telescope. But certain gifted and energetic minds have thought their way not only to the telescope, but with its aid through the visible fact to its causes and its various cosmic relations. And listening to their interpretations, we learn that the rising and setting sun is significant of the diurnal revolution of the earth, our own flight of over a million and a half miles a day round the sun, the attraction of gravitation—in a word, of the hitherto undreamt-of glory of the heavens.

True, one may decline to accept this teaching. Many contemporaries of Copernicus, Martin Luther for example, rejected it—though, had they been born in the twentieth century instead of the fifteenth, the case would doubtless have been different. But those who do accept it, which to-day means all the enlightened world, find here, in the fact and its meaning, a splendid body of astronomic truth.

Take an illustration from a very different sphere—from the inner world of mind. You feel a certain sense of moral compulsion—“*I ought.*” It has been named “conscience.” Its voice may antagonize other voices, without or within, or may accord with them; but in either case it is quite distinct from them. Not the voice of self-interest—“*It is profitable*”; nor of taste—“*It is beautiful*”; nor of utility—“*It is useful*”; nor of physical compulsion—“*I have to*”; it is the voice of moral obligation—“*I am obligated, it is due.*”

Such is the simple and sublime moral fact, the vision

of duty. And being interpreted, it is seen to signify that man belongs to a moral order. Which is to say that he has power of choice, that he is a person, that he is under moral government. It tells of freedom and responsibility—the daily miracle of self-determination amid contrary influences. It draws aside the veil of an invisible realm and brotherhood of souls; it bears witness of God. Thus by the fact of conscience and its interpretation, the eyes of the soul are opened to the reality and greatness of the moral universe.

Or, here is a historian. He knows the heart of man. He can trace the course of the human world through generations and millenniums—how the earth was peopled, the migration of tribes, the rise and fall of nations, the old order giving place to the new, each subsequent age lying germed in that which went before, and thus the present significant and predictive of the future. Not, of course, that he sees the whole world-wide and age-long movement. But in the little that he does see he can read off something of the wavering march of humanity, in its freedom of will, with its intellectual achievements, under its awfulness of sin and suffering, toward the goal of its earthly history. And beyond question this grand conception of historical truth was reached through a close, sympathetic view and review of the human facts.

Or again, the philosopher may be summoned as a witness. He is interested in the perception of ultimate truth. To him nothing else seems so great and worthy. Your physical order and human history, upon what do they all rest as their deepest reason? what is

reality? That is the question he is ever asking. Nor does it go without an answer. Philosophy is an interpretation as truly as science or history. And its method is essentially the same. It is the things and events of the outer world, as made known through the senses, together with the acts and experiences of the soul itself, as made known simply through consciousness, that suggest and make possible of apprehension the underlying principles of truth. Such truths are indeed seen intuitively by the reason, but they are suggested and demanded by the body of attentively considered inner and outer facts.

So, speaking generally, while on the one hand "facts without ideas are meaningless," on the other "ideas without facts" are empty. The two taken together constitute truth.

And now the same thing may be said specifically with respect to evangelic truth. The gospel is a succession of facts and their interpretation. For just as God "made known his *ways* unto Moses, his *doings* unto the children of Israel," that they might be stirred up to consider, and to enter thus into a knowledge of himself, so has he made known his ways and his doings in Jesus. Lo, here is Christianity—a revelation, the supreme Divine revelation, in human history. It is not given in nature or in mind; it is given in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Man. To know him, not simply according to the flesh, but as revealed by the Spirit, is to see the kingdom of God. It is to know, as far as it has been given men on earth to know, "what God and man is."

Evangelic truth, then, is the interpreted fact of a Person—the fact of Jesus of Nazareth and the interpretation thereof. Tell who he was, show what he did, set forth its meaning, and you have declared the gospel of Christianity.

II

This, therefore, as might have been expected, was Peter's evangel to the Cæsareans. He calls it the word which God "sent unto the children of Israel"—unto them, first of all—and announces that that word, or "saying," was concerning Jesus of Nazareth. He told about Jesus—his doing good, his healing of them that were oppressed of the devil, his death on the cross, his resurrection and reappearance before chosen witnesses, his charge to the Apostles that they go forth as witness-bearers and preach him.

Also, together with the recital of facts, the preacher gave words of interpretation. Jesus, he said, was anointed of God with the Holy Spirit and with power; he is the fulfiller of the prophetic Scriptures, the judge of man, the Lord of all, the Saviour through whose "name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."

Such was the early apostolic gospel—as illustrated by its first preacher. There were announced certain historic facts and what they mean. There was repeated, over and over again, one great inclusive Fact and its interpretation. That is the truth as truth is in Jesus. It so appears, beyond a doubt, in all the preaching that is narrated or mentioned in the New Testament.

Paul, who had never seen the face of Jesus in the flesh, knew no other gospel for Jew or Gentile but the interpreted facts of the Cross and the Resurrection. "For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." To the men of Athens he preached "Jesus and the resurrection."

So throughout the teaching of the New Testament itself: in the Gospels, particularly in the first three, chiefly the facts, in the following books chiefly the interpretation. The vital tie that binds these twenty-seven little books together into the priceless volume we hold in our hands to-day is their common reflection of the life of the once incarnate and now glorified Son of God. Take as an example Peter's own further exposition as given in his First Epistle. For what is this whole writing to his brethren of the Dispersion, from its opening doxology, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," to the closing benediction, "Peace be unto you all that are in Christ," but a setting forth of the significance of Jesus Christ in the beliefs, the experiences, the spirit, the daily conduct of Christian believers?

The historic and the spiritual reality of Jesus—no other truth is at once so human and so Divine. To make a life-study of the Divine Man, as set forth in the pages of the New Testament, as transcendent in influence upon the Christian ages, as sharing with the

individual soul that trusts him the knowledge and love of God unto eternal life—to know him and at the same time to make him known through living speech to whosoever will hear, such is the vocation of the Christian preacher. Nor is there any other truth that the people of the present age and of all other ages so need to know, and to believe with heart and life, as this truth of the Universal Man, the Master and Saviour and Sovereign of the soul.

“The word which he sent unto the children of Israel . . . even Jesus of Nazareth.” “Unto” them but *for* mankind. It was a word for Cæsarea, for Rome, for all the world; it was *the* word for all the world. So Jesus himself taught. So his first confessing disciple was learning. So his disciples are learning still—and should have learned sooner and more obediently.

That word which is Jesus Christ, ought it not to have been borne ere now, by those who have received it, to every kindred and people on earth? “You are angry,” said a negro fellow-traveller to Dan Crawford, at the end of a fifteen miles’ trek in the tall grass of Central Africa. “Why do you say so?” “Because you are silent,” was the reply. “Tell me more about it.” “In our language,” answered the black man, “we say that if a man is silent he is angry. This is why we know that God is angry—because he is silent.” “God is silent.” The intrepid Christian missionary was cut to the heart. He opened his pocket Testament and read to the man the first verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Much more, he went to work at translating the New Testament into the language of his Central

African brother, and at building school-houses in which the people might be taught to read the word which God had spoken in Jesus Christ *nearly two thousand years before.*

God was not silent. But the messengers to whom he had committed his Good News had been slow to tell it, as he had bidden them, unto the ends of the earth.

III

“People need this evangel indeed, but do they wish it? does the heart of man naturally desire evangelic truth?” It is a pertinent question, and may fitly be considered as part of the larger question, whether men have an instinctive desire to know any order of facts and their meaning. May man as man be characterized as a lover of truth? But concerning this larger question there is hardly room for doubt.

Ask the school-houses, the teachers, the ceaseless flood of books and periodicals, the scientific laboratories, the world-wide and continuous questioning of the Unknown. All these tell the story of the mind's hunger for knowledge as truly as the harvest-fields and orchards and mill-wheels and bake-ovens and three meals a day tell the story of the body's hunger for bread.

Ask those truth-enamoured “wizards of the spade,” the archæologists. See them in their isolation, at work decade after decade in the long-buried cities under the sands of the East. Hear their word concerning pre-historic man as an artificer, an artist, a knower, a thinker. Ask the devotee of scholarship or science or

philosophy, who is more than willing to spend his days in lonely unrequited toil for the joy of finding fact and truth—standing “at the extreme of the known and wrestling with nature for more of her unknown.”

Little René Descartes, because of his eagerness in asking questions and his aptness to learn, was called, in the eighth year of his age, the Young Philosopher. When a young man he formed the resolution “that he would make the search after truth the business of his life.” And now for three hundred years Descartes has been named by common consent the father of modern philosophy. Is such a mind unhuman, abnormal, a sport of nature? On the contrary, is it not altogether human and normal, only an extraordinary example of that instinct to know which is common to us all? Look for answer into the wondering eyes of any little child.

Or, read the story of the first sin: “And when the woman saw . . . that the tree was to be desired to *make one wise*, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat.” Or, simply look within and find there the instinct to know asserting itself among the primal impulses that make us men.

One had as well ask whether there be a universal motive to look and see as to ask whether there be a universal motive to enquire and know.

If, on the other hand, we should be reminded of how many people seem fairly well contented with ignorance, of the child’s proverbial dislike of the school-room, of the difficulty in inducing people really to think, of the predominance of the novel over all other forms of popular literature, of the readiness with which

all sorts of fancies and fictions are caught up as if they were true and worth while, would it follow that one must disbelieve in the innate love of knowledge and truth? No more than that because of prevalent thriftlessness and waste, one must disbelieve in the love of property; or that because of cruelty, lust, unkindness, and war, one must disbelieve in the social instinct; or that because of suicides and the everyday recklessness of health, one must disbelieve in the love of life.

It is not a question as to whether the hunger of the soul for facts and their meaning has an unhindered development—no weakness, no perversions, no antagonisms. It is a question as to the simple existence of such a hunger. And to this question the only answer is that man is a being of insatiable curiosity.

All this being admitted, one might suppose that man would be especially inclined to welcome any religious knowledge that might be offered him. For certainly his higher nature would need to have but little development to make him feel that such knowledge is the most interesting and significant of all. The tantalizing mysteries of birth, death, the supernatural, who shall resolve them? The indefinable inward answer to the call of the Infinite, what does it mean? The Power or the powers above, what is their will concerning me? For, such Power or powers, says the heart of man everywhere, there must be, attracting even when they appal. What, then, is their will, and how shall I relate myself to them?

We might expect some satisfying answer to such

questions to be universally sought after. And, as a matter of fact, so it has been. The proof is in the religious history of the world.

IV

Souls do want to know about things Divine and eternal, and their own personal relations thereto. "As imperatively as a man's lungs call for air his human calls for a Divine." Let the preacher come, therefore, proclaiming the substance of the Christian message—the facts of redemption, the kingdom of God, the revelation of the Eternal Father in Jesus—and we should expect him to get a hearing. Is not this message truly called an evangel, "good tidings of the kingdom of God"? Yes, indeed; and it has been so welcomed from the beginning until now.

But not universally. For here again about the "open door" are "many adversaries." Did not Jesus announce in the synagogue of Nazareth, concerning Isaiah's prophecy of "the acceptable year of the Lord," the Year of God's Jubilee, that the prophecy had come true then and there—"This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears"? Did not his hearers bear him witness and wonder "at the words of grace that proceeded out of his mouth"? And yet it was this very synagogue that rose up in wrath against him and would even have cast him down to death.

Minister this gospel of the grace of God, in its native simplicity and truth, to any community beneath the sky, and you may confidently expect the response of listening souls. But let not your faith fail if many

should seem to have no ears to hear. For people are not simply human; they are sinners. The pressure of the outside world with its pleasures and its business may benumb their spiritual senses. The soul may be enflashed. It may be withering under the blight of worldliness. It may be consumed with selfish schemes and ambitions. The power to hear the word of God may be atrophied through neglect or beaten down by abuse. And to all these forces of moral evil the word of Christian preaching is utterly oppugnant. It would destroy the prevalent and destructive sins of the soul and enthrone the living Christ as Lord. It must make its way against them. Hence resistance and conflict.

Accordingly the word of God is compared in the New Testament to both seed and a sword. The two things are very unlike. A seed is informed with a spirit and law of life. It grows, impelled by a vital power within. And such is the gospel, that "seed" which "is the word of God," in the soul—creative of spiritual life, growth, fruitfulness. A sword, on the other hand, is unliving and destructive. It has nothing but death to give. It strikes down and destroys. But such is the gospel in another mode of its action in the soul—"the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." It is destructive of evil. It is "sharper than any two-edged sword" against not indeed the human but the sinful self. It would strike down "every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God."

"Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" Yes, unsparingly, with the sword of truth by the power of the Spirit in the hand of inexorable love.

v

Here we touch the heart of our topic: namely, the distinctive power of evangelic truth in the soul. For it is this truth that does somehow show itself to be, as no other has ever done, a word of power. As no other it appears as both sword and seed, slaying the evil, producing the good.

How can these things be? Evidently there are some kinds of truth that do not affect one's moral and spiritual character at all. Directly at least they lead to no moral act and make no change in the attitude of the will. They give rise to no moral motives. To know, for example, any proposition of plane geometry is not adapted to make the knower either a better man or a worse; and the same thing is true of pure mathematics generally, from the simplest to the most abstruse of its demonstrations. It does not so energize in the mind as to make the liar truthful, or the vindictive sweet-spirited, or the miserable blessed.

In like manner, one might spend a lifetime in the various and interesting fields opened up by natural science, without coming upon any group of facts or truths that are likely, by direct action, to stimulate the will and guide the conscience, or to renew the heart, or to create the spirit of the sacrificial life. So with mechanics, so with much of the teaching of the schools. So for the most part with the knowledge of trades and professions.

Powerful beyond all appreciation is the mechanical

and other inventive knowledge that has made our material civilization. A great English economist has asserted that one new idea, such as Bessemer's process of producing steel, "adds as much to England's productive power as the labour of a hundred thousand men." How much muscular energy would you set over against Cyrus Hall McCormick's idea of cutting wheat, or the idea of the present-day printing-press? Think of the enormous effects produced in the life of the world by the realized truths of the great discoverers and inventors. For the steam-engine, the ocean cable, the telephone, and chloroform and vaccination and the antitoxins and the beneficent wonders of recent surgery and the thousand machines and instruments and crafts and remedies that are so ceaselessly ministering to the human welfare of our time—what are they all but knowledge, truths, ideas, moulding for themselves material bodies? The sphere of all such ideas, however, is limited, and it is not the highest. They do not touch the moral and spiritual. They are makers of machines and medicines, for which the whole world is their debtor; but they are not makers of character. They do not effect the new birth of the soul.

But with certain other kinds of knowledge the case is distinctly different. It is different, for instance, with the knowledge of one's fellow-men and one's self as gained, let us say, through history and biography. That does exert a recognizable influence upon the moral nature. It is not a matter of the intellect only. It brings the sympathetic reader into such contact with the mind and character of his fellows of the past and

the present as tends to make him like them. For here are human personalities to warn or inspire, to lead or mislead. Here are personal ideals urging with mystic voices, Follow me. Here are morally dynamic ideas. One rises from the sympathetic reading of a great biography with a distinct influence upon one's spirit to live a higher life—or, it may be, a lower.

Why, for example, did Plutarch write those "Lives" which have been read with interest even unto our own day? He himself tells us in one of them that it was because "the beauty of goodness has an attractive power, it kindles in us at once an active principle, it forms our manners and influences our desires, not only when represented in a living example, but even in a historical description." "For this reason," he says, "we chose to proceed in writing the lives of great men."

There is another word to be said about mathematical or scientific knowledge and the like. Let the mathematician ask, "Whose thoughts are these, whose immutable truths of number and space, a few of which I have been able to follow, and along the lines of which the material universe seems to be built?" and so let him gain a vision of the Eternal Reason, the Creative Thinker. Or, similarly, let the chemist or physicist or astronomer pass from proximate, or unreal, causes to the Divine Artificer, the one Real Cause. Let him recognize the Will back of the orderly and upward movement going on through unnumbered centuries. Thus these men of science cross over into philosophy, theism, theology. And here they also come into contact with truth that has power upon the heart and conscience.

For the knowledge of God as the theist knows him makes appeal to the spirit of awe, of reverence, of worship, of obedience. It is such a heavenly vision as puts a certain moral pressure upon the seer. For He who speaks in it is the God who has already been speaking in the conscience.

If, then, it is truth concerning our fellows, ourselves, and God, truth of humanity and of Deity, that comes home to heart and conscience, and tends thus to work moral changes in the life, what shall be said of the Christian gospel? Here is the weightiest of all truth concerning our fellow-men, ourselves, and God. What might we suppose it to be as an influence upon the heart and will of them that receive it? It must be and is what the New Testament declares it to be, the power of God unto salvation. "Send to Joppa and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall speak unto thee words whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house." It is the word of judgment and of pardon. It is the word of life through death, even of life eternal through the death of the sinful self—"I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." It is formative of the mind of Christ in the recipient soul. To preach it effectually is to offer a Divine-human answer to the prayer, Thy kingdom come. As it fell from his own lips Jesus himself declared: "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life."

VI

Is Jesus, then, the author of the Good News of God? He is even more truly, as already suggested, this Good

News itself. It is all personalized in him, the Divine Sacrifice for the sin of the world. At his cross we find God as Saviour. Peter had already been bearing witness of him in Israel, and now comes to declare to his Gentile congregation in Cæsarea that "to him bear all the prophets witness that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Which Name is the reconciling word committed, now as in the beginning, to the preachers of the New Covenant.

In him, therefore, as the Divine Sacrifice, is the supreme manifestation of the heart and will of God. It may seem to us almost a matter of course that men should think of God and have communion with him in the Christian way—as the Father of an infinite majesty and of a holy and tender sacrificial love. But in point of fact it is far from being a matter of course. Such filial faith and knowledge of God was not the faith and experience even of Israel before our Lord's day. On the contrary, it is a result of the one life of perfect sonship which has been lived in the flesh—the Life whose completion and deepest meaning was that suffering love in which the fatherhood of God is most effectually revealed.

"To us," says the Apostle Paul, contrasting Christianity and paganism, "there is one God, the Father."

And the origin of this distinctive Christian doctrine of Deity is contained in the additional confession of faith, "and one Lord, Jesus Christ." * Our knowledge of God as Father is due to the revelation of the Divine fatherhood in the Divine Sacrifice.

It is in him, moreover, that our own sonship to the Father in heaven may be realized. "As many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." Here a new type of personal goodness came into human experience. Not that the morally good in the Word made flesh and in them that received him was absolutely different from that which the Spirit of God had breathed already into human hearts in Israel and elsewhere. We may think of it more truly as the fulfilment of what had thus been realized. We hear its note in the new commandment, which was—that we love one another? That was the old commandment. The new commandment was given under a higher ideal and with an added power of realization: "*even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" This new commandment is in fulfilment of the Divine purpose that we should "be conformed to the image of his Son." It is the meekness and gentleness of Christ. It is the simplicity that was in him. It is the vitally unified tenderness, strength, self-poise, sympathy, entire devotion to the will of God, and utter self-sacrifice for the salvation of men, that was illustrated in the cloudless light of the life of Jesus. That is Christian law, Christian morality, Christian character. Have you made acquaint-

* I Corinthians 8: 6.

ance with a personal example of it? Then may you truly say, "I know a man *in Christ*."

Here, then, is the heart of the Christian message—it is the Christ himself. Here is the evangel of truth concerning God and man—it is the One who could say, "I am the Truth." *Whom* we preach.

Will it suffice? Any quest for a larger, or a more personal, or a more solemn and inspiring, or a more practical and effective truth, must be utterly vain. No other "tidings of peace," no other "word," is commensurate with this "good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ." No moral philosophy, from the earliest to the latest written, has shown any such motive power. No page of history or biography, nor any philosophy of theism, forceful as these may be upon receptive minds, and certainly not Buddhism, nor Islam, nor the no-faith of agnosticism, is to be accounted of, in comparison with this word, in regenerative power. It is creative of the new man, the new life, the new age of righteousness and brotherhood. "Salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

And what it has already done, with what it is now doing, is predictive of its future effects. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." The first-fruits of that living and life-giving word now, the "harvest of the world" ripening in its season.

VII

Nor need we suppose there is any peculiarity in the manner in which this evangelic truth acts upon the

soul. We do it no honour by making of its influence a gratuitous mystery. Let no one vaguely say to himself: "Somehow, without any reference to the laws of the mind, this gospel, just so it is spoken to men, will act in a way that no other truth acts, and thus, we know not how, will bring them salvation." It acts in its sphere, so far as we know, just as other forms of persuasive truth act in theirs. That is to say, it touches motives and thus incites the will to choice and action. The preacher is not a rhapsodist, but a persuader. Men are not saved by magic. They are taught; they are convinced; they are persuaded; and opening their hearts to Christ, they are saved—all under the quickening power of the Spirit of the living God.

But these Christward motives, what are they? what are the incentives to action that urge a man toward repentance unto life and self-committal to the Lord Jesus Christ? or that press him on through the whole course of a Christian life? First of all, let the preacher look into his own experience for an answer. For he may be quite sure that the motives that have been influential with him are suited in like manner to touch and move the wills of many others. Then, preaching to himself, as every preacher must, he will at the same time be preaching to his fellows.

But if he should also make enquiry of other Christians, he would doubtless obtain through this questionnaire some such as the following answers: "The fear of punishment," "the desire for happiness," "the desire for freedom from condemnation," "a sense of un-

rest with a longing for abiding peace and satisfaction," "a sense of incompleteness together with an aspiration to become all that a man ought to be," "a feeling of obligation to set a Christian example before other people," "an attraction toward the Christian life as that which every one ought to live," "a realized need of Divine help," "a spirit of love and loyalty toward Christ," "the ideal of doing the will of the Father in heaven as the one true law of life," "the blessedness of a life of service to one's fellow-men in Christ's name."

Now, two or more of these motives may actuate the same person at the same time; for in no great and important undertaking are men likely to act under the influence of one motive alone. Again, it may be that in this or that hearer none of them is actively present. They have not asserted themselves. They may be lying dormant. They may exist only in the way of capacity—potentially, not actually. Nevertheless, let the appeal to them be made. Call upon men, with the holy gospel of God, to repent. Urge them to yield their wills to the Lord Jesus Christ. Claim them in the Master's name for a life of love and service. And the potential motive may be stirred into actual and resultful life.

Such, then, is evangelic truth in its action upon the soul.

Would any man fain speak so great a word worthily? The conditions are manifest. First and last and always, let him be and become what he speaks. By faith,

experience, practice, let him make the evangel of Jesus his very own—truth interfused with personality.

Indeed, he cannot even know this evangel of Jesus, his one message to men, without thus making it his own. For Jesus, evangel, as we have seen, is in its highest expression Jesus himself; and to know him is not a matter of the hearing of the ear or of simple intellectual perception, but most truly of the heart and will. It is a knowledge which comes through oneness with its object. Only a living man can know what life is. Only a spiritually quickened man can know "Christ, who is our life." There must be the Christian mind, the Christian purpose, the forming Christian character.

Let us, then, give heed to the suggestion of power through the personality of the preacher.

XII

POWER THROUGH THE PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER

And we are witnesses of all things which he did.—
ACTS 10: 39.

And when it came to pass that Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter raised him up, saying, Stand up, I myself also am a man.—ACTS 10: 25, 26.

And Peter opened his mouth and said . . .—ACTS 10: 34.

IT is shown in the Third Epistle of John—that of “the Elder unto Gaius the beloved”—how men may be “fellow-workers with the truth”—namely, by welcoming to their homes the witness-bearers of Christ. But there is another way, which is open to all men, whether it be their privilege to practise the gracious rites of Christian hospitality or not, and that is by showing forth the truth in their own personal lives. This would make them, in a larger sense than that of the Elder to Gaius his host, fellow-workers with the truth; because it would be truth and personality interblending and working harmoniously together toward the same great end.

I

Not “arms and the man,” nor “tools and the man,” but truth and the man is the heroic story of the New Testament and the Church of Christ. So, the preacher

himself—his spirit, convictions, voice, conduct, character, inner and outer life—as well as the truth of which he is the bearer, becomes a means of conveying spiritual power to other souls. He intermixes with his message. Humanizing the truth, he helps human souls to take hold of it. Like the rain of heaven, which dissolves the substances of the soil in such a way that they can be taken up by the rootlets of the growing plant, so the Christian personality of the preacher enters as a solvent into his word of preaching, to make it the more readily available to the hearer.

Might not Cornelius have been told in vision the words whereby he and his household should be saved, without any human intermediary? No doubt; but it is also true that such words might come with added effectiveness from the lips of a fellow-man. The personality of the messenger would count for something.

For something? In the case before us, it might be expected to count for a great deal. Because Simon Peter's was no small or feeble personality, but sympathetic, enthusiastic, sincere, that of a warm-hearted and hopeful believer in Jesus. Was he not the foremost of the Twelve? Is there not evidence that he exerted personal influence over the others, so that they were inclined to do as he did? When he averred, with his accustomed explosive vitality, that the face of death itself should not gain from him a denial of his Master, "likewise also said all the disciples." When, having been outrun by his brother disciple John to the tomb of Jesus, he came and made bold to enter in, "then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who

came first to the tomb." When, some days thereafter, in company with several of his brethren, he said, "I go a-fishing," they said, "We also come with thee"; and forth they fared together, he and therefore they, to toil all night on the lake. And unhappily, on the other hand, when in Antioch he withdrew from social intercourse with the Gentile Christians, the rest of the Jews did the same, "so that even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation."

Here, then, came a preacher whose personality was by no means a negligible quantity. To say the least, he would show no signs of effeminacy. Not yet perfected, his spirit was nevertheless that of a genuine big brother, energetic, buoyant, stimulating—a man to win a following.

Let no pulpit be justly blamable with a lack of manliness. Sympathetic it must ever be; mawkish or insipid, never. Gentleness becomes a man—"the Lord's servant must not strive but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, forbearing"—but not softness. Tenderness becomes him, but not effusiveness. If there be a place anywhere for soft talk, let no one imagine he has found it in the Christian pulpit. Not in the hymn, nor in the prayer, nor in the sermon is it called for. Think of a soft-talking prophet or apostle—even though, like Hosea or Paul, his very heart be breaking with sacrificial love.

For young hearers as well as older, for women as well as men, for the whole many-minded congregation, for city and for country, there is needed, with all friendliness of fellow-feeling, the virile message and mes-

senger. Because the effeminate is no more the feminine than is the blustering the masterful, or the childish the childlike.

Nor can we imagine the bearing of Simon Peter as that of the mere pulpiter, or that of the self-seeking professional orator, the ecclesiastic spellbinder; and beyond all question it was not that of the pulpit exquisite. He wore no mask, he took no actor's part; it was his plain and proper self that spoke. His action was uncalculating. His sentences were heart-beats. And as even an Arab proverb reminds us, while "the neck is bent by the sword, heart is bent only by heart."

Something more. He was a man transformed by the power of a great conviction. In Jesus of Nazareth he had found the Christ—"We have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God." He had seen that Holy One alive from the dead; and it had made him a new man—illuminated through new vision, effective with new power.

When, therefore, this spiritually virile brother man came promptly in compliance with the Roman captain's request, would not let him pay homage at his feet, went into the house talking with him, declared his faith that in every nation he that feared God and wrought righteousness was acceptable to God—when this prophet of fire and force, with conviction in the tones of his voice and the light of vision in his eyes, bore personal testimony to the facts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we may well believe that together with the truth of Christ there wrought the personality of the preacher.

II

Greatest and most real of all known facts is this fact of personality. We are conscious of it in ourselves. At the same time we know by indubitable signs its presence in others. Let the mother and father go on caring for their child. Through all the years of infancy and of adolescence, let them freely expend upon him whatever treasures of wisdom and love they may have at command. For the purposed outcome of their nurture, teaching, and discipline, the result of their self-denials and self-sacrifice, is a product valuable beyond all estimation. They can make no better contribution to the world, none more potent, than to train and send forth a true and strong personality.

Is it not, indeed, the product for which God himself has planned and wrought from the beginning of our planet's history? What else has the creation been ever looking forward to, predicting, preparing for? "Into whatever region of thought we stray," says Jonathan Brierly, "whether theology, history, literature, or art, we find the universe spelling out one word as its final meaning. It exists for persons."

Men may not ponder this crowning fact of personality as they might; yet it is none the less the very sun of their life-system, the center round which all their interests revolve. It is that which chiefly influences them in others and by which they, in their turn, chiefly influence others. Because it is not simply what human beings say or do, but what they *are*. It

is not a look or word or act, but the living source of all such forces, a subtle and ceaseless personal power.

That deeply penetrative impact of soul upon soul which is commonly called the power of example might be described with equal truth as the contagion of personality. The child "catches" rude or gentle manners, refined or coarse language, true or false ideas and ideals, from his companions, in a manner quite analogous to that of catching from them contagious bodily states.

The invisible character-germs are in the moral atmosphere of the home, the school, the playground, the neighbourhood, the church. They spread increasingly from soul to soul. Otherwise, why should we care what company those whom we love, especially if they be little children or adolescents, are keeping? And why should it have become proverbial that a man is known by the company he keeps? It is not only because he will seek association with those of the same tastes and character with himself, but also because the association itself will tend to make him of the same tastes and character with them.

And that man is yet to be born who is naturally proof against the touch of other personalities upon his own. In fact, there is no one who wishes to be proof against it—none but instinctively craves it for himself. The social nature demands it, even as the physical nature demands bread.

True, individuals may be seen here and there in the crowded street who possess extraordinary personal re-

sources. They can spend much time enjoyably and profitably, alone. But where shall we find one who would live his whole life alone, or who, if he stop to think at all, does not know himself to be incalculably indebted for the good he enjoys to his contact with others?

It is not only that the small need the great, the child the man, the poor the well-to-do, the illiterate the well informed, the people the preacher. But in every case the reverse is likewise true. Even a little child taken into the life of a lonely man may change the whole face of the world to that man's eyes.

Both in intellect and character the Apostle Paul was certainly one of the very greatest of the sons of men. His converts and other fellow-Christians were not, as a class, such as would naturally be attractive to him. Most of them were ignorant, some were slaves, some had lived lives of coarse immorality or perhaps of crime. But they had been renewed in spirit by the grace of God and in a weak and stumbling way were endeavouring now to live their life in Christ. And how much they meant to the gifted and cultured apostle! Writing to the Philippians, he says, "Brethren beloved, my joy and crown"; to the Thessalonians, "But we, brethren, being bereaved of you for a short season, in presence not in heart, endeavoured the more exceedingly to see your face with great desire"; to the Romans, whom he had never yet visited, "That I with you may be comforted in you, each of us by the other's faith, both yours and mine." Independent, was he? Yes, in the sense of having great resources within himself; but emphatically

not, in the sense of indifference toward mutual life-sharing with others.

The Master of life himself wanted those whom he had begun to call "friends" to be near him even in Gethsemane. "Sit ye here, while I pray." If their poor and unenlightened sympathy could minister any comfort or strength to the Master when "amazed and sore troubled," with the brimming cup of sacrificial suffering at his lips, how much more may the least of us all, through the simple heart-beat of sympathy, become a strength-giver even to the strongest.

III

And now specifically as to the coöperant force of personality in the teaching and preaching of God's word. Take Israel of old as an example. In what form of literature did the Spirit and providence of God give them the holy Book which, through generation after generation, made them what they became for the fulfilment of the Divine purpose? Predominantly it was history; and this Old Testament history is *biography*. The God-breathed truth was made luminous and real to them through a great succession of human lives.

If, for illustration, in a cloister of Herod's temple, you could have had opportunity to talk with some such spiritual Jewish minds as, let us say, Simeon and Anna, and had asked how it came to pass that they and their people got so strong a hold of the doctrine of the one true and living God, what would have been their answer? We should be quite justified in imagining them as naming Abraham, the pioneer of the monotheistic faith, who

left his father's house in a land of idolatry at the call of God, and taught his faith to his children after him—"We are the children of Abraham." Or they would have spoken of the prophets' splendid idealism, their vision of righteousness and passion for its realization in Israel; of the consequent prophetic denunciation of the foul idolatries that were corrupting the land; of such an experience as that of Isaiah the son of Amoz in the temple, the antiphony of the seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory," and the half-despairing "Woe is me!" that broke from the young prophet's heart—"We are the children of the prophets." If you had asked them about the laws which distinguished their people from all other peoples, they would have said: "Yes, the laws of Moses, none purer and greater than he, from the mouth of God he received them on Sinai and delivered them unto our fathers—no prophet has yet arisen like unto him." Had you asked about the hope of Messiah, waiting expectantly as they were for that "consolation of Israel," they would have spoken of Isaiah, Micah, and other prophets through whom God had spoken to their fathers concerning the Man who should come to reign in glory, and of the promise: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

In a word, it was about their great and good men, as representatives of the word of God, that the faith of the people gathered. It was not by an abstract truth or a legal code, but by inspired personalities, that the abiding enthusiasm of Israel was kindled. It was

PERSONALITY OF THE PREACHER 259

Divine truth "entangled in events" and possessing the lips and lives of personal teachers, that mediated to the people the power of their redeeming God.

"We seek with word and thought
To open the eyes of the blind:
But the word avails us naught
To make the world to our mind,
Until we have learned God's plan
And sent truth forth in a man."

Who was Jesus? Truth incarnate. "The Word"—the Eternal Word uttering the Eternal Reason—"was made flesh and dwelt among us." "The Life was the light of men." "In Whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden." Men are saved not by a writing or a ritual or a discipline, not by a truth or a legal code, but by a Person.

And despite the opposing power of sin, the response, whether in the first century or in our own, to the personality of Jesus has been utterly incomparable.

For all the truths of eternal righteousness and love which Jesus taught, he himself, first of all and always, lived. And he would have us likewise, in our measure, translate these same truths into terms of personality. Whether spoken in the form of precepts or otherwise, they are life-truths, and therefore to be lived. They must be turned into goodness by Jesus' messengers, as by all his disciples everywhere. "Your Heavenly Father," "One is your teacher and all ye are brethren," "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," "It is enough that the servant should be as his master," "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed,"

“A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth”—are not such words as these truths to be *done*? Indeed, does not the Teacher himself speak thus of them, as when in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount he says: “Every one therefore who heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them.” To do them in Jesus’ sense of the word is to do them from the heart, which is to live them.

IV

Indeed, it was on truth and personality—truth as embodied in personality, personality as embodying truth—that Jesus founded his church. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.” On truth? Not on truth apart from a person. On a person, then? Not on a person apart from truth. But on a truth-possessed, truth-living, truth-confessing man. Of the Congregation of those who confess his name throughout the world and the ages, figuratively spoken of by Jesus as a building of which he himself is the Builder, of this great Ecclesia he calls the first witnessing disciple the first, or foundation, stone. Of this same vast Temple for the indwelling of the Divine Spirit, Peter himself has said—did he have that great word at Cæsarea Philippi in mind?—using a figure in which God is the builder and Christ the “chief corner-stone, elect, precious,” Christians, “as living stones, are built up a spiritual house”;* and in the metaphor of the Apostle of the Gentiles, they “are built upon the foun-

* I Peter 2: 5, 6.

dation of the Apostles and prophets" of the New Testament, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."

Of what, then, is the Church of God in these Christian ages—that which we call the *Christian Church*—constituted? Of the creative personality of Christ and the reborn personalities of his first witnesses and their successors.

As might have been expected, therefore, all along the history of the Christian pulpit appears, together with the evangelic truth, the personal force of the preacher. It may be a winning or a convincing or an imperative force; in any case it is *his*. Note the examples of it in the pulpits of to-day—and of yesterday. Note the need of it where one might least suppose it would be called for—say, in the wilds of Central Africa: "Thus you see us confronted," says Dan Crawford, "with a painful and even awful aspect of this winning of first-generation Africans for Christ—I mean the innocent way they take you for walking and talking Bibles." Note the beginnings of it in the preaching of the apostolic age. It appears not only in the Apostle Peter, but more notably in the later called apostle who could say to his Christian converts in Thessalonica: "We were well pleased to impart unto you not the gospel of God only, but also *our own souls*, because ye were become very dear to us." Truth in alliance with love, truth-giving in the spirit of self-giving, the impartation of their own lives, their "own souls," together with the gospel of God—that was the ministry of Paul and his companions to the congrega-

tion they had gathered in the European city of Thessalonica.

Or, as one of the less conspicuous characters, take Barnabas the apostolic exhorter—Joseph, who was surnamed by the Apostles Barnabas (“the Son of Exhortation”). “He was a *good* man.” The word (*ῥᾶγαθός*) is evidently used in its sense of *kind, generous, benevolent*. For wherever Barnabas appears in the story of The Acts it is in the way of some generous or friendly or self-effacing conduct*—a kind-hearted, helpful brother. Hence we are not surprised that he should be called by the brethren of the council in Jerusalem “beloved,” or that with a glad heart he should minister to the young Christians at Antioch, or that it should be recorded of his ministry of exhortation in that city: “And much people was added unto the Lord.”

“For he was a good”—preacher? Something greater—“a good *man*.” When the life of the preacher shows that unconscious Christian goodness which will make friends for himself, it will at the same time be making friends for the truth he represents and the Master he serves. So will it vitally help him “add much people” unto the Lord.

v

Now, it is quite possible, in fact a common experience, to be impressed more or less with the personal power of some person whom we have never even seen. Suppose him to be an author, making himself as well as his ideas felt in his writings. In the written words,

* Acts 4: 36, 37; 9: 27; 11: 22, 23, 25; 15: 37, 39.

it may be, the reader hears as it were the accents of a voice, feels the heart-throb of a masterly and gracious brother man. Of the New Testament writers, for instance, how strongly does the Apostle Paul strike home, even across continents and centuries, not only with his great revealed truths, but also with a personality to which these same truths were the very bread of life—the great-minded, tender-hearted, courteous, mystical, practical, consecrated soul of the man.

So with this or that writer whose words have entered deeply into one's inner life. Why is not the book sufficient? Why care for the author? We do care. He has influenced our thinking, our spirit, our life. (We have felt the thrill of his personal power—a spiritual contact. He is greater than his written words. He is self-diffused through his book. We visit the house which was his home. "This," says the attendant, "is the room in which the book was written;" and we enter reverently, for—

"What's hallowed ground?
 'Tis where the birth
 Of sacred thoughts
 Thrilled souls of worth."

But more penetrating and humanizing is the power of personality expressing itself not with pen and ink, but in a living face and in living speech. There are faces which one instinctively trusts—or hesitates to trust. "Isn't it lovely?" said to me a Sister of Charity, showing a likeness of the uncommonly ill-favoured face of the founder of her order. It was Vincent's benignant *soul* at which she was looking. No fineness

of features can make a soulless face impressive, nor can any plainness make a soulful face other than fine and fair. "If you are not beautiful at seventeen," said their teacher to a school of young women, "it is not your fault, but if you are not beautiful at seventy it will be your fault." Here, as everywhere, it is the personality that tells.

Have you known a man whose mere presence seemed to lower the moral or religious temperature of the company he entered? You have known another of whom it was true, as some one has said, that "when he is present doubts die away and certainty increases, the unseen world is nearer, and spiritual powers are active."

It is reported of Richard Whately and John Henry Newman that, in the common room of Oxford University, their comrades required Whately to prove what he said, with a clear process of reasoning, but were inclined to accept Newman's affirmations without asking for proofs. While trusting Whately's logic, they trusted Newman himself. It does not follow, of course, that Whately was untrustworthy either in intellect or in character; for exactly the opposite is true. Newman himself acknowledged a great intellectual indebtedness to his clear-minded logical friend. He says of him: "While I was still awkward and timid, he took me by the hand and acted the part to me of a gentle and encouraging instructor. He emphatically opened my mind and taught me to think and use my reason." But Newman, even in this early stage of his career, was exerting an altogether exceptional personal influence

upon other minds. And it was not chiefly due to his intellectual endowments, but rather to the manifest sincerity, the intensity of religious devotedness, the restrained passionate earnestness of the man. It was this extraordinary moral intentness back of his intellectual and literary activity that made Newman, despite his reactionary and erroneous beliefs, so notable an ecclesiastic power in the England of his day.

Now it is such a power of sincerity, conviction, moral earnestness that is to be used to the utmost in the Christian pulpit. A young woman perplexed in faith who went, through curiosity, to hear Dwight L. Moody preach, said on coming away: "I like him, he just *makes* you believe." It was not the knowledge or the reasoning but the moral intentness and intensity of the preacher that made for even the intellectual assurance of his doubting hearer.

A great conviction, is it not a prime essential of persuasive power? Even the errorist or the fanatic has often illustrated its effectiveness. Much more may the man of wisdom and truth.

If a man believe not, his time for speech has not yet come. Let him think and live. Especially let him *live*. And he may well keep silence for a time with men, talking the more with God. "You cannot change human nature," "It's a long time till the millennium:" such phrases may be credited with a measure of prudential truth, but their chief noteworthiness is their deadening lack of the larger spiritual vision and the deeper moral earnestness. "There will be a Black Bottom while the world stands," I heard a

preacher declare from the pulpit. It was a certain city slum of which he was speaking. There were those in the community who were trying to cleanse and restore it. Why should he publish his doubts? A prophet without vision, what had he to tell or what power of telling?

But conviction will transmute weakness into strength. It will make the timid heroic, the common man extraordinary. Let a speaker hold and possess the truth. It is well. But rather let the truth hold and possess him. Let it have sway in his soul and speech, and it will find doors of entrance into other souls for which a mere rigorous logic might grope in vain.

Nor is it only intensity of conviction and purpose that is powerful in a speaker's impression upon other minds. The power of joyousness, hopefulness, courage, sympathy, might also be illustrated with examples innumerable. And it is all these qualities that the indwelling Christ would create—wholeness, perfectness, not a caricature but a likeness of Christianity. "This grace also" was Paul's word to the Corinthians. "As ye abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace [of Christian liberality] also." Yes, the word of salvation into the life of filial devotion to the Heavenly Father is always a "this grace also"—"that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

Briefly, it is a *Christian*, in all the sweet and majestic fulness of that great word, whose speech is mightiest in the man behind the message.

VI

Paul, it is true, has said that in his day, while there were those who preached Christ "of good will," there were also some who preached Christ "not sincerely," but "even of envy and strife," "of faction." "What then?" he asks; and his unexpected answer—what is it? We recall that he had already said in writing to the Corinthians with reference to himself and the earlier apostles, who had been taught and trained by the Master, that the same gospel had been preached with saving effect by him and by them, one and all. It was not a question of which one preached it. "Whether then it be I or they, so we preach and so ye believed." * But here in writing to the Philippians he makes a much broader assertion: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or truth, Christ is proclaimed, and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." † He would be glad and rejoice that the life-bearing facts of redemption in Christ should be proclaimed to a world that had not heard the good tidings, even if it should be from a factious or a selfish motive. The gospel, even though hindered by an evil spirit in the preacher, may still have power to save. Some light may shine through a cloudy window, and some souls may be converted under the appeals of a vain or money-loving or otherwise self-seeking evangelist. But how much surer, deeper, greater the appeal when made in such a spirit of nobility and sacrificial love as that of the great-

* I Corinthians 15: 11.

† Philippians 1: 15-18.

hearted apostle himself. Besides, "what case could be more miserable," as Chrysostom asks, "than a teacher's when it saves his disciples to give no heed to his life?"

So, the apostle, before closing this same epistle, short as it is, in which he has expressed his joy that Christ is preached even though it be "of faction," exhorts the Philippian Christians to do nothing "through faction or through vainglory." On the contrary, he would have those who are "holding forth the word of life" to be good-spirited and blameless, "children of God without blemish." *

Listen also to his reminder in the introduction to First Thessalonians: "Our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance; even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake. And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord."

It is plain enough, then, how these people of Thessalonica—the same to whom Paul wrote, "we were well pleased to impart unto you . . . our own souls"—were led to Christ. It was *by* Divine power, "in the Holy Spirit," *through* the preaching of evangelic truth, "our gospel." But something else. Together with the gospel there wrought the personality of the three men, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, who preached it. "Even as ye know what manner of men we showed ourselves toward you for your sake. And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord." Thus they

* Philippians 2: 15, 16.

were saved—made imitators of the Lord—by means of the gospel as set forth from the lips and in the *lives* of its preachers.

The life the ally of the lips, is a universally acknowledged principle of eloquence. And it holds good in the case of wise and thoughtful as well as of emotional hearers. “Greeks seek after wisdom,” wrote the Apostle of the Gentiles. They were quick-witted, keenly inquisitive. Philosophy naturally made its home among them. One might fancy, accordingly, that the element of personal character in the speaker would count for very little with such a people. Did it, then? On the contrary, it was their own great Aristotle that said: “Your power over your hearers will depend upon what your hearers think of you.” And of Pericles, with his extraordinary practice of the arts of oratory, it was said that “these alone were not sufficient, but the orator was a man of probity and unblemished reputation,” and that he did not humour the people but led them, and “was able on the strength of his character to control them even at the risk of their displeasure.” Great is rhetoric, compact of mental laws, servant of persuasive power. Make yourself master of it. But the greater weight of your utterance will be due not to your mastery of language, but to the mastery of your own lower self and to the spirit of goodness and truth that breathes through your life and speaks in your speech.

Nor is this a disparagement of evangelic truth, as if it did not possess a perfect claim in itself, but had to be bolstered up by some mere personal human power. It does not mean that. The meaning is that, while the

Holy Spirit may reach men through simple Christian truth, it may reach them more freely through the humanized truth of Christian personality.

A student came to me in college, having spent three or four years already as a preacher, to talk over a certain mental perplexity which had been troubling him. In fact, the desire to find relief from this perplexity was one of the motives which had influenced him to quit preaching for a time and seek fuller light in a course of study. "I found," he said, "that when I was in good spirit and preached an animated sermon, the people responded in a corresponding manner, and when I was dull and inanimate so were they. Thus it all seemed to be a matter of human feeling rather than of divine power."

The answer is not difficult. If the preacher's "good spirit" was simply that of bodily animation or that of the natural excitement which often attends public speech, or that of a mere emotionalism, there is no reason to believe that the corresponding effect upon the congregation was that of Divine regenerative power. But if, on the contrary, the "good spirit" was one of moral earnestness, of joy in the truth and in the well-being of souls, if it were what the Apostle Paul calls a "spirit of wisdom" and a "spirit of power and love," the "spirit of life in Christ Jesus"—in a word, if it were the pulsations of the preacher's own Christian personality stirring the hearts of the congregation, there is no reason to doubt that therewith might come the veritable power of God unto salvation. Shall spiritual truth have less power for being fused into

personality? Shall we forget that the Spirit of God has a human way into the human heart?

Suppose the preacher to attain such a preparation to preach as was required of the prophet by the river Chebar. *Eat the book*, said a voice of one that spoke to him. A roll, a book, written on both sides with Jehovah's message to Israel, to hand it over to the people was not enough. To proclaim its contents as a herald was not enough. To explain it as a scribe was not enough. Message and messenger must become one. Let it be true of him as it was said of Adam Clarke, the Bible commentator and early Wesleyan Methodist preacher, that his hearers were made sensible that "he and his subject were one, that his being was possessed of it, that they might cut off his right arm, but that nothing could separate him and his faith." "*Eat this roll and go speak unto the house of Israel.*" As daily bread taken into the body's life, so let the truth of God pervade and vitalize the soul. Eat this bread of heaven. "Nourished in the words of the faith." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Suppose this to be our Christian prophet's method, both general and particular, of preparing to preach. Who will show him a better?

VII

Now it may be safely assumed that the reader of these pages is a friend of the Christian pulpit. So also is the writer, a lifelong lover of it. But I will venture to say that it is not because of any partial prejudgment of preaching, as compared with other forms of public

speaking, that reader and writer believe the demand for a suitable personality on the part of the preacher to be preëminently great. We do believe it. We believe that if any one who stands regularly before an audience needs to be able to say, not only as Peter did to the cripple at the Gate Beautiful, "What I have, that give I thee," but even, "What I *am*, that give I thee," the proclaimer of evangelic truth is that man. He needs, moreover, that his *what I am* should be of the worthiest and best. But this is no partial or biased opinion. There are reasons for it. One special reason is that the demands which the preacher makes in his gospel upon them that hear him are the most exacting that are ever heard from any speaker's lips. Absolute abandonment of the sovereignty of self for the sovereignty of Christ, absolute devotion to the will of the Father in heaven as the law of life—that is this public speaker's demand.

It may, for instance, cost the obedient hearer the making of restitution for goods taken from his neighbour through fraudulent transactions. It may cost him the giving up of the business on which his livelihood depends, or of this and that feature of his business. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold"—that was the repentance of Zaccheus as he stood before the heavenly Guest who had brought to his house the word of salvation. "Buy, sell, get, gain, enjoy—these words he knew. But 'restore' and 'give' almost stuck in his throat"—nevertheless, he spoke them out distinctly from his heart.

And the same spirit and principles of action are the repentance demanded by the word of Christ's salvation from any other dishonest and selfish man.

All perfectly reasonable, undoubtedly; no more than men ought to do and acknowledge, to be sure. But this tremendous *ought*, is it a light or easy matter? No other life-task to which one may be called means or requires so much.

Yet this great life of Christian discipleship—this coming *after* Christ as well as to him—is no impossible dream. By the grace of God it has been made actual, far and wide, in human lives. Surely it needs to be actualized in the life of him who is ever urging the experience and practice of it upon others. Would he speak of such a discipleship with power? It may be done through the coöperation of speech and life.

Verily we do constantly speak of great matters, we preachers of the gospel. We dare to proclaim the will of God, the fact of Christ, the kingdom of heaven on earth, the way of life and of death. We must; nothing less is our mission. And we may expect such truths to be effective unto great results—if, indeed, at the same time we be living them.

When John Bunyan, a prisoner for conscience' sake, was offered his liberty on condition that he would abstain from preaching, and replied to the magistrate, "If you let me out to-day, I should preach to-morrow," his sweetness of spirit seems not for a moment to have failed. The great dreamer was equally great in the doing of his dream. Why should he not, when released from the "den" in which he had been so long

shut up, teach, if he felt moved to do so, the duty of an unconquerable will conjoined with a genial and loving heart in the Christian life?

Last Sunday morning the preacher to whom I was listening told of a ministerial brother whom he had recently visited and found writing a sermon, to be preached from a chair in his pulpit, on the theme, "How to Meet Trouble." This brother, a typical north-of-Ireland man, had been notably able-bodied and happy-hearted. But grievous trouble had befallen him. The hand of death had been laid upon his wife, and then upon his little daughter, an only child—his home destroyed. Shortly afterward, in a railroad accident, one of his hands and both his lower limbs were severed from the body. And now, propped up in bed, in constant physical pain, he was writing down with the hand that had been left him a message of comfort and strength to troubled hearts in his congregation. No word of complaint, no bitterness, no mock heroics, sorrowful yet always rejoicing, the peace of Christ ruling in his heart. "Old man," said the visiting brother, "you are the sermon." So he was. Well might it have been said of him as it was said of Edward Irving in the days of his power, that he lived his sermon and preached his life. And with both inspiration and authority might he teach to others the truth of faith and joy which he was all the while illustrating in his own Christlike personality.

VIII

Let us make no mistake. There is such a thing as the intrusion rather than the simple energizing presence of the preacher in the sermon. He may have much to say, habitually perhaps, about his own remarkable experiences, good deeds, bright sayings, successes, achievements. He may be too habitually aware of his own doings and indirectly far too commendatory of himself. A secret thing of the heart, it will inevitably disclose itself, sometimes in such excessive self-references, sometimes in self-importance of manner. And is not this the personality of the preacher in his preaching? Alas, it is even so. It is an evil element of his personality. It is not self-devotion but self-exaltation. Far from attracting, it repels. For it is not putting one's self into the sermon so as to preach Christ, but putting Christ into the sermon so as to preach one's self.

The disciple who has turned from his selfish ambitions, tearing off the veil with which he would have hidden them from his own eyes, and become childlike in spirit, he shall be great in the service of the kingdom of God. Those who "gird themselves with humility," they are prepared most effectively to "serve one another." * "I shall measure your words," says George Matheson, "not by their size but by *your* size." It is the unconscious goodness of the preacher, not the goodness or greatness which he talks about, that reaches

* I Peter 5: 5.

the heart—having itself no other human source or destination or home. Said a good woman: “It is to me an amazing experience that there are people who are influenced by what I say, not because I say it well, but because it is I that say it.” But her very inability to explain the fact suggested its explanation. She was good without obtrusive self-consciousness. Her word was influential because back of it was the force of an influential life, the power of a true and unpretentious womanhood.

As a thoroughly eloquent speaker would be at the time quite unaware of his eloquence, so a thoroughly noble soul will never be caught doting upon his nobleness. It is one of Fairbairn’s penetrative words: “The goodness that knows itself to be good is but the inward side of the spirit that outwardly thanks God that it is not as other men.” The Christian note, then, is not boasting—“it is excluded”—either crude or refined, but aspiration and faith; not self-praise, direct or indirect, but truth in love.

Let us, therefore, one and all, before delivering any word to others, take this word of preaching to ourselves: “Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” “Be ye transformed (*μεταμορφοῦμαι*)”—it is the same word that is used by both Matthew and Mark for the Transfiguration of Jesus “on the holy mount.” Be ye *transfigured* in mind, spirit, character, so as to become like him who was ever perfectly proving God’s own perfect will. For

this is our transfiguration, made possible through him. And it will be as a flame shining even through the flesh and hallowing the whole outward life. Said Enoch Mather Marvin, a child of eight years, praying in his backwoods home, where a Christian mother lived in his daily presence the truth of Jesus' love: "O God, give me that which makes my mother so beautiful and so good." When, years afterward, in journeyings far and wide, he stood up to preach the faith which he had learned first through his mother's gracious personality, there shone oftentimes from his own plain, pale face the inner beauty of goodness and truth for which in the simplicity of childhood he had prayed.

Give us, Lord, that purity of purpose, that inward truth of righteousness, that all-pervasive love, which will make us, unconsciously to ourselves, light-bearers to others, holding forth the word of life.

XIII

POWER OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

And while Peter thought on the vision the Spirit said unto him . . .—ACTS 10: 19.

Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God . . .—ACTS 10: 33.

How God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power . . .—ACTS 10: 38.

While Peter yet spake these words the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.—ACTS 10: 44.

ONE might say that Peter's sermon at Cæsarea was never concluded—at least by the preacher.

It might naturally have ended with a recital of the great consummation of Pentecost, that coming again of Christ in the power of the Spirit. But it reached a still greater conclusion. It ended in a recurrence of the signs, visible and audible, of Pentecost itself. For while the preacher was telling, with intermingled interpretation, the story of him in whose name is offered remission of sins, those who heard the word began to speak with tongues, magnifying God.

Peter called to mind the words of the Master: "John indeed baptized with water but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." This promise, then, was for others than the original Apostles, for others than Jewish believers. It was fulfilled at Pentecost, but here was another and in one sense a larger fulfilment—in "the Pentecost of the Gentiles." Not unnaturally the breth-

ren who had come with the apostle from Joppa were amazed. They had never dreamt of seeing the gift of the Spirit poured out on Gentiles also. Yet it was the signs of just such a baptism that here in the house of Cornelius they were witnessing.

Now, in this culminating event of his first ministry to Gentiles, the assurance to the apostle that he had been interpreting his vision aright was made doubly sure. Any possible lingering doubt of it must have been shamed away. God had given of his Spirit to these aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, just as he had done to the Apostles themselves and to others who held a birthright in that sacred commonwealth. What further proof of his equal good-will in Jesus Christ to the outside peoples could be asked?

“*Even as on us:*” that was Peter’s apologetic word to his adverse critics at the meeting soon afterward in Jerusalem—“the Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning.” Ought he to have refused to believe in the evident significance of that which with his own eyes and ears he then perceived? It would have been, he said, to “withstand God.”

I

But what meaning has such an event for our own time—and for all time? We have already been reminded that, while the preaching of the gospel is attended by the power of truth and of personality, the heart and source of its power is in the strictest sense Divine. No matter what may be the form of the spoken words or who may be the speaker, the saving power,

though it may be in them, is not of them. "The word of the cross . . . is the *power of God*." The gospel is "the *power of God* unto salvation." If men with godly sorrow turn away from their sins, whence came it? If they are inwardly renewed in righteousness, their lives lifted to a higher spiritual plane, whence came it? If God's love to them is so shed abroad in their hearts as to make his will more and more regnant in their wills, is it the outcome of a simple effort or determination of their own? One had as well ask to whom men pray for salvation, or to whom the praise of their salvation is instinctively offered.

There is but one answer to all such questions.

Nor may we assert that it is only by means of the gospel and its personal witness-bearers that the Spirit of God can reach the human heart. On the contrary, the Spirit is always and everywhere present. He is in the lives of men who have never heard the gospel. He is in their inner life, to give the sense of sin and need, to excite spiritual yearnings, to strengthen the will for doing such truth as is known. Was not this the case of Cornelius? But there is also a preparation for the gospel in men who, unlike Cornelius, have never heard the name of the God of Israel. "It means," says the author of "The Indwelling Spirit," "that a missionary, not only in India but in Patagonia, not only among Buddhists but among Fijians, orders his speech as to those in whom God the Holy Spirit has already been at work, and that there is and can be no man of whom that is not true."

Ask the missionaries themselves for illustrative ex-

amples. They will tell of a prepared Cornelius and his family, here and there. Said an awakened pagan in the Far East, when, in reading the copy of the four Gospels that had fallen into his hands, he had touched the heart of the Gospel of John: "It must be true, it is true, for it is just what I have been longing for and searching for." What unseen Power had been leading him hitherto? Augustine of Hippo could have told us: "For He did not make them and so depart, but they are of him and in him. See there he is, *where truth is loved*. He is in the very heart, yet hath the heart strayed from him." * Dan Crawford has told us, when, out of twenty-two years of free missionary labour in the Dark Continent, he testifies: "God is his own pioneer, and in the heart of Africa, black, 'heathen' Africa, he has preceded us." Ask this Central African how he knows that there is a God, and he replies: "How do I know that my goats passed along the wet, muddy road this morning, if not by the deep imprints left in the mud?" He believed in some wondrous and mighty God.

But it is only where the truth "as truth is in Jesus" is known that the way is prepared for the fuller enlightening and sanctifying work of the Spirit. It is not of conviction under the darkness of unbroken paganism, but of conviction under the gospel, that Jesus speaks, when he says that the Spirit, "when he is come," will convict of sin. Compare this Christian conviction, in clearness, depth, and power, with the sense of sin where Christ is not known. It would be to compare the sunshine with the twinkling light of far-away stars.

* Confessions," iv, 18.

II

Does it seem strange that the power of our salvation should rest in a person? For that it does rest in a Person there can be no doubt. If a man be freed from the slavery to his lower self, it is because of the power in him of the almighty Personal Presence. If a Christian preacher's ministry be an effective ministry of deliverance to the slaves of sin, it is because of the abiding in it of that same almighty Personal Presence. Take this truth out of either the Hebrew or the Christian Scriptures, and there is nothing of supreme value left.

When Jehovah sends Moses forth to the humanly impossible task of establishing his kingdom in Israel, the word is, "I will be with thee." When Christ sends forth his Church to establish his kingdom in all the world, the word of assurance is the same, "Lo, I am with you always." The power by which men, through whatever mediation it may reach them, are personally saved and equipped for service is the personal touch, the life-imparting presence, of God himself.

Indeed, it would seem that we can form no other idea of power—or *cause*, which is the same thing—than that of personality. All power is personal power. Shall we think of this for a little while? Out here in the world of nature are two great facts: namely, physical objects and power (or, as it is usually called in this connection, force). We know physical objects by the senses. One has but to open one's eyes and see them,

or reach forth one's hand and touch them. And we know force, or cause, or power—how? Certainly not by the senses. It cannot be seen or touched. It has no shape or size or colour. It would utterly elude the keenest microscopic observation. But when, as is the case continually, we see a physical object moving from place to place or in any way changing its form, there arises in our minds not only an idea of motion or change, but the very different idea of force, cause, power. We say, Something *makes* it move. Whence does such an idea come? The only reasonable way to account for it is that it is given by our consciousness of ourselves and our own doings. That is to say, it is given by one's experience of force, cause, power, in one's own person.

To take the simplest sort of illustration, we are conscious, say, of the not unfamiliar experience of choosing to throw a stone. Then follows an experience which has been named effort, exertion, the putting forth of will-power in a certain direction. Nobody can describe it, though everybody knows it. Following this experience, forth flies the stone from the hand. Thus by personal consciousness of what, taking place in ourselves, is the cause of certain external events, we spontaneously come by the idea of force, cause, power. Then we apply this idea to the motions and changes, with which we have nothing to do, that are continually going on in the natural world.

There is no reason to believe that without this consciousness of will-power, we should ever have any such idea as that of power. There would be no personal

experience to give it birth. In a word, if, in the last analysis, power as we know it in ourselves is will, we may reasonably believe that power as we see the signs of it outside ourselves is also will—is the creative will of him after whose likeness we are made. As Martineau has tersely put it: “Since we have to assume causality for all things, and the only causality we know is that of living mind, that type has no legitimate competitor.” *

Such a conclusion is a child of the reason; and in manifest harmony with it is the Biblical teaching. For the Scripture, as we have seen, speaks of the presence of God’s personal creative and renewing power in nature from the beginning, through all seasons and centuries.

Tens of thousands of young men are ordained to the Christian ministry with the use of a prayer taken from that noble mediæval hymn, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, which begins with a reference to the brooding of the Spirit of God, as told in the second verse of the Bible, upon a formless and empty earth—

“Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The earth’s foundations first were laid.”

Let it remind the newly set-apart minister of the Church that the Eternal Power to whom he must ever look for the new birth of souls under his ministry was in the world of nature at the beginning as the ultimate cause and giver of order, beauty, and life—the God of nature and of the human soul, then and now and always.

“The Spirit of God hath made me,
And the breath of the Almighty giveth me life.”

* “Materialism, Theology and Religion,” p. 39.

But the Scriptures speak of the Spirit of God chiefly not as God in nature, but as God *in man*, and of his work as that of spiritual illumination and renewal—in the New Testament, indeed, exclusively so. God in nature renews the face of the earth, that it may bring forth its proper fruits of seed for the sower and bread for the eater; God in man renews the innermost springs of conduct, that they may bring forth fruits of faith and hope and love, which are the fruits of the Spirit. And here the name of this almighty Spirit, when a descriptive word is added, is the “*Holy Spirit*.” It tells that he is the Spirit of holiness, and that his work in the human heart is a work of cleansing and perfecting. “It is written, Ye shall be holy, for I am holy.”* Which seems both an imperative and a promise of the Father.

And no promise could more completely fit the need of the soul. “Follow after . . . the sanctification,” says the letter to the Hebrews, “without which no man shall see the Lord.” How, then, shall we follow after and attain unto this sanctification, this holiness, this likeness to the Lord, which shall make us meet to see him as he is in glory? By contact and communion with him who is holy. Which is to say, by yielding ourselves up to possession by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

III

So, therefore, the visible environment of man is, as Dr. A. M. Fairbairn has reminded us, twofold, namely, nature, which is intelligible, and human society, which

* I Peter 1:16.

is rational and moral; and "the invisible Environment, the common background of both, is the Spirit whose thought has been aiming in each and through each at ever fuller and more adequate expression."

Not for a moment, however, are we to suppose that that almighty Spirit is with the human soul just as with the rocks and waters and trees and with "all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth and fowls of the heaven"; or, for that matter, that he is with the human soul just as with the human body. No; there is a difference heaven-wide. The Spirit of God brooded upon "the face of the waters" in the beginning and broods over the whole earth even now, according to his ways—the "laws" of nature—with a world of things, which cannot come into spiritual sympathy and communion with him. He broods over the soul, according to his ways—the "laws" of spirit—with a world of persons, who can and may come into spiritual sympathy and communion with him.

The farmer makes his farm. But for him it would not be. He diligently protects it from injury. He cuts down a wood, clears out the underbrush, ploughs, and sows, and gathers the harvest into the barn that he has builded. He pastures his cows and drives his team. But in one of his buildings our farmer has made himself a home, and lives there with his family. And he gives himself to them—in just the same way as to the farm outside? Very far from it. He is, to be sure, present to his little outside world, but present to the dwellers in his little inside world with a different sort of nearness. These partake of his own higher

nature, and so can understand him, sympathize with his plans and purposes, enter into fellowship with him. He likes his farm, he loves his family. It is a picture of God in his world of nature and of souls.

“In Him we live and move and have our being” in the natural life: this is what philosophy would call the Divine immanence. “In Him we live and move and have our being” in the spiritual life: this “Diviner immanence,” as Bishop T. J. McConnell, in his fine little book with that title, has termed it, is what Christianity would call the perpetual presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, let no one either fear or hope that the presence and working of the Spirit will break down the moral freedom of the soul. He instructs, he persuades, he is grieved, he strives; he does not main or destroy. It cannot be otherwise than that God shall have respect to the personality which he has created, the moral freedom which he has breathed into the soul. It is shown to be so in almost the very first story of human sin, where Jehovah is heard saying to Cain: “Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin coucheth at the door.”—God reasoning with even a bad-hearted man. Divine power rests upon us not as upon the subhuman creation, the “trees of the Lord,” the cattle on a thousand hills, which are his, but as upon moral intelligences. He would have us freely to choose his service; they cannot. He would hold converse with us; they could neither speak to him nor hear his voice.

True, there is much going on at every moment, in both body and soul, altogether apart from any choice of ours. Aptly has it been said: "The heart is a labourer to whom we pay no wages, with whom we hold no conversation, who gets his orders elsewhere, who elects to work, and at the end to cease to work, without any say of ours in the matter." Put a finger on your wrist and count the heart-beats—say, seventy a minute, 100,800 a day—and still the untiring heart beats on for seventy years, quite independent of your will.

"No rest that throbbing slave can ask,
Forever quivering o'er his task."

But these quivering hearts are no slaves of ours, if by such a word we mean that they are doing their appointed task under our direction and control. Indeed, what direction and control have we of the vastly larger part of the ongoings of life within us? What power have we to turn food into flesh? Where is the child of genius that can either create or prevent such continual experiences as sensation, ideas, emotions? What will-power of ours is enabling us to pass, instant by instant, from this or that vibration of the brain into a state of consciousness—which acknowledges no kinship whatever to a state of vibration.

Then, too, heredity, bringing much that is good, also lays various disabling burdens upon us. The generation of to-day, inheriting, as it does, bodily health and moral capacity from its forbears through immemorial ages—incalculable its debt to them—has likewise fallen heir to their depravities of body and of spirit.

Nevertheless, here we stand, living our life this hour as persons, which is to say, morally free. The doors of knowledge and of feeling may be opened from without as well as from within—by others' hands as well as by our own. But the door of will can be opened from within only—by our own hands or not at all. The signs of it are unquestionable. Upon the assumption of it, the whole social and moral life of the world is lived. Whether it be acknowledged in so many words or not, everybody demonstrates it practically—like that son of common sense in the days of old who, when a certain philosopher proved unanswerably that such a thing as motion is impossible, showed the opposite by simply rising up and walking.

How much is it, then, that God has given us to determine by his grace for ourselves? It is, chiefly, something in comparison with which all other things are as vanity and nothing. He has given us our moral conduct to determine; which means our character; which means our personal greatness or littleness, blessedness or misery, salvation or condemnation.

“The sweet persuasion of His voice
Respects thy sanctity of will;
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
To walk in darkness still.”

Present with man in his freedom, then, is the Spirit of truth. Not to overbear and destroy, he is here to enlighten the understanding, to purify the affections, to empower the will. Not to hinder the action of the God-given powers, he is here to correct their aberrations, and to work together with them. “Whereupon

I labour also, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily."

IV

With respect to this Divine indwelling, however, there is One who stands quite alone in the history of our race. In the sinless Son of God the Spirit could abide continuously and in the infinitude of truth and grace. It was indicated at his baptism when "he saw the heavens rent asunder and the Spirit as a dove descending upon him, and a voice came out of the heavens, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased," and at the unapproachable height of his sacrificial suffering and service, when "through the eternal Spirit" he "offered himself without blemish unto God."

Hence the Apostle Paul speaks of the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Christ. "Ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." "Now the Lord [Christ] is the Spirit."

Moreover, through Christ—through his life, his grace and truth, his sacrificial love, through himself—this same Spirit may be given to the receptive soul. On the evening of the first Lord's day, "when the doors were shut where the disciples were," the risen Lord appeared in the midst of them, and said: "Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Then, with his own breath as an accompanying symbol, he said to them, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." Also,

on the day of Pentecost Peter declared that the wondrous power of the Spirit over which the multitude were marvelling was an effusion from the living and glorified Christ: "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this which ye see and hear."

Indeed, did not Jesus himself foretell such an event? Did he not promise the disciples, in the Upper Room, that after his withdrawal from the sphere of their senses, he would really be nearer to them than before? He would be not only with them but in them. For the Spirit, guiding them into all spiritual truth, would interpret him to them, explain him, reveal him to them—"He shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you," "He shall glorify me." Thus, in the Spirit he would indeed come to them, and abide in them evermore.

Note, then, the epoch-making significance of the Pentecostal baptism of the Spirit. It was "no detached wonder." It meant, to be sure, that Jesus' first witnesses must be spiritually qualified for their mission; but in connection with that, it had a much larger meaning. It meant that the new and foreseen era of the Spirit's truth and power had come. For now that Christ, Revealer and Redeemer, had lived his life among men, had laid it down in atoning sacrifice and taken it again in glory, the Eternal Spirit, who had been in the world of nature and of men from the beginning, could for the first time interpret and apply to the believing heart the accomplished facts of redemption. He

could interpret and apply the sacrificial life and death of Jesus. Impossible before, it could now be done. What Jesus was, what his words, his acts, his cross, and resurrection meant, could now be made known by the Spirit of truth. Thus could be imparted a deeper knowledge, a larger life, a more Christlike mind, than was possible before God was revealed in the Son of his love.

Is not this, then, what is meant by the fulness, the plenary baptism, of the Spirit, which was not given till Jesus was glorified?



Such is the significance of Pentecost; and we are in no danger of estimating it too highly. It may be truly called "the consummation of our Lord's life on earth." It marks with its tongues of fire the fulness of spiritual vision and power in Christ—its fulness and its perpetuity. Wonderful were the days of the Son of Man, all alone in their perfect expression of the heart of God—in speech, deed, spirit, suffering and conquering love for us men and our salvation. Will they ever return? Not they themselves; but their fulfilment is now, and is coming evermore. For the Spirit's interpretation of the Risen Lord, renewal of the heart in his likeness, guidance into all the truth—this Divine administration is not for one generation only but for this whole world-age.

Christianity, then, is the religion—shall we say, of Jesus Christ? Yes, but of Jesus Christ as interpreted,

revealed, made intimately near the believing and obedient soul by the Spirit.

Now, therefore, it is in this age of the redemption and education of man, affluent as it is in gracious gifts and opportunities, that the preacher of our own time goes forth to the ministry whereunto he is called. How may we conceive of the secret of his power? In the opening paragraph of the Epistle to "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion," Peter answers the question. Speaking of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that followed, he says: "Which now have been announced to you through them that preach the gospel unto you by [or, *in*] the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven." Here, then, is the "mystery," the unveiled secret, of pulpit power—"preached the gospel unto you *by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven.*"

Surely if ever a man was prepared to teach such a truth, it was Simon Peter, this first Christian preacher. For if ever a man had reason to know it in personal experience, it was he. Imagine him preaching the gospel before Pentecost! But the ascending Saviour had said: "Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you." And when, in less than two weeks, the promise was fulfilled, see this same disciple of Jesus, "filled with the Holy Spirit," declaring to the faithless house of Israel: "God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified." The people, cut to the heart, are crying, "What shall we do?" and there are added to the one little Christian congregation about three thousand souls. Well might such a preacher write of "them that

preached the gospel unto you *by the Holy Spirit.*” And well might the book of Acts have been called in the early Church “the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.”

VI

Shall we meditate upon the way of the Spirit in the preaching of the gospel? Let us at least ask why it is that he should reach the heart with his heavenly power through evangelic truth and the preacher’s personality.

First, Why through evangelic truth? Here again Peter answers our question. For when he reminds his readers that the facts of redemption, the sufferings and the glory of Christ, were “announced” to them by the preachers of the gospel, it is suggested that these facts of redemption were not a creation of the preacher himself. He was only their announcer. They were Divine facts; they were the truth of Christ; they were words of the Eternal Word who was in the beginning with God and who was God. “If any man speaketh,” says our same Apostle, “speaking as it were oracles of God.”* Is it any wonder that such a message as that should be illumined and enforced by the Holy Spirit in Christian preaching? It is the veritable instrument of his power—the seed of Divine truth, the sword of the Spirit.

VII

Secondly, why should the Spirit reach the heart *through the preacher’s personality?* Here we have only

* I Peter, 4: 11.

to bear in mind what this personality is. It is that of "a man in Christ." It is that of a man through whom Christ would utter himself to men. It is the evangel of Jesus embodied in a person, shining forth in an individual life, and thus making appeal through a man to his fellow-men.

Think of a preacher in the act of highest self-expression in the pulpit, his mind saturated with a sacred theme, his heart uplifted to the Source of spiritual power and at the same time drawn close in sympathy to the souls of men. What a joy it is now to preach! There is a freedom and rapture of utterance, as if his words were spoken through him by Another. Mastered by a great conviction, he was never so free. Conscious of weakness, he is girded with strength. Losing himself, he is most truly at himself. Speaking for Christ, self-committed to him, with the inward prayer, "That thou mayest be glorified," he speaks with his own voice indeed, but not by his own unaided effort. Very tenderly he speaks, with a word in season to him that is weary, but boldly withal, as he ought to speak.

And the people respond, perhaps with one mind and heart, as to a man inwardly possessed and swayed by the God-given message falling from his lips.

Shall not this humanized truth, then, be a medium of the Holy Spirit to the sin-smitten soul? "By the manifestation of the truth commending *ourselves*"—the truth as embodied in ourselves—"to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

VIII

I trust that we may see truly. But it is certain that even the most illumined New Testament prophets knew and prophesied only in part. Thanks be unto God for the assurance of a fuller revelation when that which is perfect shall have come. Meantime the doer of the Heavenly Father's will shall have light enough to walk and work by. Nor is it an idle benediction when the apostolic minister blesses the people, praying that they may have "the communion of the Holy Spirit."

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said unto them" * (unto the assembled Sanhedrin)—and no wonder that his words were with power even upon the hardened minds of his unbelieving judges. "For it is not ye that speak," said the Master, "but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Think of such a possibility in one's own life. "Filled with the Holy Spirit:" it is the supreme equipment for the ministry of preaching to any audience anywhere.

But just how that Spirit of the living God touches, quickens, inspires the spirit of man, who would ask to know? One had as well aspire to discover how that same Spirit brought out of the primitive waste of waters the earth which is our happy and fruitful home this day. Frederick Robertson, describing the birth of a great human friendship, speaks of a time "when, as it were, moving about in the darkness and loneliness of existence, we suddenly come into contact with

*Acts 4: 8-13.

something, and we find that spirit has touched spirit." Through the mediation of some physical sign, a beaming eye, a voice, a hand-grasp, one human spirit has touched another, and there may result "the mystic blending of two souls in one." Shall not the Eternal Spirit have power to touch the spirit which he has made, to hear its voice and to renew its life?

Remember, no thinker, nor any mind of any order, can tell the genesis of his thoughts. Out of a vast Unknown they enter, under certain physical circumstances, into the little but wonderful sphere of his present consciousness; and that is about all that he can tell.

Men speak of the world's rare geniuses as being original; but there is none of these gifted spirits that can describe the origination of his ideas. How did the mind get hold of them? whence came they? out of what depths did they arise? "In the stillness of meditation thought bursts into flame"—true enough, but what is this thought-burst? More than one writer doubtless has been ready to say as did Thackeray concerning his own best thoughts: "I have no idea where it all comes from; I am often astounded myself to read it after I have got it down on paper."

We are told that Haydn, musical genius and devout Christian, declared concerning the chorus in his oratorio of the Creation: "Not from me but from above it all came." It was in such a spirit, indeed, that the whole of this greatest of the great composer's oratorios seems to have been wrought out. "I fell on my knees daily," he says, "and prayed earnestly to God that

he would grant me strength to carry out the work, and to praise him worthily." It suggests the faith and humility of the forerunner of Jesus: "A man can receive nothing except it have been given him from heaven." It is the Christian's faith with respect to that spiritual mind which is the highest and best in his own inner life—

"And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness
Are Thine alone."

The true and holy thought, the spiritual insight, the Christward aspiration, are they ours? They are ours, the speech of our own souls, but through God's own speech in the soul. They are his; they are ours; and we have no power to separate in our thinking between what is human in them and what is Divine.

Take as a most suggestive example one of the Apostle Paul's inspired utterances on the witness of the Spirit: "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father." But how is this? One might say: "I thought it was the Christian himself who had the filial feeling toward God and cried to him, Father." What, then, can the meaning be when we are told that it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son of God, who cries to him, "Father"? Is this voice of sonship both the Spirit's voice and our own? It is so indeed, both his and ours. It is ours because we have it, and his because he inspires it. For it did not originate with us. It is an in-breathing of the Spirit. It is by him that the filial

voice toward God is awakened in us, and hence the apostle speaks of it as the Spirit's own voice—the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts crying “Father.”

“Draw if thou canst the mystic line
Severing rightly His from thine,
Which is human, which Divine.”

IX

There is nothing that lies nearer to many a Christian pastor's heart than a genuine revival in his congregation. On what conditions may the desire of his heart be realized? Volumes, replete with the teachings of Scripture and of modern experience, and vibrant with stirring appeals, have been written on the subject. Meetings are to be held—and how best conducted? Much personal work with individuals is to be done—zealously, tactfully. There must be plans, expedients, methods. But amid it all the wise pastor and the evangelistic Church will ever have in mind that Divine method through which revival power is always available. It is no recently discovered method, but as old as the Church itself, and as familiar, at least to the ears of a Christian congregation, as the apostolic benediction. We know quite well that it is no other than “the communion of the Holy Spirit.”

And into this life-giving communion, not some select class but all who will may enter. Observe, it is not a matter of human wish or expectation, which may or may not be fulfilled, but of God's word, his will, his law. There is a “law of sin and death,” which is this: “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.” There is

also "a law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," and it is this: "If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." For here is the kingdom of the Heavenly Father with whom is no blind force, on the one hand, nor any variableness and uncertainty, on the other. All is personal and all is sure. The law is holy and inexorable love.

A church, therefore, on its knees, repentant, trusting, making supplication according to the will of God—entering thus into the communion of the Spirit—must be recipient of spiritual power. It must be quickened unto newness of life.

And such a revival will not be something apart from the regular life and work of the church, but an intensification of that life in preacher and people. "So the church . . . walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, *was multiplied.*"

Thou ever-present Spirit, may we not turn here and there in search of thee. Create within us the willing mind, the responsive heart. May we let go every evil thing, the idol, the bad temper, the bad practice, that would hinder thy abiding in our inmost self. So shall we have thee, even thee thyself, thou Light of light, for our teacher, and be clad from thee with the garment of power.

XIV

EFFECTS OF POWER

For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.—ACTS 10: 46.

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.—ACTS 10: 48.

Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life.—ACTS 11: 18.

THE Christian preacher's desire and prayer to God is that he may have an effective ministry—a ministry of *effects*.

True, he is not to grow impatient or disheartened at the delay of visible effects. It becomes him, like any shepherd of souls in any age, to consent that this ministry to the innermost life shall prove to be a work of faith and a patience of hope. Let Adoniram Judson, to take a classic instance, labour for years in heathen Burmah with almost no success. Let him be imprisoned and bound with fetters, in excruciating pain, under cruel keepers. He may still have the heart to reply, with the sublime simplicity that is in Christ, when asked what in his judgment are the missionary prospects, "As bright as the promises of God." Out upon whining and gloom!

"Be strong!

It matters not how deep intrenched the wrong,
How hard the battle goes, the day how long;
Faint not, fight on! To-morrow comes the song."

Even though the "to-morrow" with its triumphant song should be theirs who shall come after us and not our very own, what of that? To-day with its battle is the principal thing; and this is ours, graciously given of God. Six or seven years did Robert Morrison, the pioneer evangelic missionary in China, wait for his first Christian convert. Last summer, on the other hand, a Young Men's Christian Association secretary, George Sherwood Eddy, held meetings there for students, business men, women, boys, and others, out of which came thousands of enquirers for the knowledge of Christ and Christianity. Was it Eddy's achievement, or Morrison's of a hundred years before, or was it the Lord's achievement through the succession of his faithful representatives in that ancient and wonderful non-Christian land? And whose is this to-morrow, awaiting still greater yet to come, with its victors' song of joy and praise? Together shall the earlier and the later workers and warriors of Christ rejoice.

Nevertheless, the bravest and most faithful soul is still "human." Oftentimes his burden is heavy. He craves approval and is pained by apparent lack of success. He wants to see Christian converts, changed lives, the growth of souls, multiplied Christian workers, under his ministry.

Needless to say, it was so with such a one as "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God." "I am perplexed about you," we see him writing to his churches in Galatia. He had given himself to them without stint as minister and friend. They had begun well, "begun in the Spirit"; but now with their ob-

servance of "days and months and seasons and years"—trusting an outworn ritual for salvation—they seemed to have fallen away from the saving evangel of Christ. "I am perplexed about you." Worse than that, he wrote, "I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labour upon you in vain."

On the other hand, how eagerly did the strong-hearted apostle welcome the comfort and strength that came to him and his fellow-workers from the fruits of their ministry. "For now we live [life is for us life indeed] if ye stand fast in the Lord."

I

Essential Christianity has been described as "right relations between man and God and man and man, together with the power to create them." These, at least, are two notes of the religion of Jesus that make it incomparable among the religions of the world. But this or that Christian preacher may be in doubt whether, as a matter of fact, these right relations are being created under his particular ministrations. Hear him in the solitude of his study, this bearer of the last and best word of God to the world, meditatively asking, Is this great evangel which I have undertaken to preach truly enlightening the people, and, together with the wisdom it gives them, is there a Divine creative power really relating them to God as his children and to men as their brothers in Christ?

But the answer to such a questioning cannot be thought out in the preacher's study. It must be seen and heard in the human life about him—in the congre-

gation to which he ministers and the community in which he lives. Seen and heard; for though the answer relates to the things of the spirit, it is given in sensible signs.

When a playmate of my childhood was told that a boy friend of his had been converted, he asked, "How will John look?" A trivial incident, unworthy of note except as illustrating the instinctive expectation that a person shall seem what he is. Let him show his colours. Let him look like himself. My inquisitive playmate, one may be sure, did not discover any such preternatural change in his familiar friend as he had seemed to expect. Yet the heart of his enquiry was the too little pondered truth that every man, whether he wills to do it or not, is continually pronouncing judgment, in the presence of other people, upon himself. His spirit will speak in the tones of his voice. His habit of thought and speech will write itself upon his face. "Wouldn't you like to be a Christian?" said a man of forbidding countenance to the author of "The Song of the Shirt." "No," was the witty poet's too caustic reply, "not if it makes me feel as you look." How would a perfect Christian be likely to *appear*?

Attaching no fanciful or undue importance to mere facial expression, we may still speak quite soberly of the soul in a face. Every man's soul is in his face, but not always or in all persons equally evident. It is there at times, glowing or glowering, in quite extraordinary self-revelment. It might have been seen on the first recorded day of human hate: "And Cain was very wroth and his countenance fell:" it was seen on the

first recorded day of Christian martyrdom: "And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Verily it is good to look upon a habitually joy-illuminated face. "When he rose from his knees," said a friend of the worshipper, "I saw for the first time the significance of Pentecost. The weariness had gone. The dark care-lines were wiped out. The face was all aglow with a renewed flame." "He was so cheerful," says Dr. W. T. Grenfell of a converted Labrador ruffian who had developed through his faith in Christ a ruling passion to save his fellows,—“he was so cheerful and so uniformly optimistic that his very face became transparent with happiness.” Have we not known something of this—

"Of those clear souls whose shining face
Made beauty whensoever they came,
Hearts full of tenderest love and grace,
For truth and right a glorious flame?"

It is especially good to recognize such changes of countenance as show the passing of the cloud of doubt or despondency, under the light of faith and hope and love. One such instance I gratefully remember. A woman of mature life, in a rural Christian home, had never been able to claim for herself with a satisfying trust the forgiving love of God. The lack of such assurance had clouded her life. Despondency had become her habitual expression. She was invited to attend a meeting to be held in the neighbourhood. "I would go, if I thought it worth while," was the reply. She did not think it worth while, but nevertheless went.

That evening, kneeling at a rude bench in a meeting-house where she had knelt, apparently in vain, more than once before, she found the Saviour and—was transfigured. She looked indeed another soul. Not only that evening but through the following days and months—so far as I could learn, ever afterward—the light of peace and joy rested on her face. Every one remarked the change, no one seemed to doubt its reality. It was at the beginning of my ministry, fifty-one years ago; and the only apology for recording it here is the encouragement of that daily visible “sign” of Divine power in even a preacher’s first crude endeavour to minister the gospel of the Light of the world, whom if any man follow he shall have the very “light of life.”

II

But it is the inner effects of the Spirit’s power rather than their outward signs that are chiefly to engage our attention. These, as already suggested, are spiritual states. They are experiences, conscious dispositions, deepening into habits, and thus becoming holy character. And the form of their manifestation is not distinctively, as we well know, in one’s appearance, but in the whole course of one’s conduct. Appearing thus in the daily life, they bear witness to the truth of God’s own life of holy love in the soul.

Note the teaching of a familiar precept in our Lord’s sermon on the Mount: “Even so,”—namely, as a lamp on a lamp-stand—“let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify”—

not you, the doer of the good works. Not that others may give you glory. But why not? Is it not, as Jesus said, “*your light*”? Should you not be praised for the light of truth and goodness that may shine out in “*your good works*”? Ay, in a sense; but in the deeper and Divine sense, No. That light of truth and goodness is kindled by the Spirit of God; it is given of God, and will be recognized by others as such. That they may “glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

It is the same truth of Christian conduct—learned from these very words of Jesus?—to which Peter would have his Jewish brethren give heed: “Having your behaviour seemly among the Gentiles, that . . . they may by your good works which they behold *glorify God* in the day of visitation.”* Happy the man to whom it should be said, as a man on the road once said to Francis of Assisi: “There are many who know you and praise God for you.” Instinctively will the faithful heart make answer, as Francis did, “God be praised.”

It is the indwelling Spirit of God whose effects are visible in the good works and seemly behaviour of his children.

III

Now, there were some such effects immediately apparent in the congregation at Cæsarea. One was *praisefulness*: “They heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.” Another was *confession*: unoffended by the shame of the cross, they were baptized “in the

* I Peter 2: 12.

name of Jesus Christ." Still another was the *desire for Christian teaching and fellowship*: "Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." Accordingly we hear the church in Jerusalem giving glory to God that these Gentiles had received the gift of "*repentance unto life*," and Peter, in the council held subsequently, speaking of the "*cleansing*" of "their hearts by *faith*."

All which is another mark of universality in the religion of Jesus. There was not to be one type of religious experience and character for Jerusalem and another for Cæsarea, one for the foremost apostle of Jesus and another for a captain of the Roman army. No caste. No exclusivism. Peter had already, on the day of Pentecost, preaching to "Jews, devout men of every nation under heaven," declared, "*Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*." It was no peculiar treasure of the Apostles and other disciples who had just received it. The promise which it fulfilled was "to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God should call unto him."

Thus the new effusion of the Spirit's power that is to attend the utterance of God's word is to attend it everywhere. Greater than prophets of Israel saw and heard, even when kings cried out in confession of sin before them, greater than the Seventy sent out by Jesus saw and heard, though they returned exultant with the report, "Even the demons are subject unto us in thy name," greater than any prophet or evangelist ever knew before the day when the things that are Jesus Christ's could be shown by the Spirit to the believing heart, are the effects of spiritual power

which may attend the ministry of the evangelic preacher to-day.

IV

Will we suffer just here a word of caution? Do not expect too much of that which is at best imperfect—even of a regenerate soul. The moral standard, be it remembered, according to which we habitually judge a Christian, is the highest possible; and to say, or silently to act upon the assumption, that a man must be a perfect Christian or not a Christian at all, “filled with the Spirit” or else not under the power of the Spirit at all, would be going far astray.

“Having become his disciples, let us live according to Christianity,” wrote Ignatius of Antioch in one of his letters to the churches. It was a difficult life to live, a terribly tested life, in the pagan surroundings of Ignatius and the brethren to whom he was writing in the first half of the second century—on his way at this very time to the lions of the Colosseum. It is a difficult and severely tested life to live in the pagan surroundings of the few Christians here and there in such a country, let us say, as China in the first half of the twentieth century. Hundreds of Chinese Christians were called a few years ago to witness for their faith with their life-blood. But will any one anywhere who has been endeavouring to live this highest and holiest life, to “live according to Christianity,” to “walk by the Spirit,” describe it as a broad and easy way? “It does not take much of a man,” some one has said, “to be a Christian, but it

takes all there is of him all the time." Even the power of the Spirit, without which no step can be taken in this way of life, can make a man a Christian only with his consent and daily coöperation.

Hence the need of enlightened and sympathetic judgment as to the reality of spiritual life in any particular case.

To be somewhat more specific. Here is an old man brought to Christ. Sadly enough, it is a rare occurrence; but happily not impossible or unprecedented. It has taken place, let us suppose, under your own ministry. What have you, then? A soul that had grown old in sin. His moral habit, formed and fixed through a long succession of years, was that of indifference, neglect, profaneness, resistance to the Holy Spirit; and the result, an almost hopeless insensibility. Yet not altogether hopeless, as his conversion has proved.

May we reasonably expect that some genuine effects of spiritual power will appear in such a man? Undoubtedly; and we need to recognize and encourage whatever signs of the new life, breaking through the old encrusted insensibility, may spring up and grow. But, on the other hand, that we shall see the fruits of the Spirit in all their varied beauty and perfection is extremely improbable.

And here, at the other extreme of our allotted length of years, is a little child not yet in what we should call the age of discretion and responsibility. How soon may the Holy Spirit touch the child-soul with his renewing and formative life? Surely at the very dawn

of moral consciousness. Let us trust that Spirit of life to do it. Let us be co-workers with him.

Let the father and mother know that their own teaching and personality are a chosen means of the Spirit in the spiritual nurture of the child that has been given into their arms by the Father in heaven. And let the minister of him who said, "To such belongeth the kingdom of God," know that the most fruitful field of his ministry is childhood and youth. Let him be glad to yield his own teaching and personality, day by day, to coöperation with the Spirit in opening the heart of the young, from infancy on, toward the Master and Saviour. Is he prone to undervalue this priceless opportunity and the consequent obligation? Horace Bushnell said that he thought of nothing in his ministry with so little respect as of his omissions here. "*With more regret,*" he said, "and so little respect." In which touching confession that noble Christian thinker and preacher by no means stands alone.

But here again the wisdom of a true spiritual discrimination is needed. The Christian child's life will indeed express something of the grace of God's renewing love in the heart, but it will be only an incipient expression, such as is possible to childhood. The attempt to force it into forms natural to adult religious experience would be a deed of violence. And to deny its genuineness because of its incipiency would be worse.

v

That which should be ever expected under the word of preaching, without reference to the age of its hearers, is the new birth of the soul.

Are we willing to look at this new birth for a few moments from the viewpoint of personal experience? Remember, first of all, that every one is governed by some supreme motive or allied group of motives; and it is this governing motive that, in each case, determines the character. Whatsoever motive governs any man's moral conduct, that is what that man really *is*. That is what he has made and is making of himself. Governed is he by appetite? by the desire for property? by the craving for esteem? by natural affection? These and the like are all proper and good in their place. They have not been given us to war against the soul. They are not enemies but, in their proper activities, helpers of the true human life. They are necessary to the making of the man. They are the push of nature, God-given, toward the different external goods that are necessary to personal life and upbuilding. But they do perpetually lead the soul into sin by transgressing their Divinely prescribed limits—healthful desire corrupting itself into gluttony, covetousness, revenge, selfish ambition, lust. Thus, the will, yielding to unholy passion, becomes self-will, which is antagonism to the good and holy will of God.

But let the motive now be enthroned which has the right to rule. Let the usurpers of the seat of govern-

ment in the kingdom of the soul be put down. There will be a radical inner change. The man will be made over, reconstructed, according to the creative and redemptive idea of humanity. And need I remind you that this motive, reigning by Divine right, is filial love to God and fraternal love to mankind? Or, what is in effect the same thing, it is the spirit of obedience to the will of the Heavenly Father as the supreme law of life.

It is when this motive is enthroned that the man is said, in the language of the New Testament, to be regenerated. He now lives a right life. He lives indeed, for he is reborn. He is God's child, God's man. And this reconstruction, this birth from above, this impartation of the highest life, is indeed through the faith of the recipient, but it is *by* the Divine energy in the soul. "By grace ye have been saved, through faith."

Here is the secret of peace; for here is the cure of the divided self. Let that which has the Divine right, even holy love, bear rule. Let Christ be master—"he is Lord of all." So, and only so, will there come into realization the true unity of personal life, the harmony of powers in which is spiritual health and peace.

VI

Not, however, that this lawful kingdom of the soul becomes forthwith a veritable kingdom of heaven. On the contrary, dethroned motives may be expected to strive again for the ascendancy, and will have to be subdued as before. They must not be dealt with softly.

Be a stern and uncompromising master of your lower nature. No "needless softness or self-indulgence." The body's duty, like the soldier's duty, is to obey. "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage"—into that bondage to moral law which is the man's truest freedom. "For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness, but of power and love and *discipline* (*σωφρονισμός*, soundness of mind, moderation, self-control)."

Now this regulation of the lower motives and the perpetual strengthening of the reign of moral love is called in the New Testament by several significant names. It is edification; it is growth in faith or knowledge or love; it is perfecting holiness; it is living and walking in the Spirit.

Here, then, in the Christian growth and activities of his congregation, as well as in the new birth of the soul, the preacher's heart may be gladdened by the signs of spiritual power. These, under a pastoral and evangelic as contradistinguished from an evangelistic ministration of the gospel.

A work of evangelism we are surely called to do, but just as surely a work of teaching and discipline. It is a peculiarly significant fact that the foremost evangelist of the eighteenth century was the founder of Kingswood School, the organizer of the first Tract Society, and the writer or editor of about two hundred books, and that the foremost evangelist of the last generation made it so large a part of his work to establish and direct his Bible Institute and his schools at Northfield and Mt. Hermon. "*Teaching them*"—it is a part of the Great Commission itself.

Think of the texts and Scripture lessons in the New Testament for a pastoral pulpit. Or, imagine, if you can, courses of sermons on the Four Gospels and the Epistles in which there was not set forth a large body of teaching and admonition to Christian believers. To preach the New Testament is to preach diligently to the Church.

“He that prophesieth,” says the great evangelizing and teaching apostle in his instructions to the young Christians of Corinth, “speaketh unto men edification and exhortation and consolation.” The Christian prophet, therefore, is not simply a preacher before whom the secrets of a man’s sinful heart will, for the first time perhaps, be “made manifest, and so he will fall down on his face and worship God.” He is also an upbuilder of the converted soul in the knowledge of Christ.

And the upbuilder must needs be a comforter, with a ministry of healing—speaking unto men “consolation.” Great is the need of it. For in all our congregations are the faint-hearted, the troubled, the sorrowing—souls in prison, souls in pain. I do not speak of the effusively sentimental or the amiably selfish, who would impose their burdens upon others. These call for a somewhat different treatment. I am thinking of the Little-faiths, the real sufferers in body and mind, the broken in spirit. “He is the only minister,” said one of these, naming an occasional preacher in the pulpit of her church, “who offers me any comfort.”

Would you be thought of as a friend? do people

honour you with the title "brother"? "A friend loveth at all times and a brother is born for adversity." Would you learn the loving tactfulness of a wise-hearted minister of Jesus? Study the Epistle to Philemon. Would you be a daily and lifelong pupil of the Spirit? Here is a part of the spiritual art which he would teach: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary."

It was one of the distinguishing notes in the ministry of the Son of Man:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor . . .
To set at liberty them that are bruised."

"Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Blessed indeed is that servant of the Master upon whom rests, in some measure as upon the Master himself, the power to give light to them that sit in the shadow of death and to heal the broken-hearted.

Moreover, we may learn from the Master that to comfort is to make strong. That, indeed, was the original sense of the word—not to condole but to strengthen. When, for example, it was written some hundreds of years ago in the Invitation to the Lord's Table, "Take this holy sacrament to your comfort," the meaning was, "to your strengthening"; and such is the word's best meaning still. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." How, then, does a mother comfort the hurt child? Sympatheti-

cally? To be sure; but if she be wise, not by engaging his attention with the sickness or the wound that has befallen him, but by calling it off to pleasant and encouraging thoughts. This lessens the pain, which the other method would have increased, and tends to healing and health.

Rest assured the case is the same with him who would fain minister to the burdened or sorrowing soul. There is a better way to help such a one to bear his burdens than to talk to him about them. Probably he is dwelling too much upon them already, which certainly makes them harder to bear. Listen to the story of grief, patient and gentle pastor, sympathetically, but be ready to give an inspiring and not a depressive sympathy. Call off the mind from disease to the power of renewal, from sadness to hope, from evil to good, from man to God.

To be not a mere condoler but an uplifter, to encourage (which means to *give courage*), that is to be a comforter indeed. "The Lord God has given me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to *sustain with words* him that is weary." Weariness is weakness. The Divinely taught comforter is a sustainer, a courage-giver, a strength-giver to the faint heart and feeble will.

VII

Now, the various concordant experiences and states in which the regenerate life expresses itself are described in a metaphor of the Apostle Paul as "fruits of the Spirit." He contrasts them with works of the

flesh, which, he says, are "manifest." But the fruits of the Spirit—such as peace, joy, self-control, love—are likewise manifest. They appear not only in the consciousness of their possessor, but to others also; and they cannot be hid.

In our day ten thousand witnesses, of all varieties of temperament and from all manner of circumstances and situations, might be summoned to tell what they know of these gracious experiences in their everyday life.

Is it a question of peace? "A while ago," says Grenfell of Labrador, "I spent some twenty-four hours floating on the great Atlantic Ocean, on a small pan of ice, on to which I had crawled out of the freezing water. No picture was formed on my retina of a single living soul. However, I slept peacefully through a large part of the night, in the absolute conviction of an unseen Presence, and of something better before me, even if it should be behind the sun which rose in the morning gloriously from behind the boundless horizon."

Do we enquire concerning joy? "When fifteen years old," says Frances Ridley Havergal, whose soulful hymns we so often sing, "I committed my soul to the Saviour, and earth and heaven seemed brighter from that moment."

Do we ask for courage and self-control? "To attempt speaking was vain," wrote Wesley in his Journal concerning the riotous mob of Wednesbury; "for the noise on every side was like the roaring of the sea. So they dragged me along till we came to the town,

where seeing the door of a large house open, I attempted to go in; but a man catching me by the hair, pulled me back into the middle of the mob. . . . I continued speaking all the time to those within hearing, feeling no pain or weariness. . . . From the beginning to the end I found the same presence of mind as if I had been sitting in my own study."

Would we hear of sacrificial love? "If I am permitted," replied Reginald Heber, when expostulated with on his decision to go as a missionary bishop to India, "to rescue one miserable Brahmin from his wretched superstition, I shall think myself amply rewarded for the sacrifice."

Peace, joy, self-control, love—these are fruits of that Spirit whose fulness of grace the Christian believer, according to the word of Jesus, may receive.

And the greatest of these is love. It must needs be so, if love is the eternally ordained governing motive of the kingdom within.

It is noteworthy, too, that in Paul's naming of fruits of the Spirit, love is given first—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." On the other hand, in his naming of the three great elements of spiritual experience and character, which he contrasts with "gifts," love is last—"And now abideth faith, hope, love." Also, in the Second Epistle of Peter this latter order has been chosen—faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.* Again, Paul bids "God's elect" to whom he is writing to clothe them-

* II Peter 1: 5-7.

selves with compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, "and above all these things, love, which is the bond of perfectness." In each case, however, the meaning would seem to be the same. Love is first, as that law of the spirit of life in Christ of which the whole of spiritual character is an expression. And it is simply declaring the same truth to say that love is last, as that in which the whole of spiritual character is summed up and included.

But why amplify illustration or proof? The conclusive word was spoken—and to its truth our best knowledge of human life and character bears witness—by the Master himself, when he named the first and great commandment and a second like unto it. "On these two commandments the whole law hangeth, and the prophets." In a word, the all-inclusive effect of the indwelling Spirit's power, in preacher and people, is that state of heart, soul, strength, mind, which Jesus has called love to God, and that care for our neighbour which, Jesus says, must move on the same plane as care for ourselves. And for the preacher of Jesus' word to see evidences of that effect under his ministrations, is to be thankful and satisfied.

VIII

He would fain see it, however, not only in the life of this or that individual but dominant in the Church. And that it may become so, he must needs be a prophet of righteousness. Let him preach to men—to them, not *at* them—as the Hebrew prophets did, as the Master

did, in the language of their own age and concerning the sins of their own lives. Let him preach to the times, but out of the timeless—eternal truth to the short-lived men of the day.

There may be some in the congregation who will not bear it. As in Jerusalem under Isaiah's preaching, they will "say to the seers, See not." For in the cushioned pew as elsewhere are sins of fleshly indulgence, of lying, of fraudulent business practices, of worldliness, of impurity, of profane language and conduct; and these instinctively complain, perhaps in attempted self-justification, under the white light of truth. Shall God's prophet shut his eyes, that he may not "see," and keep silent, that he may not offend? Silence speaks consent.

Courteous, gentle, loving, not "marring the work of grace with his own ungraciousness," but fearless and faithful must be the spokesman for the enthronement of Christ in the Christian congregation.

Indeed, the completer ideal and the unwearying endeavour will be to make of the community itself a kingdom of righteousness and brotherhood. For the Christ of the Church is Jesus of Nazareth. He is Lord of labour and the workshop, of the marriage-feast and the home, of little children, of city and country, of nature as well as man, of the body as well as the soul, of the crowd as well as the individual. "And upon this came his disciples; and they marvelled that he was speaking with a woman"—*one solitary soul*, one sinful woman, who had come to fill her pitcher with living water at Jacob's well. "And when

He drew nigh he saw the city and wept over it, saying, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"—a sinful *city* which he would fain have saved from the foreseen storm of sorrow and devastation.

A self-centred church, keeping to itself, on the defensive, unwilling to use and to lose its life for the gospel's sake, practically indifferent to the physical, social, and moral welfare of the world about it, may fairly represent the earlier monastic idea of Christianity; but it does not represent the Christianity which the preaching of Peter would introduce into the great Gentile world, when he offered to the Cæsareans, as Leader and Saviour: "Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all) . . . even Jesus of Nazareth . . . who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil." "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." A church that would follow the "Lord of all" must go about "doing good." It must be an apostolic church, which is to say, a church of the sent-forth.

Spiritual power is very wide-reaching in its effects. It makes for the well-being of the whole man. It quickens heart and conscience to promote healthful conditions of living, decent and seemly homes, sanitation, prevention of drunkenness, cure of disease, destruction of the agencies of vice, good schools, good government, obedience to law, just and beneficent industrial conditions, veracity in trade, the overthrow of the modern

Moloch of greed that is still feeding upon the lives of little children.

In diligently striving for these things in her Lord's name, a church is showing herself not worldly but unworldly, not spiritually indifferent but faithful toward the reign of Christ on earth. Surely the God who, sending forth his Spirit, renews the face of the earth, would have his people cooperate with him in renewing by that same Spirit both the face and the heart of the human world.

"I expect," says the author of "The Tongue of Fire," "to see cities swept from end to end, their manners elevated, their commerce purified, their politics Christianized, their criminal population reformed, their poor made to feel that they dwell among brethren—righteousness in the streets, peace in the homes, an altar at every fireside—*because I believe in the Holy Ghost.*"

XV

CERTAIN SIGNS OF POWER

For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.—ACTS 10: 46.

“THEY heard them speak with tongues.” Here was an extraordinary outflow of power. To Peter and the brethren from Joppa it showed, as indubitably as unexpectedly, that “on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit.” What does it mean for us?

In apostolic language it is described not as one of the “fruits of the Spirit,” but as a “spiritual gift (*χάρισμα*).” Something of its nature may be learned from Paul’s instructions, in the fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians, concerning its use and abuse. It is there referred to as an ecstatic utterance of prayer or praise—so here, in Peter’s congregation, “They heard them speak with tongues and *magnify God*”—unintelligible, for the most part or wholly, both to speaker and hearer. Accordingly it did not serve as a means of edification to the Christian people, but as a sign to the unbelieving.

There were some Christians, however, who had the gift of interpreting this rapt spiritual utterance. If such a one were present, let him interpret. If, on the contrary, there were no interpreter present, then

it were better—at least in the Corinthian church, to which the apostle is writing—not to speak aloud “in a tongue.” “Let him speak to himself and to God.” For the congregational law of love was: “Let all things be done unto edifying.”

I

In this apostolic teaching, then, three things are noteworthy: (1) The gift of tongues is recognized, together with other spiritual gifts, as a sign of the Spirit's power; (2) Of the several spiritual gifts, prophesying is distinguished as more to be desired, because of its greater usefulness, than “speaking in a tongue”; (3) Above all spiritual gifts—incommensurable with them, shall we not say?—is commended that supreme grace of character, holy love. The whole truth is compacted into a single verse: “Follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy.”

Here is indeed a large and luminous word. Delivered by the great apostolic interpreter of Christianity, who declared that as for himself he would rather speak in the congregation five words with his understanding, that he might instruct others, “than ten thousand words in a tongue,” it is applicable yet. True, the gift of tongues as a significant form of rapturous speech has ceased; but not that which it signified. For the same spiritual power as of old is expressing itself still, not only in the manifold fruits of the Spirit—which is the chief thing—but also in sundry impressive “signs.”

That is to say, there do still occur remarkable emotional experiences and outward manifestations in the Christian life. The evangelic preacher is likely to welcome them as occurring under his ministry. It will give him joy to speak the word of truth with such "signs following." But he will also, as a faithful disciple in the school of Christ, learn, as Paul did, to estimate them at their true value in comparison with one another and in relation to the crowning virtue of Christian love.

To illustrate. Suppose the preacher, while faithfully delivering his message, should see one of his hearers suddenly fall down and call upon God for mercy. And in that same hour the prayer of contrition is changed into a song of praise. This would seem to be some such scene as that which took place in the Corinthian church, when, under the spoken word of God from the lips of this or that spiritually gifted believer, an "unbelieving and unlearned" man would have the secrets of his heart made manifest—"and so he will fall down on his face and worship God, declaring that God is among you indeed." Might not that be accepted—the modern as well as the ancient marvel—as an extraordinary sign of Divine power?

There have been many events of this order in the history of modern Christianity. They are familiar, or may easily become so, to every one interested in the subject. Under some word of pungent pulpit speech, men have trembled from head to foot, or cried aloud, or fallen prostrate and lain for a time as one dead.

“While I was earnestly inviting all sinners to ‘enter into the holiest’ by this ‘new and living way,’ many of those that heard began to call upon God with strong cries and tears. Some sunk down, and there remained no strength in them; others exceedingly trembled and quaked; some were torn with a kind of convulsive motion in every part of their bodies, and that so violently that often four or five persons could not hold one of them.”—Wesley, “Journal,” June 15, 1739.

Such occurrences have been most frequent in time of extraordinary religious revival. They seem to have taken place in most instances through the thought of sin and retribution and of redemption by the cross of Christ, brought home with strong conviction and vivid realism to the imagination, conscience, and heart of the hearer. In the English and the American Wesleyan Revival and in that of New England under the leadership of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield, they were such as to attract wide attention, both sympathetic and critical.

“Wesley could never reach any conclusive opinion of their character, though he instituted, at Newcastle, a sort of scientific investigation of their causes and symptoms. . . . Richard Watson has expressed the general sentiment of Methodists concerning them, that though they are evidently physical, arising from some occult nervous susceptibility, peculiar perhaps to certain constitutions, they do not prove that an extraordinary work of God is not at the same time going on in the hearts of persons so affected.”—Stevens, “History of the Methodist Episcopal Church,” Vol. I., pp. 382-83.

Similar phenomena attended the Revival which prevailed so mightily in Kentucky and elsewhere—the “Scotch-Irish Revival,” it has been called—at the opening of the nineteenth century.

Peter Cartwright, the famous backwoods preacher, was converted at one of the meetings in connection with this remarkable evangelistic movement, and in

his biography, an intensely interesting narrative, gives the testimony, together with the estimate, of an enthusiastic but clever and sharp-sighted eye-witness, as to some of its physical phenomena.

It will be noted that he regards that extraordinary convulsive exercise, the "jerks," when spontaneous and irresistible, as a sign of Divine power and judgment, but as also in some cases a morbid contagion; and that he found the best remedy for it to be prayer:

"I have seen more than a hundred sinners fall like dead men under one powerful sermon, and I have seen and heard more than five hundred Christians all shouting aloud the high praises of God at once. . . .

"Just in the midst of our controversies on the subject of the powerful exercises among the people under preaching, a new exercise broke out among us called the *jerks*, which was overwhelming in its effects upon the bodies and minds of the people. No matter whether they were saints or sinners, they would be taken under a warm song or sermon and seized with a convulsive jerking all over, which they could not by any possibility avoid; and the more they resisted the more they jerked. If they would not strive against it, and pray in good earnest, the jerking would usually abate. . . .

"There is no doubt in my mind that, with weak-minded, ignorant, and superstitious persons, there was a great deal of sympathetic feeling with many that claimed to be under the influence of this jerking exercise; and yet with many it was perfectly involuntary. It was on all occasions my practice to recommend fervent prayer as a remedy, and it almost always proved an effectual antidote.—"Autobiography," pp. 45-51.

Many a neighbourhood revival, also, and many a regular ministration of the gospel have been attended with emotional and physical signs of the same general character.

II

The professional psychologist, who of recent years has been making something of a study in the hitherto

neglected field of religious psychology, is ready with an explanation of these phenomena, and has a valid claim to our attention. Not that he comes with any significant new discovery in this field; for there is none. But it is well that he should bring all his knowledge and thought to bear upon the great conscious facts of religion. It is well that he should endeavour to show their mental order and law. And it is well that he should make it plain, as he is doing, that the physical effects here in question are caused proximately by sudden and powerful excitation of the nerve centres, and should cite instances of similar effects of high-wrought emotional experiences under other than evangelic influences.

Here, too, we have to bear in mind that the same intensity of excitement will not express itself in the same outbreak of emotion, visible or audible, in all persons. Far otherwise. For example, in the case of the highly suggestible and the nervously unstable, there may be great physical demonstration, where in the case of the thoughtful and self-controlled nothing of the kind will occur. Similarly, even the same person is more easily affrighted and more easily moved to tears or laughter or excited speech in one state of the nerves than in another.

“The psychological key to the problem is that concentrated attention, accompanied by strong religious emotion, produces a powerful impression upon the nervous system, the result being an agitation of nerves throughout the body, the effects of which differ according to the constitution of the subject. In one, relief is found in floods of tears; in another, in hysterical laughter; in a third, by unconsciousness; in a fourth, by a partial loss of muscular action; in yet another, complete catalepsy may be produced . . . while some temperaments can bear religious or any

other kind of emotion without outward excitement and without indication, except an unusual calmness."—Dr. J. M. Buckley, "The Methodists," p. 218.

But concerning all such outward excitements—"mental and motor automatisms," our psychologist would call them—there remains, of course, a more important question of cause. What produces the emotional experience? Is it a sudden access of fear or grief or joy excited in one's simply human relations—say, by some news received, some event experienced, some person seen? Then the outcry or the bodily prostration bears witness to the power in one's life of such news, such event, such person. It is the case, let us suppose, of a long-lost son appearing unlooked for to greet his mother in the old home—I recently read the newspaper report of a mother in such circumstances falling dead in the arms of her returned son. If, however, the source of the overpowering emotion be some truth of Christianity sharply applied to conscience and heart in Christian preaching, then even violent bodily effects will bear witness, in their humble sphere, to the power of the gospel. And their testimony at times may be peculiarly arresting and suggestive.

III

But there has always been danger that such bodily reactions under religious appeal may be misinterpreted and overvalued. They are not to be coveted as proofs of the preacher's Divine vocation. Otherwhere must he look for seals to his ministry.

Let extraordinary emotional effects, then, be regarded

as incidental concomitants of the new birth of the soul, and not even that, unless they be followed by the fruits of the Spirit in life and conduct. Because the fact of their occurrence in religious meetings does not of itself prove them to be spiritually genuine.

“I told them [a ‘society’ to which he was preaching] they were not to judge of the spirit whereby any one spoke, either by appearances or by common report or by their own inward feelings; no, nor by any dreams, visions, or revelations, supposed to be made to their souls; any more than by their tears or any involuntary effects wrought upon their bodies. I warned them, all these were of a doubtful, disputable nature; they might be of God and they might not; and were therefore not simply to be relied on (any more than simply to be condemned) but to be tried by a further rule, to be brought to the only certain test, the Law and the Testimony.”—Wesley, “Journal,” June 22, 1739.

For one thing, these physical effects may be caught, under superemotional excitement, as a contagion.

The wildest excitement I have ever witnessed, in time of peace or of war, was caused by a single piercing and pitiful cry in a crowded church. A panic-stricken concourse of people leaping to their feet from a posture of prayer, hurrying here and there, faces white with terror, rushing with shrieks toward unfastened doors in hope of escape—no controlling power except that of mortal fear; and of all the distracted actors in the scene it is probable that only the first one knew what dreadful thing had happened. Hers was first-hand terror; all the rest was involuntary and uncontrollable imitation. It was in war-time. A religious revival was in progress. The congregation were keyed up to a high but silent nervous tension. During prayer two or three soldiers had quietly entered the church and

arrested an alleged informer in the employ of the enemy. And the bitter cry of the unhappy man's sister, who all at once saw and understood, did the rest. In like manner has religious excitement been enkindled, in this or that form and to a greater or less extent, in certain susceptible souls, through mere sympathy with the out-breaking excitement of others—and especially in that psychological whirlpool, a crowd.

“It is also a law that the perception of the effects of emotion and proximity to those who are under the power thereof will produce upon many effects similar to those manifested before them, so that they will weep when others weep, even though in no way related to the cause of grief. Thus great panics arise and mental and moral epidemics. . . . Thus armies have been stampeded before forces which they could have overthrown without difficulty, had they made a stand.”—Dr. J. M. Buckley, “The Methodists,” pp. 218-19.

Or, such demonstrations may be honestly practised by untaught souls who are striving thus to fling themselves by means of some vaguely conceived mental or physical struggle into the kingdom of God.

Or again, Christian converts may be led to strain their religious experience so as to make it conform to an accepted type—insensibly to strain it, as Jonathan Edwards has said in his “Treatise on the Religious Affections,” “so as to bring it to an exact conformity to the scheme already established in their minds.”

Especially may such damaging results ensue when the untaught soul of the preacher is making appeal to the fitful nerves of his audience rather than to their reason or conscience or spirit or will.

Grievous has been the abuse of the emotional nature,

and correspondingly grievous the resulting spiritual injury, at many a religious meeting—even at many a one which in spirit and intention has been true to Christ and the soul's salvation. I remember once expressing surprise at the success that seemed to attend a certain preacher in his revival meetings. He had told me that if he should seriously undertake to study continuously for the space of half an hour, he believed it would drive him wild. He remarked that very often he selected his text after entering the pulpit. "Well," replied the friend to whom I was speaking, "I understand it. I was once appointed to preach, during a Conference, to the negroes. I did the best I could, but there was no special expression of interest in the congregation. I asked this brother, who was sitting in the pulpit with me, to close the services. He rose and read a hymn in his ordinary tone of voice. Then, laying the hymn-book down, all at once he clapped his hands, stamped with his foot, and shouted 'Hallelujah!' Without another word, instantly, the congregation was kindled into a very flame of excitement." The method of our physically fervid brother was not essentially different from that of certain revivalists before Anglo-Saxon congregations. It was only somewhat simpler and cruder.

In all which cases the physician of souls is exciting a fever in whose factitious strength the patient may rise up and walk a little way, while the disease itself remains untouched and becomes even more difficult to cure.

Religious excitement that is caused by the reception

of truth and followed by a Christian life—or by a better Christian life, as the case may be—is to be welcomed; and no other. Any excitement that claims to have worth must submit itself to the practical test. What is its value for life? What good conduct does it produce? It is the Divine test under which we must all be judged: “Who will render to every man according to his works.”

IV

Let us linger a moment longer on this phase of our subject. The fact that individual members of an excited crowd will do what no one of them would have attempted alone is familiar enough. It accounts for the wild excesses of the mob. But essentially the same thing is true under great waves of excitement in more intelligent and orderly assemblages. This and that person will promise their votes or money or lives to a cause which, on the subsidence of the emotional agitation, they show themselves quite unwilling to serve.

It would be hard to find more thoughtful or better ordered meetings of young people than those of the Student Volunteer Movement of our day. At the most recent of these conventions, as on previous occasions, the missionary enthusiasm was widespread and intense, but no one was asked to enroll himself on the spot as a volunteer. The cause of world-wide evangelism was powerfully presented; much information was given; much persuasion was offered; missionary literature was put into the young people's hands; and they were urged to think and pray and yield their wills wholly to the

will of God, and after due consideration to decide, each for himself, the great question of their lifework. This, because their leaders had learned that only thus could the best results be reached.

Are we to conclude, then, that there is no good in the unifying thrill of religious excitement in a congregation, and that no one ought to act under its influence? Not at all. That would be too much like saying that one ought not to act under the influence of sympathy and imitation. For it is this influence that moves a person to do as those about him, whether they be few or many, are doing; and in either case such action may be entirely good and true.

There are men and women, for example, so absorbed in worldliness or so blankly indifferent to spiritual realities that the contagion of religious excitement is needed to jostle them out of the sense of security in sin, and make them attentive, for a little while at least, to some word of truth and salvation. Let them be brought under such excitement. It is well; it may prove to be their salvation.

But let not the preacher, in his craving for immediate and visible results, refuse to discriminate between the use and the abuse of that intensified spirit of sympathy and imitation which he and his audience are uniting to awaken.

v

Passing now from this phase of our subject, let us take note of certain other experiences at the time of conversion. I mean those which, without expressing

themselves in any marked outward demonstration, do bear witness within the soul itself to its newness of life in Christ. There is a spiritual peace and joy. There is a sense of nearness to God and of rest in him. "I can trust him," says the soul; "I feel that he hears my prayer." The kingdom of heaven is come. "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."

As we have already noted, the convert's face may be changed with his change of heart. Not only so; but the scenes of the outer world may look to him brighter and more beautiful than ever before. "I went to the door," said a plain working-woman, in her account of such an experience, "thanking God, and was amazed at the changed look of everything around. I said, 'Where have my eyes been that I never saw the beauty of it before?'"

"It was during my second autumn as a scarecrow [a small boy employed to keep crows off the corn-fields]," says Alexander Irvine, "that I had an experience that changed the current of my life. It was on a Monday, and during the entire day I kept humming over and over two lines of a hymn I had heard in the Sunday-school. Nothing ever happened to me that remains quite so vividly in my mind as that experience.

"I was sitting on the fence at the close of day, a very happy day. I must have been moved by the colour of the sky, or by the emotion produced by the lines of the hymn. It may have been both. But as I sat on the fence and watched the sun set over the trees, an emotion swept over me and the tears began to flow. My body seemed to change as by the pouring into it of some strange, life-giving fluid. I wanted to shout, to scream aloud; but instantly I went rapidly over the hill into the woods, dropped on my knees, and began to pray.

"It was getting dark, but the woods were filled with light. Perhaps it was the light of my vision or the light of my mind—I know not. But when I came back into the open I felt as though I were walking on air. . . .

"Many a night I had been kept awake by the gnawing pangs of hunger, but this night I was kept awake for a different rea-

son. It was an indescribable ecstasy, a new-born joy. As I lay there with my head about a foot from the thatched roof, I hummed over and over the two lines of the hymn, sometimes breaking the continuity in giving way to tears. . . .

"Everything looked beautiful. The world was full of joy. I was perfectly sure the birds were sharing it, for they sang that morning as I had never heard them sing before. . . .

"As I passed through the barnyard I came in contact with some of the men, and their questions led me to believe that some of the experience remained on my face."—"From the Bottom Up," pp. 11, 12.

"On my way home that night," said a convert in one of the meetings of my own early ministry, "the ledge of rocks which I had to pass seemed all aglow with light." That surely was such a light as came not from the sun nor from the moon and stars, but from the soul.

Nor is it a surprising story. To doubt such testimony would show but scant knowledge of the human heart, with its unceasing witness in the face and its vision of surrounding objects. Let some great natural good, the greatest that can be imagined, a boon that one could hardly have dared hope for, come suddenly into one's life. Would there be no brightness of joy, both in his face for others to see and in the whole outside world for his own eyes to look upon? Quite reasonably, then, may we believe all this and more besides of a soul that has come to know for the first time as his very own the love and fatherhood of God in Jesus Christ. "Out of darkness into His marvelous light." * It is as if it might be a partial and personal fulfilment of the ancient prophetic word, "There shall be new heavens and a new earth."

* I Peter 2: 9.

Now such an emotional uplift has a distinct and permanent value. It is good to rejoice in the Lord always. It is also good, in a special sense, to have a definitely glad and assuring experience at the outset of one's Christian life. It is something to look back upon all along the journey with grateful joy. On every remembrance of it one may thank God and take courage. In time of mental perplexity and conflict, of multiplying difficulties, of clouded vision, it is well to be able to recall a first great day of God and to say: "Then was I full of gladness in the light of His countenance." Blessed the memory of such a birthday of the soul.

Perhaps no more remarkable example of ecstatic experience at the time of the new birth has ever been recorded than that of Charles G. Finney. A young man, alone in his law office, he had been earnestly praying day after day for personal salvation. Then, in his own words:

"Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, without any recollection that I had ever heard the thing mentioned by any person in the world, the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love; for I could not express it in any other way. It seemed like the very breath of God. I can recollect distinctly that it seemed to fan me, like immense wings. No words can express the wonderful love that was shed abroad in my heart. I wept aloud with joy and love. . . . I said, 'Lord, I can bear no more.'"—"Autobiography," pp. 20-25.

At once he began to preach. "I soon sallied forth from the office," he says, "to converse with those whom I should meet about their souls. I had the impression,

which has never left my mind, that God wanted me to preach the gospel, and that I must begin immediately. I somehow seemed to know it." And thus began the ministry of the most notable revivalist of the first half of the nineteenth century. Who shall say that the rapture of love and joy which marked its beginning was not an element of permanent power in that evangelistic ministry?

Needless to say, such an ecstasy is exceeding rare. Nor is there anything either in the New Testament or in the course of Christian experience, from the beginning until now, to excite the expectation that it will ever be otherwise. Indeed, no form of instantaneous and exulting assurance is one of the ordinary signs of conversion.

One might find illustrative analogies in other spheres of life and experience. Here, for instance, all about us, is a world of sentiment and imagination, astir with beautiful and inspiring images, ideals, and suggestions, to which the poets—may their goodly tribe increase—would fain open our eyes. Does the glory of that vision appear so distinctly as to set apart the first occasion of it from all others, before and after? Sometimes it does. I have heard a professor of English literature tell of the very day on which such a vision came to him, of the particular little poem—Tennyson's "Ulysses"—through which it came, of the college campus over which he went walking and repeating aloud the magic words. He spoke of it as a genuine mental rebirth. But that great teacher was far enough from telling his pupils that, unless the love

of poetry should come to them in just the same manner, they never could be sure that it had come at all. Let the appointed teacher of Christianity be equally wise and true in his teaching.

Or, take the case of some particular truth of religion laying hold of the soul with all its hitherto unfelt power, as in the twinkling of an eye. Dr. R. W. Dale tells of such an instance in his own life. He had been a preacher and teacher of Christ, scholarly, deep-thinking, thoroughly in earnest, from youth to middle age or beyond, when the unprecedented experience came. "He was writing an Easter sermon, and when half-way through the thought of the living Christ broke in upon him as it had never done before. To use his own words: "'Christ is alive,' I said to myself. 'Alive! Can that really be true—living as really as I myself am?' I got up and walked about repeating: 'Christ is living! Christ is living!' At first it seemed strange and hardly true, but at last it came upon me as a burst of sudden glory. . . . It was to me a new discovery. I thought all along I had believed it; but not until that moment did I feel sure of it. I then said: 'My people shall know it; I shall preach about it again and again until they believe it as I do now.' " * So he did preach it from that time on, and also, under the inspiration of it, wrote his illuminative book, "The Living Christ and the Four Gospels."

Is this, then, the typical form for the realization

* "Biography of R. W. Dale of Birmingham." By his son. Pp. 642-43.

of a great Christian doctrine? We know that it is not, and may know equally well that it is not the typical form for the realization of the converting grace of God.

VI

It should also be noted that an extraordinary emotional experience at conversion is not unattended with its own peculiar dangers. One of these is the danger of resting in the memory of a past spiritual attainment. For life maintains itself only in ceaseless movement. The voice of a living and healthful soul must ever be: "Come, let us sing a new song unto the Lord." No possible nearness to God ten years or ten days ago implies the same nearness now. And while all this may be readily admitted as the merest commonplace of Christian teaching, there may nevertheless intrude and linger the half-acknowledged feeling that a thrilling conversion, at some designated time and place in the past, does somehow show a man to be a child of God here and now.

There is also the danger of making the rapturous or instantly sun-bright conversion a test for all conversions. This would be to confuse the occasional with the universal, the incidental with the essential. It would be to accept a particular, perhaps a denominational, tradition as a substitute for the teaching of the New Testament and the enlightened Christian consciousness. Especially in the teacher of religion must it prove to be a most lamentable error. Theoretically

wrong, it may become practically worse than mischievous.

Imagine two persons who, with equal genuineness of repentance and faith, set out side by side in the way of salvation. One rises up suddenly into a joyous sense of spiritual liberty and assurance. He will ever after remember the precious occasion, and will testify: "Whatever befall, I shall always believe that then and there the love of God was shed abroad in my heart." The other has no such day of days to celebrate. Through the coming years, in the same community and congregation, these two persons live the Christian life. Is it likely that their most spiritually minded fellows, the best interpreters of the things of the Spirit, will find the former of the two showing stronger evidences of the truth and grace of God in the heart, of love to Christ, of sonship to the Heavenly Father, than the latter? It is quite as likely that just the opposite will be the fact.

Let us enquire, then, what it is that makes the difference in these two types of conversion? The religious teaching under which the two persons were brought up may have something to do with it. The circumstances attending the two conversions may help explain it. The expectation or non-expectation of a distinct and strongly marked emotional crisis at conversion may need to be taken into the account. But careful observation will in all probability show the chief cause to be found in a certain innate difference in the two persons themselves. It may be found in a difference of temperament.

Such a conclusion has been confirmed by the specific psychological study of the subject. That is to say, in a large majority of the cases examined those persons who at conversion passed through a strongly marked emotional crisis have been shown to be persons in whom sensibility was predominant. It is not meant, of course, that they were lacking in either intellect or will-power, but that the more marked characteristic was sensibility. Temperamentally they would be classed, to use the technical terms, as either "sanguine" or "melancholic"—chiefly as included in the former class. In brief, a soul that is impressionable, impulsive, confident, hopeful ("sanguine"—for example, Simon the son of Jonas), or that is liable to be mastered by great depth of feeling ("melancholic"—for example, John the son of Zebedee), in his experience and practice of the natural life, will be likely to have his experience and practice of religion correspondingly affected by this same temperamental emotiveness. Indeed, why should any one think or wish it otherwise?

"The ultimate test of religious values," as Professor George A. Coe has happily said, "is nothing psychological, nothing definable in terms of the *how it happens*, but something ethical, definable only in terms of the *what is attained* of loving trust toward God and brotherly kindness toward men."

To ascribe an exaggerated significance, therefore, to the emotional test of conversion, or of religious experience and character in general, must work only confusion and harm. It calls away the attention not only

from reason, but also from conscience and will and conduct. Thus emotion itself is spoiled, being emptied of its true meaning and content. And the religion of Jesus, which is truly thoughtful, conscientious, strengthful, practical, emotional, degenerates into an *emotionalism*.

VII

Now, here is the danger of opening a door for some of God's most faithful children into darkness and misery. Setting up the emotional standard, we declare to those who have been disappointed in their hope of a thrilling conscious transition at conversion that, no matter what else they may have experienced, and no matter what they may believe or become or do, they cannot be so well assured as some others that they have been truly converted to God.

Take one of these, for example, as representative of very many others, and learn his inner history. He would be at peace with God. He pours out the desires of his heart in persevering prayer. Turning away from a sinful life, he is willing, so far as consciousness testifies, to give up every evil temper and habit and to submit himself wholly to the Divine will. He trusts, he reaches forth his hand to the Saviour's cross. And he has been told that, these conditions complied with, his heart will forthwith be surcharged with a heavenly joy and his lips made vocal with the Saviour's praise. But it is not so: there is no result which he can conscientiously describe in such language.

With the psalmist he could say, "The troubles of

my heart are enlarged"; but he does not *say* it, being constitutionally reticent and silent about the inner life. He goes to church, however, and hears the preacher assert from the pulpit, "A man must know by the inward voice of the Spirit that he is a child of God"—and straightway asks himself, "Have I indubitably heard that voice?" Turning for a word in season to the poet-prophets of the hymnal, he reads:

"No tongue can express
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love"—

and bitterly confesses, "It is not mine." Taking up a religious newspaper, he sees an account (as I chanced to do yesterday) of a lovely Christian character who, speaking of his conversion in mature manhood, said, "I had never heard the birds sing before"; but to him the songs of the birds are about the same as they have ever been. He reads of John Henry Newman's assertion that he was as sure of having been converted on a certain day in his early life as that he had "hands and feet"—and feels that he would give the world for a certainty like that. There falls into his hands Charles H. Spurgeon's description, as given in his "Autobiography," of the effect of converting grace upon his emotions: "The sun hath risen every morning, but on that eventful morn he had the light of seven days. As the days of heaven upon earth, as the years of immortality, as the ages of glory, as the bliss of heaven, so were the hours of that thrice happy day. Rapture Divine and ecstasy inexpressible filled my soul." And the rapturous words are not wings to his

soul, but a weight to drag him down. He attends a meeting for prayer and testimony, and hears some brother tell, "I can no more doubt that God for Christ's sake forgave my sins on that day than I can doubt that I asked him to do it"—and the unhealed wound is made to bleed afresh.

The outcome may be that such a soul will be led ere long into a truer knowledge of Christian experience, a happier obedience, a more trustful and undoubting spirit of sonship toward his God and Father. Or, he may come to regard his case as for some inscrutable reason hopeless, unfitting him for church membership, and so may depart sorrowfully from "the Way." Or again, he may faithfully pursue the path of consistent and useful Christian conduct, but under a shadow that is never wholly lifted from his life. It is a spiritual tragedy. May God pity so mistaught a soul—and his well-intentioned teachers, who have not been "rightly dividing the word of truth."

There is no lack of actual examples. An unusually interesting one is that of the beloved Christian giver and worker, John S. Huyler, of New York City, as related by his pastor, Dr. Charles L. Goodell. When a young man he knelt beside his mother and others at the chancel of her church, in a Watch Night service, seeking the forgiveness of sins. "He had expected," we are told, "a conversion after the manner of St. Paul's. But it did not come that way. At the close of the service he felt still more profoundly that he had reached the turning-point in his life, and prayed that he might have power over temptation, and that God would lead

him to a clearer understanding of his will concerning him. . . . It always gave him delight when men testified with definiteness to a certain place and a certain hour, and celebrated the anniversary of that kind of religious experience. It may strengthen some other heart to know that he often experienced times of religious depression when he would say to me, 'I sometimes wonder whether I have been really converted.' But the mood would soon pass, and he would speak with great assurance of the mercy of God which had been exercised so blessedly in his behalf." *

If among the millions of the great city there was a man whose heart seemed to overflow with love to God and mankind, all who knew him would probably have said, "Here is such a man." It was his joy to do good. It was a special joy to help bring to Christ some hopeless and abandoned soul; for he seemed to despair of nobody. With thought and sympathetic personal attention, and with gifts of hundreds of thousands of dollars, he was ever ministering to the varied forms of human suffering and need. And yet because at the turning-point of life he was not somehow lifted into an ecstasy, or, after the manner of Saul of Tarsus, "unable to see for the glory of that light," the doubt would persistently recur, "I wonder if I was ever really converted."

Thus may the application of the emotional test of the Spirit's power in the soul work disheartenment to those who fail to meet its requirements. It puts them outside a certain comparatively small select circle

* "Followers of the Gleam," pp. 51, 52.

which they feel, however delusively, to be well-nigh necessary and yet impossible for them to enter.

May I give another example? The most prominent man in a certain rather isolated community was converted in a sudden whirl of excitement. He had been very worldly. A camp-meeting was in progress on his land; and he was present, not attending the services, but absorbed in secular business. Standing one evening inside the circle of tents, his ear was gained by the voice of a young preacher fervently exhorting from the stand. "Something all at once came over me"—so he himself told me the occurrence—"and I rushed into the congregation, made my way through the crowd to the 'altar,' fell backwards, and cried, 'Almighty God, have mercy upon me'; and the next thing I knew I was rejoicing, with all the brethren round me, and praising God." An unpromising sort of conversion, one might suppose; yet, I think, nobody doubted its genuineness. Because from that good hour the man's life was changed. The habit of profanity, for example, which had grossly marred his everyday speech, was broken off immediately. I remember his saying that he had never thereafter felt the inclination to utter an oath. He became a lover of good people and of the cause of God and showed his faith by his works. There was too much newness in his course of conduct for it not to have come from newness of heart.

But the story I started to tell is this. In that same neighbourhood was a down-hearted man who, though seemingly religious, remained persistently out of the Church. His life was upright and pure, he regularly

attended the church services, and would come forward in revivals of religion as a penitent, but was ever under a spiritual cloud and would make no confession of his faith in Christ. I talked with him at his home. He said, "I want to be converted like W. G."—the brother whose extraordinary conversion I just now related. In the course of the conversation I asked: "Suppose you have a painful sense of sinfulness and condemnation. You come to God and pray in the Saviour's name that your sins may be forgiven. And there rises in your heart a sense of nearness to God; the condemnation is gone and there is peace; you can trust him; there is an assurance that he accepts you and hears your prayer. Would not that satisfy you?" His answer was, "No, I want to be converted like W. G." He could command no other. And such, as long as I knew him, was the answer of his life as well as his lips.

An extreme case, was it? Perhaps so; but at any rate a true and significant one. Significant, because temperamentally the two men were wholly unlike. The first was rapid in all his mental processes, vivacious, notably emotional. You could hardly have thought of him as really deliberating on any subject. All was stir, movement, quickness of speech, often bustle and noise; and unhappily, though a man of kind and generous spirit, he could break forth into violent fits of ill-temper. The other was quiet, critical of himself, slow, phlegmatic. And yet the test of a satisfactory change of heart which he had been led to adopt included some such emotional storm as that of his antipodal brother.

Much more suggestive of the Master's teaching is the ancient prayer: "I have but one miracle to ask of thee, O Lord; it is that Thou wilt make me a good man."

Can one be a Christian, then, without the excitation of feeling? Impossible; and just as truly one cannot be a patriot or a philanthropist or a friend or a human being in any relation of life without it. But what are the feelings that are indispensable to Christian experience and character? They must be not only feelings that prompt to action—which is to say, *motives*—but such motives as self-love, sense of duty, love to others, love to God. No true religion without these; and they cannot be too deeply stirred. It is in and through these that there arises the new life, the new man. Emotions—which is to say, feelings that do not prompt to action—are good and inevitable; motives, essential. Which of the two classes of feelings, the emotions or the motives, are directly concerned with obedience, Jesus' own test of discipleship? It is assuredly the motives. "If a man *love* me, he will keep my word." And of like import is the word of the beloved disciple: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

The founder of a mission to some cannibal tribe in Central Africa makes an appeal—I heard one yesterday—for missionary volunteers. "It is a needy and a promising field," he says, "but attended with peculiar danger. He who goes there may be called at any time to lay down his life under the blight

of tropical disease or the hand of savage violence." Central Africa, cannibal tribes, tropical disease—what does it mean? It is an appeal to the heroic—to that Christian heroism demanded in any age or land by witness-bearing unto death. Would you ask the young Christian who responds to such an appeal—

"Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to thee"—

that he give some more emotional and demonstrative proof of love to his Lord?

VIII

That which is chiefly on my heart in these observations is the children of the Church. They are just beginning to think and reason for themselves. They must be taught, guided, disciplined, in morals and religion.

"Send to Joppa," said the angel in the vision of Cornelius, "and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words whereby thou shalt be saved"—and he added, "*thou and all thy house.*" Christianity, as in its earlier form under the Law and the Prophets, was to be a family religion. The whole household were to share in the same grace of salvation. "Suffer the little children and forbid them not to come unto me." "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." "Provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord."

What, then, shall be our directive idea of the new

birth and the Christian life in childhood? That the child is regenerated through baptism in infancy, and after a few years, with no other preparation than instruction in the catechism, must be received into full membership in the Church? Surely not. Is it, then, that the child cannot be regenerated until he shall have reached the period of a certain distinct development of reason and conscience—say, from ten to fourteen years of age—and that he must at this time experience a sharp spiritual crisis which he shall recognize as the new birth of the soul? Just as little have we thus learned Christ.

It would seem to be often forgot that the child, personality in the bud, man in the making, has a moral and religious nature, as well as a rational or a social. At the outset, it is true, his rational or social nature is simply a capacity. He is not actually rational or social, but impulsive, self-seeking, governed by instinct, bent upon the gratification of the senses and the imagination. Ere long, however, under right nurture, both reason and sociality will appear in action. Similarly, at the outset, the child's moral and religious nature is simply a capacity. He is not actually moral or religious. But ere long, under right nurture, he may become so. How? By the saving grace of the Father who is in heaven; by the power of his Holy Spirit in the heart. May the little child, then, be verily born again? He may be, not ten years nor one year hence, but now. To mature years, to adolescence, to childhood, the word is the same: "Behold, now is the day of salvation."

But the Christian soul, yielding thus from his earliest years to the light and life of the indwelling Spirit, is not in the least likely to recognize some one experience, standing apart from all others, as the crisis and consciousness of conversion. Shall his brethren, therefore, express or entertain a doubt as to such a man's personal salvation? It is said that the Moravians had misgivings of this sort concerning their great friend, Count Zinzendorf, the resuscitator of their Ancient Church, because he insisted that he could not recollect a time—oh, blessed inability—when he did not love the Saviour. True, his whole life was in evidence of the truth of his own oft-quoted words: "I have one passion only; it is He, it is He." Yet, inasmuch as he could not recall the day on which, in early childhood, the love of the Saviour entered his heart, his Moravian brethren seemed troubled with doubts as to whether it was there at all. But we have no need to follow them into such cruel darkness.

Or, shall the lifelong Christian have similar doubts concerning himself? Richard Baxter was at one time troubled with such questionings until he saw that education, as well as preaching, is a means of grace—"and that it was the great mercy of God to begin with me so soon, and to prevent such sins as might have been my shame and sorrow while I lived."

Education a means of grace? How can any one regard it otherwise, if it be the impartation of Scripture truth? "From a babe," wrote Paul to Timothy, "thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in

Christ Jesus." Surely here was a means of grace, and just as surely without a pulpit or a succession of homiletic discourses.

Would you ask the Christian child at what particular hour and place he first gave his heart in the response of obedient love to the Saviour? Why not ask a similar question as to his first distinct experience of love and obedience to his mother, or his first distinct sense of right and wrong, or his first serious thought of God? That a childlike child should name a particular time and place in response to any such questioning is possible—and extremely improbable. "From a babe thou hast known."

Nor is it meant hereby, as already suggested, that a child simply grows or is educated into religion. It is meant that he is as truly born of the word and the Spirit of God as any Christian convert of twenty or fifty years of age.

I have said that it is well to be able to look back upon one great day of God in which the soul for the first time was made distinctly glad in the light of his love. I say it again, but would add with equal emphasis, that it is better to receive the dawning light of God upon the soul in childhood and to have it shine continually brighter through youth and old age unto the glory yet to be revealed. This, not the other, is the Christian ideal.

XVI

THE WAY OF POWER

Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.—ACTS 10: 9.

The Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting; for I have sent them.—ACTS 10: 19, 20.

And on the morrow he arose and went forth with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And on the morrow they entered into Cæsarea.—ACTS 10: 23, 24.

Who was I, that I could withstand God?—ACTS 11: 17.

IT is expected of the Christian minister that he shall be reputable, well-informed, and religious. The ecclesiastic name of "clergyman" by which he is sometimes called conveys an idea of professional dignity and social respectability; and a certain routine of duty is required of him, especially on the first day of the week. But if he have taken the New Testament to heart, he will be quite unable to find his true life in any or all of these things. They do not satisfy his conscience. He would follow a vocation rather than a profession; he would be named by the New Testament name of minister or pastor or preacher rather than by any ecclesiastic title; and above all, in his speech and his preaching he would have the voice of the Spirit of God to be heard always.

A Christian gentleman, never a clown, in spirit and conduct, he would be much more than that. "A

prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people"—that is his ideal. No professional propriety or ambition, but a passionate love for the cause of Christ, for the souls of men, for the rule of righteousness, must dominate the order of his life. Such a confession as that of Paul to the Ephesian elders—"I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God"—falls upon his ear not as a far-away sound of some foreign tongue, but as the real voice of a kindred soul. Consciously unworthy of this high companionship, he is nevertheless a brother to that master spirit in the Church of God. "I will die on the streets," said a daring and devoted pastor-evangelist of the present generation, at the beginning of a peculiarly difficult pastorate, "I will die on the streets before there shall be a failure of that great work in New York City." They were impassioned, but not idle or boastful, words. "The work of the ministry," I have heard a marvellous preacher declare, "is not work at all, it is a consuming vital passion."

I

Now it is inevitable to ask how the aspiration of such a man's heart may be fulfilled.

We have already been dwelling upon the thought of the mediation of the Holy Spirit's power to human souls through evangelic truth and through the personality of the preacher. But just what are the condi-

tions on which this power may be expected to attend the preacher's personality? In what way of life will it be realized? That is our present thought.

For one thing, the power of the Spirit will assuredly not be found in the imitation of its outward signs. The fact that it expresses itself at times in loudness of voice or extraordinary emotional fervour does not mean that an imitated or mechanically adopted loudness and fervency will somehow infuse it into pulpit speech. The fact that it may find expression at times in pathos or fluency of utterance does not mean that we can put it on as a garment by affecting such pathos or fluency. The fact that it lifts the heart to God at times in individual and outspoken praise does not mean that to utter hallelujahs with the idea of stirring the hearts of the congregation into spiritual excitement will avail for the purpose.

The loudness, or fervour, or pathos, or fluency, or hallelujah is at best not a source but a sign; and unless it ring true from the heart, it is never a sign of spiritual power. Contrariwise, it shows ignorance or mistakenness or emotionalism, or even, it may be, hypocrisy. Whether in the pulpit or elsewhere, an imitated sign is not witness-bearing, but acting in religion.

Nor will this crowning gift of Jesus' messengers be found as an accompaniment of positions of prominence or authority in the Church. Sometimes it is seen in such positions; sometimes it does not appear. It bears no vital relation to ecclesiastic honours. A man may be richly endowed with it in the comparative obscurity of his early ministry. His speech, whatever vigour

of thought or grace of language it may lack, is attested by the signs that follow as the very power of God unto salvation—apostolic “signs, and wonders, and mighty works.” Men wonder at his success perhaps and ask, How do you account for such effects? Called somewhat later to fill a more conspicuous office, he accepts it with joy and trembling. He would not have dared to choose it for himself. And the power with which he was furnished at the beginning abides in the larger field, as in the little corner where his glorious ministry began. It abides, and is given more abundantly.

On the other hand, there was danger of losing it. He might have grown weary of obscurity and fallen out of love with much of his work. He might have hugged the idea of “laudable ambition” and sought for himself the higher seat. He might have been perverted by the illusions of a self-centred church life. He might have been so occupied with administrative affairs as to be removed both in spirit and in fact from personal contact with individual souls, and thus have suffered spiritual impoverishment. He might have yielded to the temptation to suppress a truth which he should have proclaimed, or to use official position for personal or partisan ends. He is not now living in daily communion with the Source of power, as in the earlier and happier days. And the result is inevitable: the true glory no longer appears in his ministry. The soul-winning and soul-building gift is gone; and its departure may cost him humiliation and tears.

“He thinks of the days when first with fear
And faltering lips he stood
To speak in the sacred place the Word
To the waiting multitude.”

There are no “faltering lips” now. He stands before the people confidently, and his reputation is that of an able preacher. He is not infrequently said to have delivered “a great sermon.” But is it only a roseate dream that many a time there thrilled through the cruder sermon, spoken “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling,” a spirit of life that is somehow lacking in his more conspicuous pulpit of to-day? Alas, it is no idealizing dream, but a witnessing fact; and his soul may well be cast down within him.

Or, worse, it may be a case of unconscious spiritual declension. “But he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.” “Yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not.”

II

Turning now to the more positive view, it may be remarked that, vision and power being so near akin, we are prepared to find the conditions of their attainment to be the same. One cannot say, On these terms a soul may receive the baptism of light, and on those the baptism of might. On the contrary, the way of vision is itself the way of power.

Pentecost is the incomparable example. The Master had said: “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me.” Accordingly, fifty days there-

after the disciples were shown by this testifying Spirit the truth of their Lord as never before—which was the promised enlargement of vision. But it had also been promised: “Ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you.” So, they all spake this truth of Christ “as the Spirit gave them utterance,” and the same day there were added to their number three thousand souls—behold, the promised investiture of power.

The power, then, followed immediately upon the vision. The knowledge uttered itself in Divinely convincing and persuasive speech; and the same Spirit under the same conditions was equally the giver of the one and the other. Both light and heat, both knowledge and its communication, both a revelation and a dynamic, both vision and power, were in the pentecostal flame.

So, likewise, here in Cæsarea. “While Peter yet spake these words”—what words? The truth of Christ, as that truth was shown him by the Spirit of revelation at Pentecost, and again in the vision from the housetop—while he was speaking “these words the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word.”

And now the positive answer as to the condition on which this great twofold charism of the Spirit of truth and power may be realized by the Christian preacher—or by any other Christian man or woman—may be given very briefly. The condition is, *the spirit of filial love and service to the Heavenly Father*. To live a life of such communion with God is increasingly to learn his will, to see the things of his kingdom, to

do his work in the world, to speak his word with power and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.

The spirit of filial love and service to the Heavenly Father—that is indeed a large answer to our question. It may be broken up into several; for it contains all the gracious qualities that enter into the making of a child of God. Recall the Scripture forms of expression in which some of these qualities of heart and spirit are named as conditions of spiritual illumination and power. Thus we may ask, Would a man have the vision of God? and the answer from the lips of the Master himself will be, that it is given to “the pure in heart.”* Would he have Divine guidance in the conduct of life? “The meek will He teach his way.”† Would he make alliance with Infinite Power? “All things are possible to him that believeth.”‡ Would he have the kingdom of heaven, which is “not in word but in power,” as his possession? Let him be “poor in spirit.”|| Would he have his darkness scattered and his diseases healed by the abiding presence of the God of love and forgiveness? He must renounce all unwillingness to forgive his brother who has trespassed against him. For “he that hateth his brother is in the darkness, and walketh in the darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes.”§ Let him forgive his brother; let him try by truth and kindness to win him to a better mind; and the light of the knowledge of the Divine forgiveness will arise

* Matthew 5: 8.

† Psalms 25: 9.

‡ Mark 9: 23.

|| Matt. 5: 3.

§ I John 2: 11.

in his own heart—that light of love and of life. “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”* “If we love one another, God abideth in us.”† Would he have the gift of the Holy Spirit, in heart and life, from the Heavenly Father? Let him remember Jesus’ “how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.”‡ Would he know the word of Jesus in personal experience as the veritable word of the Father? “If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself.”|| Would the preacher know the joy of a fruitful ministry? “Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit . . . full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.”§

Here, on the one hand, are such conditions as purity of heart, a sense of personal insufficiency, faith, Christian forgiveness and love, prayer, obedience; and, on the other hand, such results as the vision of God, the Spirit’s guidance, alliance with almighty power, the kingdom of heaven within, the abiding Divine presence, the personal assurance of the truth, a ministry of “great wonders and signs among the people.” The conditions any soul by the grace of God may comply with; the results are beyond all human appraisalment.

And the conditions are all included in one—spiritual sonship to God; the results also are one—spiritual vision and power.

* Matt. 6: 14.

† I John 4: 12.

‡ Luke 11: 13.

|| John 7: 17.

§ Acts 6: 5-8.

III

Note especially two of these conditions as illustrated in the early apostolic example immediately before us. One is *prayer*. For Peter had already learned the lesson of Pentecost: "These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brethren." Praying for the fulfilment of their Lord's promise? It would seem so—asking for that which he had simply bidden them wait for. He had said that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should "wait for the promise of the Father," the baptism of the Spirit. They seem to have known enough of the mind of their Master, however, to have been assured as to what manner of waiting this must be. They might have learned it, indeed, from one of the goodly company of prophetic spirits that had gone before them:

"I *waited patiently* for the Lord,
And he inclined unto me and heard *my cry*."

At Pentecost were many prayers, social, fraternal, uniting as the prayer of one man, "all together in one place." Peter's prayer at Joppa, on the contrary, was a coming to God in retirement—all-alone prayer. But the essential matter, whether in association with others or by one's self, is to wait not indolently, but "patiently" and with a "cry." Both the patience and the cry are the appeal of a soul in earnest at the throne of grace.

Is such an appeal vain? To say so would be to dismiss the whole Christian revelation from our lives as a delusive dream. It would be to say that either the Eternal Mind in whom we have our being does not know our personal thoughts, needs, and questionings, or that there can be no living contact of our spirits with the Spirit of God. It would be to say that the highest finds its source in the lowest, that the beating heart in the human breast came into existence out of the impersonal and the unloving—that there is no answering heart of life and love in him that made it.

No; the hindrances to prayer need never be sought in a self-absorbed almighty being ensphered beyond the stars, for there is no such being. The difficulty is on the human side, not on the Divine. It is in our spiritual ignorance, our poverty of trustfulness, our feebleness of will, our lack of love. It is not in the Divine will by whose ever-present power all things and all persons exist. It is not in the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, as we saw at the outset of our studies, God is beforehand with us in our prayer. He is inspiring it. A few days ago I heard for the first time the dumb speak to their teacher. They could not hear her voice, nor even their own. But they had learned to read the motions of her lips and by corresponding motions to mould their own breath into the appropriate audible words. They spoke. It was a fine achievement, and the listening audience applauded. But the greater applause was due not to the pupils, but to the teacher. There was the grace and the good-will

—in the teacher. There was the splendid human love that stooped in patient wisdom to help bear the burden of the disabled—in the teacher and the institution which she represented.

Similar is it with our God himself, through the inspiration of whose good Spirit all such labour of love is wrought. He makes the spiritually dumb to speak. The grace and good-will are in him, not in them. In numberless ways he wakens the sense of their need; he teaches them to pray; he brings them into acquaintance and converse with himself. And is not this the Divine preparation to preach? “For neither,” says Augustine in his “Confessions,” “do I utter anything right unto men which Thou hast not before heard from me; nor dost Thou hear any such thing from me which Thou hast not first said unto me.”

Frances Ridley Havergal, to whom it was given to touch so many hearts with a more constraining sense of the Redeemer’s love, once wrote to a friend something of the attitude of mind in which her hymns were composed: “Writing is *praying* with me,” she said, “for I never seem to write even a verse by myself, and feel like a little child writing.” It was indeed the childlike, which is the receptive, spirit. Up-looking, asking, trusting, *receptive*, the soul becomes a means of quickening power, through song or sermon or the use of any good gift, to other souls. The Christian messenger who can say “with me *preaching* is *praying*” will be heard to speak the word of Christ even as our lamented Christian hymnist wrote

her spiritual songs, in the Holy Spirit and in power.

Let us yield ourselves to that ever-near, ever-brooding Spirit of grace and supplications. But marvel not if the yielding itself may be done only through some mighty effort of prayer. For to yield is not merely to be passive. It may mean the breaking down of barriers. It may mean a hard fight against evil. Because all dominance and all intrusion of the lower self must be renounced—all wilfulness, sensuality, unforgivingness, self-indulgence, vainglory. To yield to the Spirit is to resist evil.

Has this been done already? So far, very good, Divinely good; yet the renunciation needs to be repeated. The returning enemy must be met and overthrown. But let not our hearts be troubled or afraid, for the prayer will have its answer. It must have its answer; because it is the alliance of our human weakness with God's own almightiness. "What will prayer do for you?" asked his fellow-tribesmen of a Christian convert. "All that God can do for you," was the well-instructed reply.

From such waiting upon God, the soul will arise peaceful and strong. It will go forth clothed with an energy not its own, masterful with men through the strengthening Christ within. "And He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for My power is made perfect in [conscious human] weakness."

It also needs to be borne in mind that this prevailing prayer is the voice of an obedient heart. It is vitally related to a willingness to do the will of

God. We think of the spirit of prayer as a spirit of desire, aspiration, docility, faith, unworldliness, perseverance; and so it is. But it is also a spirit of obedience.

“I came to this meeting,” says some faint-hearted Christian, “with no other purpose than to get a blessing.” But if the blessing sought be distinctly, as seems often the case, some excitement of the emotional nature, there is a more Christian purpose and prayer. “To get a blessing?” Then, why not ask for strength of soul in the path of duty? Why not ask for the grace of righteousness? Why not ask for some work to do for the Master and a spirit of service in which to do it? That would be a most Christian prayer, and its answer would be a “blessing” indeed.

Such was the prayer of Saul of Tarsus in his first vision of Jesus: “What shall I do, Lord?” It was that he might have knowledge not of what the Lord would do for him, but of what he himself should do. May we not say that here is heard the very prayer of Saul’s lifetime and the secret of his power in the gospel? Even before his acknowledgment of Jesus as the Christ, with all the spiritual illumination and renewing grace which this conversion brought into his life, Saul was seeking to know and do the will of the God of his fathers. “I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day.” “I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” And now it was an utterly different course of life which the word of the Lord Jesus bade him follow. It meant

sacrifice and service unto the uttermost for the cause which hitherto he had been bent upon destroying. It meant unceasing pioneer labours for Christ at the cost of comfort, esteem, liberty, and life. "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Yet this chosen missionary of the cross faltered not, but unto the very last step of the pathway lived out his first great prayer. "I was *not disobedient* unto the heavenly vision."

IV

So we are ready to note that the other condition is *obedience*. And here again appears a trait of Peter's natural temperament and spiritual character. A doer rather than a drifter or a dreamer, capable of warm and quick devotion, he seems to have been prompt to obey the voice of his Lord. "Peter went down to the men." "And on the morrow he arose and went with them." "Who was I, that I could withstand God?"

When Jeremiah was bidden to go forth as a prophet to proud and contemptuous Israel, he tried to beg off: "Ah, Lord Jehovah, behold, I know not how to speak; for I am a child." When Jonah was sent as a preacher of repentance and forgiveness to a Gentile community, he disobeyed outright and went elsewhere. But when this out-and-out Jewish apostle was bidden by the Spirit to go preach to a Gentile congregation the very gospel that he had hitherto been preaching to his brethren of Israel, he took not counsel of personal preference or prejudice and provincialism, but straightway

went. At the same town of Joppa from which we have seen Jonah, in full sail, going anywhere rather than across the land toward his recent appointment to preach at Gentile Nineveh, this son of a later Jonah took the highway to Gentile Cæsarea. And the result? The light of a larger knowledge shone into his soul—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him"; and the urgency of a mightier power attended his speech, for "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them [Gentiles] that heard the word."

But what was true of the journey from Joppa to Cæsarea at that particular time is true of all time and everywhere. In the journey of life the way of obedience—not as outward conformity or in selfish fear, but from the innermost heart—is the way of vision and of power.

There is a world-wide parable of this truth in our relation to the physical forces. For physical power will yield itself to our needs and serve us untiringly on condition of our obeying its laws; and on no other.

Does any one wish to be endued with bodily health and strength? Let him eat, breathe, sleep, work, rest, according to the laws of God in his body, and the wished-for health and strength comes upon him. Or, being diseased, would he be healed? There is a widespread fancy that this may be done by magic. But there is no magic in medicine. Neither the ground tigers' teeth of the Chinese doctor nor the mysterious characters of the Western physician's prescription pos-

sess a particle of healing virtue—unless, indeed, it be due to the patient's imagination. From the days of Hippocrates till now no physician has ever cured a disease except through the body's own vital force; and the one condition on which this power of life will do its curative work is that the body be brought, either through medicine or in some other way, into obedience to physiological law. "I never said," remarks Dr. O. W. Holmes, "I will cure, or can cure, or would or could cure, or had cured any disease." *Curo*, he reminds us, means *I take care of*—"and in that sense, if you mean nothing more, it is properly employed." As a catch-phrase in the ward of a hospital has tersely put it, "Man tends, God mends."

Or, does any one, standing with closed eyes, wish to have a picture of surrounding objects arise in his mind? Let him lift his eyelids, and the astounding marvel of vision is accomplished. Does he wish to read after dark? There is at hand the greatest abundance of potential light-force which only requires perhaps that he touch a certain button in the room and, lo, the light lies upon the page of his book.

It has become a trite observation that the world's work in our modern age is increasingly done, not by human muscle nor yet by brute muscle, but by the responsive coöperant forces of nature. First known, then obeyed, they are at our service. Even the arm of a child may clothe itself with their power. Every bodily act, indeed, is a utilizing, through obedience, of the vast stored-up energies of nature; and there is no other way to live our life on earth. Nature can-

not be "conquered," as Francis Bacon observed long ago, "except by obedience."

And now the great spiritual forces of the world, are they also accessible to such as we? More than accessible, they are in God himself, who is "the Infinitely Near." Our relation to them is a relation to him—a personal relation and incalculably more vital than any other. Every moment of our lives is spent under the immediate touch and government of the moral will of God, which is the law of the kingdom of the spirit. Here is the law which is voiced by conscience, and which is supremely set forth in terms of human life by Jesus the Son of God. To disobey it is enfeeblement and death, to obey is spiritual empowering. In God himself is the power—inexhaustible reserves of strength instantly available to every obedient soul.

Act in harmony with the will of God as declared in the physical world, and you lay hold upon illimitable physical power. Act in harmony with the will of God as declared by the word and the Spirit of Christ in the spiritual world—for in both these realms is our life lived simultaneously—and just as certainly you lay hold upon infinite spiritual power. "In proportion," says Campbell Morgan, "as we are careless of the laws of the life of the Spirit, the experience fades and the power recedes. In proportion as we obey, the experience grows and the power increases." As in nature so in grace, harmony is life, health, attainment.

v

“But are we not here,” some one may ask, “in a kingdom of freedom rather than of law?” In a kingdom of freedom, assuredly, but why should it be added “rather than of law”? The idea of law does indeed exclude that of arbitrariness or caprice, but not that of moral freedom. It is so in the case of human personalities, and how much more of the Divine. The Infinite and Eternal Personality is alike the God of all grace and of all law and order, of all rightness and certainty and peace. In him is not Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen, evermore.

This, too, is a truth learned in the school of Christ and taught with both tongue and pen by our first Christian preacher. “The Holy Spirit,” we hear him saying, as he stands before the judgment-seat of Israel, “whom God hath given to them that *obey* him.”* To the obedient soul the Gift of all gifts.

And to his fellow-Christians Peter writes: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren.” How is this? They had purified their souls—he does not say from what but *unto* what. He leaves it to be understood that the purification was from selfishness, which is the core of sin; and it was unto a new and sincere love, which is the heart of all spiritual truth and persuasive power. They had purified their souls “unto unfeigned love of the brethren”—without which to

* Acts 5:32.

speaking even with the tongues of men and of angels would be ineffective. And this most illumined and effective life of love was realized through their "obedience to the truth." *

May the preacher idle away his time, neglect his duty, indulge his love of ease—

"Do as all men ever would,
Own no man master but their mood"—

during the week, and then, as the hour for preaching approaches, reach up and grasp the mantle of power through some emotional exercise or paroxysm of petitional prayer? It would be to practise a pagan superstition rather than any word of Jesus. "Give me also this power," said Simon the Sorcerer, offering money to Simon Peter, "that on whomsoever I lay my hands he may receive the Holy Spirit." We have learned that this "gift of God" cannot be bought with money. Let us as little expect to get it through any other un-Divine method. It will not suffer itself to be brought into use, like the Pharisee's phylacteries, to be seen of men. It does not come in answer to the call of the church bells. It cannot be put on and off with clerical vestments.

Let us indeed "reach up and grasp the mantle of power," but not that it may be worn an hour in the morning and another in the evening on the first day of the week. It must be for all day long and for all the days of all the weeks.

What think you? When we are bidden, "Put ye on (*ἐνδύσασθε*, *clothe yourselves with as a garment*) the

* I Peter 1:22.

Lord Jesus Christ," is it a preaching-robe that the apostle has in mind? He is not writing to preachers; and, if he were, we are sure that he would not be recommending such a garment for the pulpit only. It is for the whole of life. It is for every life. There may be a spiritually minded farmer, sowing his seed and gathering his harvests, or bearing the loss of them, with a genuine Christian motive; and, alas, there may be a secular preacher, in the ministry "for a piece of bread" or delivering his sermons as a performance to be applauded rather than as a living message of the Christ within.

But for any soul to come into contact with Christ, to have the mind that was in him, to reproduce his life, to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," is to be clothed with all possible power from on high. And it may be ours, to abide upon us, in Jesus' way only—through the daily harmonizing of our wills, in sacrifice and service, with the will of the Almighty Father.

Very marked, therefore, is the New Testament emphasis on Christian obedience. Greater is its revelation of law, as well as of faith and love, than is that of Moses and the prophets. All through its successive pages Jesus is called Lord, and the mind which was in him is given as the authoritative rule of life. "God hath made him," said Peter at Pentecost, "both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified"; and again, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord."* "We preach not ourselves," says the Apostle to the Gentiles,

* I Peter 3: 15.

“we preach not ourselves [as Lord] but Christ Jesus as Lord;” and again, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord.” And it is all in the spirit of the Master’s own teaching of his sovereignty of the soul and the universal obligation to keep his commandments. Was not a part of the charge to the Eleven in the Great Commission itself, “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you”?

“Whatsoever I commanded you:” it is the word for a great imperative whole expressing itself in many differing yet harmonious precepts. The Master, as we often truly say, laid down principles rather than rules. And as to principles, he saw them all in one, in the law of love to God and our neighbour. Nevertheless, he did continually particularize. He applied the great supreme Law to this and that matter of heart and conduct: “*whatsoever* I commanded you.”

Let it remind us that there is no such thing as obedience in general. Obedience, to be sure, is a spirit rather than an act; but it *is* a spirit, not a mere idea, and as such has no way to express itself except in particular acts. In something conspicuous, epochal, decisive of one’s whole subsequent career? In that when the rare occasion arises, but ordinarily in the thousand and one grandly simple cases of the inconspicuous everyday life.

VI

It is early morning, and the Christian disciple, going forth into the unknown day, says to himself: “By the

grace of God I will this day do whatever the Master bids." An impure or unkind thought drifts into his mind: to dally with the intruder would be to disobey. He is tempted to lie, in order to avoid adverse criticism or to gain some pecuniary advantage: he must tell the truth. The cruel or irreverent word rushes to his lips: he must speak kindly, reverently. Next door is some one in want or sorrow, or in sin: he must be neighbour to him. A spirit of ease and self-indulgence comes upon him: he must shake himself free from its meshes and do his daily task. Be it pleasant, be it difficult, be it a joy, be it painful, he would make his life a free-will offering of obedience to his Lord.

But will he not have to pray? Aye, let any one endeavour thus, not in creed but in conduct, to "call Jesus Lord," and he will find that he cannot do it except "by the Holy Spirit." So he will pray indeed. He will ask with the cry of the heart for the needful Divine help. And the result of the successive days of such prayerful endeavour? He will become toward God more and more a child of the Spirit, and toward man a chosen vessel of truth and power.

"If therefore thine eye be single"—not if we have read so many books, or asked so many questions, or listened for so many years to the speech of the wise, or attained to so much familiarity with Christian doctrine—but "if thine eye be single"—if our wills be simply intent upon doing the will of our Father in heaven—"thy whole body shall be full of light"—thy whole nature shall be illumined with the innermost

truth of righteousness. "The simplest woman," it has been said, "who tries not to judge her neighbour, or not to be anxious for the morrow, will better know what is best to know than the best-read bishop without that one simple outgoing of his highest nature in the effort to do the will of Him who thus spoke." It is the doer of Jesus' commandments who becomes a seer in the kingdom of heaven. There is a story of the great painter and engraver, Rembrandt, that when a pupil of his was prone to ask about many things, he said: "Try to put well in practice what you already know; in so doing you will in due time discover the hidden things which you now enquire about." Similarly in the school of Christ mere asking is not sufficient for advancement in knowledge. Voluntarily to be doing what we are bidden is to learn, to see, to know.

Is Jesus, then, the one Master? He is such because of his own faultless and complete obedience to the Father's will—Master of man because Servant of God. "That signs and wonders may be done by thy holy Servant Jesus," prayed the congregated disciples in Jerusalem.

Even from childhood it was his word: "Knew ye not that I *must be* in my Father's house (Gr. *in the things of my Father*)?" Not, indeed, that Jesus lived under the moral law as an external restraint. The law was within, it was written on his heart, it was of his own choice and purpose and nature. It was the law of the spirit of filial love and joy; the obedi-

ence, the service of perfect sonship. And the same is the Christian ideal.

Here, then, is the secret of the power of Jesus himself. It is his absolute oneness with the will of God. "For God was with him," said Peter at Cæsarea. And has not he himself told us so? "He that sent me is with me; He hath not left me alone." Then, also, he tells us why. "For I do always the things that are pleasing to him." Nothing less, nothing other, is the truth of the cross and the throne. Becoming obedient even unto "the death of the cross," the Son of God received from the Father the Name of supreme sovereignty and power, so that "every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." All "to the glory of God the Father."

From the Master himself, therefore, may the disciple learn that obedience to the word, "Take up thy cross and follow me," is the path which leads to the throne of power.

XVII

THE CONFESSION

Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.—ACTS 10: 47, 48.

WITH the closing incident in this story of early apostolic preaching, our study shall also find an end.

While the witnesses from Joppa were amazed at the bestowal of spiritual gifts upon a Gentile congregation, Peter, not content with the indulgence of a mere emotion, saw something to be done. The unprecedented event suggested to him the proposal of an equally unprecedented religious observance. So, characteristically, he spoke out and said: "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" Since the reality of the outpoured Spirit had been experienced, why should it be thought sacrilegious to confer its sacramental sign? And he commanded it to be done—at the hands, we may believe, of the six witnessing brethren.

I

But how is it that in Christianity there should ever have been such a command? why this outward ordinance of baptism in the religion of the Spirit?

Nearly three hundred years ago there appeared in England a notably devout unschooled mystic, with a spoken message that found thousands of responsive hearers. It found them and drew them together in a society which has existed, here and there, unto the present time. The preacher was George Fox, the first of the Friends, and the message was that of the enlightening and life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit in the human heart.

It was a teaching as old, in fact, as the New Testament, but it came to many with the force of a fresh revelation in the England of the seventeenth century. It made the Divine presence a conscious reality. It bade every man realize the immediate guidance of the Spirit of truth in his own heart and conscience. Walk by the inner light, it urged, for that will show the way of salvation; and through obedience the light increases, while through refusal to obey, it is dimmed and darkened. "Christians," writes the chief theologian of Quakerism, Robert Barclay, "are now to be led inwardly and immediately by the Spirit of God even in the same manner, though it befall not many to be led in the same measure, as the saints of old."

Now, it was a great truth upon which the early Friends thus laid the emphasis of their religious faith. But just here was their lack, to wit, in the withholding of emphasis, or even acceptance, from certain other truths of the human soul and the Christian revelation. They magnified the inward work of grace, but saw too little worth in its outward means.

Inasmuch, for example, as a man is called into

the ministry of the gospel by the voice of the Spirit in his own heart, and must speak under the impulse of the Spirit, they would have no instituted pulpit or pastorate and no preparation of sermons or other addresses—as if the Spirit could not speak to men through such means. Inasmuch as the essence of the Lord's Supper is spiritual communion with Christ—"I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me"—they would have no memorial bread and wine. Inasmuch as the real baptism is that of the Spirit, they would have no baptism with water.

They declared these ordinances to have been intended only for the special circumstances of the apostolic age, and pointed to the baneful superstitions that soon afterward began to gather about them. Any prescribed form, even the singing of a hymn, they said, was unsuited to the dispensation of the Spirit. Besides, they were prone to listen for the voice of the Spirit too exclusively in the feelings, to the neglect of judgment and reason.

This was their testimony: what were its fruits? Beautiful characters were developed, gentle and heroic lives were lived, noble philanthropic work was done. But in the effort to bear witness against all religious forms, both Christian evangelism and spiritual nurture were greatly embarrassed, while poor and ineffective forms were persistently practised. Thus it came to pass that the day of the Friends' missionary zeal was comparatively brief; and the day of their declining, or at least unprogressive, activity has lingered until now.

While, therefore, on the one hand, we may learn from the life and labours of the early Friends the vital power of their essential message, on the other hand we may be reminded, by their subsequent weakness as a Christian society, of the right use as contrasted with both the depreciation and the overuse of the outward means of grace.

Truly, without the Spirit's light and power, our ministration of the word of truth will be in vain. Truly, Christianity is the religion of the Spirit. Truly, he of whom the Father said, "This is my Son, my chosen, hear ye him," who taught much and brought religion to men as an abundant inner life, instituted very little. Nevertheless, Jesus would adapt his ministrations to man as he is. His gospel, therefore, is not only a gift to the religious feelings, to common sense, to spiritual intuition, but also, as Horace Bushnell has said, "a gift to the imagination." He used many parables and object-lessons in illustration of the truth. He gathered his disciples about him at the Last Supper, and said, "This do in remembrance of me." Though declaring to the Apostles, "John indeed baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence," yet he gave approbation to that water-baptism—had he not even sought it for himself?—and bade these chosen Apostles baptize disciples into the name of the Triune God.

Man is distinctively intellectual and religious rather than physical. Yet would it be vain that any man should say, "I am intellectual, and therefore in no need of schools or libraries or laboratories or pen and

ink"; and equally vain would it be for any man to say, "I am religious, and therefore in no need of churches or Scriptures or any outward sign of inward and spiritual grace."

Did not he who gave us the inward give also the outward? Does not the outward furnish means of discipline and development for the soul, and of intercommunication between soul and soul? To use such means is not to abuse them.

The New Testament is not the Christ.

*"Beyond the sacred page
I seek thee, Lord,
My spirit pants for thee,
O living Word."*

But this New Testament, seen with the eyes, handled with the hands, is a means through which we may find the Christ. It has no power to give eternal life, but it contains "the witness, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Similarly with the Christian congregation and its outward ordinances. To seek spiritual life in them would be idolatry; to seek it through them is wisdom and truth.

If, therefore, it be asked, How is it that in Christianity, which is distinctively the religion of the Spirit, there need be any such ordinance as baptism? it may be answered: Because the world of human souls has not yet ceased to need the service of external signs. Baptism is one of these needful signs. It is a sign of the renewal of the heart by the Spirit of God, and of the renewed heart's allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence it becomes the rite of initiation into the Christian

brotherhood and the Divinely prescribed form of the confession of Christ before the world.

II

This baptism in Cæsarea was the more significant because of the day and the circumstances in which it occurred. It was a day of pentecostal blessing. While the Gentile congregation, with ears to hear, were gladly receiving from an eye-witness and apostle of Jesus Christ the Good News of God, the Holy Spirit fell upon them with power and filled their lips with ecstatic praise. One might have supposed that this, which was the culmination, would also prove to be the close of the meeting. Let the little company disperse at once to their homes or to whatever customary duties awaited them—new men and women in a new world, singing the new praise of God. But it was not so. The apostle would have them first make a distinct confession of Christ in Christian baptism. He would receive these “strangers,” at whatever risk to their outward peace, into the New Israel, in which there should be neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christian believers only. Did they believe on Jesus as the Christ? Let them declare it here and now by baptism in his name. Let them declare it, whatever the consequences of such an avowal.

“Upon this rock I will build my Church”—upon the rock of the confessing disciple. And of such is the Master Architect building it still. “A disciple of Jesus but secretly”—how could and how can such a man form any part of such a Church? He must be-

come, like these Cæsarean converts, a *confessing* disciple—like them and their preacher.

For one thing, baptism as confession of Christ would commit the young Christian, in the sight of his fellow-men, to the new "Way"; and the reaction of self-committal is increase of strength. Attach a badge to your person, as a sign of membership in some confraternity or of adherence to some cause, and it will tend, like the soldier's uniform or the flag under which he serves, to strengthen those personal principles and ideals which it represents. Similarly baptism, introducing to church membership, is a badge which tends to strengthen that sense of Christian discipleship to which, at the same time, it gives expression. Says the spirit of loyalty, Be true to your colours.

Nor will the instructed Christian refuse to make confession of his faith. "If I am ever converted," said a man in the course of a conversation we were having on the subject, "nobody shall know it." Ah, my friend, how little were you aware of what you were speaking or whereof you affirmed. As if the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ were a treasure to be hid securely away, like some valuable certificate in a safety-box—until, perchance, it might be needed for admission into the Celestial City.

Then, too, the confession of Christ, making the disciple a member of a visible and organized brotherhood, meets the social need of his nature with a type of friendship peculiarly its own. "*As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.*" Peter knew the

sweetness and worth of this new-born love and helpfulness in Christ, when he wrote: "Above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves, for love covereth a multitude of sins; using hospitality one to another without murmuring; according as each has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." * And it was into this new visible order of mutual love and service that the Apostle of the Jews would introduce his newly found Gentile friends.

III

Not, however, that Christian confession is simply or chiefly a self-regarding act. It expresses a far greater purpose than to be good to one's self. It is for others' sake, even all others'. It is for the propagation of the gospel, the extension of the Church, the bringing in of the kingdom of God.

What is the patriot citizen's motive in enlisting for a war of defence, if it be not love, even love at the risk of life itself, to his country? What is a true-hearted man's motive in joining any society of civic or moral reform—a temperance league, for example—if it be not an unselfish concern for the welfare of others? And will a man be baptized into the Church of God, our Lord's one great Missionary Society, the institutional representative of the kingdom of love, with any less beneficent a motive?

Here, then, is not a command of some blind priest or some dogmatic council from without, but a law of

* I Peter 4: 8-11.

the inner life. It is love, complying with a condition of the largest service. It is the emancipated soul entering the one training-school for service to all mankind. It is the impulse of a heart in which the highest life has begun to get possession. It is spiritual spontaneity.

“The earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.” “Bringeth forth fruit of herself;” it is of her very nature, under the quickening power of sunshine and rain, to raise up the implanted seed into foliage and fruit. So too, spiritually. It is of the nature of the human heart, under the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, to raise up the implanted seed of God’s word into all the progressive fruitage of a helpful Christian life. To share with others his faith and hope is one of the first desires of a soul born from above. Hence he must confess the Christ of that faith and hope before men. Perfectly natural to the new creation in Christ was the request which the converted Ethiopian offered out of his own heart to Philip the Evangelist: “What doth hinder me to be baptized?”

IV

True, there are those who make it a point to applaud the name of Christ—in a socialistic meeting, for example—and at the same time to pour contempt upon his Church. One would fain ask where these, our unsympathetic brothers, get their knowledge of the Name which they profess to revere. It cannot be from the New Testament; for very different from

theirs in such a matter is the mind of Christ as there portrayed.

We may be told, indeed, that it was an ecclesiastic court that pronounced Jesus of Nazareth worthy of death and had him sent to the cross. But we also remember that that ecclesiastic court was not the Congregation of Israel. The Sanhedrin was not the Church. "They took counsel together that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him. But they said, Not during the feast, lest a tumult arise among the people." So they laid hands upon him by night for a hurried mock trial and conviction, to avoid opposition on the part of the people—the people assembled in Jerusalem for the Passover feast. And these rather than any ecclesiastic court were the Congregation of Israel, the Church of their day.

Moreover, that Church was indeed greatly lacking in the spirit of humanity and in many respects sadly imperfect; and yet, all the way from Bethlehem to Calvary, Jesus was included in its membership. He submitted to its rites,* attended upon its ordinances,† spoke no word against its institutions,‡ drove the desecraters out of its temple.|| To accept him as leader, therefore, is to be a member, a lover, and a reformer of the Church of God in our lifetime, as he was in the days of his flesh.

For here it stands, "the house of God, which is the Church of the living God," even in our community this day. Imperfect? Necessarily imperfect, if you

* Luke 2: 21, 41-43.

† Luke 22: 15; 4: 16.

‡ Matt. 23: 2.

|| John 2: 15.

or I be included in its membership. Denominationally divided? Even so, and not without sectarian strife and vainglory. Sin-stained? Confessedly very far from perfect purity and righteousness—as it was in Jesus' day, and in the apostolic age, and at the Protestant Reformation. Nevertheless here it stands, in the forefront of the world's higher life, the representative of all that is greatest and best.

Think of its spiritual standards and ideals. It testifies continually of the things of the spirit. It puts the New Testament, written by its own prophets and teachers, the inspired teaching of God's self-revelation in Jesus, into the hands of all the people, that each may learn for himself the way of life. It proclaims with living and prophetic voice the redemption that is in the Son of God, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. It favours and fosters a life of holy love, embodied in many manifest examples which illustrate the Master's own word: "Lo, the kingdom of God is within (or, *in the midst of*) you." It leads or coöperates in undertakings for civic betterment and moral reform, and receives the unconscious endorsement of being instinctively expected to do so even by those who show scant sympathy with its spiritual beliefs. It is incomparably the greatest of all the forces on earth that make for the brotherhood of man. It sends forth its messengers, anear and afar, to teach the Christian gospel, with all that such a message means of spiritual salvation and its great by-products of physical, social, and political welfare. Which mission these sons and daughters of the

cross are cheerfully fulfilling, in the name of the Son of Man, to-day.

The baptism of Cornelius was the baptism of a Roman and a soldier, but it meant a call to a higher type of heroism than that of arms, and the same is true of Christian baptism in our own age—or indeed in any other. It means the yielding of the will in obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord. And this means to witness for him against worldliness and falsehood in all their fashionable forms, against unhallowed speech and fleshly indulgence, against all manner of vice and greed; to make no compromise with moral evil, however plausible its plea or insinuating its defenders; and not to count our life dear unto ourselves, so that we may serve his cause at home or abroad.

Hence it is the heroic to which the appeal of the Church must ever be made. “Let us hear what kind of persons these Christians invite,” said Celsus, a Greek philosopher of the second century, in his satirical book against the Christians. “Every one, they say, who is a sinner, who is devoid of understanding, who is a child . . . him will the kingdom of God receive.” So they did, and so must any church of Christ do, in any year of our Lord. But out of the ignorant it would fain make the wise-hearted and out of the slavish the heroic. Receiving the youngest, the feeblest, the most timid, it would transform them into men and women that are strong and of an excellent spirit and unafraid. For the warfare into which they are called is that beside which all the strife and struggle of warring

nations, present or historic, pale into insignificance. It is the true world-war. Its antagonists are the powers of spiritual darkness and death. Its law is the cross. Its kingdom of peace will be won with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

What, then, is the brotherhood denoted by Christian baptism? No human invention or ecclesiasticism, no child of an age or a race, it sees kingdoms and civilizations flourish and decline, but lives unshaken through them all, a mightier beneficent power in this than in any preceding century. It is the Congregation of the Eternal Christ. The gates of Hades have not prevailed against it. The peoples of the world will gather beneath its banners and crown its Lord the Lord of all. Oh, the honour and the attendant opportunity of—standing among the rulers in its courts or the chief ministers at its altars? Not that; but of simple admission into its fellowship, that we may have some share, even the least, in its glorious warfare and work.

v

Shall we think of the Church under another New Testament figure? Like the individual Christian preacher, though in a larger sense, the local Christian congregation is a light-bearer, which is to say, a truth-bearer. "The seven candlesticks are seven churches." The word of their Apostle-pastor to the church in Philippi, "among whom ye are seen as lights [shining personalities] in the world," is equally true individually and collectively. This light of truth

shines the brighter for its transmission from one to another within the congregation. For each is to give of his own sense and vision of truth to his brethren.

And not the least, in receiving as well as in giving, in learning as well as in teaching, will be the appointed pastor and teacher of all. His prayer for himself and his people alike will be that of Paul and Timothy for the heresy-threatened congregation at Colossæ: "That ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," "increasing in the knowledge of God."

All this for one another, and equally for still others; for their human neighbours, one and all. "Among whom [the outside community in pagan Philippi] ye are seen as lights *in the world.*"

But again as in the case of the individual Christian preacher so with the congregation, to be a truth-bearer is to be at the same time a bearer of power. It must needs be so. "Lights in the world, holding forth the word of *life.*" In the faithful congregation, this power of spiritual life will, through mutual sympathy and service, through organization, through united prayer, be both diffused and intensified.

Whosoever has known a happy and spiritually high-toned Christian home—fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, sisterhood—will testify to its saving influence upon the young people who go forth from it. Many a one has it kept from childhood in the ways of righteousness, many a one has the abiding memory of it called back from the "far country." Such a power

also is the watch-care and companionship of the house of God—fatherhood, motherhood, brotherhood, sisterhood in the Spirit.

A church, therefore, in its true idea, is a union of Divine life-forces through the touch of man upon man. "Through love be servants one to another." "Build each other up, even as also ye do." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." "O come, let us worship and bow down"—together let us come to the Springs of strength. Your desire to draw near to God will quicken mine. Your prayer will remind me of my own innermost needs. Your praisefulness will kindle some flame of devotion in my own heart. Through association there will be spiritual reinforcement.

Here, too, the pulpit is the beneficiary of the pew. Few indeed must be the congregations that are without some ministry of power to their own chief minister. There will be inspiring hearers to help him preach. There will be humble and unselfish lives to put to shame his vanity and self-worship. There will be appreciation shown him that will nerve his spirit to more faithful service. There will be kindnesses done him that will purify his heart with the awakened response of grateful love. There will be shadowed homes, broken family circles, couches of pain from which he will come away with the prayer: "Oh, that I may have grace in the day of trial thus to suffer and be strong."

There will be much to try his patience and much

to threaten his ideals and many a burden to bear, which things may prove in the end to be "friendlier than the smiling days."

Freely therefore let him give, even as he has freely received, through the lives of his fellow-disciples, from the Infinite Love.

"Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." Novices in the Christian life, they felt the need of their evangelist's further teaching and personal influence. They needed him as friend and pastor.

This further invitation, be sure, was not despised by such an evangelist. Did it not mean another opening door?

On the shore of Lake Gennesaret, Jesus, at the time of his calling Simon Peter to discipleship, had foretold for him a ministry of evangelism: "Fear not; henceforth thou shalt catch men." On the same lake shore, Jesus, having finished on earth the work which the Father had given him to do and passed through death into the glory of resurrection, prescribed for this same Apostle, with equal distinctness, a ministry of pastoral care: "Feed my lambs," "Tend my sheep." The same two forms of Christian ministry have continued unto this day; for the unsaved world is still everywhere present and the gathered congregation of believers is ever in need of instruction, encouragement, admonition, upbuilding, while the constraining love of Christ abides as the motive of this twofold ministration of his gospel. Hence the evangelist-pastor.

All the while there is the larger vision and the multiplying power. For the Church is inter-congregational. It is a spiritual commonwealth. Soul answers soul across the continents and the seas. The word of life which is preached and lived in the local community may be borne afar, and bear abundant fruit even where Christ had not been named. Only the Eye to which nothing is hid can trace its course or reckon its contribution to the building of the unseen City of God.

HOMILETICS AND CHURCH WORK

CHARLES SILVESTER HORNE

*Yale Lectures on
Preaching*

The Romance of Preaching

With an Introduction by Charles R. Brown, D.D., Dean of Yale Divinity School, and a Biographical Sketch by H. A. Bridgman, Editor of *The Congregationalist*. With Portrait. 12mo, cloth, net \$1.25.

"From the days when Henry Ward Beecher gave the first series of lectures on the Lyman Beecher Foundation in Yale University . . . the task of inspiring young ministers to nobler effort in their high calling, has been well performed. But among all the lecturers few have ever so gripped the divinity students, the larger audience of pastors in active service, as did Silvester Horne. The intellectual distinction which marked his utterances, the fine literary form in which they were phrased, the moral passion which gave to their delivery that energy which belongs to words which are 'spirit and life,' together with the rare spiritual insight displayed all combined to make notable the service rendered by Mr. Horne to Yale University."—*Charles R. Brown, D.D., Dean of Yale Divinity School.*

The last message of a leader of men.

BISHOP THOMAS B. NEELY,

The Minister in the Itinerant System

12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

"Bishop Neely discusses frankly the fact that large numbers of strong men eagerly accept official service, leaving the itinerant pastorate. He states the system itself briefly, but the burden of the book is a full discussion of the bearing of it all on the minister himself. It was to be presumed of course that a Methodist bishop would conclude that 'the system should be maintained' and even that 'the appointing power should be untrammelled'; but it is none the less interesting to follow the argument. We do not know any other book which states the whole case with such eminent fairness."—*The Continent.*

EDMUND S. LORENZ, B. D.

Practical Church Music

A Discussion of Purpose, Methods and Plans. *New Popular Edition.* 12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

"Mr. Lorenz has had thirty years' active experience with both the theoretical and practical sides of church music in all its forms. This is one of the most practical books on the subject of church music we have ever read. Every page is suggestive and every suggestion is eminently practical. The book closes with a worthy appendix dealing with musical and hymnological books worth owning, choice church music for choir and solo use, and suggestive outlines and subjects for song sermons and song services."—*Advance.*

PRACTICAL RELIGION--CHURCH HISTORY

HAROLD BEGBIE

Author of "Twice-Born Men"

The Proof of God

A Dialogue With Two Letters. 12mo, cloth, net 75c.
The author of "Twice-Born Men" here enters a new field of thought. It is a most effective book—one that will be read and passed on to others. His method of meeting the agnostic and the skeptic is admirable. Here is philosophy presented in conversational form, pointed and convincing.

WILLIAM J. LHAMON, D.D. *Dean of Bible School, Drury College, Springfield, Mo.*

The Character Christ—Fact or Fiction?

12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

A study of the Christian Gospels, prepared and presented with a view to enforcing the claims of the historical Christ. Attention is directed to the literary presentation of the character Christ.

C. L. DRAWBRIDGE

Common Objections to Christianity

Library of Historic Theology. 8vo, cloth, net \$1.50.

An ably compiled volume dealing with almost every current objection to Christianity. The author writes with a pretty full knowledge of these objections, having, as Secretary of the Christian Evidence Society, lectured in the London Parks and held his own against all sorts of questioners.

CHARLES J. SHEBBEARE *Rector of Sverford, Oxon, England*

Religion in an Age of Doubt

Library of Historic Theology. 8vo, cloth, net \$1.50.

To this great problem Mr. Shebbeare addresses himself, claiming that with the old faith and the added insight of a new teaching, believers may lay the foundations of a devotional system, which furnishes a rational ground for a robust faith.

W. J. SPARROW SIMPSON, D.D.

The Catholic Conception of the Church

Library of Historic Theology. 8vo, cloth, net \$1.50.

Dr. Simpson's book supplies the information and assists in forming a right judgment: What Christ taught and did; what St. Paul and the Early Fathers conceived to be the functions of the Church; the idea of the Church in the Council of Trent, are among the matters ably discussed.

JOHN B. RUST, D.D.

Modernism and the Reformation

12mo, cloth, net \$1.50.

The aim of this able treatise is to defend the Protestant Reformed faith, as against the liberalizing movement within the Roman Church known as Modernism. The essential principles of Protestantism are set forth in detail with an exhaustive review of the trend and methods of Modernism.

SERMONS—LECTURES—ADDRESSES

JAMES L. GORDON, D.D.

All's Love Yet All's Law

12mo, cloth, net \$1.25.

"Discloses the secret of Dr. Gordon's eloquence—fresh, and intimate presentations of truth which always keep close to reality. Dr. Gordon also seems to have the world's literature at his command. A few of the titles will give an idea of the scope of his preaching. 'The Law of Truth: The Science of Universal Relationships'; 'The Law of Inspiration: The Vitalizing Power of Truth'; 'The Law of Vibration'; 'The Law of Beauty: The Spiritualizing Power of Thought'; 'The Soul's Guarantee of Immortality.'—*Christian Work*.

BISHOP FRANCIS J. McCONNELL *Cole Lectures*

Personal Christianity

Instruments and Ends in the Kingdom of God.

12mo, cloth, net \$1.25.

The latest volume of the famous "Cole Lectures" delivered at Vanderbilt University. The subjects are: I. The Personal in Christianity. II. The Instrumental in Christianity. III. The Mastery of World-Views. IV. The Invigoration of Morality. V. The Control of Social Advance. VI. "Every Kindred, and People, and Tongue."

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS, D.D.

Lectures and Orations by Henry Ward Beecher

Collected by Newell Dwight Hillis. 12mo, net \$1.20.

It is fitting that one who is noted for the grace, finish and eloquence of his own addresses should choose those of his predecessor which he deems worthy to be preserved in a bound volume as the most desirable, the most characteristic and the most dynamic utterances of America's greatest pulpit orator.

W. L. WATKINSON, D.D.

The Moral Paradoxes of St. Paul

12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

"These sermons are marked, even to greater degree than is usual with their talented preacher, by clearness, force and illustrative aptness. He penetrates unerringly to the heart of Paul's paradoxical settings forth of great truths, and illumines them with pointed comment and telling illustration. The sermons while thoroughly practical are garbed in striking and eloquent sentences, terse, nervous, attention-compelling."—*Christian World*.

LEN G. BROUGHTON, D.D.

The Prodigal and Others

12mo, cloth, net \$1.00.

"The discourses are vital, bright, interesting and helpful. It makes a preacher feel like preaching once more on this exhaustless parable, and will prove helpful to all young people—and older ones, too. Dr. Broughton does not hesitate to make his utterances striking and entertaining by the introduction of numerous appropriate and homely stories and illustrations. He reaches the heart."—*Review and Expositor*.

ESSAYS AND STUDIES

JOSEPH FORT NEWTON

Author of "The Eternal Christ," "David Swing"

What Have the Saints to Teach Us?

A Message from the Church of the Past to the Church of To-day. 12mo, cloth, net 50c.

"Of that profounder life of faith and prayer and vision which issues in deeds of daring excellence, the Pilgrims of the Mystic Way are the leaders and guides; and there is much in our time which invites their leadership."—*Preface.*

JOHN BALCOM SHAW, D.D.

The Angel in the Sun

Glimpses of the Light Eternal. Cloth, net \$1.00.

Dr. Shaw has prepared a series of spirited addresses marked throughout by sincerity and fine feeling, and free of all philosophical surmise, or theological cavil. "The Angel In The Sun" is a refreshing and enheartening book; the cheery word of a man of unswerving faith to his companions by the way.

PHILIP MAURO

Looking for the Saviour

12mo, cloth, net 35c.; paper, 20c.

The first part of this little volume is devoted to an examination of the chief reasons that have been advanced in support of the post-tribulation view of the Rapture of the Saints. The second part contains some affirmative teaching relating to the general subject of the Lord's return.

PROF. LEE R. SCARBOROUGH

Recruits for World Conquests

12mo, cloth, net 75c.

"Here is a soul-stirring message, presenting the call and the need and the response we should make. The author is deeply spiritual, wise, earnest and conservative in presenting his appeal.—*Word and Way.*

PRINCIPAL ALEXANDER WHYTE, D. D.

Thirteen Appreciations

12mo, cloth, net \$1.50.

Appreciations of Santa Teresa, Jacob Boehme, Bishop Andrews, Samuel Rutherford, Thomas Shepard, Thomas Goodwin, Sir Thomas Browne, William Law, James Fraser of Brea, Bishop Butler, Cardinal Newman, William Guthrie and John Wesley, go to the making of Dr. Whyte's new book, a work of high authority, revealing on every page the man who wrote it.

1000 - 1000
1000 - 1000

1000 - 1000



1 1012 01023 1860