WHAT IS THERE IN RELIGION?

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN

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Flumen Dei repletum est aquis.

BY

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN
Minister in the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, and Associate Professor in the Union Theological Seminary, New York City.

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TO THE REVEREND PRESIDENT
ARTHUR CUSHMAN MC GIFFERT, PH.D., D.D., LL.D.,
MY TEACHER, COLLEAGUE AND CHIEF,
IN HONOR AND AFFECTION

Five of the following chapters were delivered upon the Merrick Lectureship on "practical and experimental religion," at Ohio Wesleyan University, in April, 1922. The other chapters are added in order that the presentation of the theme may be less fragmentary.

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CHAPTER I

REFRESHMENT

SHORTLY after the Armistice, a group of young people in a town on the banks of the Hudson were discussing the state of the universe (a theme pleasing to younger minds because of its roominess), and they were mentioning factors to be counted upon in the remaking of a shattered world. One spoke of religion, and was abruptly challenged with the question: "What is there in religion anyhow?" The eyes of the group turned towards an older man, who somewhat mystified the circle by asking: "What is there in the Hudson River anyhow?" He went on to answer his own question by pointing out that what the river does for the territory through which it flows, that the Christian faith does for those whom it reaches. Trampers climbing Mt. Marcy meet the Hudson rising in Lake Tear-of-the-Clouds, and slake their thirst from a cooling brook; so believing people discover refreshment in religion. A little farther on its course the brook provides campers with a bathing-pool where they wash themselves, and at its lower end the Hudson receives the filth of New York City from a hundred sewers and sweeps it out into the salt ocean. Thus religion cleanses individuals and communities. Along part of the river's course mills are built, and the stream supplies them with power. Religion has always been found an incalculable reinforcement. Sometimes the power in the stream is transmuted into electricity and carried to light the streets and homes of towns. Faith has found illumination in fellowship with God. The entire valley through which the Hudson flows is made more fertile by the presence of this body of water; and religion is a source of fruitfulness in human life. Upon the river's broader stretches steamers and barges carry freight and passengers; so believers know themselves upheld by their trust. The Hudson forms part of New York's Harbor, affording a quiet anchorage for ships, and opening out through the bay into the vast Atlantic it supplies a passage to the great deep. So religion both furnishes peace to men in search of haven, and an outlet to adventure on the boundless sea. The river beautifies the landscape; and men of faith find life enhanced with loveliness when they are aware of the presence of the living God. The Hudson is a barrier, forming a dividing line between states and sundering those who dwell on opposite banks, but it is also a highway upon which ferries ply and steamers make daily connections between cities miles apart. Religion draws boundaries and separates men, whose convictions compel them to take clearly defined positions; but it also is the great unifier, establishing intercourse between those who else would be without sense of kinship and unconnected. The Hudson, like all rivers, is constantly changing—flowing away to the ocean; but the stream remains a permanent part of the landscape—the watershed from the Adirondacks to the Atlantic. So religion is always in flux, seeming about to pass altogether, but forever renewed, an abiding element in human life—the never ceasing outgo of man's heart towards God, because that heart is continually replenished by inspirations from God.

There was nothing novel in this illustration. Centuries ago a psalmist had sung: "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God," and he was thinking of God's presence with His people, for he continued: "God is in the midst of her." And the prophet Ezekiel concludes his description of the redeemed and restored holy land by picturing a miraculous river which emerged from the threshold of the Temple in Jerusalem and brought life whithersoever its waters came.

May I, a provincial New Yorker, crave your indulgence to employ our loved and admired Hudson as a parable, in attempting a fractional answer to the query, What is there in religion?

We shall narrow the question somewhat, as though it read, What is there in *Christian* religion? because that faith has the only chance of gaining the attention of students in an American college; and also because, as Dean Inge has well said, "Christianity is not *a* religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest aspects." And we shall further limit our answer, as though the question read: "What is there in Christian religion *which appeals to people of our day?*" At Trenton, on the banks of the Delaware, there is a colonial house, equipped with a water-wheel which in George Washington's time ran a grist-mill. To-day the occupants of the house find it more convenient to buy their flour; but the water-wheel is still in operation and generates electricity to light the house. The successive centuries find different uses for their fellowship with the living God. We shall freely draw on all the centuries for illustrations, but we shall look for illustrations of those experiences which have worth for normal people among ourselves. We shall appeal oftenest to the experiences recorded in the Bible, because its books contain the accounts of discoveries, which were made not only by their first explorers, but which have been repeated by many thousands since in every generation. The reason the Bible remains the authority on the life of God with men is that it constantly proves its experiences true to age after age of those who employ it as their guide. A river is a continuous flow of water in a well-defined stream. It is the Bible, more than any other institution, which keeps the Christian religion a continuous and clearly recognizable stream of life with God through the centuries. Without it the water of divine life which had its origin in Jesus, collecting in Him from many earlier tributaries, would have become so mixed with alien currents, and would have flowed off into such widely separated river-beds, that it would have lost its identity. The water of life found its banks and its proper channel in the First Century, and the New Testament has held it permanently in its true course ever since. We cannot answer the question, What is there in Christian religion? without looking first at the experiences contained in the Scriptures and tested and approved by the Church of all the following centuries.

In selecting a parable as a guide to our answer, we obviously confine ourselves to the very partial presentation of the subject which any one parable suggests. But we have excellent precedent for using a parable, and if it furnishes us with only a few glimpses of the vastest of all themes, it may render those glimpses more clear and intelligible.

Well, then, to our parable. Those who are familiar with the sources of the Hudson River in the Adirondacks know it first as a tiny brook which supplies them with a cool drink as they toil up the tallest mountain in the state. Believing people find religion refreshing. To begin with a few well-known utterances of the Bible, Jeremiah speaks of God as "the Fountain of living waters"; and when, in a despondent mood, he fears that he will miss the usual renewal of spirit, he thinks of the water-courses of Palestine which dry up in summer to the disappointment of expectant travelers, and asks: "Wilt Thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful brook, as waters that fail?" The best loved Psalm runs: "He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." Another psalmist employs the same figure of speech: "Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life." Still another, according to the text used by our English translators, pictures a company of singing and dancing worshipers, saying: "All my springs are in Thee." Jesus took up the metaphor in His conversation with the woman at the well in Sychar about living water, and in His saying at Jerusalem: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." And on the final page of the Bible stands the gracious invitation: "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." These religious men (and one might multiply similar sayings from both Old and New Testaments) found their contacts with the Invisible reviving.

It is not a common opinion to-day that religion is refreshing. Fellowship with the Lord of heaven and earth is looked on as sobering, rendering a man serious-minded, conscientious, burdened with the wrongs and woes of mankind, and awed with the momentous issues which hang upon his own dealings with good and evil. And it certainly should have this solemnizing result, for in religion only that can help us before which we bow, but Biblical believers found it also exhilarating. They spoke of going unto God their "exceeding Joy," and bade one another "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Both because outsiders mistake its essential character, and because insiders often fail to realize what is theirs, a widespread protest has called the Christian faith depressing. The brilliant French novelist, George Sand, speaks wearily of "the Deity of the crucifix." Swinburne puts his feelings on the lips of a pagan addressing Christ after Christianity had been officially proclaimed at Rome:

> "Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has
> grown grey from Thy breath."

Ibsen makes the Emperor Julian apostatize from a faith which robs life of its zest and thrill: "To thee I make my offering, O Dionysus, God of Ecstasy, who dost lift up the souls of mortals out of abasement." Undoubtedly the French-woman familiar with Roman Christianity, and the Englishman and Scandinavian brought up among Protestants, had some reason for their complaint that religion, as they had seen it, supplied its votaries with no gayety of soul.

But had they listened to contemporaries compelled by skepticism to abandon Christian faith, they might have heard them lamenting a loss of vitality. Ernest Renan, destined for the Roman priesthood and led out of the Catholic Church by doubts, confesses: "Since Christianity is not true, nothing interests me or appears worthy of my attention." No substitute ever takes the place of the discarded religion in his enthusiasm, and the best work of his life is done upon studies connected with the Bible. With a somewhat similar mental experience, Edmond Schèrer, a Protestant, writes: "So I see myself carried away by my intellectual convictions towards a future that inspires in me neither interest nor confidence." About the same time, in England, John Addington Symonds complains of his unbelieving state of mind, and comments: "Such skepticism is like a blighting wind: nothing thrives beneath it. How can a man who has not made up his mind about the world and immortality, who seeks and cannot find God, care for politics, for instance?" And on our side of the Atlantic, one of Yale's foremost graduates, the poet Edward Rowland Sill, who had abandoned his plan of entering the ministry, wrote to a classmate: "People think that a thinking man's speculations about religion interfere with his daily life very little—but how certain conclusions do take the shine out of one's existence." These men of sad lucidity of soul looked forth on an overcast world, where nothing sparkled, and found the heart for vigorous living gone from them.

Or had these who condemn Christian faith as banishing life's zest listened to appreciative estimates of an artist, so little Christian by personal conviction as Goethe, they would have found him employing religion to recall his best known character from suicide. Faust, hopeless of probing nature's secrets, oppressed with the misery and paltriness of man's lot, is about to take the poisoned goblet when he hears the Chorus welcoming Easter morning with the hymn: "Christ is arisen!" It takes him back to his earlier and more believing days:

Once Heavenly Love sent down a burning kiss
Upon my brow, in Sabbath silence holy;
And, filled with mystic presage, chimed the church-bell
slowly,
And prayer dissolved me in a fervent bliss.
A sweet uncomprehended yearning
Drove forth my feet through woods and meadows free,
And, while a thousand tears were burning,
I felt a world arise for me.
These chants, to youth and all its sports appealing,
Proclaimed the Spring's rejoicing holiday;
And memory holds me now with childhood's feeling
Back from the last, the solemn way.
Sound on, ye hymns of Heaven, so sweet and mild,
My tears gush forth: the Earth takes back her child!

Without question life is a fatiguing affair, in which idealists are disillusioned, enthusiasts bored into cynics, and the most indomitable souls suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Religion frequently seems to make it a sadder and more impossible undertaking. The Christian has a loftier standard for himself and for society, and if the lower ideals of his neighbors are unattainable, he is more surely doomed to perpetual failure and discouragement. Contact with Christ softens his sympathies and sensitizes his conscience, so that men's woes and his own iniquities become more painful. When he places the cross in the center of his outlook, he is aware that the same forces which accomplished the fell disaster at Golgotha are still active; and for him there is a darkness over all the earth where a loving God is ever in anguish with and for His sinning children. The believer is not spared the strains and disheartenments of other men, and his fellowship with Christ both immeasurably increases his sense of responsibility and his consciousness of his own unworthiness. What Christian can view the world of our time with its brutalities surviving from a long obsolete past, with its age-old hatreds fanned into intenser flame by the gales of passion which have swept over our generation, with its industrial injustices and racial antipathies, with animalism thinly veiled in much that passes for amusing, and with countless absurdities still taken seriously by an unthinking and stupid public, without raising the impatient cry: "O Lord, how long?" There often appears to be a cruel perversity in the universe which cuts off promising careers, allows the well-meaning unwittingly to work harm, couples clever brains with an unscrupulous conscience and a kind heart with a dull head, and into the most wisely contrived and lovingly intentioned plan introduces an unsuspected factor to complicate and defeat it. Again and again frank believers feel disposed to tell the Controller of events: "Thou hast showed Thy people hard things: Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering." Our fellow-mortals are frequently a bitter disappointment. Some whom we love and respect, as Hamlet had his mother, display a coarseness or a disloyalty of which we had not dreamed, and then

> How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
> Seem to us all the uses of this world!

The littleness of men—the trifles which amuse them, their pettiness in their virtues and in their vices—causes us to disparage humanity as a race of Liliputians.

> For goodness all ignoble seems
> Ungenerous and small,
> And the holy are so wearisome,
> Their very virtues pall.

And of all mankind none tire and bore us like ourselves. Back of all our difficulties with circumstances, and behind all our disagreements with people, we discover a chronic offender who is chargeable with almost every blunder and implicated in every folly which brings us defeat and unhappiness. We may be sick of the world and of men, but we are more sick of ourselves.

And the first effect of religion, like that of some medicines, may be to make us feel sicker yet. Many persons take their religion in such small doses that they never experience more than this first result. Their acquaintance with God in Christ is just enough to increase their disrelish for the world and people and themselves. That disgust is of itself an advantage: it means a growth in conscience. One cannot but honor disgusted men as they grimly combat intolerable conditions, lay themselves out to serve people to whom they are drawn by no liking, and take themselves sternly in hand. But they are far removed from those who with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation. Mr. Birrell, in his life of Charlotte Brontë, describes her religion as a "robust Church of Englandism, made up of cleanliness, good works and hatred of humbug—all admirable things certainly, but not specifically religious." And he remarks of the brilliant daughters in that Yorkshire rectory that "alone amongst the sisters Anne had enough religion to give her pleasure."

"Enough religion to give her pleasure"—it is its possession in insufficient quantities which has given the false impression that it is not refreshing. When men have enough of it, they find it as reviving as a mountain-brook. Old Franz Joseph Haydn told Caprani that "at the thought of God his heart leaped for joy, and he could not help his music doing the same." And from that glad spirit came the best known interpretations of "The Creation" and "The Seasons."

Religion affects men's physical and mental condition. The publication of William James' *Letters* disclosed one of the most striking cases, reported in his Edinburgh lectures as from a correspondent, to be an account of his own experience. When he was twenty-eight or thereabouts, he found himself in wretched health, with no congenial task for which his strength was adequate, and tortured with philosophic questions. He was obsessed with a haunting fear of existence and a horror of ending his days in a lunatic asylum.

"In general, I dreaded," he says, "to be left alone. I remember wondering how other people could live, how I myself had ever lived, so unconscious of that pit of insecurity beneath the surface of life. My mother, in particular, a very cheerful person, seemed to me a perfect paradox in her unconsciousness of danger, which you may well believe I was very careful not to disturb by revelations of my own state of mind." His terror, he tells us, was "so pervasive and powerful, that, if I had not clung to scripture-texts like 'The eternal God is my refuge, etc., Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, etc., I am the Resurrection and the Life, etc.,' I think I should have grown really insane."

There speaks a man ill in body and mind kept going by religion.

Now that we have this chapter in Professor James' personal experience, we read with added interest the paragraph in which he says to his Scottish audience:

"There is a state of mind known to religious men, but to no others, in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and water-spouts of God. In this state of mind, what we most dreaded has become the habitation of our safety, and the hour of our moral death has turned into our spiritual birthday. The time for tension in our soul is over, and that of happy relaxation, of calm deep breathing, of an eternal present with no discordant future to be anxious about, has arrived. Fear is not held in abeyance as it is by mere morality; it is positively expunged and washed away."

During the Influenza Epidemic of 1918, the head of a nurses' training-school in a large city hospital, with many of her usual force in France, found herself obliged to work twenty hours out of twenty-four, and at the end of two weeks she was so worn out that one Saturday night she said to herself: "I must consult a nerve-specialist, or . . ." (and she did not know why she suggested the other alternative, for she had not attended religious services in years) "or go to church." The next evening towards eight o'clock one of her nurses saw her slipping out of the hospital and protested that she ought to go to bed; but she walked a few blocks to a neighboring church, had the current of her thought directed by the worship into a new channel, felt herself uplifted, calmed, renewed, and she returned to her work with a freshness of spirit and a repaired will for work.

Religion restores the *morale* for life. We mentioned the experience of weariness in the struggle for ideals, which gives Christians a disgust with the universe. Matthew Arnold speaks of the first followers of Christ as "drawing from the spiritual world a source of joy so abundant that it ran over upon the material world and transfigured it." The New Testament for all its stress and strain, its fighting without and fears within, is a jubilant book. No men have ever said harsher things in condemnation of an evil world than the Christian leaders throughout the centuries; but they are never disheartened for long. Their faith keeps them in high spirits. In the Second Century Clement of Alexandria writes: "Holding festival in our whole life, persuaded that God is on every side present, we cultivate our fields praising, we sail the sea singing." In the Thirteenth Century Francis of Assisi asserts: "The servants of God are, like jugglers, intended to revive the hearts of men and lead them into spiritual joy." In the Sixteenth, Martin Luther declares: "It is impossible for one who hopes in God not to rejoice; even if the world falls to wreck, he will be overwhelmed undismayed under the ruins." And in our own day an essayist takes up this same strain, and tells the Twentieth Century: "Wherever you have belief, you will have hilarity. If we are to be truly gay, we must believe that there is some eternal gayety in the nature of things. The thing called high spirits is possible only to the spiritual." Behind events which go bitterly wrong and circumstances which seem unconscionably unresponsive to every effort to better them, faith has sight of Him who is primarily accountable for the ongoings of the universe, and whispers: "The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." He is tirelessly at work on a refractory world; if He must wait His time, He lacks neither patience nor persistency; He will not fail nor be discouraged, and He is able to accomplish His goodwill. Believers know how to be still; to remind themselves that God lives and rules; that what He stands they can endure; and that as He perseveres they must bear Him company. They look for the apparently impossible; and if it accords with the mind of Christ, they say quietly: "Behold, it shall come to pass."

Religion repairs our weariness with our fellow-mortals. Faber voiced a common mood in his lines, entitled, *Low Spirits:*

> Fever, and fret, and aimless stir,
> And disappointed strife,
> All chafing unsuccessful things,
> Make up the sum of life.
>
> Love adds anxiety to toil,
> And sameness doubles cares,

While one unbroken chain of work
  The flagging temper wears.

The light and air are dulled with smoke;
  The streets resound with noise;
And the soul sinks to see its peers
  Chasing their joyless joys.

And he passes to a less common mood, but to one familiar to those who seriously use their religion.

Sweet thought of God! now do thy work
  As thou hast done before;
Wake up, and tears will wake with thee,
  And the dull mood be o'er.

The very thinking of the thought,
  Without or praise or prayer,
Gives light to know, and life to do,
  And marvelous strength to bear.

Oh, there is music in that thought
  Unto a heart unstrung,
Like sweet bells at the evening-time
  Most musically rung.

A contemporary, who loathed Father Faber's ecclesiasticism, bears witness to the same experience of renewal when, out of sorts with the obtuseness of conscience and hardness of heart of men who should have been better, he reminds himself of God. In the Diary of the Earl of Shaftesbury for May, 1854, are the following entries:

"Great anxiety about Bill for relief of Chimney Sweepers. Have suffered actual distress through solicitude for prevention of these horrid cruelties. . . .

"The Government in the House of Commons threw out the Chimney Sweepers Bill, and said not a word of sympathy for the wretched children, nor of desire to amend the law. . . .

"Very sad and low about the loss of the Sweeps Bill. . . . The Collar of the Garter might have choked me; I have not, at least, this or any other Government favor against me as a set-off to their insolence and oppression. I must persevere, and by God's help so I will; for however dark the view, however contrary to all argument the attempt, however painful and revolting the labor, I see no Scripture reason for desisting; and the issue of every toil is in the hands of the Almighty."

And when one has to do with some petty, cranky, touchy individual, who tries one's nerves and strains one's endurance, there is no refreshment comparable to the recollection of Calvary. From its summit flows a river of devotion down to this unpromising man; and as, with St. Paul, we call him "the brother for whose sake Christ died," we are renewed with the love that beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all and never faileth.

Religion restores a man's respect for himself. All of us know times when we cannot find names bad enough to characterize what we are in our own eyes. We speak of ourselves as "beasts." A psalmist once used that epithet of himself: "So brutish was I and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee." And the particular kind of animal he had in mind was a thick-skinned, clumsy, hideous creature, like the hippopotamus (Behemoth). The biographies of the saints of every communion contain uncomplimentary opinions of themselves; and it is their own awkwardness constantly foiling their desire to be serviceable, their unmanageableness even in the hands of God like hulking, stupid brutes, their personal unattractiveness as representatives of the Divine, that disgusts them. "I was as a beast before Thee. Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden my right hand." To think of God's unfailing presence, evidencing His continuing regard, renews self-respect.

And even more remarkable is the refreshment men have found in their religion when wearied with God. A French archbishop, in a letter of spiritual counsel, advises his correspondent: "If you are bored by God, tell Him that He bores you." And instinctively believing souls go to God in an appeal against His own dealings with them, and find their spirits heartened. Job's speeches are the classic instance, in which this sufferer turns from the God who seems to be his enemy to the same God whom he cannot help feeling to be on his side. Against God he strengthens himself in God. One finds a similar experience in two tragic scenes. Euripides, in a sublime attempt to bring home to his countrymen the horrors of war, pictures the Trojan women after the sack of their city, enslaved by their conquerors and about to be carried away from their loved native-land to Greece. He shows us their woeful figures sitting disconsolate among the ruins while their captors announce to whom each is allotted; and he makes his climax of sorrow that heart-rending scene when Hector's little son, Astyanax, is torn from his mother's embrace and flung from the walls. The old grandmother, Hecuba, looks out on the ships lying at anchor, and recalls how they breast the storms until at last

Too strong breaks the o'erwhelming sea: lo, then
They cease, and yield them up as broken men
To fate and the wild waters. Even so
I in my many sorrows bear me low,
Nor curse, nor strive that other things may be.
The great wave rolled from God hath conquered me.

And while acknowledging the calamity as from God, she has tried to pray, but the gods appear helpless:

Ye Gods. . . . Alas! why call on things so weak
For aid? Yet there is something that doth seek,
Crying, for God, when one of us hath woe.

And she addresses her prayer:

Thou deep Base of the world, and Thou high Throne
Above the world, whoe'er Thou art, unknown
And hard of surmise, Chain of Things that be,
Or Reason of our Reason; God, to Thee.
I lift my praise.

It may be reading too much into the drama of doubting Euripides to see these women in their unrelieved gloom drawing any renewal from religion; but it is significant that they try to find comfort in God and that the prayer becomes praise. We set beside these desolate women outside the walls of sacked Ilium another tragic group of women outside the walls of Jerusalem, watching afar off a Sufferer in mortal agony upon a shameful cross between two thieves, while His mother stands beneath Him, broken with sorrow. The scene in the Gospels gives the same sense of cruel disaster, the same suffering of the innocent for the guilty, the same turning to God in puzzled questioning at His dealings: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And here surely we find the refreshment that religion brings, the renewal in God against God. The Sufferer waiting upon God renews His strength, and goes triumphantly through death.

And religion is a source of refreshment always at hand. It is not like mountain air or sea breezes to which one must travel; it is "the brook in the way" of which men drink and lift up the head. You will, perhaps, forgive a New Yorker another local allusion, if I refer to lines in which a minor poet puts this accessibility of the reviving water of religion, entitled *On a Subway Express.*

I who have lost the stars, the sod,
  For chilling pave and cheerless night,
Have made my meeting-place with God
  A new and nether night.

A figment in the crowded dark,
  Where men sit muted by the roar,
I ride upon the whirring Spark
  Beneath the city's floor.

You that 'neath country skies can pray,
  Scoff not at me—the city clod;—
My only respite of the Day
  Is this wild ride—with God.

We have been speaking of the fellowship of God as refreshment; many believers go further and call it stimulant. In pre-christian faiths, lower and higher, communion with the unseen excites and releases the emotions, and exalts men as with the wine of gladness. Plutarch has left us a description of the effect of the cult with which he was familiar:

"Nothing gives us more joy than what we see and do ourselves in divine service, when we carry the emblems, or join in the sacred dance, or stand by at the sacrifice or initiation. . . . It is when the soul most believes and perceives that the god is present, that she most puts from her pain and fear and anxiety, and gives herself up to joy, yes, even as far as intoxication and laughter and merriment. . . . In sacred processions and sacrifices not only the old man and the old woman, nor the poor and lowly, but 'the thick-legged drudge that sways her at the mill,' and household slaves and hirelings are uplifted by joy and triumph. Rich men and kings have always their own banquets and feasts—but the feasts in the temples and at initiations, when men seem to touch the divine most nearly in their thought with honor and worship, have a pleasure and a charm far more exceeding. And in this no man shares who has renounced the belief in Providence. For it is not abundance of wine, nor the roasting of meat, that gives the joy in the festivals, but also a good hope, and a belief that the god is present and gracious, and accepts what is being done with a friendly mind."

There is a devout man's testimony to the stimulus which his feelings receive in fellowship with Deity. And the New Testament thinks of the filling with the Spirit as a substitute not for water, but for wine. To view life as Jesus saw it ruled by the heart of a Father like Himself, to be caught by His vision of a world remade to conform to that Father's mind, to be baptized into His passion to bring that vision to pass, and to look forward confidently to sharing its realization forever in the Father's many mansions, is not only to be cooled and freshened in one's exhaustion, but to be set a-tingle to go, despite every fatigue and discouragement, and keep devoting one's last ounce of energy to a cause which claims us altogether. Bliss Carman has voiced this exhilarating quality in religion:

> Lord of my heart's elation,
> Spirit of things unseen. . . .
> Be Thou my exaltation
> Or fortitude of mien,
> Lord of the world's elation,
> Thou Breath of things unseen.

The many instances quoted of men to whom faith opened the Fountain of life have surely served to illustrate a final point that religion makes the believer himself a refreshing person. "He that believeth on Me, from within him shall flow rivers of living water." In a disillusioned period, when hearts are sick with hope deferred, when the frightful sacrifices of a world bled nigh to death have issued in paltry results, when the most ardent appear jaded, he whose fellowship with God keeps him of good heart, confident that all needed resources are at hand in the most near Lord of all, seems like a stream from the everlasting hills to his thirsty and drooping comrades. In a shifting world, where opinions are in flux, customs changing, and restlessness is an infection in the air, he who is steadfastly sure of God towers like a giant rock, and men shelter themselves beside him. Religion, provided a man has enough of it, makes him "as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

CHAPTER II

CLEANSING

ON summer days along the Hudson's upper reaches one sees soiled trampers going in for a cleansing dip, and as the river sweeps by New York City hundreds of sewers discharge their filth into its waters to be carried out into the purifying salt ocean. The river is a means of cleanliness and health. So men find that their contacts with God wash mind and conscience, and wherever the Christian ideal goes throughout our world, the social life is purified.

The Bible is full of this cleansing effect of religion; and in quoting its witness, one is not slighting similar testimony from other faiths, but using its passages as summing up the highest and most widely tested religious experiences of mankind. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." "He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap." The New Testament presents "the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

No one ever exposed the polluting factors resident in human nature more clearly than Jesus: "For from within, out of the heart of man, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickednesses, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, pride, foolishness; all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man." But He and His followers were confident that the same heart of man could be cleaned and made the seat of motives as purifying as these were defiling. Paul mentions a number of the dirtiest and worst elements in the notorious city of Corinth, and adds: "Such were some of you: but ye were washed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." The Gospel which he proclaims "renews" men's minds. James insists that the genuinely devout man shall keep himself "unspotted from the world"; and John announces that they who walk in the light of Christ are cleansed by His blood from all sin. There is a graphic description of the socially purifying effect of religion in Ezekiel's picture of the magical stream, which issues from the temple at Jerusalem, and flowing down to the Dead Sea so heals its briny waters that they teem with fish. Another prophet speaks of a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness; and the seer on Patmos portrays a great multitude with robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb. And these passages, let us remember, have become holy scriptures to millions because they picture experiences of the cleansing by religion which they themselves have in some measure repeated.

When one turns from the Bible to the writings of those who in the first centuries passed from paganism into the Christian Church, one discovers these followers of Jesus vividly aware that a transforming river is flowing in the new religion which has entered the Roman world. The philosopher Justin writes:

"We who formerly delighted in sexual license now embrace chastity alone; we who once used magical arts dedicate ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; we who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and distribute to every one in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavor to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ."

The African lawyer, Tertullian, flings back at the detractors of Christianity their own remarks about acquaintances who have embraced the new religion: "What a woman she was! how wanton! how gay! What a young blade he was! how profligate! how dissipated!—they have become Christians!" "So," he adds, "the hated name is given to reformation of character." Origen answers the attacks of Celsus, who holds the usual opinion of a man of the world that human nature cannot be altered, and then charges Christians with peculiarly vile iniquities:

"The work of Jesus reveals itself among all mankind where communities of God founded by Jesus exist, which are composed of men reclaimed from a thousand vices; and to this day the name of Jesus can produce a marvelous meekness of spirit and complete change of character, and humanity, and goodness, and gentleness, in those who have honestly accepted the teaching concerning God and Christ."

And Lactantius, who had spent years as a teacher, and knew the futility of trying to make men over by the virtuous precepts of the wisest sages, having late in life become a Christian, says confidently:

> "Give me one who is grasping, covetous and stingy; I will presently hand him back to you generous, and freely giving his money with full hands. Give me a man who is afraid of pain and death; he shall shortly despise crosses, and fires, and the torture. Give me one who is lustful, an adulterer, a glutton; you shall soon see him sober, chaste, and temperate. A few precepts of God so entirely change the whole man, that you would not recognize him as the same."

Admitting that there may be in these statements the exaggeration of the enthusiastic devotee, they bear eloquent witness to the sense of a cleansing force in the Christian religion.

In a society long familiar with the ideals of Jesus, we are often not aware of the moral rottenness from which He spares us. New Yorkers seldom think of the service which the ceaselessly flowing Hudson renders our city; its cleansing goes on unnoticed. One has to live for a time in a non-Christian land, become acquainted with family-life in homes unhallowed by the Gospel, watch the plight of woman, see how cheap human life is held and what cruelties are inflicted without compunction, find vices which occur rarely and only among the most degenerate of our population accepted as matters of course, breathe in an atmosphere unvitalized by the breezes which flow from the hillsides of Galilee and from Calvary, to appreciate what Christianity has done for our society. An eminent university professor, himself (I understand) without avowed Christian loyalty, after lecturing extensively in China is reported to have said that in America he had taken too much for granted. He found in a non-Christian land an absence of that moral background to which he had been accustomed to appeal. Although many thousands of our people profess no regard for Christ and never connect their principles with Him, we are as much indebted for our moral health to the presence of His standards, as is New York City for its well-being to its usually unthought-of purifying Hudson.

What the early leaders of the Church saw happening about them, unbiased observers notice in the work of Christian missions to-day. To scan the faces which one sees in a Chinese or Korean market-place, and then to look into the faces of a gathering of Christians in the same town, is to be struck with the transfiguring power of the Gospel. Charles Darwin, reporting his voyage in the southern Pacific, wrote: "The lesson of the missionaries is the enchanter's wand. The march of improvement consequent on the introduction of Christianity through the South Seas probably stands by itself in the records of history." A British officer, in an account of two African campaigns in the London *Spectator* some years ago, introduces a word of admiration for the work of the Scotch Mission in the Shiré Highlands: "First you must see the negro boy in his savage state, and then see the finished article as turned out by the Blantyre Mission, and I think that you will say that truly the thing is little short of marvelous—from a wild, unkempt, savage urchin, with a rag for a wardrobe, to a pleasant, self-possessed lad, who dresses in spotless white garments, can read and write, and conducts himself with quiet decorum."

Dr. Schweitzer, versatile musician and Biblical critic, who went out as a physician to Equatorial Africa, writes of his first impression of a Christian congregation:

> "As we mounted the hill through the rows of neat bamboo huts belonging to the negroes, the chapel doors opened for service. We were introduced to some of the congregation and had a dozen black hands to shake. What a contrast between these clean and decently clothed people and the blacks that we had seen in the seaports, the only kind of native we had met up to now! Even the faces are not the same. These had a free and yet modest look in them that cleared from my mind the haunting vision of sullen and unwilling subjection, mixed with insolence, which had hitherto looked at me out of the eyes of so many negroes."

One of my own cherished memories is of a visit to a community of earnest Christians on Lake Biwa in Japan, composed of people of varied stations—students, farmers, a physician, an architect, an ex-Buddhist priest, and several interesting women—who looked back on their pre-Christian life as essentially unclean, and whose devotion to Jesus showed itself in a thorough-going consecration and in a purity beyond that commonly insisted on among American Christians. John's declaration concerning Jesus is superbly confirmed: the Lamb of God does "take away" the sin of the world. There are plenty of faults in the best of Christians, but one has only to read history or to observe the ways of non-Christian communities to realize how many forms of loathsome evil disappear where men have felt, however unconsciously, the uplifting and shaming touch of Jesus. Hosts of excellent people in Christendom, who consider themselves nowise indebted to Jesus of Nazareth, and sometimes speak slightingly of Him, have pure and affectionate homes, move in a society where there are countless incentives to unselfishness, and are themselves high-principled, tender-hearted, and keen of conscience, because centuries ago Christ lived and died, and in His life and cross set flowing a river of spiritual motives which has cleaned and vitalized both them and their neighbors. In many non-Christian communities the small groups of believers exercise a cleansing influence upon social standards out of all proportion to their numbers or prestige. The ideals which they hold, and which they illustrate, set in motion little rivulets of the Christian Spirit which purify the minds of many who have no personal touch with Christ. And in long-established Christian societies the majority of people are not even exposed to numberless gross and filthy sins, which fiercely tempt men and women without their inspirations. Christ has removed the inclination to and taste for such things, and developed an instinctive repugnance to them.

Nor can we forget the cleansing of smirched lives and the salvation of the dregs of our own social order by the religion of Christ through the ministry of those who, like their Master, have felt themselves specially commissioned to seek the lowest and the lost. Vachel Lindsay has set before us the tatterdemalion group who owed their rescue and redemption to one such notable ministry in his lines entitled *General William Booth Enters Into Heaven:*

Booth led boldly with his big bass drum.
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
The saints smiled gravely, and they said, "He's come."
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Walking lepers followed rank on rank,
Lurching bravos from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug-fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail!
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath,
Unwashed legions with the ways of death—
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

. . . It was queer to see
Bull-necked convicts with that land made free!
. . . Drabs and vixens in a flash made whole!
Gone was the weasel-head, the snout, the jowl;
Sages and sibyls now, and athletes clean,
Rulers of empires, and of forests green!

It is not an overdrawn picture of the recreating and transfiguring power of the Gospel as preached and applied by spirits afire with earnestness.

In outstanding Christians, where the flow of the Spirit is not a trickle but a river, one is usually aware of a cleansed sanctity. Professor Masson, treating of the literature of the Restoration period, calls attention to the fastidiousness in matters of speech of John Bunyan, the tinker. While university men used coarse expressions, Bunyan, a man of the common people and thrown with the lowest for twelve years in Bedford gaol, was kept by his religion from the slightest filthiness of utterance in an age where such cleanliness of phrase was rare indeed. George Herbert attributed to his ideal country parson a purity of mind "breaking out and dilating itself even to his body, clothes and habitation." And this ideal was realized in the spiritual impression of one of the greatest city preachers and pastors, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, of whom Lord Rosebery said in a memorial address a few years ago:

"He wrote enormously, he spoke continually, he revealed his inner self in every possible way; but after his first struggles and victory every word that remains on record seems instinct with a pervading, undoubting, eager Christian faith. There was an unconscious sanctity about him which was, as it were, the breath of his nostrils; he diffused it as his breath, it was as vital to him as his breath. . . . Here was a man, bustling, striving, organizing, speaking and preaching with the dust and fire of the world on his clothes, but carrying his shrine with him everywhere."

Nor is there any question of the purifying effect such devoted disciples of Jesus exercise. The touch of so-called Christendom on so-called heathendom has been often anything but cleansing. An Asiatic seaport, where West and East mingle in trade, is invariably more vicious than an interior city. In Dr. Schweitzer's volume already quoted he mentions finding ruins of abandoned huts on the banks of an African stream: " 'When I came out here fifteen years ago,' said a trader who stood near me, 'these places were all flourishing villages.' 'And why are they so no longer?' I asked. He shrugged his shoulders and said in a low voice, '*L'alcohol.*' " But these debasing group contacts only serve to render more conspicuous the influence of genuine Christian individuals. One reads in the biography of Li Hung Chang the impression made upon that astute Oriental statesman by General Gordon. "It is a direct blessing from Heaven," he says, "the coming of this British Gordon. He is superior in manner and bearing to any of the foreigners whom I have come in contact with and does not show outwardly that conceit which makes most of them repulsive in my sight." Professor William James, after spending months in reading the experiences of religious men and women in preparation for his Gifford Lectures, speaks of himself as feeling "washed in better moral air."

A crystal clear brook discontents us with a muddy stream, and Christianity renders certain motives unclean which would not seem so apart from Christ. But dwellers beside discolored rivers are not displeased by their tainted hues until they become familiar with a pellucid stream. One often hears lamentations over the absence of a sense of sin, and the consequent lack of interest in Christianity as a means of cleansing. Such bewailers have read little history. Mr. Lecky tells us that "no philosopher of antiquity ever questioned that a good man, reviewing his life, might look upon it without shame and even with positive complacency." And he adds: "There is no fact in religious history more startling than the radical change that has in this respect passed over the character of devotion." This change has been due to the coming of the Christian conscience with its new sensitiveness to evil. If one scans the mass of testimony from many mission fields contained in the reports made at the Edinburgh Ecumenical Conference of 1910, there is scarcely an instance of any who have come to Christ burdened with a consciousness of iniquity. That consciousness has developed, if at all, as a result of contact with Him. The Spirit of Jesus both creates the sense of evil and provides the cleansing. And in that lies its incomparable value for social advance.

Throughout her history the Church has eyed askance the realm of amusements, and has frequently condemned it as unclean. There have been, and there still are, reasons for this condemnation. Happily the modern Church is learning to discriminate between wholesome and unwholesome recreations, and to recognize that in the sphere of amusements the Spirit of Christ exercises a purifying touch. Among leaders on the American stage few of the last generation stand higher than Edwin Booth. He was open-eyed to the debasing character of many theatrical performances, and said in a letter to Dr. Lyman Abbott: "I never permit my wife or daughter to witness a play without previously ascertaining its character." He was not afraid to incur serious losses in carrying on his theater according to his ideals. When in financial difficulties he once wrote a friend: "My disappointment is great, to be sure, but I have the consciousness of having *tried* to do what I deemed to be my duty. Since the talent God has given me can be made available for no other purpose, I believe the object to which I devote it to be worthy of self-sacrifice." A clergyman, wishing to attend a play in his theater and afraid of the censure of his parishioners, had the bad taste to ask him whether he might not be admitted to a performance by a side or rear door, and Booth replied: "There is no door in my theater through which God cannot see." Joseph Jefferson testified that Booth's theater was conducted "like a church behind the curtain."

The wholesale disapproval by Christians of certain forms of entertainment is a confession of unbelief in the cleansing power of the Spirit of Jesus. There is no part of the landscape of human life—and certainly not that part of it in which millions find keenest pleasure—where the stream of religion cannot carry away the polluting filth.

But there are other parts of the landscape upon which Christians have looked with too lax scrutiny, or where they have calmly concluded that the cleansing river of the Holy Spirit could find no watercourse. We are all agreed in condemning sexual sins as unclean, and it is because of their stimulus of the sex instinct that many forms of amusement have been banned by Christian leaders. The New Testament places in the same class with sexual defilements a pervasive spirit in our whole life, which colors our point of view and corrupts our motives in every public and private issue. Repeatedly in the writings of apostles and of the fathers, and in that saying of Jesus quoted at the outset, one finds covetousness, the acquisitive spirit, classed with "fornication, uncleanness, passion, lustful desire." You may have noticed this in the quotations from Justin and Lactantius given a few minutes ago. But few among us regard the instinct of acquisition as filthy, or the man who is ruled by it as a moral leper. From the New Testament viewpoint every business which is carried on primarily to make money, every public policy which is adopted for our own national enrichment, every individual who takes up an occupation or accepts a position with his eye on what he will get from it, is impelled by a motive as foul as the sexually lustful. We are children of a holy God, and His holiness is His creative love:

He does nothing for His own advantage merely, but spends Himself that He may add to the beauty of His world and the fullness of His children's lives. Who, then, are of clean hands and of pure thoughts before Him? They only who are impelled by the creative spirit—artists who put themselves into their work for love of it and for the joy of enhancing earth's loveliness, inventors who add to the serviceable possessions of mankind, producers who supply goods with a sense of obligation to do their best to fill men's needs, workmen of every calling who dedicate themselves to their task because they believe it to be a service of the commonwealth. With all such, considerations of payment are secondary. The instant fees become foremost in the mind of a physician, or salary in the thought of a preacher or professor, or profits in the enterprise of a merchant, or dividends in the eyes of an investor, or wages in the outlook of any worker, that instant his calling is sullied and his own heart is soiled. For the honor of business the word "commercialized" must be cleaned until it no longer is a synonym for "degraded." A British economist diagnoses the disease of our present social order by entitling a book *The Acquisitive Society*. As originally published in England, its title ran "The Sickness of an Acquisitive Society," and the title on our American edition is an improvement, both because of its brevity and because an acquisitive society cannot be anything but sick. By Christian standards acquisitiveness is in the same class with sexual disease. We take measures to prevent the spread of plagues which have their origin in impurity. The Christian conscience demands a prophylactic in our industrial life to safeguard workers with head or hand against the deadly bacilli of the gain-seeking spirit. Like the lustful impulse, it "hardens all within and petrifies the feeling." It eats up consciences and rots characters as loathsomely as leprosy destroys the tissue of the body. Our social order will not be sanitary until it can be fairly described from its dominant motive as "The Creative Society," or "The Ministering Society."

And what a mass of filth has to be washed out before that can be! In international relations, such devices as preferential or protective tariffs, ship subsidies, the use of the diplomatic representatives of governments to obtain advantages over rivals in trade, the imperialistic desire to hold some weaker people in subjection for commercial profit—devices more fundamentally causes of war than the possession of huge armaments, for without national self-seeking armaments would be robbed of almost all danger—must come to be abhorred as smirches on a nation's honor. In business life, investments made in order to obtain returns irrespective of the service performed by the investment must be viewed with the disgust now felt for the traffic in vice. There is an amazing page in Edward Bok's Autobiography on which he tells how as a stenographer, in the Western Union Telegraph office at 195 Broadway, Jay Gould used to dictate his stock orders to him; and how Bok went to his Sunday School teacher, a Wall Street broker, with the information of how Gould was buying and selling; and how this Sunday School teacher bought and sold for his pupil and for himself. In the Plymouth Church of that day when Henry Ward Beecher was proclaiming a large Gospel, this was apparently considered by intelligent hearers as quite legitimate, while the New Testament would call such gain-seeking filthy covetousness. In education, studies pursued with an eye to getting on in the world, the teaching of certain views—capitalistic or socialistic, conservative or progressive—because they please the supporting constituency, the exclusion from colleges or schools of the presentation of facts which offend some powerful group in the community, must be regarded as prostituting institutions dedicated to the fearless and untrammeled pursuit and propagation of truth. This thorough cleaning which our social order requires will not be compassed save as we let the Spirit of Christ render consciences sensitive with His judgment of filthiness and purity.

It is a *religious* cleansing which is indispensable. Still, as in the days of Celsus, the ordinary man of the world does not believe in the possibility of radical transformations of human nature. Only believers in the living God expect men to be born again and to show themselves new creatures. Professor Hocking recently wrote: "There is a kind of official legislative pessimism or resignation, born of much experience of the unequal struggle between high aspiration and nature, a pessimism found frequently in the wise and great from Solomon to this day. . . . The world-wise lawgiver will respect the attainable and maintainable level of culture, a level not too far removed from the stage of no-effort. . . . How different from this legislative pessimism is the pessimism of religion. . . . The great religions have spoken ill of original human nature; but they have never despaired of its possibilities. . . . In spite of the revolutionary character of their standards, they are still committed to the faith that these standards are reachable. . . . Religion declines to limit the moral possibility of human nature." The Harvard philosopher entitles his believing book *Human Nature and Its Remaking.* Contemporaneously with his lectures appeared the last book of a suggestive British thinker, Benjamin Kidd, *The Science of Power,* in which he points out in how relatively short a time the whole mind of a people can be made over for good or ill, and a social heredity set flowing, which shapes the thoughts of the new-born and moulds them to the established type. Germany was militarized, and Japan was westernized, in a single generation. Individually and collectively men are plastic. With God the scabbiest moral leper and the most grasping society can be cleansed and renewed with incredible swiftness. That is the heart of the Gospel of Christ. If any man or any community be brought under His control, there is a new creation: "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."

Men cannot fully believe that there is this cleansing power in the Christian religion until they have themselves experienced it. They are led to try it through the testimony of those who have known what it was to be foul and then through Christ washed white. A book like Augustine's *Confessions* has perennial force because it gives this personal witness. Surveying his earlier years, he cries out: "O rottenness!" and breaks off from their contemplation: "'Tis filthy, I will never give my mind to it. I will not so much as look towards it. But Thee I desire, O Righteousness and Purity. . . . I slid away from Thee, and went astray, O my God, yea, too much astray, and I became to myself a land of want." From a soiled self that had been to him the far country of harlots, swine and hunger, he had been cleaned into a companionable child of God.

Can peach renew lost bloom,
Or violet lost perfume,
Or sullied snow turn white as overnight?
Man cannot compass it, yet never fear:
The leper Naaman
Shows what God will and can.
God, who worked there, is working here;
Wherefore let shame, not gloom, betinge thy brow.
God, who worked then, is working now.

Penitent shame has begun to flow in Christian hearts oftenest when they caught sight of the figure of Jesus. None can face Him without feeling himself dirty by contrast. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," has been the instinctive utterance of thousands since the words first surged to Peter's lips. The cross has always made our world appear blackest, for every generation knows its own religious traditionalists, commercial exploiters, expedient politicians, false friends, unthinking mob, indifferent public; and Calvary is no event of the past alone, but a present tragedy in which the hands of the living are stained with the blood of the Righteous. No men have ever accused themselves with such searching sincerity, or felt themselves so smirched by the guilt of their community as disciples of the crucified Jesus. John Howard, the reformer of prisons, just before his death in the Crimea, whither he had gone to investigate the plague, writes on the cover of his memorandum book: "I think I never look into myself but I find some corruption and sin in my heart. . . . Oh, that the Son of God may not have died for me in vain!" Their consciences align Christians among those who slew Jesus Christ—one with Caiaphas and Pilate and Judas in motive and principle. And their consciences also charge them with complicity in the social guilt of their own day. Clement of Alexandria says: "If the neighbors of an elect man sin, the elect man has sinned. For had he conducted himself as the Word prescribes, his neighbor would also have been filled with such reverence for the life as not to sin."

This sense of being involved in corporate wrong-doing has grown stronger among Christians in recent generations. When the Fugitive Slave Law was enacted, Emerson declared: "There is infamy in the air. I have a new experience, I wake in the morning with a painful sensation, which I carry about all day, and which, when traced home, is the odious remembrance of that ignominy which has fallen on Massachusetts, which robs the landscape of beauty, and takes the sunshine out of every hour." R. H. Hutton records the sensitiveness of Frederick Denison Maurice which made him charge himself with every iniquity which he found in the life about him: "His confessions were a kind of litany, poured forth in the name of human nature, the weakness and sinfulness of which he felt most keenly, most individually, most painfully, but which he felt at least as much in the character of the representative of a race by the infirmities of which he was overwhelmed, as on his own account." This self-reproachful complicity in the sinful tendencies of the life about them is typical of the finest Christian spirits. A keen-minded Chinese official, comparing the influence of Jesus with that of Confucius and Buddha and Lao-tse, once said to me in Peking: "He seems to have the power to create a more delicate conscience." One is aware of its presence in those in our generation who take seriously the mind of Christ. Caught in judgments like the Great War, or faced with the selfishnesses and sordidnesses of our peacefulest times, they own: "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean motive, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean motive, for mine eyes have seen the Lord of love, and looked on Him whom we have pierced." In that experience of personal and social shame, men are set free from soiling self-interest and made passionate enthusiasts for the reign of brotherhood. In contact with Christ they are disgraced and reborn.

We return to the metaphor with which we began—the Hudson River cleaning those who bathe in its waters and bearing the filth of a thronged city into the salt ocean. The Spirit of God touches men like the moving current of a great stream. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and railing be put away from you with all malice"—Paul's words suggest an outbearing current removing this moral sewerage, if men will allow it to be carried off. And his next sentence easily connects itself with a picture of the cleaned streets of a wholesome city where children of God dwell together in spiritual health: "And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." Men have found this cleansing in religion. They have confidently prayed, as individuals and as nations: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

CHAPTER III

POWER

ALONG part of the course of the Hudson River mills are built and the stream is employed as a source of power. Human force is multiplied many times by the force of the current, and what would be impossible for the physical strength of man is done easily with the assistance of the river. The commonest of all religious experiences is the discovery that power results from faith in God.

The Bible is full of acknowledgments by believers of this reinforcement. An early warrior sings: "By Thee I run upon a troop, and by my God do I leap over a wall." Another psalmist gives as a repeatedly verified experience: "Twice have I heard this: that power belongeth unto God." A shrinking prophet faces single-handed a whole people with the divine Voice ringing in his soul: "I have made thee a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls." A Christian apostle, who to spread the sway of Jesus has inured himself to hardship and loss, and learned self-control when success smiled upon him, declares: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me." Old Testament believers heard the challenge: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Jesus premised His prayer with the confession of confidence: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee"; and He passed on to His followers an assurance which made them say again and again: "God is *able*—able to guard you from stumbling, able to make all grace abound, able to do exceeding abundantly." The biographers of Jesus repeatedly call attention to His extraordinary force: His word is with power; He does mighty works; He is aware of limitless resources—"the Father abiding in Me doeth His works." The God of Christian faith is not sheer might; He is love; but His love is wise, and has all the forces of the universe at its disposal. The supreme instance of the might of God is the triumph of Jesus over the combination of forces which massed themselves to end His career and succeeded in crucifying and burying Him, only to find Him a more potent living Factor both in their own and succeeding centuries. When Paul wants a measure for the force of God, he speaks of "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." Christian faith establishes a connection with One whose love is incalculably capable.

Man is pitted against three antagonists which seem too strong for him—the physical universe, the mass of his fellow-mortals, and himself.

(1) *The physical universe.* He has to sustain himself in the midst of, by, and against the world of nature. He must fight to keep alive—fight against heat and cold, disease and danger. He must subdue beasts and soil, and make them support him. He must investigate and try to conquer such forces as electricity and bacilli. He wages a losing battle, for in three score years and ten more or less the physical universe appears to win and to reduce

his body to dust. Instinctively he reaches out for an invisible Ally; and, from the most primitive believer, who fortified himself with a magical charm, to Jesus of Nazareth commending His spirit to a Father's hands, he has felt himself strengthened.

Psychologists have investigated the latent force in man's instinctive emotions, and have taught us how these are made dangerous by repression or paralyzed by inhibiting notions. There is no more emancipating idea than that on which Jesus laid such constant stress—that this physical universe is God's world, that its forces are not foes but friends of His sons and daughters, that man can use every one of them for his advantage. Paul summed up the Master's teaching in the statement: "All things are yours: the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." Those who possess this faith are freed from fear—the most serious of inhibitions. In their religious life they are daily renewed with the suggestion of power. Physiologists tell us that the mind becomes fatigued much sooner than the body, so that a faith which strengthens our confidence enables us to put forth much more physical energy. A British neurologist reports an experiment on three men under hypnosis, in which a suggestion of weakness lowered their strength to almost one-fourth of their normal average, while a suggestion of power increased it by more than a third. Christian faith enables its possessors to become whole men physically, to release as much as in them is. And Christian believers would not be willing to limit their available powers by those which any physicist could list as within them. They refuse to draw a sharp line between the Within and the

Beyond; for them there is a door between, which they believe can be opened. The resources in themselves are not merely human, for God is within; and God to whom belongs the universe can replenish and supplement the available stock out of an exhaustless store. Pitted against the odds of the physical universe, they are confident that all that God asks of them they can rely on Him to supply.

In the note-books of Henry M. Stanley there are striking testimonials to the worth of religion to a man confronting the perilous forces of a savage continent:

"On all my expeditions, prayer made me stronger, morally and mentally, than my non-praying companions. It did not blind my eyes, or dull my mind, or close my ears; but, on the contrary, it gave me confidence. It did more, it gave me joy and pride in my work, and lifted me hopefully over the one thousand five hundred miles of forest tracks, eager to face the day's perils and fatigues. . . . Civilized society rejoices in the protection afforded it by strong-armed law. Those in whom faith in God is strong feel the same sense of security in the deepest wilds. An invisible Good Influence surrounds them, to whom they appeal in distress, an Influence which inspires noble thoughts, comfort in grief, and resolution when weakened by misfortune. I imperfectly understand this myself, but I have faith and believe. . . . By prayer, the road sought for has become visible, and the danger immediately lessened, not once or twice or thrice, but repeatedly, until the cold unbelieving heart was impressed."

But the physical universe sooner or later presents man with the inevitable. He may face it in one of five ways:—He may revolt, and be sent to his grave "like a quarry slave at night scourged to his dungeon." He may try to cheat the universe by taking his own life, finding a pose of power in substituting for its mode of execution one which he chooses for himself. He may attempt a fractional suicide by dulling his sensibilities with drink or drugs. He may face it with the grim effort of will of the Stoic or the Red Indian. Or he may accept it as the will of a wise and loving Father. Christian faith condemns revolt and suicide, whether total or partial. One evangelist tells us that Jesus declined the drugged drink which humane custom provided for victims *en route* to crucifixion. He seemed to say:

I would hate that death bandaged my eyes and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it.

Christianity is altogether different from Stoicism in its attitude to the universe, but many a Christian tends to stop with Stoicism. There are few more heroic figures in the annals of English literature than that of Sir Walter Scott, when suddenly upon his career of uninterrupted prosperity came, through no fault of his, the failure of the publishing house in which he was financially involved, the death of a dearly loved grandson and the death of his wife. Scott left the house he loved, saw his cherished belongings taken away for sale, sat down day after day and forced himself to write in order to pay off his creditors, and battled manfully with his own depression. Here is a typical entry in his diary:

"Worked in the morning as usual, and sent off the proofs and copy. Something of the black dog still hanging about me; but I will shake him off. I generally affect good spirits in company of my family, whether I am enjoying them or not. It is too severe to sadden the harmless mirth of others by suffering your own causeless melancholy to be seen; and this species of exertion is, like virtue, its own reward; for the good spirits, which are at first simulated, become at length real."

God forbid that one should speak slightingly of a struggle so honorably fought; but it is singular that one as punctiliously religious in outward observances should have fought it apparently alone. When Lady Scott lies slowly dying, he enters:

"The same scene of hopeless (almost) and unavailing anxiety. Still welcoming me with a smile, and asserting she is better. I fear the disease is too deeply entwined with the principles of life. Still laboring at this Review, without heart or spirits to finish it. I am a tolerable Stoic, but preach to myself in vain."

And he transcribes two lines from Shakespeare's *King Henry the Fourth:*

> Are these things then necessities?
> Then let us meet them like necessities.

Possibly Scott's reticence made him diffident in expressing religious faith even in his diary; but he seems to be forcing himself to bear up by sheer power of will, and pathetically he owns that the struggle leaves him "hardened." It is a long way from the acquiescence of Gethsemane: "The cup which the Father giveth Me, shall I not drink it?"

Henri Amiel, professor in the Academy of Geneva, acute student of art, literature and philosophy, consults his physician and is told that an incurable malady is upon him, that he must look forward to rapidly waning strength, and after some months or years to death. Next morning he writes in his *Journal:*

"On waking it seemed to me that I was staring into the future with startled eyes. Is it indeed to *me* that these things apply? Incessant and growing humiliation, my slavery becoming heavier, my circle of action steadily narrower! . . . It is difficult for the natural man to escape from a dumb rage against inevitable agony."

He asks himself the possible explanations of the universe: an indifferent nature? a Satanic principle of things? a good and just God? As he thinks them over, the Christion interpretation grips his mind:

"Righteousness consists in willingly accepting one's lot, in submitting to and espousing the destiny assigned us, in willing what God commands, in renouncing what He forbids us, in consenting to what He takes from us or refuses us."

And the entry in the journal concludes:

"Health cut off means marriage, travel, study and work forbidden or endangered. It means life reduced in attractiveness and utility by five-sixths. *Thy will be done!*"

In a previous chapter we quoted Mr. Birrell's remark on the religion of Charlotte Brontë. It may be true that she had not enough faith to give her enjoyment; but she had enough to give her splendid power. After her sister Emily's death, and with Anne dying of the same incurable disease, this brilliant woman, condemned to the loneliest of existences with her old father in Haworth rectory on the bleak Yorkshire moors, writes to her closest friend:

"I avoid looking forward or backward, and try to keep looking upward. This is not the time to regret, dread, or weep. What I have and ought to do is very distinctly laid out for me; what I want, and pray for, is strength to perform it. The days pass in a slow, dark march; the nights are the test; the sudden wakings from restless sleep, the revived knowledge that one lies in her grave, and another not at my side, but in a separate and sick bed. However, God is over all."

An even more triumphant instance of the power which Christian faith supplies in the face of an overwhelming blow from the physical universe is given in Dr. John Brown's account of the way in which his sainted father took his wife's death:

"On the morning of the 28th May 1816, my eldest sister, Janet, and I were sleeping in the kitchen-bed with Tibbie Meek, our only servant. We were all three awakened by a cry of pain—sharp, insufferable, as if one were stung. . . . We all knew whose voice it was, and, in our night-clothes, we ran into the passage, and into the little parlor to the left hand, in which was a closet-bed. We found my father standing before us, erect, his hands clenched in his black hair, his eyes full of misery and amazement, his face white as that of the dead. He frightened us. He saw this, or else his intense will had mastered his agony, for, taking his hands from his head, he said, slowly and gently, 'Let us give thanks,' and turned to a little sofa in the room; there lay our mother, dead."

In these instances we have men and women confronting the universe in its most menacing and hostile aspects, and finding in religion force to face circumstances bravely, and to acquiesce with thankfulness in that which at the time is breaking their hearts.

(2) *The mass of our fellow-mortals.* Every earnest man has to follow a lonely way in face of the criticism of many and the opposition of some, and with the drag of the uncaring ignorance of the majority of those about him. Here and there stalwart spirits fall back on themselves and hold their course in resolute solitude. But in such isolation almost invariably they are driven, even despite their own reluctant unbelief, to feel after invisible Comradeship. And then the power of faith is manifested.

For years Louis Pasteur strove in the interest of truth and humanity, against the medical profession and the overwhelming majority of his fellow-scientists, to have his theory of the spread of infection by germs applied practically. It was a long and almost solitary struggle against stupidity, pride and professional jealousy. When at the close of his career he was elected to the Academy, at a time when expressions of personal religion were most uncommon in such circles, he took occasion in his inaugural address to pay homage to the sense of a Power beyond man's:

"Blessed is he who carries within himself a God, an ideal, and who obeys it; ideal of art, ideal of science, ideal of the gospel virtues, therein lie the springs of great thoughts and great actions; they all reflect light from the Infinite."

Pasteur had an English contemporary who would have regretted that his faith was not more explicitly evangelical and orthodox, but whose own battle through a lifetime on behalf of the oppressed—factory-operatives, chimney-sweeps, lunatics, children enslaved in industry—was akin to the struggle of the French man of science. Lord Ashley (more familiarly known by his later title as Earl of Shaftesbury) confided to a diary such reflections as these:

"Engaged more than ever: small works compared with the political and financial movements of the day—a Lodging-House, a Ragged School, a Vagrant Bill, a Thieves' Refuge! No wonder that people think me as small as my work; and yet I would not change it. *Surely God has called me to the career.*

"'With all your experience' (I imagine some young man saying to me) 'would you counsel me to follow the career that you have chosen and pursued?' In the first place, I reply that, in spite of all vexations, disappointments, rebuffs, insults, toil, self-denial, expense, weariness, sickness, all loss of political position, and considerable loss of estimation—in spite of being always secretly despised and often publicly ignored—in spite of having your 'evil' most maliciously and ingeniously exaggerated, and your 'good' 'evil spoken of,' I would for myself say, 'Yes.'"

Throughout the diary after some speech which he had anticipated with dread and which went off better than he had dared to hope, after some unexpected support for his measures from leaders in Parliament, after a vote which set forward the cause even if for the time being the bill he wanted was not passed, he inserts: *"Non nobis, Domine."*

Here are men who found their religion a reinforcement against the pressure of fellow-mortals indifferent or hostile to their cherished ideals.

There are dozens of men and women, younger and older, in our commercial enterprises asking themselves whether Christian principles can be made to work in modern business. They may need to be reminded that no sentiment, however lofty, can be expected to act as a substitute for sound judgment and unflagging industry. They may also be told that the current acquisitive motives are not working in such fashion that present business conditions can be viewed with complacency. But they must recall that the Gospel does not offer mere principles which men must put into operation, but the Spirit of love which is the Spirit of power. The Christian religion stands or falls with the practicability of this Spirit. It asserts that the mind of Jesus is the mind of the Lord of earth and heaven, that to work by methods at variance with that mind is to court certain disaster and to impoverish one's soul, that to be ruled by His mind is to encounter criticism, mockery, enmity—a repetition in some sort of Calvary—and inevitably to know the power of His victory.

There are hundreds of wistful spirits the world over looking for a readjustment of international relations on a basis of brotherhood which will render impossible a recurrence of the tragedy of war. They feel the pressure of the opposition which invariably develops when even the most moderate steps towards an organization for world-friendship are undertaken. They know the cynicism which has succeeded the eager idealism of a few years ago. They see the same factors alive and aggressive which brought on the terrible catastrophe. They confront the dilemma of pessimism or religious faith. Those who choose the latter are the spirits with force enough to bring to the birth the new era, with which the world is now travailing.

(3) *Man fights with himself.* Each one knows himself a house divided. It is not merely a conflict of the physical and the spiritual, but a civil war in the spirit itself. The most placid of saints confess their consciousness of an inward warfare, and the vast majority of believers tell of a battle to the death. The struggle seems usually more acute in religious than in irreligious natures; for in the latter the spiritual nature is itself dormant; but the former speak of conquest. They have opened their hearts in trust and let in reinforcements against their baser selves. In the conclusion of his study of *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* Professor William James says that "higher energies filter in." The combat between the good that a man would and the evil that he would not do, wringing the anguished exclamation: "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" ends successfully with those who can say: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Not to dwell upon the grosser passions and hideous selfishness from which believers look to God to wash them white, take the timidity which inhibits usefulness. When young John Calvin was a student in Paris, and just beginning to break with the traditional Roman interpretation of Christianity, he suddenly discovered fellow-students and other inquiring folk turning to him for guidance:

> "I was quite surprised to find that before a year elapsed all who had any desire after purer doctrines were continually coming to me to learn, although I myself was but a novice and a tyro. Being of a disposition somewhat unpolished and bashful which led me to love retirement, I then began to seek some corner where I might be withdrawn from public view; but so far from being able to accomplish the object of my desire, all retreats were like public schools. In short, whilst my one great object was to live in seclusion without being known, God so led me out through different turnings and changes that He never permitted me to rest in one place, until in spite of my natural disposition He brought me forth into public notice."

And there is a tradition that this shy and hesitant scholar, apprehensive of the conflict ahead, scarcely knowing whither his thoughts were taking him, used to conclude these early addresses on religious themes with the words: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Religion was his reliance to down the inhibitions of bashfulness.

Many discover a worse inward enemy in worry, which robs them of sleep, darkens their days, and more than halves their efficiency. On March 3rd, 1843, after a long effort which had left him with less than a dollar in his pocket, Samuel F. B. Morse sat in the gallery of the Senate Chamber in Washington anxiously waiting for the passage of a Telegraph Bill, which would insure the putting into operation of his invention for the transmission of messages by wire. As the hands of the clock drew towards midnight on that last evening of an expiring Congress, he consulted two senatorial friends on the probability of the bill's being reached before the close of the session, and they could only bid him prepare to be disappointed. "In this state of mind," he writes to a friend, "I retired to my chamber and made all my arrangements for leaving Washington the next day. Painful as was this prospect of renewed disappointment, you, my dear sir, will understand me when I say that, knowing from experience whence my help must come in any difficulty, I soon disposed of my cares, and slept as quietly as a child." Next morning at breakfast he was called out of the hotel dining-room, and to his extreme astonishment told that the bill had passed. But if it had not been reached, with a good night's rest behind him, Morse would have been ready for the next effort. Christian faith equipped him with the valuable power of disposing of care.

Students of psychology have been opening up for us the abysses of human personality, and pointing out the dangers that lurk in repressed or misdirected impulses, notably the sex-impulse. A certain school of psycho-analysts carry back almost all mental and moral ills to some faulty treatment of this primary instinct. Whether their diagnosis be altogether correct or not, Christian faith and consecration can sublimate the impulse and transmute it into a creative force for the highest social well-being. The conversion of the instincts sets free the reservoir of latent power in man's subconscious life, and opens up his personality to fresh inspirations from the life of God. To revert to our metaphor of the Hudson, religion changes the nature of a man from a stagnant pool, in which all manner of noxious infections breed, into a river flowing out in acts of ministry and replenished with new supplies from the lofty mountains of God. It is not without significance that the health-commissioner of one of our largest cities recently called together a group of religious leaders and asked their coöperation in dealing with drug-addicts. He brought with him a number of physicians who had specialized in the treatment of these cases, and the burden of their speech was that apart from religious renewal they were unable to point to permanent cures. Here is a pathetic class of men and women, who long to be delivered from their own craving, for whom the only certain relief and rescue seems to lie in the power of faith.

In this discussion of religion as a source of power, it is well to remind ourselves that there are two types of strength: there is the strength of the steel bridge over which a heavy train pounds its way, while the girders resist the shock and strain; there is the strength of the locomotive which draws the train at a steady speed. There is the strength of the river which bears up a heavy vessel, and the strength of its current which sweeps such a vessel towards the sea. Believing men find both forms of strength in religion—the power of patience by which they endure the intolerable, and the power of perpetual moral motion. They find in God both the passive and the active strength. Isaiah possessed and tried to give his contemporaries in Judah quietness and confidence. Paul said of a tottering weak brother: "The Lord hath power to make him stand." Jesus, "when He was reviled, reviled not again." Water has a stalwart resistance to pressure, and faith beareth and endureth all things. Another prophet pictures the believing exiles on their march across the desert to their homeland mounting upon wings, running, walking—always moving towards their goal. New Testament Christians found the energizing Spirit of Christ within them an unfailing inspiration to tireless effort. Steadfastness and energy—the power to keep still and the power to keep going—these men discover in religion.

In a sense, as was suggested in a previous chapter, religion makes life much harder, because it faces believers with the impossible—with the Christlike. Many people manage to get along without the reinforcements of religion because for themselves and for their community they aim at goals well within their powers. To them the message that force is to be found from contact with the Unseen is without interest. They may even think it a sign of weakness, unworthy of self-respecting men, to go begging for assistance from any one. But the Christian is haunted with a tantalizing ideal to which he cannot attain. He must stand as much, and bear it as acquiescently, as Jesus. He must spend himself as ungrudgingly and with a like outgo of love. The more seriously he takes the ideal of Jesus, the more painfully aware he is that he comes nowhere near its achievement. He must either give up in desperation or turn for aid to One who is able unto the uttermost. We were speaking a moment ago of Calvin. When he first established the reformed faith in Geneva, a certain offender against Biblical moral standards, who was cited to appear before the Council, sent the naïve message that he was prepared to agree to the articles of the Confession of Faith, but that he could not take any oath about the Ten Commandments of God "because they are very difficult to keep." It is the difficulty of the New Testament interpretation of what God requires of us and our community which compels us to go to Him for reinforcement.

And what a picture a river, like our Hudson, is of Divine power! A dam might be erected which would check that flow of water for a brief space, but no matter how high the obstruction might be built, the water would continue to pile up behind it, until at length it poured over the top, or forced a way around it, or by its sheer weight broke through the dam. A loving God may be delayed. Men may set up barriers against His purpose in our world; they may hold fast the entrances of their own hearts. But sooner or later, over, or around, or through, He comes. Have we not seen it in human affairs? Have we not known it in our own experiences?

When a river is employed to supply power, men rarely set their water-wheels in the broad stream. The current is contracted into a mill-race. Has not God done something analogous to that in His Self-expression in Jesus? Has He not focussed and made available His power? Jesus used the metaphor of contraction when He said of His death: "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" The figure of Jesus, and especially of Jesus as crucified, is in every generation the point where men are connected with the flow of Divine might. George Tyrrell wrote: "Again and again I have been tempted to give up the struggle, but always the figure of that strange Man hanging on the cross sends me back to my task again." Samuel Butler, who delighted in sneering at Christianity, once set down in a note-book: "There will be no comfortable and safe development of our social arrangements—I mean we shall not get infanticide and the permission to suicide, nor cheap and easy divorce—till Jesus Christ's ghost has been laid." He added sarcastically: "And the best way to lay it is to be a moderate churchman." Christ sets the ideal and has power to force men to try to attain it.

And when He lays hold of a life, He narrows it into a mill-race. Like Himself, His disciples are wonderfully broadened in the range of their sympathies, but they are restricted to a single purpose. Paul used the word which a Greek would have employed for the confining of water in a sluice: "The love of Christ *constraineth* me." His followers feel themselves hemmed in. Every activity of their lives has to be in line with the aim for which Jesus lived and died, as the mill-race parallels the course of the stream. And through a man's life so narrowed and set power flows. The concentrated man accomplishes what nobody fancied he had it in him to do. And they were quite right: he hadn't it *in him*. "I labored more abundantly (our English word is derived from the flow of water wave on wave—*ab unda*), yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."

Here and there along the Hudson one comes upon a disused mill-race. Usually there is water in it, and a superficial glance might not disclose that the race was not in operation. But closer inspection shows that the water is stagnant; the mill-race has become a standing ditch. And there are not a few lives of which it is a picture. A New Testament writer speaks of some in his day as "holding the form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." They are often members of the Church; they are apparently interested in good things; their lives seem to be parallel with the purpose of God in the world; they are not empty of inspirations. But those inspirations are not flowing out and in. They are the remainders of the water of life from past connections through an inherited faith or an earlier devoutness. Their parents had first-hand contact with God, or in their own childhood there was an open passageway into their souls from Him. The mill-wheel may still be in place and an old factory standing beside the stream; but the wheel is not turning, and nothing is produced in that factory for the spiritual enrichment of mankind. The upper-end of the mill-race is clogged. Preoccupation with many things has put God out of mind; prayer is forgotten, or has become a perfunctory routine; there is no commitment of self to God day by day in trustful dependence. Theirs is a form of religion without its power. The bed of the mill-race attests what it has been. The pathos of an impotent Christian is a reminder of what was once planned;—yes, and of what may still be, if the connection be reopened; for that gives power: "I labor, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily."

CHAPTER IV

ILLUMINATION

IN that section of its course where the Hudson is used as a source of power, one frequently sees the force of the stream transmuted into an electric current, to furnish light for towns and villages. Men of practically all faiths have found illumination in their contact with God.

The pages of the Bible are full of this experience. "The Lord is my light," one of the psalmists begins. Another pictures believers turning their faces Godward, and catching and reflecting the glow of dawn: "They looked unto Him and were radiant." When Isaiah describes what the Spirit of God will mean to the ideal Ruler of the nation, he stresses his intellectual enlightenment: four out of the six nouns in the description have to do with the enrichment of intelligence: "The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of knowledge"; and the first of the four titles applied to this Monarch is "Wonderful Counsellor." In the poetry and proverbs of the Hebrews, we are told again and again that those who trust Jehovah find guidance: "He leadeth me in paths of righteousness," "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel," "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths," "The path of the righteous is as the dawning light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." One large section of the Biblical literature represents God as coming to man chiefly as Wisdom. The New Testament is even more full than the Old of this experience of enlightenment. Paul connects the coming of Jesus with the story of the creation, and asserts: "God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." John declares that "God is light," and introduces his account of Jesus with the statement: "The life was the light of men." And on Jesus' own lips he records the saying: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life." The climax of the whole Bible is the vision of the city of God, brilliant in nightless day, in whose light the nations walk,—a city whose illumination is religion, for the glory of God lightens it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb.

Both believing and unbelieving men agree that life is a puzzling affair. Along with these utterances of enlightenment on the pages of the Bible, one finds as frank expressions of bewilderment, and we cannot forget that He who spoke of God with the utmost assurance died with a question on His lips: "My God, why?" The confident Christian, William Wordsworth, acknowledges

> "the heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible world,"

and his agnostic admirer, Sir William Watson, agrees with him:

> Think not thy wisdom can illume away
> The ancient tanglement of night and day.

Enough to acknowledge both, and both revere:
They see not clearliest who see all things clear.

In ordinary conversation few remarks are commoner than: "Well, this is a queer world." All our attempts to reach an explanation that will carry us surefootedly through life must begin with the recognition of its strangeness and oddity. Religious and unreligious alike admit that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"; but the latter think there is nothing for it but to use the best light they possess in themselves and stumble on, while the former are confident that even amid the puzzling shadows, and often black darkness, it is possible to walk in the light and be children of the day.

For devout men and women, while they may feel themselves hopelessly puzzled, begin with the assertion: "God knows." A Greek dramatist places in the mouth of a character caught in a harrowing tragedy the line:

A thought deep in the dark of my mind cleaves to a
Great Understanding.

Augustine in his *Confessions* addresses God as One "in whose presence are the causes of all uncertain things and . . . . with whom do live the eternal reasons of all those contingent chance-medleys, for which we can give no reason." The unbelieving have frequently used with sarcasm the saying "God knows." The Persian skeptic, Omar, writes:

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;

And He that toss'd thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—*HE* knows!

This singular world has seemed to not a few thoughtful persons a grim joke, and the only sound they could fancy in the silent skies was ironical laughter. That mood has not been altogether lacking among the believing. The Old Testament several times ascribes scornful humor to the Most High: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh." The sayings of Jesus are frequently touched with humor. He pokes fun at bigoted ecclesiastics who scrupulously strain out a gnat and gulp down a camel; and some of His phrases, which over-serious people have taken with bald literalism, are playful exaggerations, purposefully one-sided to force His listeners to think. A world that is queer evokes humor in the Divinest; but it is the light-hearted humor of a buoyant spirit, confident that even the absurdities of life are being worked out by a Father who understands and loves.

Believers are sure that God knows, but His children, however intimate they may become with Him, cannot always expect to share His knowledge. An Old Testament writer has a suggestive classification when he divides "secret things" and "things that are revealed"; and he remarks that "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God." We are not forbidden to let our curiosity pry into them and "press bold to the tether's end allotted to this life's intelligence." But when the tether's end is reached, and we are brought up with a jerk, and strain and tug as we may can get no farther in our thinking, it is surely something to be able to say: "This is God's secret." It may well be that He would like to tell it to us and cannot, because we are too immature to understand Him. Those who have attained closest friendship with Him do not speak of Him as secretive. Jesus asserted: "There is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light." The obscurity of things is God's way of tempting us to investigate and of leading us on to more accurate knowledge—knowledge which is the result of our own discoveries. But whether God cannot, or of purpose does not, make plain to us matters which we are dying to know, there is at least this in religion, that it enables believers "to bear without resentment the divine reserve." Thomas Arnold said: "Before a confused and unconquerable difficulty my mind reposes as quietly as in possession of a discovered truth." In every man's life there are experiences in which his most inquiring thought and eager prayer seem to be answered: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter." In a world which to us is inherently puzzling, whether it was meant to be so or not, it is much that faith helps us to accept the inexplicable with patience and hope.

And in the whole queer universe nothing is queerer to us than ourselves. We agree with Clough:

> What we, when face to face we see
> The Father of our souls, shall be,
> John tells us, doth not yet appear;
> Ah! did he tell what we are here?

In one of Mrs. Humphry Ward's novels, Lady Lucy Marsham says to Lady Niton: "I thought, Elizabeth, you would have tried to understand me." Elizabeth Niton shook her head, "There's only your Maker could do that, Lucy, and He must be pretty puzzled to account for you sometimes." When we are overcome by feelings beyond our power to control, when we tremble at disclosures of capacities for iniquity within us which we did not suspect were there, when our crankiness and stupidity become too difficult for us to manage, it is no small matter to be able to look up and say: "He knoweth our frame," and to trust Him to help us to handle ourselves. "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn Thy commandments." When despite damaging appearances to the contrary we know that we sincerely mean to do right, when we must appeal to our own consciences against the disapproval of those whom we most respect, it is everything to be able to say with Job: "He knoweth the way that I take"; and with Simon Peter: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee."

There are many, many things which we can afford not to know; our only concern in this perplexing world is to know enough to live usefully. Religion assures us that even when we do not know where we are going, or why events befall us, and walk as in a maze, we may still be divinely guided. A prophet sums up a large chapter of religious experience when he makes God say: "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; in paths that they know not will I lead them." Those of us with only a little faith, when we survey our past, have borne in on us that a Wiser than we has had a hand in our careers. We may not be able to prove it to others; we should not care to try, for the facts are too personal to divulge; but for ourselves we cannot help feeling that there were secret preparations for things as yet years ahead, that we were intentionally thwarted here and encouraged there, that the best things which happened us came largely without our effort, and sometimes in spite of our effort. A man phrased his experience to an inquiring college professor: "God has frequently stepped into my life very perceptibly." We conclude with George Eliot's Silas Marner, "There's dealings wi' us, there's dealings"; with the Quaker, George Fox, we speak of "great openings"; and we say with Robert Louis Stevenson: "There stood at the wheel that unknown steersman whom we call God."

An English man of letters has described the career of one of his own friends:

"He had to bear a series of devastating calamities. He had loved the warmth and nearness of his home circle more deeply than most men, and the whole of it was swept away; he had depended for both stimulus and occupation upon his artistic work, and the power was taken from him at the moment of his highest achievement. His loss of fortune is not to be reckoned among his calamities, because it was no calamity to him. He ended by finding a richer treasure than that he had set out to obtain; and I remember that he said to me once, not long before his end, that whatever others might feel about their own lives, he could not for a moment doubt that his own had been an education of a deliberate and loving kind, and that the day when he realized that, when he saw that there was not a single incident in his life that had not a deep and an intentional value for him was one of the happiest days of his whole existence."

Now in all this it may seem that religion brings no illumination; it brings only the assurance that we are led in the dark. But that is not how it seems to religious folk. The French naturalist, Jean Henri Fabre, was once asked by a visitor: "Do you believe in God?" To which he replied emphatically: "I can't say I believe in God; I *see* Him. Without Him I understand nothing; without Him all is darkness. Not only have I retained this conviction; I have *aggravated* or *ameliorated* it, whichever you please. You could take my skin from me more easily than my faith in God." A similar confession is made by a professor of Greek in the Spanish University of Salamanca, Don Miguel de Unamuno, who says: "I believe in God as I believe in my friends, because I feel the breath of His affection, feel His invisible and intangible hand, drawing me, leading me, grasping me; because I possess an inner consciousness of a particular providence and of a universal mind that marks out for me the course of my destiny." Others who would hesitate to speak of "seeing" God, or of possessing this inner consciousness, would say that He is "the Master Light of all their seeing." God is an assumption which illumines and interprets for them an else unintelligible world. In His light they see light. One of the leading theological teachers of the last generation, Henry B. Smith, said: "My determination to seek religion was formed solely in consequence of my complete persuasion of its reasonableness. I did not feel any need of it." While such souls lack the mystic sense which enables them to say that they see God, they walk in His brightness, and their experience validates for them the assumption which they have made. Their illumined way in which they step surefootedly convinces them that He whom they have darkly trusted is light.

Believers never stop with the mere assumption of God's existence; they are confident that they can so connect themselves with Him that He will lighten their path in life. We may illustrate this in two typical instances of men who expected and received such illumination.

The first is an Old Testament story of guidance in one of life's most momentous choices—the selection of a wife. Abraham and his confidential servant, to whom he entrusts the finding of a wife for Isaac, resolve to be led by God, and in the narrative there are four steps which were taken to secure this leading:

First, Abraham and the servant determine to follow God's will, not their own, in this matter. They wish it to be a marriage made in heaven; and they are confident that God wills for Isaac a wife who will share his faith and be sympathetic with the purpose to which his life is dedicated. So the servant is sent where such a woman is likely to be found, though it involves a long journey. There is no promise of illumination except to the obedient. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." The first requisite in those who would be unerringly led is willingness to follow God's will to whatever it may carry them.

Second, the servant puts himself into a receptive attitude to get guidance. He prays: "O Lord, send me good speed this day. Behold I am standing by the fountain of waters; and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water." He waits upon God; he holds his mind open to divine suggestion.

There is a story of two of Queen Elizabeth's statesmen, that Sir Francis Walsingham, wishing to consult Lord Burleigh, had to wait in the latter's office because Burleigh was in church at prayer. When he came into the room, Sir Francis said jocularly that he wished himself so good a servant of God as Lord Burleigh, but that he had not been at church for some time past. To which Burleigh gravely replied: "I hold it meet for us to ask God's grace to keep us sound of heart, who have so much in our power; and to direct us to our well-doing for all the people, whom it is easy for us to injure and ruin; and herein, my good friend, the special blessing seemeth meet to be discreetly asked and wisely worn." Prayer for direction is the unfolding of the mind for the entrance of light.

Third, the servant uses his brains. One might think that he abdicates the use of his intelligence by asking for a sign: "Let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also; let the same be she that Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac." Had he suggested a sign that was no indication of the girl's character; had he said, Let it be the girl with dark hair, or with red in her dress, it would not have shown that he was testing the girl's nature; but knowing Isaac's lack of initiative and resource, the girl who would both promptly comply with a request and of her own accord suggest something additional was the type of ready and self-reliant woman whom Isaac needed. The sign was not an attempt of this man's to shift responsibility from himself to God, but to let God meet and guide his own intelligence.

There is a similar use of a sign from God in a far-reaching decision in our American history. Shortly after the battle of Antietam, Mr. Lincoln called his cabinet together, and taking up a draft of a proclamation freeing the slaves which he had previously submitted, said, "When the rebel army was at Frederick, I determined, as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland, to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation such as I thought likely to be most useful. I said nothing to any one, but I made the promise to myself and"—here he hesitated a little—"to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise." "It might be thought strange," he added, "that he had in this way submitted the disposal of matters, when the way was not clear to his mind what he should do. God had decided this question in favor of the slaves." Mr. Lincoln was a shrewd judge of public opinion, and he was by no means abdicating the use of his brains. A decisive victory seemed to him the opportune moment to launch this contemplated proclamation. He let God meet his own best judgment.

Fourth, having put himself in line with God's will, having prayed, having used his brains, Abraham's servant waits for an inward sense of assurance before he completes his decision: "And the man looked steadfastly on her, holding his peace, to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." Those who are accustomed to asking God's guidance know the feeling of being right for which this faithful man was waiting. Frequently one hears people say: "Everything seemed favorable, but somehow I did not feel satisfied to go on"; or "There were many contrary opinions, but I could not get away from the sense that it just had to be." One put it colloquially: "I had been thinking and praying to see my way, and it came over me in a flash; I just had a 'hunch' that this was God's plan for me." What a difference the presence or absence of this assurance makes! It is light *versus* darkness.

In 1855 the Earl of Shaftesbury was asked by Lord Palmerston to accept office in the Cabinet. "I never was in such perplexity in my life," he told a friend. "On one side were ranged wife, relations, friends, ambition, influence; on the other, my own objections, which seemed sometimes to weigh as nothing in comparison with the arguments brought against them. I could not satisfy myself that to accept office was a divine call; I *was* satisfied that God had called me to labor among the poor. There was no Urim and Thummim; no open vision. I could do nothing but postpone, and, in doing this, I was placing Palmerston in a most awkward position. But God interposed for me." And he told how in an uncertain frame of mind he prepared to go to the Palace to meet the Queen with the rest of the cabinet ministers. "I never felt so helpless. I seemed to be hurried along without a will of my own. I went and dressed, and then, while I was waiting for the carriage, I went down on my knees and prayed for counsel. Then, there was some one at the door, as I thought to say that the carriage was ready. Instead of that a note, hurriedly written in pencil, was put into my hands. It was from Palmerston: 'Don't go to the Palace.' That was thirty years ago," added the Earl, "but I dance with joy at the remembrance of that interposition, as I did when it happened." Everything seemed to make for his acceptance, but he lacked the sense that it was God's will, and waiting, as too few are sufficiently patient to wait, God's leading came.

The other instance is that which is supreme for Christians—Jesus' search for light which led to His decision that the cross was His Father's will for Him. In that search, as it is summed up in its final moment in Gethsemane, we discover the same four steps so clearly marked in the Old Testament example.

First, He committed Himself to God's purpose, and to that alone: "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

Second, He prayed, holding His mind alert and open to admit God's light. Not once but three times in the Garden He addressed Himself directly to heaven: "O My Father."

Third, He used His judgment as far as His mind could take Him. "If it be possible" shows His thought canvassing alternatives, and time after time returning to death as the Divine cup for Him.

Fourth, He waited for the feeling of certainty. How else explain the repeated prayer? The light did not break clearly all at once, so He kept on seeking it until the shadows dissolved. Matthew's account makes an interesting interpretative change in the material taken from Mark. The latter reads: "Again He went away, and prayed, *saying the same words.*" But according to the first evangelist, He had prayed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me," while the second prayer is given: "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." Is not this evangelist trying to interpret Jesus as becoming more confident each time He knelt that death was the cup assigned Him? Waiting on God, assurance came.

What is there in religion to illumine life's perplexities? Is it fanciful to press the picture of our parable of the Hudson—a town lighted by an electric current generated by the force of the stream? The illumination does not abolish night; all about the town is the enveloping blackness, and only here and there the lights gleam. Life's mystery is about those who believe. "We know in part." But why lay the accent on "in part?" Suppose it be night, the streets of the town are light enough for its inhabitants to walk safely and its homes glow with friendly brightness. Suppose our knowledge be partial, still "we *know*." We move along life's puzzling ways illumined by the Spirit of Christ and homes and shops and pleasure-places and public offices are lit with a kindly light, wherever His love glows.

The current of the river had to be transmuted before it gave light, and transmuted by men's skill and labor. God's wisdom flows as a river in the experiences of the godly of all the ages, in the many-times-tested experiences preserved in the Bible, most fully in the experience of Jesus. This stream of the Divine Spirit flows still in our time, and we can gain from present occurrences, from books, from the voices of the living, from the memories of the dead, hints and intimations of God's will for us. But there must be something in us which takes the hint, which sees the light of Christ, which appreciates and interprets the wisdom of the seers of old. Call it spiritual discernment, the intuition of faith, the inward light, or by some other name, it is the Spirit of God formed in us. The light which is latent in God's presence has to be transmuted into enlightened eyes in our hearts. Here is the process of transmutation—commitment to God's purpose in Christ, minds held by prayer receptive to His suggestion, intelligence actively thinking out the most Christlike course available, self-controlled waiting for assurance. Obviously the process does not need to be consciously repeated with every decision. When the electric light is once installed, householders are not aware of the part played by the Hudson in generating the current when they press a button and turn on a light. Believers who establish relations with the living God have in themselves the mind of Christ. But when for some reason the illumination seems dim, the authorities of the electric company investigate the connections. The transmuting process must be in such operation that the light shines where its illumination is required. Believers must go over their contacts with God sufficiently often to make sure that within them is the brightness which lit up the path of Christ: "If a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him." "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

CHAPTER V

FERTILITY

IN the valley through which the Hudson River flows the countryside is more fertile—meadows are richer, foliage more luxuriant, orchards more fruitful, crops more abundant—because of the presence of this body of running water with its unfailing supply of moisture. There is a like result in human life from the stream of inspirations in man's intercourse with the living God.

This picture of a river with fruitful trees along its banks meets us repeatedly in the Bible. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose trust the Lord is," says Jeremiah. "For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat cometh, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." The First Psalm borrows this simile in describing the godly as "a tree planted by the streams of water, that bringeth forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also doth not wither." When Ezekiel portrays a river emerging from the temple—symbol of the spiritual influence of the center of worship—he writes: "By the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, neither shall the fruit thereof fail; it shall bring forth new fruit every month, because the waters thereof issue out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for food, and the leaf thereof for healing."

The seer on Patmos incorporated that description into his vision of the holy city, where beside the crystal clear water grows the tree of life, with its twelve crops of fruit and its leaves for the healing of the nations. Another psalmist sings the flourishing lives of those planted in the fertile courts of the house of God: "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be full of sap and green."

Jesus stresses fruitfulness as a result of true faith, but, instead of the metaphor of a river which moistens the soil, He prefers that of seed. Is it fanciful to suggest that He felt that human nature needed not only watering, but the introduction of new elements, if it were to bear a divine harvest? He speaks of Himself as the Vine and His disciples as grafted branches, of His word as falling on various soils with various results, of Himself as planted seed, dying in the ground and certain to be not without much fruit. St. Paul lists the crops to be expected where the Spirit of Jesus is sown in human hearts. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control."

The early exponents of the Christian faith did not hesitate to point to its results in character and conduct as the chief evidence of its value. Typical of many similar statements is that made by the converted Athenian philosopher, Athenagoras, to the Emperors Aurelius and Commodus, about 177 A.D.: "Among us you will find uneducated persons, and artisans, and old women, who if they are unable in words to prove the benefit of our doctrine, yet by their deeds exhibit the benefit arising from their persuasion of its truth: they do not rehearse speeches, but exhibit good works." Both friendly and unfriendly historians of the spread of Christianity ascribe a large measure of its success to the good and useful people it produced. Readers of Walter Pater will put beside the statement of Athenagoras his imaginative account of the first Christian ceremony at which Marius was present in the Lararium of the Cecilian Villa at Rome, and saw "the wonderful spectacle of those who believed."

"The people here collected might have figured as the earliest handsel or pattern of a new world, from the very face of which discontent had passed away. . . . Was some credible message from beyond 'the flaming rampart of the world'—a message of hope regarding the place of men's souls and their interest in the sum of things—already moulding anew their very bodies, and looks, and voices, now and here? At least there was a cleansing and a kindling flame at work in them, which seemed to make everything else Marius had ever known look vulgar and mean."

Nor need we turn our eyes backwards across many centuries to catch sight of the fruits of the Spirit of Christ. Robert Louis Stevenson, in his volume on the South Seas, paints a portrait of a native Christian in whom faith had been "highly fructifying." He speaks of Maka, an Hawaiian evangelist in the Gilbert Islands, as "the best specimen of the Christian hero that I have ever met."

"He had saved two lives at the risk of his own; like Nathan, he had bearded a tyrant in the hour of blood; when a whole white population fled, he alone stood to his duty; and his behavior under domestic sorrow with which the public has no concern filled the beholder with sympathy and admiration. A poor little smiling laborious man he looked; and you would have thought he had nothing in him but that of which he had too much—facile good nature."

And not only in transfigured individuals, but in the family-life, the social customs, the public spirit, of transformed communities, the stream of the Christian faith evidences its fertilizing presence.

It may be worth our while to dwell a moment upon the distinction between religion as something useful and as something fruitful. In our day almost everything is appraised by what it can do, and do forthwith. The value of a church is apt to be computed by the number of helpful services which the organization renders to the neighborhood. Sunday School teaching and sermons are measured by their immediate effects—by what they induce younger and older hearers to go out and attempt. But the Bible does not apply this utilitarian standard to religion. Men do not at once notice the connection between the fertility of the Hudson Valley and the river which flows through it. The moisture which enriches fields and gardens comes circuitously through the atmosphere from the water in the stream. The work of the church does not consist to any great extent in the activities which can be listed as its ministry to the community; they are never more than a small fraction of its contribution. Its main output is in men, women and children, whose thoughts, sympathies and consciences it has helped to grow towards Christlikeness, and in the results of their lives through many years in homes and schools and business, as friends and citizens, and through eternity in the city of God. Faith touches the soil with the fructifying Spirit of God, and all manner of crops are harvested upon it.

With our impatience for instantaneous and measurable returns, men often ask of what good is church-going and family worship and personal prayer and Bible study? Occasionally there are immediate consequences—flashes of insight, kindlings of enthusiasm, awakenings of the soul; but these are rare. The dew which forms on the ground or the mist which covers a valley or the drops which seep into the soil from a shower seldom produce striking effects; but any chemist can tell us of marvelous processes that begin when water touches the earth, and statisticians with their figures of crops per acre can show an impressive difference to be credited to the presence of a steady stream like the Hudson. The many who so lightly discard the habit of regular attendance at church, and put aside family prayers as an antiquated custom, and think a Sunday in the country more beneficial for their children than uninterrupted Sunday School-going, scarcely realize that they are cutting themselves and their boys and girls off from fructifying contacts with the stream of spiritual influences which rolls through the ages in the Christian Church. The loss is not at once apparent; but there are many families where there are signs of pitiable spiritual drought.

It is not only the meadows upon the banks of a river which are enriched by it. The moisture in the stream affects the entire valley, and fields several miles away from the water bear larger harvests because the stream is there.

It is not those alone who are themselves in conscious fellowship with God who are benefited by religion. Many persons who never open a Bible or darken a church-door are influenced in their thinking, their motives, their ideals, by the presence of a flow of Christ's Spirit in their neighborhood. Those who maintain religious institutions perform a far-reaching service to the community. The number present at worship on any Sunday is no accurate criterion of the result upon a city of holding up publicly the faith and purpose of Jesus. One cannot calculate the influence of Christianity in a nation by the figures of Church membership. The relatively small Christian Church in Japan exercises an effect upon the moral standards of that people out of all proportion to its size. The Spirit of Jesus in a company of disciples in any land penetrates the press, education, business-life, amusements, government; it is as pervasive as the atmosphere which it charges with moisture. To be sure a tiny brook cannot affect as extensive an area as the mighty volume of water in the Hudson River. We are vitally concerned with the number of those who have direct dealing with the living God, and whose lives form the river-bed through which the stream of His Spirit takes its course. But it is heartening to recall that a river's fructifying influence extends far beyond the fields along its banks. No Sunday School teacher seated in the midst of a circle of children can tell how wide is the area of fruitfulness from the lessons imparted in a morning's lesson. No company of faithful churchmen who keep a congregation's organization alive and active can measure the extent of its fertilizing touch upon a town's or a nation's life. A prophet, addressing a remnant of religiously susceptible persons, spoke through them to an entire people when he said: "Thou shalt be like a watered garden."

It is fair to remember that moisture in enriching the soil increases the crop of weeds as well as the harvest of useful vegetation. Religious movements always show mixed results; but that is not to be blamed upon the spiritual inspirations which they bring. There are various seeds present in every community, and the moisture accelerates the growth of tares along with that of wheat. George Eliot put this inimitably in her account of the religious interest which the preaching of the Reverend Mr. Tryan brought to the village of Milby:

"Religious ideas," she wrote, "have the fate of melodies, which, once set afloat in the world, are taken up by all sorts of instruments, some of them woefully coarse, feeble, or out of tune, until people are in danger of crying out that the melody itself is detestable. It may be that some of Mr. Tryan's hearers had gained a religious vocabulary rather than religious experience; that here and there a weaver's wife, who, a few months before, had been simply a silly slattern, was converted into that more complex nuisance, a silly and sanctimonious slattern; that the old Adam, with the pertinacity of middle age, continued to tell fibs behind the counter, notwithstanding the new Adam's addiction to Bible-reading and family prayer; that the children in the Paddiford Sunday School had their memories crammed with phrases about the blood of cleansing, imputed righteousness, and justification by faith alone, which an experience lying principally in chuck-farthing, hop-scotch, parental slappings, and longings after unattainable lollypop, served rather to darken than to illustrate; and that at Milby, in those distant days, as in all other times and places where the atmosphere is changing, and men are inhaling the stimulus of new ideas, folly often mistook itself for wisdom, ignorance gave itself airs of knowledge, and selfishness, turning its eyes upward, called itself religion. Nevertheless Evangelicalism had brought into palpable existence and operation in Milby society that idea of duty, that recognition of something to be lived for beyond the mere satisfaction of self, which is to the moral life what the addition of a great central ganglion is to animal life. . . . Miss Rebecca Linnet, in quiet attire, with a somewhat excessive solemnity of countenance, teaching at the Sunday School, visiting the poor, and striving after a standard of purity and goodness, has surely more moral loveliness than in those flaunting peony-days, when she had no other model than the costumes of the heroines in the circulating library. Miss Eliza Pratt, listening in rapt attention to Mr. Tryan's evening lecture, no doubt found evangelical channels for vanity and egoism; but she was clearly in moral advance of Miss Phipps giggling under her feathers at old Mr. Crewe's peculiarities of enunciation. And even elderly fathers and mothers, with minds, like Mrs. Linnet's too tough to imbibe much doctrine, were the better for having their hearts inclined towards the new preacher as a messenger from God. They became ashamed, perhaps, of their trivial, futile past."

This is admirably said, and describes not inaccurately what occurs in many communities among ourselves. And it is the strange assortment of effects, more and less desirable, which makes the fruitfulness of religion sometimes open to question. The same stimulus which produces genuinely saintly qualities often intensifies ugly traits, enthusiasm for righteousness appears commingled with bigoted intolerance, sympathy with the down-trodden may have at its side an unfeeling disregard of the well-to-do, a passion to enlighten souls in the ends of the earth may coëxist with a shocking obtuseness to social injustices at one's own door. But the number and strength of the weeds are evidence of a very fructifying factor, and the intense results of religious awakenings are proof of the fertilizing touch of the Divine Spirit. We need to supplement our simile of a river with Jesus' metaphor of seed. We must take pains that the Spirit we bring is the authentic Spirit of Jesus: the Christlike God within us will produce fruits akin to those of Jesus' own character and work.

In both Ezekiel's and John's descriptions of the trees beside the river of life the leaves are said to be for healing. Health is one result of religion, and a very important result. But no one grows fruit-trees for their leaves; leaves are incidental. The growth fertilized by religion is not primarily physical health; and the instant health becomes the main preöccupation of the devout, you have a debased fruitfulness—trees running to leaves. Examine the votive tablets on the walls of some church where physical miracles are expected, as in the Basilica at Lourdes or in the large church at Sainte Anne-de Beaupré, and one is struck by the absence of expressions of gratitude for divine assistance to become more self-controlled, more considerate, more responsible, more consecrated. Go to the testimony meetings of cults which stress religious healing apart from medical and surgical means, and while speaker after speaker will regale the company with tales of floating kidneys marvelously anchored, or an appendix miraculously made innocuous, which some surgeon is alleged to have predicted would burst fatally within twenty-four hours (and there are unfortunately accredited physicians who tell patients luridly terrifying narratives of possible or probable disasters in the mysterious inner regions of their bodily organism)—while speaker after speaker will describe maladies cured and accidents averted and even financial prosperity attained from "demonstrating" with religious formulæ, there will scarcely be heard a syllable of advances in patience, in fidelity to duty, in tender sympathy with those whose hearts ache, in sense of social obligation—in short of advances in justice and mercy and faithfulness, which Jesus called the weightier matters. Leaves are being given the attention which should be devoted to fruits.

But among ourselves we have often forgotten that our fruit-trees possess leaves, and that these are for healing. Genuine Christian faith undoubtedly affects physical health; how could it be otherwise? The trust in a fatherly God which supplies serenity and banishes worry, the preoccupation with the interests of Christ's cause in the world which takes the mind off self and leaves no time for fancying ills, the consecration of one's body to His service which compels one to keep healthy that which is God's, and not harm it by dissipation, over-eating, bad hours, lack of exercise, and any neglect of the known laws of well-being, the dedication of means to Christ's kingdom forbidding us to squander them on self-indulgence (a productive cause of much sickness), above all the vitalization of the spirit daily with supplies of God's life, the feeling of adequacy for one's work because His strength and wisdom are at one's call, the cleansing of the heart from the sickening presence of envy, greed, bitterness, revenge and covetousness, by the inflow of Christ's love, surely all these are most potent forces for health of body and of mind. The average church has paid too little attention to training its people to employ their spiritual resources to overcome the fears which inhibit their happiness and to sublimate the passions which misdirect their mental life. Happily neurologists now recognize the ally which they may find in religion, and the religious leader must avail himself of the knowledge which psychotherapy places at his disposal. Explicit education in the use of faith to assist wholesome physical living ought to be part of the program of every Sunday School and church. But we must not forget that our most successful orchards are conducted by men who devote their attention to making the trees bear fruit, and think only incidentally of their foliage. The healthiest Christians will concentrate on the work which is given them to do, and the manner of men they must show themselves, and let their physical condition be a subordinate, and usually unthought-of detail, in keeping themselves fit to be partners of their Father in His business.

And what marvelous fruits are grown on soil enriched by religious faith! Professor Hocking has drawn attention to the fact that the great ages of religion have preceded the great ages of art and of science, "for they were attending to the fertilization of the ground." Where a vital spiritual movement has swept over a people, it has often prepared the soil for a development in music, in literature, in industrial expansion, and above all in humanitarian progress. The streams set flowing by the preaching of the Evangelicals, Wesley and Whitefield and their contemporaries, a century and a half ago in Britain and America, had vast consequences in creating a new social conscience. The preachers themselves laid little stress on social changes: their one concern was to link men's souls to God in Christ. But Christ-touched men begin to feel, to think and to purpose more fraternally. A Howard takes the prisons of his own country and of Europe on his conscience; a Wilberforce is burdened with the miseries of the traffic in African slaves; a Shaftesbury is made wretched by the plight of children in factories, of little boys and girls inhumanly used as chimney-sweeps, of lunatics handled with brutality, of operatives in mines and work-shops doomed to overlong hours of monotonous toil. Societies for the correction of abuses, for the protection of some oppressed group, for the care of a neglected class in the community, for the spread of the Bible, of good literature, of the sway of Christ the world over, spring up in the wake of the evangelical preaching. It is frequently not the harvests directly intended which are the most important results of the work of those who inspire men with the Spirit of God. Religion fertilizes the soil, and makes possible crops not foreseen even by those who cherished the largest expectations. These preachers of an intensely individualistic piety hoped to link men one by one with the living God; they succeeded, and in addition they changed the face of human society.

Our own age is eager to produce harvests of friendship in international relations, of responsible and ministering comradeship in our industries and commerce, of earnestness and public consecration in the pursuit of knowledge in our schools and colleges, of loyalty in family relations restoring permanency to the shockingly temporary and casual ties which now hold lives together in homes. We discover that we lack the soil upon which these may be grown—the soil of sensitive and inclusive consciences. There is a widespread recognition that only new supplies of the fructifying stream of the Spirit of Christ can furnish the moisture required. It will not do to talk wistfully of the crops, nor to draw plans of the barns into which they may be garnered; our main concern must be with the condition of the soil. And, if history assures us of anything, it is that once the river of vital religion flows broadly through our time, not only the harvests for which we look, but others even more glorious, now beyond our power to conceive, will be gathered.

The symbol of a tree planted by a stream, bearing fruit every month and full of sap and green in old age, is a fascinating symbol of the religious ideal for life. One of the early New England divines, when dying, was seen to be moving his lips to frame some word, and his son, leaning over to catch it, heard him whisper: "*Fructuosus.*" It is the Christian aspiration, here and forever. Do you remember Victor Hugo's description of Mademoiselle Baptistine, the sister of Bishop Bienvenu: "Nature had made her only a lamb, and religion had made her an angel"? Christian faith had taken the gentleness of her womanhood and infused her with the tireless energy of a ministering spirit. Such is the enhancement of the gifts and graces of a life accessible to religious inspirations. There is a fruitfulness which surprises by its abundance and its frequency, "because the waters of the river issue out of the sanctuary."

CHAPTER VI

BUOYANCY

UPON the waters of the Hudson tons of freight are carried in vessels and in long tows of canal-barges, and thousands of passengers are transported up and down stream in steamers and across the river on ferries. The Hudson is a bearer of burdens; and that generations of believers discover in the living God.

The men of the Bible do not employ the simile of a river for the discovery of the sustaining power of religion, for the streams of Palestine were not big enough to carry ships, and the Hebrews rarely became navigators on the sea; but they compare God to an eagle, swooping under her young in their first attempts at flight, and catching and upholding them on outstretched wings: "He spread abroad His wings. He took them, He bare them on His pinions." They represent Him as a grown-up Companion walking beside an unsteady little child: "When I said, My foot slippeth, Thy loving-kindness, O Lord, held me up"; or as a considerate warrior assisting a fellow-struggler on the battle-field to keep on his feet: "Thy right hand hath holden me up"; or as a stalwart Comrade who places His arm around an over-weighted man and enables him to stand up under his pack: "Cast thy burden on the Lord, and He will sustain thee." They use an even more touching figure of speech and describe God as a father carrying His people as babes in arms: "The Lord thy God bare thee as a man doth bear his son," "In His love and in His pity He bare them and carried them all the days of old," "I taught Ephraim to walk: I took them on My arms." A New Testament writer gives an added touch of tenderness to the picture by using a phrase employed of a widower who must try to be both father and mother to motherless children: "For about the time of forty years as a nursing-father bare He them in the wilderness." A prophet contrasts the heavy images of the Babylonian deities, carried on the straining backs of their devotees in a religious procession, with the living God of Israel, who carries His people all their days: "Their idols . . . the things that ye carried about are made a load, a burden to the weary. . . . O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, that have been borne by Me from their birth, that have been carried from the womb; and even to old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." And possibly the phrase which has come to mean most to those who prize the support of religion is the line from an early poem: "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

Among outsiders it is not a common idea that faith confers buoyancy. To a great many persons all thought about religion appears saddening. You recall what the tavern hostess said of Sir John Falstaff: "A' cried out, 'God, God, God!' three or four times. Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God; I hoped there was no need to trouble himself with such thoughts yet." Religious beliefs are regarded as straining weights which the devout must force his intelligence to accept and carry, as one straps a pack upon an unwilling donkey; and there are not a few who add sarcastically that it is only donkeys who can be turned into such credulous beasts of burden. Certain types of unbelievers represent themselves as emancipated from an earlier burdening Christian creed, and walk about the world with an air of superior liberty. Religious usages are considered oppressive. Stevenson begins a letter with the sentence: "I've been to church, and I am not depressed." Church-going interferes with week-end outings, and is discarded as a hampering nuisance; prayer is viewed as the repetition of certain phrases, often childish in form—the luggage accumulated in the past; the Bible is classed as heavy reading, and when the mind is already under considerable pressure, other literature is resorted to. Above all, religion is thought of as afflicting its devotees with a troublesome conscientiousness. The ordinary man of the world has obligations upon him which he dare not disavow, but the unfortunate believer, who takes his Christianity seriously, must load himself with numberless additional responsibilities—responsibilities as wide as the human race—and hold himself particularly sensitive to the appeals of the most backward and ne'er-do-well at hand and afar off. His conscience forces upon him an admittedly impossible standard—likeness to Jesus Christ; and he must task himself with every secret thought, every personal ambition, every acquiescence in social conventions, every expressed opinion, which discords with the heart of the Master. To them that are without it seems preposterous that any sane man should assume an obligation which he knows he cannot fulfill, and place upon his conscience an ideal which no human being ever has attained. Their own consciences give them trouble enough without letting religion break their moral backs by piling upon them infinitely more.

We must frankly grant that religious beliefs are often presented in forms which make them an intolerable load upon intelligence. It has been a great relief to many when they could set aside certain statements in the Bible and certain doctrines preached and taught in the churches. Christianity has carried along through the centuries and frequently published as of the essence of its message opinions which thinking folk find incredible, which tender-hearted folk find unloving, and which honorable folk find immoral. Their minds and hearts are eased when they reach the point where they fling these views away as outworn superstitions, even though at the same time they feel constrained to part with all religious faith whatsoever. We must also own that devout customs are at times made onerous. Jesus clashed with the church-leaders of His age oftenest over their insistence upon an observance of the sabbath which was to Him inhuman, and He was denounced as a desecrator of God's hallowed day. People forget that forms and habits which are uplifting to them may seem to another generation weights instead of wings. And we must also admit that time and again the teaching of the Christian Church unduly loads the consciences of her members by placing an overemphasis upon certain classes of duty. How many persons reared in Christian homes have gained the impression that the chief evidences of loyalty to Jesus are faithfulness in church-attendance, Bible-reading and prayers, and scrupulous abstinence from a number of harmless and possibly very delightful amusements! The stress on relatively subordinate matters took attention off more momentous human obligations; and when the inherited convictions began to be questioned and thrown aside, the mass of petty scruples which went with them often lightened earnest people and gave them a sense of freedom.

Men whose experiences have been in the least like those recorded in the Bible passages quoted a moment ago would protest that a burdensome religion was no true communion with the living God. A Christian's beliefs are not ideas which he compels his mind to accept: they are truths which grip him. They seem to approach him with hands and arms, to lay hold of his intelligence, and to lift him. They are not notions which he tries to make himself believe: they are convictions which he finds he cannot disbelieve. His faith takes him off his feet, and he is conscious of resting upon it, and of being borne along by it. Recall how religious convictions come to men. Coventry Patmore tells us that when he was a boy of eleven, he was reading a book, when "it struck me what an exceedingly fine thing it would be if there really was a God." He had been taught from childhood that there was; but that had remained a dormant assumption without interest for him. Dr. John Brown, the Edinburgh physician and man of letters, in describing the process by which his father became a contagious preacher, says: "The truth of the words of God had shone out upon him with an immediateness and infinity of meaning and power, which made them, though the same words he had looked upon from childhood, other and greater and deeper words." Principal Shairp recounts of Thomas Erskine of Linlathen:

"He spoke of the awful silence of God, how it sometimes became oppressive, and the heart longed to hear an answer to its cry, some audible voice. And then he added, 'But it has not always been silence to me. I have had one revelation: it is now, I am sorry to say, a matter of memory with me. It was not a revelation of anything that was new to me. After it, I did not know anything which I did not know before. But it was a joy for which one might bear any sorrow. I felt the power of love—that God is love, that He loved me, that He had spoken to me, and'—then after a long pause—'that He had broken silence to me.' "

Events, books, friends, mysterious leadings, our own thoughts, bring home certain religious ideas—that God really is, that the outlook of Jesus upon life is true, that at the center of the universe is a Heart, that life linked with God in Christ goes on through death and forever; and these ideas, up till then mere commonplaces, perhaps traditional notions scoffed at as obsolete, lay hold of us, and we find ourselves upraised, and surveying all things from a higher elevation, and resting upon a new medium which buoys our spirits. Ezekiel was describing this experience of being carried to a loftier outlook, when he said: "The Spirit lifted me up . . . and behold, I saw."

Devout men would insist that there is something the matter with methods of devotion which weary those who employ them. Take the Sunday question, as an instance. Any sensible community may well enact laws, not for religious but for humanitarian reasons, to safeguard one day in seven from gain-seeking labor, so far as that is possible. The individual believer can then take the free day and use it for the enrichment of his life and the life of the community, as he finds best for him. When one reads the biographies of men who have been outstanding forces for Christian righteousness, one is impressed with the number of them who felt deeply indebted to Sundays kept free from business and devoted primarily to the culture of their own and other men's spiritual natures. Few persons in the London of a century ago were more incessantly busy than William Wilberforce—member of Parliament, sought-after guest at dinners, active on countless committees, with throngs of people on all sorts of errands crowding in to see him daily. In the thick of his struggle for the abolition of the trade in slaves, he gave up a Sunday to presenting his cause in a letter to the Emperor of Russia, stayed home from church, and rested himself, saying: "God desires mercy rather than sacrifice." The following Sunday he enters in his diary:

"I will not quit the peculiar duties of the day for my Abolition labors. Though last Sunday I set about them with a real desire to please God, yet it did not answer; my mind felt a weight on it, a constraint which impeded the free and unfettered movements of the imagination or intellect; and I am sure that this last week I might have saved for that work four times as much time as I assigned to it on Sunday. Therefore though knowing that God prefers mercy to sacrifice, yet let me in faith give up this day to religious exercises, to strengthening the impression of invisible and divine things, by the worship of God, meditation and reading."

Here was a man to whom it seemed all-important that weights be removed and his spirit enfranchised, and he found a devoutly thoughtful Sunday setting him at liberty.

Or take the Bible. Not long since, a young man of culture, religiously reared, but who had scarcely opened the covers of a Bible in years, was convalescing from an illness which had brought him and his little daughter very low, and he startled a kinswoman, who came in to inquire if there was anything he would care to have her read to him, by asking her to read him something from the Bible. She asked, "What?" He replied: "I remember some passage about armor and a shield; I don't know just where it is." A concordance was consulted, the Sixth Chapter of Ephesians found, and after the reading, he remarked: "Well, there's nothing quite like the Bible, is there?"

Or take prayer. Psychologists and physicians have written much recently of the value of prayer as relaxing nervous tension, and quieting and invigorating the mind, as deep breath does the body. At a medical congress not long ago, a well-known nerve-specialist made the statement: "As an alienist, and one whose whole life has been concerned with the sufferings of the mind, I would state that of all the hygienic measures to counteract disturbed sleep, depression of spirits, and all the miserable sequels of a distressed mind, I would undoubtedly give the first place to the simple habit of prayer." Coleridge justified his custom of praying every night before going to sleep by giving the tested effect upon himself in the lines:

> A sense o'er all my soul imprest
> That I am weak, yet not unblest,
> Since in me, round me, everywhere
> Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

Is not that akin to the picture with which we began of a freighted vessel upborne by the encompassing flow of a river? Lowell voiced a similar sense of relaxation and buoyancy, when he characterized the essense of prayer as "that perfect disenthralment which is God." Here are spirits aware of the lift which is theirs through intercourse with the Most High. None dare prescribe methods of communion to another; each must explore for himself and discover the mode of fellowship which upraises him; but the witness of all men and women of prayer is that God so found is an Upholder; and they bid us: "Rest in the Lord."

As for the burdens which religion places on conscience when it touches it with the new sensitiveness and comprehensiveness of Christian responsibility, we cheerfully admit that vastly more is put upon the hearts and minds of followers of Jesus than on those of any other human beings; but that is by no means the whole story. A semi-pagan, like Goethe, made the discovery that "*must* is hard, but it is only when a man *must* that his real inner nature is revealed." Ordinary folk are aware that when they have to keep up under some pressure, there is that within which appears to upbear them. Christians explain this as the unlocking of spiritual resources, the releasing of a pent-up stream, which so soon as it is allowed to flow is augmented by the waters of the vasty Deep. They do not resent their enormously increased obligations, because their necessities bring with them the sustaining river. The more heavy the strain, the more buoyancy they seem to possess:

Ah, the key of our life that passes all wards, opens all locks,
Is not I will, but I must, I must, I must, and I do it.

It is when a Luther reaches the point where he declares: "I cannot do otherwise," that he spontaneously adds: "So help me, God," and is most conscious of Divine support.

In the sinking experiences of life, what does one possess to buoy him up? Few are unfamiliar with the situation where sorrow seems about to drown the spirit. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me"; "I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me." One sees brave spirits under such circumstances keeping themselves afloat by various devices. None would withhold his respect from any who, without religious faith, manage to remain unsubmerged. But Christian faith would be false to its own long experience through the centuries, if it did not testify to the steadfast underpropping believers have discovered in the Father of Jesus Christ. In the correspondence of John Calvin, there is a letter to his friend, William Farel, in which Calvin writes of his wife's death. After describing an affecting scene at the bedside, he says: "Then I went to a secret place to pray." After a sentence or two the letter continues: "Before eight she breathed her last so gently that those who were with her could not tell whether she were dead or still alive. I at present control my grief so that my duties are not interfered with. May the Lord Jesus strengthen you by His Spirit, and may He support me also under this heavy affliction, which would certainly have overcome me had not He, who raises up the prostrate, strengthens the weak, and refreshes the weary, stretched forth His hand from heaven to me." There was something beneath him to lean his weight upon and be splendidly upborne.

And there are experiences far more depressing than grief. Men find themselves in situations where physical hardships, apparently hopeless prospects, surroundings that appal them, combine to render their plight intolerable. There could be scarcely a more hideous fate than to be banished to the mines, as these were operated in the Roman Empire by condemned criminals, given a bare subsistence, locked in filthily unsanitary and damp pens underground at night, and worked for long hours by taskmasters who had no interest in prolonging their victims' lives; and one of the most thrilling documents in early Christian literature is a letter, written by Cyprian, himself probably in exile, to Nemesianus and his comrades in martyrdom in the mines:

"The body is not cherished in the mines with couch and cushions, but it is cherished with the refreshment and solace of Christ. The frame wearied with labors lies prostrate on the ground, but it is no punishment to lie down with Christ. There the bread is scarce; but a man lives not by bread alone, but by the word of God. Shivering, you want clothing; but he who puts on Christ is both abundantly clad and adorned. The hair of your half-shorn head seems repulsive; but since Christ is the head of the man, anything whatever must needs become the head which is illustrious on account of Christ's name. . . . A manifold portion of the people, following your example, have confessed alike with you, and alike have been crowned. Even in boys a courage greater than their age has surpassed their years in the praise of their confession, so that every sex and every age should adorn the blessed flock of your witnessing. What must be the vigor, beloved brethren, of your victorious conscience, that every one of you walk in the mines with a body captive indeed, but with a heart reigning, that you know Christ is present with you, rejoicing in the endurance of His servants, who are ascending by His footsteps and in His paths to the eternal kingdoms!"

Beside this page from the Third Century, we may place another from the Seventeenth, on which Governor Bradford, in his *History of Plymouth Plantation,* describes the condition of the sick and imperiled band of exiles for conscience' sake, after they had landed and were in the midst of a New England December:

"They that know the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men? and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. Neither could they, as it were, go up to the top of Pisgah, to view from this wilderness a more goodly country to feed their hopes; for which way soever they turned their eyes (save upward to the heavens) they could have little solace or content in respect of any outward objects. For summer being done, all things stand upon them with a weather-beaten face; and the whole country, full of woods and thickets, represented a wild and savage hue. If they looked behind them, there was the mighty ocean which they had passed, and was now as a main bar or gulf to separate them from all the civil parts of the world. If it be said they had a ship to succor them, it is true; but what heard they daily from the master and company? . . . That victuals consumed apace. Yea, it was muttered by some that if they got not a place in time, they would turn them and their goods ashore and leave them. Let it also be considered what weak hopes of supply and succor they left behind them, that might bear up their minds in this sad condition and trials they were under; and they could not but be very small. What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace?"

The Pilgrims rested upon that, and kept up and kept on.

It is the fashion in certain circles to jeer at religion as a surviving childish weakness in modern man. We begin life helpless and are carried in parental arms; in maturity when these are no longer about us, our orphaned minds fancy an unseen Father still upbearing us. God is the projection upon the skies of an unsatisfied craving in our natures, and He is nothing more. It is a tempting explanation, because there come times when believers do not feel anything stable in the invisible to buoy them. Augustine confesses that at one period in his life: "Thou wert not any solid or substantial thing unto me, when in those days I thought upon Thee. If I offered to discharge my burden, to give it some easement, it fell as it were through the empty air, and came tumbling again upon me." And in His supreme need, Jesus Himself cried: "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But such experiences of non-support are not final with believers. Augustine was holding on to his self-confidence and his sins, "the baggage of the world," as he calls them. When he put them away and committed himself utterly to the will of Christ, he speaks of resting in God. Through the darkness, Jesus' trust still prayed: "My God," and the glorious issue of

His career is witness that the hands into which He commended His spirit upheld and still carry Him triumphantly through the ages. There must be as complete a venture of faith in God as that of a ship launched upon a stream, and with nothing beneath it but the water, before buoyancy is realized.

Nor is it true that religion with its message of relaxation and dependence keeps men childish. Surely the men and women we have instanced are not puerile. The buoyancy of the river does not relieve tugs and steamers from the necessity of using their own power, if they would transport cargoes and passengers. Its upbearing renders possible the full output of their powers. The sense of a sustaining God enables a Calvin in his lonely sorrow not to let his work be interfered with, fortifies a mixed company of captive Christians to endure with contagious courage the exhausting and sickening toil in the mines, and puts heart and hope into the pilgrims in the face of overwhelming discouragements to go forward with their enterprise. The world's commerce must be carried in vessels that can stay afloat. It is men and women buoyed up with confidence, saved from sinkings of heart and depression of spirits, responsive to the tiller of conscience and capable of employing all the energy they possess, who vigorously carry their own loads and the burdens of others, and bring both themselves and their brethren to the haven where they would be.

CHAPTER VII

SERENITY AND ADVENTURE

THE Hudson River is part of New York harbor, or perhaps we should say that New York Bay is part of the Hudson River, for geologists tell us that at one time the Atlantic Coast Plain stretched much farther out towards the East, and the ancient bed of the Hudson can still be traced beneath the floor of the ocean making its way to a mouth a hundred miles beyond its present outlet. The river front on Manhattan Island and the Jersey shore is to-day occupied by wharves where vessels dock, and it is not unusual to see a large fleet anchored below the Palisades in mid-stream. The river is a haven for ships. A New Yorker, enjoying a calm day on a trans-Atlantic voyage, remarks: "It's as quiet as the Hudson River."

The steady, even flow of a river as contrasted with the choppy waves of the sea is used in the Bible as a symbol for the peace which comes in obedience to God: "Oh that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river"; "Behold I will extend peace to her like a river"; "Great (that is 'abundant,' 'flowing') peace have they that love Thy law." An early prophet compares the cities on the Tigris, the Euphrates or the Nile, where the river formed a powerful military protection in time of siege, with riverless Jerusalem which

Jehovah encompassed with His defence: "There the Lord will be with us in majesty, in place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby." Christian literature is full of expressions of the shelter men find in God. One may put beside the prophecy just quoted the words of Paul: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus." When men reach trust in God, they feel themselves like warriors safely lodged within a moated citadel, or like billow-tossed ships which have been faring on the high seas and are now in a placid stream. Listen to Dante, voyaging on the windy ocean of Fourteenth Century Italian politics, singing: "In His will is our peace"; to Luther, with a nature that swirled in storms of intense feeling, writing to a brother-monk at Erfurt: "I know from my own experience, as well as from that of all troubled souls, that it is solely our own self-conceit which is at the root of all our disquietude," and pointing him for peace to "union with Christ's loving heart and divine will"; and to Charles Wesley, whose lines

> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high,
> Hide me, O my Saviour hide,
> Till the storm of life is past,

have so accurately voiced the longing and the answer of thousands of English-speaking Christians, that no hymn in our language is better known or more widely used. Finding through Christ a quiet anchorage as in a river while life's vast ocean is storm-swept, is an experience which believers have known from the earliest days of our faith, and expressed in words placed by one evangelist on the lips of Jesus Himself: "These things have I spoken unto you that in Me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation." "In the world"—there is the ship at sea; "in Me"—there is the ship in the protected stream.

Those believers who lack serenity of spirit are failing to get out of their religion what is undoubtedly there. They have problems, public and personal, which harass their minds, obligations which keep them anxious lest they prove wanting, feelings and passions to be held in check and turned into an outflow of love, "fightings and fears, within, without" to be controlled, work to be got through without failing those who count on them, men, women and little children to be lived with, worked with, played with, worshiped with, harmoniously. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." "Whose mind is *stayed*"—serenity is lost by letting God drop out of mind. When perturbed, successful believers have employed the grace of recollection, reminding themselves that God is, and what He is.

I smiled to *think* God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness,—
Round our restlessness His rest.

In a tense moment in the Reformation movement Martin Luther received a frightened and despondent letter from his friend, Spalatin, to which he replied: "Great heavens, Spalatin, how excited you are! If this thing be of God, it will come to pass contrary to, in spite of, over or under, your or my way of bringing it about."

The Modernist, Father Tyrrell, tells a correspondent: "God 'takes up the islands as a very little thing, and measures out the ocean in the hollow of His hand,' and I do think we ought to try hard to look at these matters with His eyes—to take up the whole wriggling mass of squabbling humanity in our hand as a very little thing—a matter for quiet and not unkindly curiosity more than for volcanic, self-hurting, useless indignation." The recollection of God enables us to do our work as "toil unsevered from tranquillity"; it cushions our nerves with bits of His own heart in our contacts with frequently angular and irritating fellow-humans; it restores and maintains poise as we try to think through bewildering questions; it renders the earnestness of men who must care as intensely as Jesus how it goes with the whole world and with every least mortal in it "an impassioned quietude." God is harbor and anchorage; and a faith which does not give the peace of mind of the navigator who has safely brought in his vessel is not the faith which generations of Christians have found in Christ.

Some of the finest results of religion may seem beyond the reach of many believers, but peace appears to be the invariable effect of cordial self-commitment to God. Professor Robertson Smith, the eminent Semitic scholar and editor of the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* once threw aside his usual reticence and wrote to a younger brother dying of tuberculosis a tender letter, in the course of which he said:

"You have had a sore share of trials, and yet perhaps one easier to bear than a long life of prosperity and worldly cares which make it very hard to keep near to God. At all events we know that He who orders all things wisely has dealt with you and with us all according to His will, which is the same as His purpose of love; and He will not forsake you, even in the valley of the shadow of death, if you lean on Him. Do not look inwards and vex yourself with self-questionings about faith and assurance and such like things. God gives a joyous assurance to some of His servants, but He gives peace to all who simply throw themselves on Him, humbly accepting His will, looking to Him as children to a father, and beseeching Him to be with them and carry all their burdens."

The Britain of 1887, when that letter was penned, contained few more acute or original minds, but in these simple sentences, with shadows about his loved ones and himself, this Christian scholar stated the religious commonplace that whole-hearted trust brings quietness.

But the Hudson River flows out into the Atlantic. Stand near its source on the slope of Mt. Marcy and one sees moisture in the moss forming a tiny trickle and beginning to feel its way down to the distant ocean: the river is born a venturer. Geographers call attention to the nearly straight course of the Hudson from Fort Edward to the sea, despite the fact that at some points, particularly in the Highlands, the river pursues a way out of harmony with the structure of the country through which it passes. It flows at a considerable angle across the Taconic folds of rock above the Highlands, and when it reaches these mountains it passes through a deep gorge which it has cut athwart the hard granites and other stone of which this section is formed. What is more enterprising than water, ceaselessly finding or forcing a path through soil and rock, around obstacles, gradually wearing a channel, until it reaches the sea? So rivers have always lured those who dwelt near them to attempt the great deep. The only stream in Palestine, the Jordan, empties into the Dead Sea, and one need not look in the Bible for metaphors which link a river with daring. The Hebrews, just because no streams or arms of the sea broke their coastline, were never tempted out on the Mediterranean, and unlike Egyptians and Greeks and Phœnicians they never became seafarers. But their religion is represented by a long roster of venturesome spirits—Abraham setting out from Ur of the Chaldees on a lonely quest for a better country; Moses leading an Exodus of slaves out of Egypt to found a holy nation; Elijah facing single-handed king and queen, priests and people, who worshiped inferior gods, and recalling them to the just and jealous Jehovah; John the Baptist aflame for the kingdom of God and driving the people to its more exacting conscience; Jesus with no place to lay His head in the convictions and ideals of those about Him, and bidding them follow Him as the Way to life; Paul taking the faith of Jesus out of its confining limits as the religion of a handful of Jews and carrying it, an adapted and appealing message, throughout the Roman world—such are they in whose experiences flows the stream of the outgoing and outbearing Spirit of God. The very essence of their conception of Deity had in it this indefinite advance into an unbounded future. Our version makes God disclose Himself to Moses under the mysterious title: "I am that I am," which suggests a static Deity. But scholars seem agreed that the better translation of the Hebrew verbs reads them as futures: "I will be that I will be." Moses and his contemporaries are represented as led forth by One who will disclose Himself to them more and more with each experience which they share with Him. He cannot tell them what He is; He can only bid them trust themselves to Him, and discover what He will be. The language suggests a mutual venture upon which God and His people stake themselves, and in which they find out what they can mean to each other.

The God of Christian faith has not often been pictured as a Venturer. His sufficiency in wisdom and power has been portrayed by a Figure in majestic repose. He speaks, and it is done; He thinks, and the entire course of events from start to finish is thought out. Theologians have stressed His foreknowledge. He sees the end from the beginning and all the intervening steps; He prearranges whatsoever comes to pass; He causes all things to work together in unerring accord to accomplish His purpose.

That is not the conception of the Creator of our world to which present scientific thinking points. He seems One who makes many trial-starts: He has undertaken numerous species of plants and creatures which have not survived changing conditions on the surface of the earth, and remain only in fossils. He seems one who equips organisms with elastic powers of adaptation, and lets them make themselves, and go on perfecting themselves: —a Mesozoic reptile has capacities for developing its scales into feathers or fur, and of becoming the progenitor of birds or of beasts, or its kind disappears from among the living; a prehistoric man has capacities for becoming an artist, a scientist, a man of conscience and faith, and he makes use of these capacities or he remains akin to the brutes and is exterminated by the advancing types of the human race; historic man for ages and to-day has capacities of growing a social conscience, commensurate with the material forces at his command, and of developing a finer spiritual nature by fellowship with the Invisible, or he will be wiped out by the weapons and gases which his own inventiveness has furnished him, and his spirit will be crushed out of him under the pressure of the things with which he surrounds and overlays it. The only idea of God which can be fitted into our present outlook upon the universe is that of One who is all the time risking ventures.

That conception of Him, while it may not agree with some proof-texts on which theologians of the past have based their doctrine, is certainly more in accord with the general thought of God in the Bible than was theirs. Their conception was rather Greek than Hebrew. Æschylus writes: "Secure it falls, not prostrate on its back, whate'er is decreed to fulfillment by the nod of Zeus. . . . God knows not toil: seated above upon His holy throne He worketh His will from thence by ways unknown." But the prophets of Israel do not hesitate to picture Jehovah as taken by surprise; they hear Him saying of some iniquity of His people: "Neither came it into My mind." They represent Him as winning a reputation, getting to Himself "a name." And Jesus contended for a view of Him as a living Contemporary—a Father who "worketh even until now." One who was baffled and had to try again: "How often would I have gathered Thy children together, and ye would not"; One who took risks and was sometimes disappointed: "He had yet One, a beloved Son: He sent Him last unto them, saying: They will reverence My Son. But those husbandmen said, Let us kill Him."

To be sure the Deity suggested by our study of the universe is One who cannot be permanently thwarted. How amazingly resourceful nature is! How promptly the unfit are replaced by the more fit! How life seems to crowd upon the stage, eagerly awaiting a chance! What powers of repair nature posseses, so that one season's damages the next begins to make good! What an undefeated impression she leaves upon us with her reserves constantly arriving upon the scene! When one studies any detail of the complex web of existence there is a fineness of adjustment which it is hard to fancy as unplanned. Mr. Huxley, describing ovarian evolution as seen through a microscope, comments: "After watching the process hour by hour one is almost involuntarily pursued by the notion that some more subtle aid to the vision than the microscope would show the hidden artist, with his plan before him, striving with skillful manipulation to perfect his work." Charles Darwin, towards the close of his life, said in a letter: "If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance—that is, without design or purpose." And the God of Christian faith is both One who plans and is adequate for any emergency which may arise in the execution of His design. He uses disasters as disciplines for triumphs; He discards a nation which is blind in the day of her visitation, and carries out His purpose through a cosmopolitan group of every kindred and tongue; He makes the cross, reared by the sins of men, the means of His most far-reaching victory. But the point is that He forever confronts emergencies. Walt Whitman made the acute observation: "It is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary." That appears to be as true for God as for His children. He must continually hazard Himself in Self-giving love, pouring forth His fullness in life in His creatures, and in thought and conscience and sacrifice in the sons and daughters of men.

Fellowship with such a God must be an adventure. The Son who fully shared His mind and heart impressed His first followers, and impresses every succeeding generation of those who try to accord with His Spirit, as an innovator. New Testament writers speak of Him as "the Pioneer of life," "the Explorer of faith." Was there ever adventure comparable to Calvary? Jesus staked everything upon the hazard of His sacrificial death. He deliberately courted it, when He went up from Galilee to the capital. Throughout His career He so far outdistanced others in His trust, His hope, His love, that twenty centuries of religious and moral advance have not brought the leaders of mankind abreast of Him. One of His interpreters in the Second Century wrote: "Our limit is the cross of Christ," and each successive century which sets the spirit of that cross as its goal finds itself embarked on a quest which carries its pursuers out beyond all known boundaries. The early Hebrew designation for God appears to fit the Deity who speaks to us through the cosmic processes as we understand them and through our ethical ideals: "I will be that I will be."

In its essence faith, like water, is a venturer. How mysterious is the outreach of a man's trust beyond the *terra firma* of things tangible and visible to rest on and be borne forth by the unseen God! What an exploration when the mind relates the happenings of life's common day with the will of the Most Highest! What a far country the heart visits when in loving memory it follows the dear dead off into the presence of a most near Father, Lord of earth and heaven! "It is an enterprise of noble daring," wrote Clement of Alexandria, "to take our way to God." And the modern Scandinavian thinker, Kierkegaard, calls the Christian faith a desperate sortie. We have to fare out beyond the shore-line of common-sense, of the accepted maxims of prudence, of the standards which men of this world commend as the frontiers of wisdom, and cast ourselves upon One whose appeal is to our sense of what-ought-to-be, but never yet has been. "Faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." It is the deep in man, a deep which may appear as shallow and tiny as the drop of moisture glistening in the moss on the mountain-side, moving towards the great deep in the universe—the heart and conscience of God. In faith the affections and thoughts gather themselves, like the trickles on the hill-slope, and make their venturesome start for the mighty ocean.

Believers stress the deliverance from conventionality which religion confers. They feel themselves swept out by the current of the stream to what William Vaughan Moody calls "the spirit reaches of the strenuous vast," as the Hudson bears a ship out into the Atlantic. Men who come close to God know their minds unfolding for fresh views and their natures opening for new departures. It is so all down the Christian ages. The seer on Patmos hears Him who sitteth upon the throne declaring: "Behold, I make all things new"; and he is ready for a very different city to come down out of heaven and take the place of the Ephesus and the Rome with which he is all too familiar. Tertullian, the Carthaginian lawyer, a century later, writes: "Christ, our Master, calls Himself Truth, not Convention"; and insists in His name upon far finer standards of purity than the respectable of his day deemed necessary. John Hus pens a letter from his prison at Constance, in which he says: "We ought not to follow custom, but Christ's example and truth"; and he becomes the harbinger of a reformation in the life and thinking of Christendom. In no generation, past or present, will you discover men alive unto God who do not break with the current opinions and usages and move forward towards a vaster ideal. In the inscription upon the cenotaph, in St. Paul's Cathedral, of John Howard, whose evangelical faith was his incentive and support in his fearless investigation of prisons and hospitals in Britain and on the Continent of Europe, is the sentence: "He followed an open but unfrequented pathway to immortality." Pasteur, whose biography reveals a religious devotion, when people remonstrated with him upon the risks of infection which he took in pursuing his researches, replied: "What does it matter? Life in the midst of dangers is *the* life, the real life, the life of sacrifice, of example, of fruitfulness." In fellowship with God men are borne afar from the boundaries of the usual. The seer on Patmos voiced the experience of many fellow-believers in the phrase: "I was *carried away* in the Spirit."

Genuine touch with the living God always comes as an awakening which makes its possessors feel themselves loosed and launched on a larger enterprise. A minor singer has put this experience in autobiographic verse:

I was quick in the flesh, was warm, and the live heart shook my breast;
 In the market I bought and sold, in the temple I bowed my head.
I had swathed me in shows and forms, and was honored above the rest,
 For the sake of the life I lived; nor did any esteem me dead.

But at last, when the hour was ripe—was it sudden-remembered word?
 Was it sight of a bird that mounted, or sound of a strain that stole?—
I was 'ware of a spell that snapped, of an inward strength that stirred,
 Of a Presence that filled that place; and it shone, and I knew my soul.

And the dream I had called my life was a garment about my feet,
 For the web of the years was rent with the throe of a yearning strong,

With a sweep as of winds in heaven, with a rush as of flames that meet,
The Flesh and the Spirit clasped; and I cried, "Was I dead so long?"

I had glimpse of the Secret, flashed through the symbols obscure and mean,
And I felt as a fire what erst I repeated with lips of clay;
And I knew for the things eternal the things eye hath not seen;
Yea, the heavens and the earth shall pass, but they never shall pass away.

Such spirits throw off all that holds them fast, as the ropes which secure a ship are pulled aboard or flung to the wharf as she sets out on her voyage. The cords of the proprieties, the many-stranded ropes of custom, the hawsers of tradition, the wire-cables of habit, no longer tie up the man who has been caught by the flood of a religious experience. William James in his study of saintliness concludes: "That whole raft of cowardly obstructions, which in tame persons and dull moods are sovereign impediments to action, sinks away at once. Our conventionality, our shyness, laziness and stinginess, our demands for precedent and permission, for guarantee and surety, our small suspicions, timidities, despairs, where are they now? Severed like cobwebs, broken like bubbles in the sun. The flood we are borne on rolls them so lightly under that their very contact is unfelt." There is the river of faith sweeping a man out in fellowship with the creative God towards His own boundless life. His far-reaching purposes, His infinite ideals, like a vast ocean, are before us luring us away to the divine adventure. Necessity is said to be the mother of invention; religion is the mother of creation. Necessity sharpens the wits; religion releases heart and mind and conscience, and sends the whole man forth "to unpath'd waters, undream'd shores."

A river flowing out into the sea—is it not a suggestive symbol of the life with God?

Take the course of man's three score years and ten, more or less, and blot out the Christian hope of life beyond, his mortal days become a small pond, and all their activities trifling affairs, not the momentous business of a navigable stream which opens to the mighty ocean. How impoverished death appears when it ceases to be a passage through which we take our way on a thrilling quest, with our creative skill and impulse broad awake and expectant! A proposed epitaph for a Christian poetess closes with the lines:

> Then the sails of faith she spread,
> And faring out for regions unexplored,
> Went singing down the River of the Dead.

A creative God, who for long æons has been evolving earth, again and again essaying yet better things, surely promises no stagnant existence to those who bear Him company in the fulfillment yonder of the beginnings here. There need be no fear of a static perfection which would pall upon us with its lack of incentive to enterprise. We dread no "torment of all-things-compassed, the plague of naught-to-desire." We shall still see goals shining before us, inviting and promising and divinely provocative. We do not place over the entrance of heaven the inscription Dante saw over the portals of hell: "All hope abandon ye who enter here." Goethe, protesting against just such an inference in the popular conception of the life after death, said: "I could begin nothing with an eternal happiness before me, unless new tasks and new difficulties were given me to overcome." But in St. Paul's outlook hope abides as certainly as faith and love. Emerson put it: "In God, every end is converted into a new means." We look forward to no home without a horizon, but to expectant companionship with One who remains there as here "the God of hope."

The tides of the Atlantic send the salt water of the ocean many miles up the Hudson to mingle with the fresh stream which pours down from far inland. Men who live in Christian faith taste in this life the powers of the age to come. And many miles further up the river than the salt of the sea is perceptible the flow of the Hudson is affected by the rise and fall of the ocean's tide. So believers are aware of the power of an endless life. Indeed there is no sharp separation between the Atlantic and the Hudson; and those in whom is the Spirit of Christ feel themselves already in possession of life eternal.

Take the immediate prospect before our generation. Men and women of Christian heart, whether or not their heads are convinced of the feasibility of the Christian program, look wistfully for advances in racial comradeship, in international friendliness, and in commercial and industrial brotherhood. We talk glibly of democracy —of government of the people, for the people, by the people, extended to include every race and nation, and bring all into a commonwealth of friendly peoples, and applied to industrial organizations to embrace all who participate in business enterprises into a partnership of responsibility, labor and reward. What a huge demand democracy makes upon faith—faith in the capacities of ordinary, and sometimes much less than ordinary, men and women; faith in the self-evidencing power of truth and right to convince their reasons and command their consciences, even when reason and conscience are only rudimentary; faith in the fabric of the universe, seemingly so indifferent to man's aspirations, as responsive to brotherhood. There is no short-cut to success in this democratic experiment, any more than there seems to have been a short-cut to the creation of the physical and moral world in which you and I live. There are likely to be many trial-starts in the forms of fraternal political and business organization, as there have been many discarded, because improved-on, forms in the structures of plants and animals in the course of the long evolution of our planet. There are not a few among us without confidence in the practicability of this attempted fraternity; and unbelief fills them with fears and drives them to compromises and makeshifts out of line with the endeavor altogether. Faith is assurance of things hoped for, and where there is no wish for the advent of such a day, there is no likelihood of faith in its coming. Prepossession is always nine-tenths of belief. But where the heart hopes for it, what a difference when the head consents, because the whole man is convinced of the living God, the Father of Jesus Christ, who Himself is the great Venturer. He stakes everything upon the capacities of His children, least, last and lowest: He offers His fullness in Christ to every human being. He hazards His entire enterprise upon the inherent might of truth and justice to win and hold His children's allegiance. If these fail, He has no other resources. His love shown to the uttermost in the cross is His wisdom and His power. He risks His cause in a world where physical conditions apparently are only in process as yet of attaining His mind for them, and He trusts that sons of His will master the groaning creation, and shape it with Him to be a congenial home for love. Whole-hearted belief in brotherhood, the assurance of the feasibility of this hoped-for consummation, is born in those who are comrades of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. Such believingly venturesome spirits will constantly put out towards it, as the Hudson moves towards the broad Atlantic.

Take the subjugation of nature to human purposes—the conquest and utilization of matter by the Spirit of God in man. The Bible, from its first scene in the Garden of Eden, where man is bid subdue the earth and have dominion over every living thing, down to the Christ of the Gospels exercising a lordly command over wind and wave, and mastering disease and want for man's strength and nourishment, presents nature as a sphere to be invaded. By faith we not only "understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God," but that they can be laid hold on by man and remade to fulfill his desires. This faith is the underlying assumption of our science, our agriculture, our engineering. One looks in a museum at the history of the evolution of the horse, from the small four-toed creature about the size of a terrier in the Eocene

Period to the hoofed wild horse of the Pleistocene; and then places beside that history of many hundred-thousand years the varied breeds of domestic horses, heavier and lighter, swifter and stronger, for all sorts of work and play, which man in a few thousand years has developed from the primitive stock. Nature is marvelously responsive to human wishes and adaptable to human needs. Deserts yield to irrigation and become gardens and orchards; pestilential regions are turned into healthful dwelling-places; plants are transformed by cultivation and made to bear immeasurably fairer blossoms and richer fruit; the forces of wind and water and steam and electricity, and now of radio-activity, are made to do man's bidding. Scientists, like Professor Soddy, tell us that we are in sight of a vast new realm of achievement when we learn to release the incalculable energy stored in the radio-active materials present in our earth. But they are frank to say that they trust that the discovery will not be made until man has evolved in fraternity; for a pound weight of such substance will not only do the work of 150 tons of coal, but is capable of doing the damage of 150 tons of dynamite. It is to be hoped that no more truth will spring out of the earth save as additional righteousness looketh down from heaven, that there will be no scientific advances without commensurate and even greater gains in character. But what a prospect of the joint partnership of man and God in marching forth on a conquest of the physical universe and making it throughout the servant of love! How inspiring to view its forces, still so largely beyond man's control and often bringing him suffering and hardship and disaster, as waiting his coming as son of God to bring in the sway of the spiritual, and of God Himself as waiting for us to be His comrades in this creative completion of earth to minister to righteousness!

Or take the personal ideal before every individual—the realization of his complete self. Our world urgently needs bigger and better men and women, creative spirits in art, in music, in literature, in science, in our educational system, our politics, our commercial undertakings, our church organizations. The earnest expectation of our age, where the whole social order groaneth together in pain, waiteth for the revealing of creative sons and daughters of the creative God. The very word "God" stands to us for that venturesome constructive Impulse behind and in the universe, manifest as Life, as Thought, as Conscience, as Love, manifest supremely in that recreating Person, Jesus of Nazareth, who has done more to alter the whole face of our world of men than any other single factor, and who acts recreatively every time He is brought in contact with an individual or with a nation. Religion, vital union with the God of Jesus Christ, sets free the creative forces within ourselves and brings to us added forces from His own abounding vitality.

And in connection with self-development our picture of the Hudson emptying itself into the Atlantic is not without special appropriateness. We wish to attain complete selves; and Jesus insists that he who would save his life shall lose it, while he who loses his life for the sake of the cause finds it. God, as Jesus revealed Him, is always losing Himself, hazarding Himself in ventures of love, outpouring His thought and heart and energy for the enrichment of His creatures and His children, and finding His life in them, as the Atlantic sends its tides up the Hudson twice every twenty-four hours. And reciprocally, faith, genuine Christian faith, opens up before us, now and forever, an outlet for the soul into the unbounded purposes of our Father God, as the Hudson continually empties its waters into the sea. Religion's inspiration is always to adventure.

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me;
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
O farther, farther sail!
O daring joy, but safe; are they not all the seas of God?

CHAPTER VIII

BEAUTY

THE Hudson River adds incalculably to the beauty of the whole valley through which it flows. When a New Yorker wishes to give a visitor to his city an impression of its fine situation, he takes him to the Riverside Drive, where the broad band of blue water glints in the sunlight or provides a silver path for the moon; and conducts him to one of the tall buildings downtown from which he can have sight of the Hudson emptying through the bay into the distant Atlantic. The Palisades, and, farther up, the Highlands about West Point, would be robbed of more than half their charm were the river-bed a mere plain, instead of the stream of gliding water.

The men of the Bible live in a world made beautiful for them, because through nature with its hills and valleys and living things, and through history with its chequered events, they see the controlling presence of the wise, mighty, righteous and tender God. "The earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord." Devout patriots saw Him as "a diadem of beauty" to His people. Life in fellowship with Him was a lovely thing: "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us." In a saddening or terrifying experience, possibly in the face of death—some dark and desolate night—a psalmist declares: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with the sight of Thy Form." Worshipers came up to the Temple "to behold the beauty of the Lord." Impatient of the adornments with which the devout of his day sought to make their adoration pleasing, Amos insisted that the grandest sight for God and men was the flow of life ordered after the divine will: "Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a flooding stream." Paul looks forth on the course God takes through the ages in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose, and an exclamation breaks from his lips, as an "Oh" instinctively forms on our tongues when a sublime prospect suddenly opens before us: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out!" And Jesus with a keen eye for loveliness has a scale of ascending appreciations. He prizes lilies of the field, birds of the air and all creatures, then mounts to human beings: "How much is a man of more value than a sheep"; and finally climbs from man at his best in fatherly affection to the Most Highest: "How much more shall your heavenly Father!" The world for Jesus is radiant because His God is Lord of earth and heaven.

There is a debate whether beauty exists in things themselves or only in us who perceive them. A British scientist, Professor Thomson of Aberdeen, has recently contended for the fact of beauty as part of the constitution of nature, and says that "in the age-long struggle for existence the unharmonious, the 'impossible,' have been always weeded out before they took firm root and multiplied. The monster is a contradiction in terms. Meredith put it all in a nutshell when he said 'Ugly is only half way to a thing.' Nature pronounces her verdict on ugliness by eliminating it." But capacities for seeing and enjoying the beautiful are required. Stevenson wrote: "After we have reckoned up all that we can see or hear or feel, there still remains to be taken into account some sensibility more delicate than usual in the nerves affected, or some exquisite refinement in the architecture of the brain, which is indeed to the sense of the beautiful as the eye or the ear to the sense of hearing or sight." These eyes and ears of the spirit are developable organs. When we look forth upon the pageant of the universe the eyes of the heart report loveliness there, but they also see hideous blemishes, the sickening spectacle of pain, the loathesome presence of mean and cruel and sordid evil. The outlook differs largely according to the capacity or incapacity of the eyes to see the prospect centering in a spiritual purpose. Blot God out of the landscape, cease viewing the course of events as ordered by a wise and kindly thought, regard men as lonely orphans whose desires are unconsidered by an iron universe, give up looking at pain and death as elements in their education for an ampler life and evil as an intrusive alien from whose sway they are being redeemed, and is it not like removing the Hudson, and leaving in its place a swamp or an arid flat?

So it has seemed to those who have felt obliged to part with Christian faith. The French philosopher, Jouffroy, has described how one December night he faced his long developing doubts and concluded that honesty compelled him to admit that he was no longer a believer: "This moment was a frightful one; and when towards morning

I threw myself exhausted on my bed, I seemed to feel an earlier life, so smiling and so full, go out like a fire, and before me another life opened, somber and unpeopled, where in future I must live alone, alone with my fatal thought which had exiled me thither, and which I was tempted to curse. The days which followed this discovery were the saddest of my life." Romanes, Darwin's brilliant pupil, found the evolutionary explanation of life banishing God for him, and owned: "The universe has lost for me its soul of loveliness." Lafcadio Hearn, teaching in a Japanese University where he found his students without religion, says in a letter: "You can't imagine how many compositions I get containing such words as —'Is there a God? I don't know'—which, strange as it may seem to you, doesn't rejoice me at all. I am agnostic, atheist, anything theologians like to call me; but what a loss to the young mind of eighteen or twenty years must be the absence of all that sense of reverence and tenderness which the mystery of the infinite gives. Religion has been very much to me, and I am still profoundly religious in a vague way. It will be a very ugly world when the religious sense is dead in all children." James Thomson entitles his sincere attempt to portray the world as it appeared to his godless view, "The City of Dreadful Night"; and thinking of an earlier fellow-poet, William Blake, to whom hideous and heartless London had accorded the same unwelcoming treatment it had given him, but whose London had contained a Divine presence, he pens lines which have a pathos when we recall their writer's unbelief:

He came to the desert of London town,
  Gray miles long;
He wandered up and he wandered down,
  Singing a quiet song.

He came to the desert of London town,
  Mirk miles broad;
He wandered up and he wandered down,
  Ever alone with God.

Thomson's memory of his own believing days reminded him how to Blake's eyes the drab and dingy streets would wear a glory they did not now show to him.

And believers themselves have time and again spoken of the beauty with which Christian faith has covered for them the appearance of all things. Jonathan Edwards (the memory of whose sensitive soul has been obliterated by the recollection of one or two grim details in a theology which he shared with most of his contemporaries) describes his unfolding religious life: "My sense of divine things gradually increased, and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of everything was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost everything. God's excellency, His wisdom, His purity and love, seemed to appear in everything; in the sun, moon and stars; in the clouds and blue sky; in the grass, flowers and trees; in the water and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. And scarce anything among all the works of nature was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly nothing had been so terrible to me." Henry Ward Beecher tells how the realization of God's providence transfigured earth and sky for him: "In an instant there rose up in me such a sense of God's taking care of those who put their trust in Him that for an hour all the world was crystalline, the heavens were lucid." In the biography of a young professor of economics in a far-western university, who died a few years ago, there is a letter addressed to him by a well-known architect and artist in San Francisco, appealing to him not to impoverish his life by banishing the beauty of religion: "From the first," writes this correspondent, "the word 'God,' spoken in the comfortable (almost smug) atmosphere of the old Unitarian congregation, took my breath and tranced me into a vision of a great flood of vibrating light, and *only* light. . . . You are building yourself into a vault in which no flowers can bloom, because you have sealed the high window of the imagination so that the frightening God may not look in upon you—this same window through which simple men get an illumination that saves their lives, and in the light of which they communicate kindly, one with the other, their faith and hopes. . . . You need beauty—you need all the escapes—all the doors wide open—and this seemingly impertinent letter is merely the appeal of one human creature to another, for the sake of all the human creatures whom you have it in your power to endow with chains or with wings." To such believers

> Heaven above is softer blue,
> Earth around is sweeter green,
> Something lives in every hue
> Christless eyes have never seen.

There have always been devotees of the religion of loveliness for whom beauty was the clearest disclosure of God. One thinks of the Greeks in antiquity who revered truth and goodness as divine, but who felt that these must be seen as lovely in order to be adored. So they reared temples in charming sites which were white delights of symmetrical marble, celebrated sacred festivals with dramas of unsurpassed moving power, and carved statues of gods of incomparable grace and dignity. Lucian writes of the majestically benign figure of Zeus at Olympia: "Those who approach the temple do not conceive that they see ivory from the Indies or gold from the mines of Thrace; no, but the very son of Kronos and Rhea, transported by Phidias to earth and set to watch over the lonely plain of Pisa." Dion Chrysostom says of this same figure: "He was the type of that unattainable ideal—Hellas come to unity with herself; in expression at once mild and awful, as befits the giver of life and all good gifts, the common father, savior and guardian of men; dignified as a king, tender as a father, awful as giver of laws, kind as protector of suppliants and friends, simple and great as bestower of increase and wealth; revealing, in a word, in form and countenance, the whole array of gifts and qualities proper to his supreme divinity." And there is a note of personal confession when he records the religious impression this statue makes: "He who is heavy-laden in soul, who has experienced many misfortunes and sorrows in his life, and from whom sweet sleep has fled, even he, I think, if he stood before this image, would forget all the calamities and troubles that befall in human life."

And while Greece and her worship of the Divine through beauty belong to the past, we still find a present-day analogy in many of the temples of Japan; the Chion-in at Kyoto or the Daíbutsu at Kamakura may easily be compared with the most notable shrines of Hellas. Japanese temples, set in lovely nooks, their grounds shaded with tall, dark, fragrant cedars (who can be unaffected by the cryptomerias of Nara or Nikko?), cooled with running brooks or lily pools, quiet save for the occasional booming of a deep-toned bell or the cooing of pigeons, with exquisite bits of lawn and patches of color in flowers and shrubs, and with the immobile face of a colossal Amida Buddha concealed among the softening shadows of a high-roofed shrine, appeal to the most undevout with a suggestive charm.

And in nominal Christendom throughout the centuries there have often been believers whose religion was devotion to beauty. One thinks of the period of the Renaissance in particular, and of those in our day, like Matthew Arnold and Walter Pater, who have stood for the Hellenic view of life. Bernard Shaw makes the indigent artist in *The Doctor's Dilemma* gasp with his dying breath: "I believe in Michael Angelo, Velasquez and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by beauty everlasting, and the message of art that has made these hands blessed. Amen, Amen." It has been an insufficient faith whose adherents may remain selfish, aloof from the wrongs and pains of the mass of men, untouched by humility, unmoved to sympathy with any who lack taste, and sometimes fouled by gross self-indulgences. But it has been a real religion with soothing, uplifting, stimulating inspirations. Goethe is its most outstanding modern devotee, and his latest English biographer concludes a two-volume survey of his career: "So it was with him to the end—unceasing endeavor, ever-widening views, constant renewal of the springs of life." A talented young architect who had undergone a harrowing grief recently published a sonnet in *The Yale Review,* in which he makes Beauty say:

He that keeps faith with me will surely find
 My substance in the shadows on the deep.
 My spirit in the courage that men keep
Though all the stars burn out and Heaven goes blind
 When sorrow smites thee, look! my joy is near,
 Flashing like sunlight on a falling tear.

Those who through sublime or pleasant sights and sounds and thoughts, hold communion with "that Beauty which penetrates and clasps and fills the world" have no contemptible fellowship with the Lord of heaven and earth.

But from the Christian standpoint it is a fractional religion. God is to be found not primarily in beauty, but in self-spending devotion. He is not loveliness; He is love. One of the greatest figures of the Renaissance, Michael Angelo, has put his confession of the inadequacy of the worship of beauty in a sonnet penned in old age:

Now hath my life across a stormy sea
 Like a frail bark reached that wide port where all
 Are bidden ere the final reckoning fall
Of good and evil for eternity.
Now know I well how that fond phantasy,

> Which made my soul the worshiper and thrall
> Of earthly art is vain. . . .
> Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest
> My soul, that turns to His great love on high,
> Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread.

Christians begin with the beauty of holiness, with God as Christlike. A religious service which satisfies the æsthetic nature without committing the conscience to the exacting demands of Jesus, without enlightening the intelligence with His mind and kindling the heart with His passion, does not supply Christian inspirations. An outlook upon life which sees a kindly Deity ("le bon Dieu") smiling upon His foolish and frivolous children, and not over-hard upon them when they prove fiendish to one another, is at a far remove from the New Testament whose God is a consuming fire. A righteous Father creating a new heaven and a new earth after His heart for His children, whose love costs Him untold suffering as He gives Himself in Jesus and in His followers to redeem a world for which He is responsible, and whose true sons and daughters share His conscientiousness and do not spare themselves in bringing to pass His purpose—that is the God of Christian conviction.

And this conception of the Jesuslike God is far lovelier than any other, and suffuses with wondrous beauty the world in which He is seen at work, and in which men work with Him in His creative plan. Greek Christians found Jesus fairer than the most charming deities they had known. Clement of Alexandria speaks of Jesus as "our new Orpheus," and dwells on the resistless music of His words and life. Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea says:

"He attracts all to Himself by His unutterable beauty." Augustine, whose mind was steeped in Plato, fills his *Confessions* with adjectives, for which we find difficulty in discovering English equivalents, to describe the attraction which God seen in Christ has for him. As he reviews his past before he came to whole-hearted faith, it is its ugliness that impresses him: "Too late came I to love Thee, O Thou loveliness, both so ancient and so fresh, yea, too late came I to love Thee." And all down the Christian ages believers feel, and seek to make others feel, the beauty of life with God as Jesus embodies it. One finds it in Latin Christianity with its hymn to "Jesu dulcis memoria," and in the German address to "Schönster Herr Jesu," while an English dissenter sings:

> Fairer is he than all the fair
> That fill the heavenly train.

The Quaker, William Penn, concludes his preface to George Fox's *Journal* with an appeal to the reader, in which he subscribes himself as "one . . . to whom the way of Truth is more lovely and precious than ever, and who knowing the beauty and benefit of it above all worldly treasure, has chosen it for his chiefest joy; and therefore recommends it to thy love and choice, because he is with great sincerity and affection thy soul's friend, William Penn." And the Puritan Jonathan Edwards, whose æsthetic nature we have already observed, discovers the main appeal of the Gospel to be "this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that bows the will and draws the hearts of men."

Beauty is primarily to be enjoyed, but many among us do almost everything with their religion except enjoy it. Their thought of God is a spur to neglected duty. It is a light illumining an obligation to be shouldered. It is a reinforcement in a difficult and draining enterprise. It is a prop to uphold a man under a crushing load. It is a challenge summoning forth on the high seas to do business in great waters. But it is rarely an enhancement of life, rendering lovely the outlook upon circumstances, the world's ongoings, upon present experiences and remotest prospects. Christians are aware that it does this for them, but they hesitate to indulge themselves in delighting in the view. They feel uncomfortable when they admit to themselves the solid satisfaction of religion. They grant that the Westminster divines were not lacking in keen conscience, but they are chary of approving their statement that "man's chief end is to glorify God *and enjoy Him forever.*" They are haunted with the fear that it is selfish to enjoy God. And it would be, were their enjoyment a selfish enjoyment. But it is impossible to enjoy the God and Father of Jesus Christ selfishly. When men come close enough to Him to appreciate Him, to be held by Him as companions, to what hazardous and exacting adventures for their brethren He takes them. Life with Him, who declares "I will be that I will be" is a river carrying them out to the unbounded ocean. And their usefulness as religious forces depends upon their pleasure in the life with God. Enthusiasts are the only proselytizers. Appreciation—appreciation of nature, of poetry, of music, of anything whatsoever—appreciation of religion is caught from and increased by contact with the appreciative. "Worship" is an Anglo-Saxon compound from "worth-ship"—"to give value to." Our delight in God is the measure of His value to us. In any situation to worship Him is both to use the benefit which He confers—refreshment, or cleansing, or power, or guidance—and to think of the satisfaction to be had in Him. When we drink from the tiny Hudson starting forth on Mt. Marcy, we not only find our thirst slaked with the cold water, but our souls feasted with the beauty of the brook. When we sail on the lower reaches of the river, we are not only upborne by the buoyancy of the stream, but we are also enriched with exquisite views—Palisades rising in brown cliffs topped with green, one of the Highlands looming in grandeur with the blue water winding about its base, and all along the sloping sides of the valley—in spring with blossoming orchards and dark, new-plowed fields, in midsummer with a dozen shades and tints of cool green, in October with flaming crimsons and gold, and as we steam at night with towns and isolated houses agleam with lights. When we trust ourselves to God, we are enriched not only with the answer of our urgent need for upholding or stimulus or peace, but also with the beauty of life with Him, who makes all things—the opposition of the belated good, the indifference of the many, the devilishness of the few, the ghastly cross, the imprisoning grave—work together for good unto them that love. That is the harmony and rhythm brought to life by religion. When we "survey" the cross, it appears "wondrous": "love so amazing" fascinates our whole nature—soul, life, all.

The presentation of the Christian religion as inherently beautiful, and as vastly enhancing life with its loveliness, deserves far more attention than it commonly receives. Few of the faiths which Christianity is seeking to supplant, or rather to consummate, by bringing their adherents under the sway of Jesus, have not trained their devotees to some extent to experience the Divine through Beauty. The saying is attributed to Mahomet: "If a man have two loaves of bread, let him exchange one for some flowers of the narcissus: for bread nourishes only the body, but to look on the narcissus feeds the soul." Even in the intense economic pressure of China and of India, their people have not lost the eye for the lovely, and associate it with devout aspiration. While we have no interest in cultivating the æsthetic taste apart from a sensitized conscience, we dare not overlook any capacity for appreciation to which Christ can be rendered appealing. The great New Testament word "grace" never wholly lost its earlier æsthetic connotation. "The grace of God" is a phrase which presents His love as doing something marvelously lovely.

On many missionary fields much remains to be done in enabling the Church to present the Scriptures in a literary form comparable in majesty and winsomeness, to the German and English versions of the Bible; to supply the people with hymns as finely lyrical as their best non-Christian songs; to furnish her congregations with houses of worship which appeal to the æsthetic sensibilities of the community; and to enlarge the scope of her work to reach the artistically susceptible, as well as seekers after truth and men of dissatisfied conscience—in short, to proclaim "the grace of God."

And within Christendom it is often possible to approach those whose minds find intellectual difficulties in the Christian message with the appeal of its enhancement of life. George Romanes, whom we have already quoted, after he had passed through his eclipse of faith, in speaking of Jesus to a group of working-men, said: "Whatever answers different persons may give to the questions, 'What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?' every one must agree that 'His name shall be called Wonderful.'" There is a haunting charm about Him which captivates even those whose minds find trouble in fitting Him into their view of the universe, or of readjusting their view of the universe to accord with their impressions of Him.

And at the moment when the mood of many is the jaded and cynical temper of the disillusioned, there is special point in stressing the loveliness of the Christian outlook. The kingdom of heaven is opened to the childlike, and the awakening of the sense of beauty is a chief road to regaining the heart of a little child. Francis Thompson, in one of the most exquisitely penned essays in our tongue, presented the religious worth of the poetry of Shelley to ecclestiastics, who thought ill of this poet because of his break with the traditional creed and morality, and warned them that in his eye for loveliness he possessed conspicuously that childlike spirit which Jesus so stressed: "Know you what it is to be a child? It is to be something very different from the man of to-day. . . . It is to believe in love, to believe in loveliness, to believe in belief; it is to be so little that the elves can reach to whisper in your ear; it is to turn pumpkins into coaches, and mice into horses, lowness into loftiness, and nothing into everything, for each child has its fairy godmother in its own soul; it is to live in a nutshell and to count yourself the king of infinite space; it is

To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour;

it is to know that you are under sentence of life, nor petition that it be commuted into death." In the reaction which has so widely followed the idealism of the War, to train men's minds afresh to prize things lovely and to baptize their spirits into wonder is a preparation for a rebirth of faith. "Wondering he shall come to the kingdom."

Nor can we forget the holding power of beauty. Many who have lost confidence in the truth of the Bible, and have come to view its ideals as obsolete, continue to read its pages for their sheer fascination. When the Scriptures are barred from the curriculum of schools and colleges because of religious prejudice, it would be a vast gain could they be brought back simply as great literature—which they indisputably are. Their stately sentences and musical cadences, their apt metaphors and pithy sayings, their vivid characterizations of several hundred interesting figures, captivate the fancy. Through the charm of the literature men are drawn into its view of life suffused with the beauty of the presence of its God. This emphasizes the duty of the Christian Church to present her message and order her worship as beautifully as she can. The English historian, J. R. Green, when traveling on the Continent, once wrote to his fellow-historian, Freeman, "I am going to High Mass to-morrow, inasmuch as Catholicism has an organ and Protestantism only a harmonium, and the difference of truth between them don't seem to me to make up for the difference of instruments."

Many, and probably almost all believers at times, find it hard to be sure of the correctness of Jesus' interpretation of life. It is seldom easy to believe that this is a world under the control of a God who is love. When it seems too good to be true, it is well to insist that it appears *good*. When heaven overhead seems vacant and earth about us a shambles, it is no small thing if in the mind there hangs the idyllic Galilean picture of a world in which a thoughtful Father clothes the lilies and caters for the sparrows and numbers the hairs of His children's heads. It may be labeled an illusion, but let it be confessed a beautiful illusion. It then possesses a man's vote to be true if it can, and prepossession is nine-tenths of belief.

We began with the assertion of the scientist that beauty is inherent in the structure of things. That which we discover to be beautiful, can hardly be out of all relation with reality. If the monstrous is in process of elimination, the beautiful is on its way to being established. A foremost writer on æsthetics, the Italian philosopher Croce, defines beauty as "successful expression." To Christians Jesus is the incarnation, the Self-expression, of God. Does not the charm of Jesus suggest "successful expression" and point to an ultimate Being at the heart of the universe whom He manifests? Wordsworth claimed that a poet's task was "to add sunshine to daylight." Daylight is sufficient to see by, but what an addition the sunshine makes to all we see! According to the Christian interpretation, God works poetically; He adds to useful prose the spell of musical verse. He has expressed Himself successfully in the Babe of Bethlehem, the Teacher of Galilee, the vicarious Sufferer on the cross, the triumphant Lord. He has made Himself known and felt to our satisfied delight.

A characteristic of beauty is enduring power. Plutarch, writing several centuries after Phidias planned and carved, speaks of his figures and buildings as "still fresh and new and untouched by time, as if a spirit of eternal youth, a soul that was ageless, were in the work of the artist." Keats put the same discovery in the familiar lines:

> A thing of beauty is a joy forever;
> Its loveliness increases; it will never
> Pass into nothingness.

That is true these many generations after of the expression of God in the Son of Mary. The fascination of Jesus abides. The satisfaction which men take in Him grows. Each age finds new meaning in the old titles, "The Desire of Nations," "The Saviour of the World," "Wonderful Counsellor," "Prince of Peace," "The Friend of Sinners," "The altogether Lovely."

And this "successful expression" of the Divine is not confined to Jesus, but extends to every soul brought under the spell of His Spirit. Men and women through whom something of the heart and conscience of Christ are disclosed possess an unaging loveliness. They seem not to belong to a passing day, much less to a past day, but to be harbingers of a fairer to-morrow. Sainte Beuve complains that the worldly Montaigne has "no notion of that inverse moral and spiritual perfection, that growing maturity of the inner being under the withering outer envelope, that second birth and immortal youth, which makes the white-haired old man seem at times only in his first bloom for the eternal springtime." The lines with which the Elizabethan hymn-writer describes the heavenly city, are a true portrait of what is in the heart of those in whom the river of Christ's Spirit flows, and in social groups where that same stream finds an unimpeded way:

> Thy gardens and thy gallant walks
>   Continually are green;
> There grow such sweet and pleasant flowers
>   As nowhere else are seen;
> Quite through the streets with silver sound
>   The flood of life doth flow,
> Upon whose banks on every side
>   The wood of life doth grow.

To believers Christ is the "successful expression" of God. Following Him they find "sunshine added to daylight," all things enhanced with beauty. There are ugly blemishes still upon the world—corporate relations and many men, women and little children, untouched by the Spirit of the Son of man. They cannot rest in an artistic view of existence which makes a harmonious unity by eliminating the inappropriate. God's Self-expression is not completely successful until the charm of Jesus Christ is seen and felt in the life of nations and cities, and of all sorts and conditions of people, made immortally fair by the flow in them of the River of God.

CHAPTER IX

DIVISION AND UNITY

WE think of the Hudson River as a dividing barrier, cutting off Manhattan Island from the mainland, and separating the states of New York and New Jersey. Religion has always been a divisive factor, compelling believers to draw sharp lines. Their faith enjoins certain things and forbids others. It presents them with alternatives of righteousness and sin, and insists upon clean-cut decisions. It resolves Abram to emigrate from Ur of the Chaldees, Moses to choose "rather to suffer ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," Nehemiah to refuse the easy ways of his official predecessors: "So did not I, because of the fear of God." It places an "I must" on the lips of Jesus, lays necessity on the conscience of St. Paul, and sets Martin Luther in protest against the ecclesiastical authorities with an "I can do no other." A river has well defined banks, and religion covers the moral landscape with as plain boundaries. Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest takes an unequivocal position:

> Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

Even those whose religion is theologically vague, and who show scant regard for the conventional usages of worship, insist that God demands clean, kind, industrious living. George Meredith writes to his boy: "Keep pure in mind, unselfish in heart and diligent in study. This is the right way of worshiping God, and is better than hymns and sermons and incense. We find it doubtful whether God blesses the latter, but cultivate the former, and you are sure of Him. Heed me well, when I say this. And may God bless you forever, I pray it nightly." The religion of the Bible is uncompromising in its exaction that men of God distinguish plainly between His will and whatever opposes or lies outside it, and that they make it their moral frontier: "Ye that love the Lord hate evil."

This divisiveness has often been carried to absurd extremes. It has led believers to cultivate singularity for its own sake; witness the ascetics of all the centuries, for whom the supreme command has been: "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate." It has frequently fostered wretched sectarian narrowness, where the orthodox would scarcely associate with those whose beliefs were deemed unsound. An elderly New Yorker recalls how her Presbyterian parents did not like to have her play with the children of a Unitarian neighbor, and Ohio Methodists, themselves life-long Republicans, questioned whether they might conscientiously vote for a fellow-Ohioan of Unitarian faith for the presidency of the Republic. Irenæus reports the story of the aged apostle John running out of a house at Ephesus, when he heard that the heretic, Cerinthus, was under the same roof. The tipsy Falstaff cries: "If I be drunk, I'll be drunk with those that have the fear of God." It has sundered Christians in hostile ecclesiastical camps, while all professed supreme allegiance to the unifying Spirit of love. Bernard Shaw says of his native Ireland: "If religion is that which binds men to one another, and irreligion that which sunders, then must I testify that I found the religion of my country in its musical genius, and its irreligion in its churches and drawing-rooms." Shaw is right in Christian eyes when he declares that religion is that which binds men to one another: ours is the worship of Christlike love in heaven and earth; but it is none the less a separating stream. It does not divide men as correct and mistaken thinkers, or as strict and lax worshipers, or even as believers and infidels, but it classes them as loving and selfish. Inasmuch as ye did it, or did it not, unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it, or did it not, unto Me—so runs a sentence of judgment which erects an eternal partition. "Every one that loveth is begotten of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love."

Yes, this river of God divides. Religious conviction sharpens the conscience to "distinguish things that differ." We are obliged to adopt the godlike course as the way of life, and to shun all others as leading to death.

But the Hudson River is a unifier. Across its waters hundreds of ferries ply, and up and down stream steamers and barges convey passengers and freight. Navigable rivers are connecting arteries establishing easy intercourse between towns miles apart. Religion unifies; indeed religion furnishes the only ultimate basis of unity.

Look at the differences that divide. To begin with, take the difference between ourselves and the physical universe. Mrs. Browning is evidently uttering a bit of autobiography in the lines:

> You who keep account
> Of crisis and transition in this life,
> Set down the first time Nature says plain "no"
> To some "yes" in you, and walks over you
> In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all begin
> By singing with the birds, and running fast
> With June days, hand in hand; but, once for all,
> The birds must sing against us, and the sun
> Strike down upon us like a friend's sword caught
> By an enemy to slay us, while we read
> The dear name on the blade which bites at us!—
> That's bitter and convincing; after that
> We seldom doubt that something in the large
> Smooth order of creation . . . has gone wrong.

We are at one with the physical world, bone of its bone, flesh of its flesh, life of its life, dust of its dust; but it is not at one with us. There is nothing in it akin to our mind and heart. If both it and we had one Maker, we are tempted to fancy that He made man with His right hand and all things else with His left, and did not let His right hand know what His left was doing. Carlyle in old age, walking with a friend beside the Thames, exclaimed: "There is healing in the air and sunshine; but the sun and air and water care nothing for man's dreams or desires; they have no part nor lot wi' us." Whittier voices the impression of the impersonality of natural forces in the lines in *Snow-Bound:*

> The shrieking of the mindless wind,
> The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,

And on the glass the unmeaning beat
Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.

We, with our affections and ideals of duty, are constantly at odds with a scheme of things in which there is suffering, decay and death. Earth sometimes in its beauty seems a playroom, and sometimes in its law-abidingness a school-room, and sometimes in its painfulness a torture-chamber. What can reconcile us with the physical universe?

Science proposes to investigate everything, and gaining control over all forces to harness them to man's will —a unity of complete knowledge and mastery. Art attempts to select and combine the delightful and harmonious elements in sound or color, and even to present the disagreeable and jarring elements beautifully, as Shakespeare portrays the tragedy of a Hamlet or a Lear —a unity of pleased feeling. Biblical religion goes deeper and asserts that there is genuine unity—"one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Our metaphor of the river fits that saying of St. Paul's: the Divine Spirit flows from above through and in everything, linking all in a oneness of life. To be sure there is by no means as much of the Hudson in the noisy brook which runs down the slope of Mt. Marcy as in the stately stream which sweeps past Tarrytown and Nyack. In impersonal existences—sun and air and water—there is as much of the Spirit of God as they can contain—God as energy, law, adaptability to human service. In living creatures there is more—God as instinct, feeling, rudimentary conscience, capacity for higher development. In mankind there is more still—God as reason, conscience, affection. Religion agrees with science that man is to study and master forces; and it pictures these forces as awaiting his mastery: "The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God." But it goes farther, and declares that where we cannot understand, much less control, the forces pitted against us—inevitable death for example—we can still view them fearlessly, as known and ruled by our wise and kind Father, and go down before them triumphantly, as Jesus on the cross. Religion agrees with art that there is a way of viewing existence which renders it delightful; but this is not by merely selecting some elements in life, while closing our eyes to others. All, harmonious and incongruous, pleasant and heart-breaking, fair and ugly, are to be cordially accepted, moulded if possible to the soul's desire, and where they prove intractable, still accepted confidently as being moulded for us by the Hand of God. "To them that love God all things work together for good."

Let us take some instances of the Christian's reconciliation with unwelcome things. Milton's sonnet *On His Blindness* is familiar; fewer know the letter which he wrote to Leonard Philaras, which concludes:

"And so whatever ray of hope there may be for me from your famous physician, all the same, as in a case quite incurable, I prepare and compose myself accordingly. . . . My darkness hitherto, by the singular kindness of God, amid rest and studies, and the voices and greetings of friends, has been much easier to bear. . . . If, as is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone,' what should prevent one from resting likewise in the belief that his eyesight lies not in his eyes alone, but enough for all purposes in God's leading and providence? Verily, while only He looks out for me . . . leading me forth with His hand through my whole life, I shall willingly, since it has seemed good to Him, have given my eyes their long holiday. And to you, dear Philaras, whatever may befall, I now bid farewell, with a mind not less brave and steadfast than if I were Lynceus himself for keenness of sight."

Milton is willing to profit by the skill of any physician, but facing what seems incurable blindness, his faith unites him with it courageously. Religion is a river connecting in friendship an eager spirit and a grim physical limitation.

When General William Booth was a very old man, his eyesight failed him, and the treatment given him proved ineffective. It fell to his son, Bramwell, to break the news to the veteran leader that he must abandon hope of seeing again. He received the statement calmly, and after a little silence said: "Bramwell, I have done what I could for God and for the people with my eyes. Now I shall do what I can for God and for the people without my eyes." This is the same faith which led Paul to acquiesce in his "stake in the flesh." He prayed earnestly to be freed from that impediment to service; but when this was denied, he not only still persevered, but persevered with good grace: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Or take the difference between a man and his fellow-mortals. All our dealings with other people stand on the assumption that there is a spiritual kinship between us and them. We take for granted that what is truth for us, is truth for Esquimaux and Chinese and Patagonians; so we work for the spread of education all over the world. We assume that what is beautiful to us is also beautiful to all races, red and yellow and black. There may be differences of taste in many matters, but an autumn sunset, or the sound of rippling water, or a lark's song, is lovely to all. What is best in the literature or in the art of any people, even a primitive people, has an appeal for all mankind. We assume that ideals of justice, of goodwill, of brotherhood, command the assent of savage, barbarian and civilized men. Conscience may need awakening, but there is a dormant responsiveness to right in every one; and there is no "East of Suez, where the best is like the worst" on the map of our world. So we plan international agreements and talk of international law. The universal appeal of truth, of beauty, of right, is taken for granted by religious and irreligious, and this river of spiritual kinship makes possible intercourse between all groups of human beings.

But it is one thing to know that a river which flows by your town also flows by others many miles distant, and quite another thing to be drawn to embark on its waters and travel to them. To Christians, Truth, Beauty, Right, are names for the one living God. We view our Father encompassing every life with His love, and calling us out towards them in sympathy and service. When men interpret the river of their spiritual kinship as

Jesus interpreted it, then it becomes a matter of obligation to revere, trust and serve them as Christ has served us.

Look at the distances which separate groups of men in races, in nations, in economic classes, to-day; and what can unite them? Some are convinced that they never will be linked in friendship. They admit that a spiritual likeness connects them, but they regard this as affording the chance for hostile contacts, as a river provides the meeting-place for battling war-canoes from encampments of savages who dwell on its shores. What quantities of books our presses have turned out upon racial conflicts, and rival nationalistic interests, and the strife of classes! But those for whom the connecting river is the Spirit of the God and Father of Jesus Christ are assured that this stream carries us to friendship. We do not think that the towns along the river must lose their separate identity, and form one unbroken chain of monotonous city water-front the whole length of the stream. We do not believe that religion demands the obliteration of racial divisions, or the fusing of nations, or even economic equality. The landscape formed by a river lined by a continuous series of city streets on a flat level would have little charm. It is the towns, smaller and larger, with their distinctive characteristics and marked differences, on higher and lower land, all joined by the one band of blue water, on which boats come and go in happy and helpful commerce, which gives the picture its attraction. Let Christlike convictions concerning God and man, and the consequent Christlike conscientiousness, govern the contacts of races and nations, and of the various groups in industry and commerce, and the unity required is achieved.

This is not mere theory; it is confirmed by abundant experience where such Christian intercourse has been tried. Witness the record of William Penn's relations with the Indians, of the dealings of sincere missionaries with peoples of many lands, of our own country's handling of the Boxer indemnity with China and our treatment of Cuba after the Spanish War, of Britain's attitude to South Africa under the ministry of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman at the close of the contest with the Boer Republics, of the relations between employers and operatives in factories where coöperative efforts have been undertaken and carried on with genuine mutual confidence.

At a Post-Communion Service at Bandawé in Central Africa an elder told how he had been a slave and had been sold and re-sold some half-dozen times. Then hearing of the settlement of the Livingstonia Mission, he fled from his owner and reached the Station, where he heard that great pioneer, Dr. Robert Laws, preaching on Isaiah lxv: 25, and urging the people to open their hearts to the love of God, which would put an end to war among the tribes.

"'Put your faith in God,'" the Sing'anga said, "'obey His word, and the leopard shall yet lie down with the lamb and the kid in the same kraal in peace.' In my heart I said, 'White man, you lie!' And yet, what do I see now? The leopard and the lamb together at peace, indeed. Ngoni and Tonga here at the same Communion Table!"

The satisfactory contacts between races and nations and industrial groups, where the Spirit of Jesus has been seriously followed, are beyond dispute. It demanded courageous faith in primitive man to venture himself in his crude dug-out on the surface of a stream and risk intercourse with strangers; but that faith was the beginning of a new era of social progress. It demands courageous faith still in racial leaders and statesmen, in employers and employees, to trust themselves in experimental plans of comradeship to the river of the Spirit of Christ and to move out towards those whose differences from themselves are patent, but that faith will mark a new epoch in the history of mankind.

And inside the groups of human beings religion is the ultimate unifier. The first of such groups is the family. It is bound together by physical and economic and sentimental attachments; but we see these ties snapping, and husbands and wives, parents and children, parting, and parting with appalling frequency in our American life. The conventional reasons, which in the past have kept them from separating, have grown weaker so swiftly in recent years, that the statistics of broken homes in the United States become more and more terrifying to all who regard permanent family-life as the basis of a healthy commonwealth. Divorces in our country have more than doubled in twenty years—from 61,000 in 1901 to 132,000 in 1920, and in several states there is one divorce recorded for every four or five marriages.

Physicians, lawyers, ministers, friends, who are called on to try to hold together lives pulling apart, know how fragile the marriage-tie is to-day. The New Testament speaks of marrying "in the Lord"—that is, under Christ's control. In the wedding service the solemn phrase is used: "Those whom God hath joined together," which surely does not mean merely that this couple have taken pledges to each other in a religious ceremony. God cannot join lives, save as both allow Him to form their consciences, rule their instincts, and inspire their purposes. It is romantic love hallowed with religious conscience, of which Mr. Lowell writes in lines concerning his wife, where he uses the metaphor of our parable:

> I love her with a love as still
> As a broad river's peaceful might,
> Which by high tower and lowly mill,
> Goes wandering at its own sweet will,
> And yet doth ever flow aright.
>
> And, on its full, deep breast serene,
> Like quiet isles my duties lie;
> It flows around them and between,
> And makes them fresh, and fair, and green,
> Sweet homes wherein to live and die.

Or take the religious group—the Christian Church—for whose unification we so often pray and arrange conferences. It may seem a truism to say that we shall get no further towards Church unity until there is more of the Christian religion in the churches. But that is the plain fact. Some of our divisions rest upon interpretations of history, and we need more faith in the God of truth to bring an honest facing of history. In 1864 Newman wrote to Father Coleridge:

"Nothing would be better than an Historical Review for Roman Catholics—but who would bear it? Unless one doctored all one's facts, one would be thought a bad Catholic."

And the same can be said of many Protestants in their attitude towards historical investigations of the Bible. Woe to the scholar who frankly reports what he finds! He will fare hardly in the educational institutions of many of our communions. More of our divisions rest at present upon differences of taste, of temperament, of social status. We need a more moving apprehension of God as love to carry us out in an inclusive fellowship, which shall allow within its communion fullest freedom for all these inevitable differences. Henry Ward Beecher recounts an experience which emancipated his spirit from denominationalism:

"I remember riding through the woods for long, dreary days, and I recollect at one time coming out into an open place where the sun shone down through the bank of the river, and where I had such a sense of the love of Christ, of the nature of His work on earth, of its beauty and grandeur, and such a sense of the miserableness of Christian men quarreling and seeking to build up antagonistic churches—in other words the Kingdom of Christ rose up before my mind with such supreme loveliness and majesty—that I sat in my saddle I do not know how long (many, many minutes, perhaps half an hour), and there all alone, in a great forest of Indians, probably twenty miles from any house, I prayed for that Kingdom, saying audibly: 'I will never be a sectary.'"

It is such a full stream of appreciation of Christ and of the urgency of His cause on which fellow-Christians of widest differences of opinion and tradition and temperament can be borne into closest comradeship with one another.

Groups—families, churches, communities, nations—are fused by a common passion and kept together by a common obligation. The Christian faith furnishes the most kindling enthusiasm and the most sensitive conscientiousness. "The love of God is shed abroad," wrote Paul, using our metaphor, "The love of God is pouring as a stream to flow in our hearts."

And the most serious disunity exists within a man's self. There is the glaring contradiction between what he should have been and what he is. Phaedra, who has calumniated Hippolytus and brought on his death, cries, in Euripides' drama:

> Oh, I am sick with shame!
> Aye, but it hath a sting! . . .
> Could I but die in one swift flame
> Unthinking, unknowing.

Augustine, commenting on the Thirty-third Psalm, interjects a personal experience: "Whither fly I? Whithersoever I go my self followeth me." Religion brings its message of forgiveness to whoever repents, turning resolutely from his past, however awful. Forgiveness does not wipe out that past. It remains part of ourselves, and just because it remains, we can remold it. The flaws of our past are the river-bed down which the stream of the divine mercy is poured. We are reconnected with our former self, only connected by the stream of God's life, which supplies us with power to repair whatever is reparable, and which transforms the ugly landscape by His presence, enabling us to live with our else loathed self, as a river, flooding an arid and cracked bottom, suffuses it with beauty.

There is the divergence between a man's aspirations and his inclinations. Every one knows himself a bundle of contradictions. Sir James Stephen has sketched the character of Henry Martyn, the future missionary, in his student days:

> "A man born to love with ardor and to hate with vehemence; amorous, irascible, ambitious, and vain; without one torpid nerve about him; aiming at universal excellence in science, in literature, in conversation, in horsemanship, and even in dress; not without some gay fancies, but more prone to austere and melancholy thoughts; patient of the most toilsome inquiries, though not wooing philosophy for her own sake; animated by the poetical temperament, though unvisited by any poetical inspiration; eager for enterprise, though thinking meanly of the rewards to which the adventurous aspire; uniting in himself, though as yet unable to concentrate or to harmonize them, many keen desires, many high powers, and much constitutional dejection—the chaotic materials of a great character."

And he describes how, under the preaching of Charles Simeon at Cambridge, Henry Martyn came to "an unlimited affiance in the holiness and wisdom of Him, in whose person the divine nature had been allied to the human, that so, in the persons of His followers, the human might be allied to the divine." And in picturing to what this pioneer of the Kingdom in India attained, he falls into the simile of our parable:

> "He rose to the sublime in character . . . by the copiousness and the force of the living fountains by which his spiritual life was nourished. . . . The ill-disciplined desires of youth, now confined within one deep channel, flowed quickly onward towards one great consummation; nor was there any faculty of his soul, or any treasure of his accumulated knowledge, for which appropriate exercise was not found in the high enterprise to which he was devoted."

The man was united within himself by the inflowing river of God, and all the dissevered miscellaneous elements of his nature bound in one divine purpose, as the towns and villages along a navigable stream form a single business community.

CHAPTER X

CHANGE AND PERMANENCE

THE form which the Hudson River assumes is determined by the contour of the country through which it flows. The stream is now broader, now narrower; now it holds a straight course as from Fort Edward to Newburgh, and again from Stony Point to New York Bay, now it winds about as from the Adirondacks to Glens Falls and through the Highlands; now its channel is deeper, now more shallow; now its banks rise precipitously as in the Palisades, or on Breakneck and Storm King mountains, or in the Stony Creek gorge, now there is a gradual slope up the sides of the valley. Photograph it at a number of points, and when the photographs are ranged side by side a stranger might not recognize them as pictures of the same river.

Geologists reconstruct for us the Hudson as it appeared in bygone ages. The depth of the rock channel in the Tertiary Period can still be measured in the Highlands some two thousand feet below the present bottom. In the pre-glacial age instead of flowing south through the Stony Creek gorge to Corinth, the river ran southeast from Warrensburg to Glens Falls. There have been periods when the ocean came up to the Adirondacks, and periods when the land stretched several hundred miles further out to sea than at present. When one traces the course of the Hudson on these various maps, it is a very different stream from the familiar river of to-day.

The Christian religion has flowed in the river-bed available for it in each generation. Now the faith has been embodied in small groups of humble folk awaiting a speedy return of the Lord to set up His kingdom; now in a much larger community, conscious of a spiritually present Christ and interpreting its earlier gospels to make Him intelligible to the people of the Mediterranean world; now in a persecuted Church, living a hunted life in catacombs and obscure meeting-places; now in a triumphant Church, well-organized, wealthy, in alliance with government, and attempting to embody its principles in the law of the Empire; now in companies of earnest men and women, fleeing from a worldly Church to live alone in the deserts in austere communion with the Invisible; now in an imperial Church, authoritatively declaring the will of God to kings and peoples, controlling education, art, charity and regulating public and private morals; now in various bodies of proscribed Protestants, seeking to recover the primitive religious experiences of the New Testament; now in nations warring on behalf of freedom; now in nations attempting to outlaw war altogether and to substitute the reign of reason and of Christian conscience for that of brute force; now in a Church devoting itself to save individuals out of an evil world, and now in a Church striving to let the Spirit of Christ rule the world's entire life. Pictures of the stream of Christianity at various epochs in history or in its various forms to-day seem not to be representations of the same river.

There is a similarly changing appearance when one takes the course of the river of the Spirit in the life of any individual. Think of the God of our own childhood, and of the feelings with which we regarded Him; then of the God of our developing youth, if a God remained distinctly in our minds during those years when our outlook on life was changing with kaleidoscopic rapidity; then of the God of our young manhood, before whose presence momentous decisions were reached, and of the personal relationship with Him into which we entered; then of the God of our maturer years, sometimes lost when youth's idealism vanished, sometimes regained with firmer assurance as observation and experience convinced us of His necessity and He seemed the reasonable and indispensable interpretation of an otherwise irrational world. Think of the varying aspects of God and our own altering attitudes toward Him which the circumstances of life have brought:—the God of shame, the God of comfort, the God of personal intimacy, the God of social obligation, the God of judgment revealed in a world-catastrophe, the God of hope who alone offered the power of repair and the assurance of stability, the God who hideth Himself, the God whose hidings prove His ways of Self-disclosure. John Fiske gave us a graphic description of "a tall slender man, of aquiline features, wearing spectacles, with a pen in his hand, and another behind his ear," who stood at a desk overlooking the world, and, assisted by a recording angel, entered the deeds of every mortal in a ledger. That was his childhood view of Deity. Frederick William Faber addressed the God of his first recollections in the lines:

I could not sleep unless Thy Hand
Were underneath my head,
That I might kiss it, if I lay
Wakeful upon my bed.

And quite alone I never felt,—
I knew that Thou wert near,
A silence tingling in the room,
A strangely pleasant fear.

But while notions of God may be recalled, it is impossible to summon back childhood's religion. That in its simplicity and imaginativeness and physical realism is gone as irrevocably as the water that was in the Hudson when you and I were under ten. The maps which geological historians make of the Hudson Valley in the divers epochs of the past are not more varied than the spiritual charts we should be obliged to construct, were we to undertake to show the flow of religion in our souls at different stages in our development.

From of old a river has been the metaphor of fleeting change. The stream is never the same for two consecutive minutes. The water is constantly moving. Attempt to stop the current in order to examine it, and the river itself is completely altered. You have a reservoir or a lake, not a flowing stream. This makes a river so apt a simile of religious experience. For what is our sense of God but a series of flitting impressions, of emotions that rise and subside in waves, of moments of confidence alternating with moments of scepticism, of intense enthusiasms changing to placid indifference, of broad expanses of heart which reflect the sunny skies and narrow, pent-in currents that take their dark course with power?

This is true of the experience of the race as we trace the line of the river of religion through the centuries. Browning's Bishop soliloquizes:

> Had I been born three hundred years ago,
> They'd say, "What's strange? Blougram of course believes";
> And, seventy years since, "Disbelieves of course."
> But now, "He may believe: and yet—and yet—
> How can he?"

In one of Shirley's plays, written in the time of Charles the First, a character says: "Praying's forgot"; to which a companion remarks: " 'Tis out of fashion." We can never expect the identical theology or religious habits or modes of devout expression in successive generations. Dr. Lyman Beecher's godly life reappeared in his distinguished children, but not his religious opinions and methods.

There is the same continual flux in the personal religious experience. Jeremiah asks: "O Thou Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, why shouldest Thou be as a sojourner in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?" There is your stream always passing. In the old story of Jacob at the Jabbok, the patriarch is represented as trying to hold the mysterious Visitant, who wrestles with him in the darkness, and as asking His name, but the Divine never abides man's questions, as a river never stops to let itself be examined. In her account of Savonarola, George Eliot observes that a man "must often speak in virtue of yesterday's faith, hoping it will come back to-morrow." Luther confessed that at times he believed and at times he doubted. There is an interesting letter of the sturdy Protestant champion, Hugh Latimer, to his fellow-martyr, Nicholas Ridley, in which he writes: "Pray for me, I say. For I am sometimes so fearful, that I would creep into a mouse-hole; sometimes God doth visit me again with His comfort. So He cometh and goeth." Thomas Arnold, a vigorous believer, declares: "There are whole days in which all the feelings or principles of belief or of religion altogether are in utter abeyance; when one goes on very comfortably, pleased with external and worldly comforts, and yet would find it difficult, if told to inquire, to find a particle of Christian principle in one's whole mind." In Victor Hugo's *Quatre-Vingt-Treize* Boisberthelot asks La Vieuville: "Do you believe in God, chevalier?" and the reply comes: "Yes. No. Sometimes." And this flux of faith, which is discovered when men look in and search for God within their souls, is found also by those who scan the outer world for tokens of His presence. The Duke of Argyll reports a conversation with Charles Darwin during the last year of that scientist's life: "I said to Mr. Darwin with reference to some of his own remarkable works on 'Fertilization of Orchids' and on 'The Earthworms,' 'It was impossible to look at these without seeing that they were the effect and expression of mind.' I shall never forget Mr. Darwin's answer. He looked at me hard and said: 'Well, that often comes over me with overwhelming force; but at other times,' and he shook his head vaguely, adding, 'it seems to go away.' "

The Spirit of God in us, like the Hudson in the country through which it flows, is given His channel by our physical conditions, our temperaments, our mental training. The river of the water of life has to take its way through the available watershed. And a stream is in its very nature ceaselessly changing. This is often a sore distress to devout souls. John Wesley, thinking both of himself and his adherents, enters in his *Diary* the question: "Oh, why should we not be always what we were once?" But the very attempt to examine ourselves and test the flow of the Spirit within is like the effort to stop a river in order to investigate it. A river is not a river except as it moves. Obstruct it with a dam, and the stream below runs away, while the waters above pile up in a pool. The act of self-examination for the moment destroys the river of the water of life. William Cowper, the hymn-writer, when dying was asked by the physician how he felt, and replied: "I feel unutterable despair." We explain his feelings by his mental and physical condition, and we see the abundant stream of the Spirit in his life, which still flows on through the heritage of his poetry. We hear Jesus on the cross crying: "Forsaken!" and in the same breath clinging in faith: "My God." There are the changing emotions and the abiding relationship.

For a river is not only an appropriate symbol of constant change; but it is also a picture of permanence. Its water is forever flowing away, but the stream remains exhaustlessly replenished. For millions of years there has been some sort of watershed from the peaks of the Adirondacks southward to the ocean. Its course has been affected by many changes in the earth's surface. The sea has been nearer and farther; the land has risen and subsided; the mountain-tops have been higher and the river-bed much lower; the path taken by the water has varied somewhat; but from the Mesozoic Period, at least, there has been a watercourse from their summits to the Atlantic in the direction where we locate the Hudson on our maps.

So far back as our explorations of mankind can take us, and all down the line of human history, we discover religion—the flow of inspirations which men connect with something beyond and above them. In a recent text-book of European archæology, covering the Palæolithic period, Professor Macalister finds indications of religion in the life of these ancient people, whose skeletons or skulls he examines; and he comments: "It is now believed that just as there is no race of people, however low in the scale of civilization, without language or without social order, so there is no tribe or race, however low, without some form of religion. A completely religionless community does not exist, and probably never has existed." The flow of man's nature towards the Unseen appears as inevitable as the flow of moisture towards the great deep. When we survey the Christian centuries, and study the stream of the life of God in man in its purest and most copious flow from those loftiest moral heights—Bethlehem and Galilee and Calvary—we note more than one period when men expected this river to cease altogether. There was this or that circumstance in the condition of the times, some obstruction in the thought or some absorbing dryness in the life of the day, which portended its cessation. But it is still sweeping on, a majestic Hudson, when one views its breadth and volume throughout our world; and there is no sign of any diminution of its abundance. The more it changes in appearance, the more it remains the same river. Plutarch, the Greek historian, wrote: "The divine—religion—is something imperishable; but its forms are subject to decay. God bestows many good things on men; but nothing imperishable; for, as Socrates says, even what has reference to the gods is subject to death." But a Christian contemporary of Plutarch's, writing to people who had witnessed revolutionary changes in their religion, who had seen the Temple at Jerusalem destroyed, its ritual become obsolete, and the whole face of Judaism transfigured in the new hope which had become theirs through One whom they revered as the Pioneer and Perfecter of faith, while he agrees with him as to the passing forms of religion, insists that God has given man one abiding element: "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, and to-day, yea and forever." The permanent factor for him in religion is to be found in Christ, and in the Christlike Spirit, discovered as the moving current amid all the changing appearances of the river's course.

When one tries to define Christianity—a very difficult undertaking because the instant you try to examine it you interfere with its flow and it loses its essential character—one gets at its essence most clearly in the Christlike movements in the thoughts and conduct of individuals and social groups. A river is found not in the water which you may be able to bail out in a pail and so investigate. The water ceases to be a river the moment you capture it in your bucket. A river is found in the continuous stream moving towards the sea-level. Christianity is not the religious opinions or the modes of worship or the customs of life or the forms of activity of any particular generation of believers in Jesus, which one can take and examine, very much as one hauls up a bucket of water from a running stream. The water of a river is ceaselessly flowing and the doctrines and ritual and usages and methods of Christians are forever in flux. Again and again men have taken Christianity at some point in its course—in the New Testament period, or in the undivided Church of the first three centuries, or in the epoch of the Protestant Reformation—and insisted that the beliefs or the forms of Church government or the usages in worship were fixed then for all time. But subsequent centuries can no more think with the minds of the apostles or of the Greek creed-makers, or organize the Church after the pattern of the early Fathers, than they can call back the first or the fourth or the sixteenth century in the stream of time.

And how fortunate it is that one cannot stabilize religion! Froude very cleverly criticized the attempt of Anglicanism to establish by law an unalterable form of religious institution in the Church of England:

> "If medicine had been regulated three hundred years ago by Act of Parliament; if there had been Thirty-nine Articles of Physic, and every licensed practitioner had been compelled under pains and penalties to compound his drugs by the prescriptions of Henry the Eighth's physician, Doctor Butts, it is easy to conjecture in what state of health the people of this country would at present be found."

There cannot be a river without water; and there cannot be a flow of the Spirit of God without beliefs and institutions and activities. But the water at any moment rolling by is not the river; and the ideas and institutions and activities even of the New Testament are not the Christian religion. They form merely the stream of the Spirit of Jesus at one moment in its long sweep through the ages.

One must watch the river as it flows to describe it accurately; one must watch the Christian Spirit in motion to get at the essence of the Christian faith. See a Paul counting all things but loss that he may be found in Christ and present others perfect in Him; an Augustine putting off his sensual life and becoming an wholly renewed man in the service of Christ; a Francis of Assisi espousing poverty and claiming glad kinship as a child of God with sun and moon, beasts and birds, and every man to whom he can minister happiness by obedience to Jesus; a Luther discovering that a Christian man is the most free lord of all and subject to none, and the servant of all, bound to be to them what Christ has been to him, and standing for that freedom and that servitude at the risk of death; a Lincoln with malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gave him to see the right, setting free the bondmen, and preserving the unity of a nation; an Edith Cavell discovering that patriotism is not enough and that she must die without hatred or bitterness towards any one;—this is Christianity, this is the permanent current of the Christian Spirit, flowing on while beliefs and institutions and prayers and ways of doing everything change.

An essential need in men which drives them to religion is the desire to find the abiding amid the transient, and thus attain a sense of being at home in an estranging world. A brilliant contemporary Jewish writer, Ludwig Lewisohn, who has recently unveiled his soul in an autobiography which bitterly indicts our American life, says of his early religious impressions in a southern city and of that which drew him to churches, Protestant and Roman Catholic:

> "I had a sense, shadowy and inarticulate, but deep enough, of our homelessness in the universe, of our terrible helplessness before it. I had seen something of misfortune and uncertainty and change, and my mind desired then, as, with frugal hope, it does now, a point of permanence in the 'vast driftings of the cosmic weather,' a power in which there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

He concludes his bitter narrative with a total rejection of Theistic belief, to which he attributes all manner of social evil, and with a violent repudiation of Christian ethics as he sees them embodied in the current industrial and international order; but his soul still cleaves with religious devotion to truth and beauty and human brotherhood—which are the chief expressions for others of the presence of the Deity whom he so scornfully denies. His interpretation of the universe robs him of that point of permanence which Christian believers find in God, to whom they pray:

> Change and decay in all around I see;
> O Thou who changest not, abide with me.

But it is perhaps not so much "a point of permanence" as an abiding flow of the Spirit which they discover, a stream which continues despite the constant passing of its water. Up in the Adirondacks, where the Hudson's headwaters form, there are brooks which during part of the year disappear from sight; one sees in their channels a dry bed of stones. One may notice similar totally arid watercourses in men's spirits. Tormented by doubts, August Hermann Francke, the future Pietist professor of Halle, resolved to call upon God in whom he did not think that he believed, and uttered the remarkable prayer: "Thou art the cause of my suffering, O non-existing God, for if Thou didst exist, then should I also really exist." But while the beds of our Adirondack brooks may be dry in summer, the moisture is seeping along through the gravel underneath. So, concealed from their own sight and out of view of those who know them best, the spiritual stream still makes its way in the souls of those who fancy it has ceased in them altogether. We spoke of the impossibility of recalling the religion of our childhood; but while that has gone irretrievably, as yesterday's water in any brook has flowed away, the stream may re-emerge. In the Autobiography of Henry M. Stanley, he tells us how in Africa the river of an early piety, for years out of sight, suddenly surprised him by re-appearing. Cut off from newspapers and unable to carry other books along, he had with him a Bible which he began to read:

"When I laid down the book, the mind commenced to feed upon what memory suggested. Then rose the ghosts of bygone yearnings, haunting every cranny of the brain with numbers of baffled hopes and unfulfilled aspirations.

Here was I, only a poor journalist, with no friends, and yet possessed by a feeling of power to achieve! How could it ever be? Then verses of Scripture rang iteratingly through my mind as applicable to my own being, sometimes full of promise, often of solemn warning.

Alone in my tent, my mind labored and worked upon itself, and nothing was so soothing and sustaining as when I remembered the long-neglected comfort and support of lonely childhood and boyhood. I flung myself on my knees, and poured out my soul utterly in secret prayer to Him from whom I had been so long estranged, to Him who had led me mysteriously into Africa, there to reveal Himself, and His will. I became then inspired with fresh desire to serve Him to the utmost, that same desire which in early days in New Orleans filled me each morning, and sent me joyfully skipping to my work."

Many persons go through several transformations in their religious views, and may alter their church affiliations two or three times, and they frequently think these changes involve complete breaks with their previous spiritual life; but those who watch the course of their careers are aware of the continuity of the stream of inspiration within them. Amid the alterations in our ideas and fluctuations in our feelings, we can say with a New Testament writer: "They shall pass; but Thou continuest." They belong to the outward man which perisheth, while the inward man is renewed day by day. And even where the interruptions in religious experience are not so marked, and there are no decided breaks with the past, there are differences which make a man seem a stranger to his former emotions and inspirations. Our religious associations change with everything else in the world; new teachers take the place of old ones; old texts acquire new meanings; fresh voices bring their messages when long-known tones no longer fall upon our ears; but there is familiarity amid difference in the set of the soul Godward. McLeod Campbell writes: "I felt this morning in reading an Epistle which I had not read for some time, all its living truth and divine love freshly affecting me, and yet as what I had felt before." Father Faber goes on in the poem to the God of his childhood, from which we have already quoted:

Thou broadenest out with every year,
Each breadth of life to meet:
I scarce can think Thou art the same,
Thou art so much more sweet.

Changed and not changed, Thy present charms
Thy past ones only prove;
Oh, make my heart more strong to bear
This newness of Thy love!

These novelties of love!—when will
Thy goodness find an end?
Whither will Thy compassions, Lord,
Incredibly extend?

And this brings us to another connection between a river and permanence. The constantly flowing stream is bound somewhither. One can scarcely look at the moving current without having his thought carried to its destination: "Into what does this river empty?" So is it with the life in which there is a religious current. There are men and women who give the impression of belonging to this world. They are at home in its ways, take it as they find it, have an eye to its main chances, are untroubled by the level of its standards, enjoy its pleasures, put up with its discomforts, and cast no wistful glances towards ideals beyond its horizons. Pontius Pilate seems to belong in the Roman Empire. He has no purposes which are too large for its confines, no longings past its capacities to gratify, no yearning towards something beyond and afar from it. Jesus of Nazareth seems a stranger moving through it, with both the sources and goals of His being outside it. His purposes require eternity for their fulfillment, His longings only God and the fellowship of innumerable brethren in God can satisfy. Jeremy Taylor in a funeral sermon said of the Lady Carbery: "In all her religion, she had a strange evenness and untroubled passage, sliding towards her ocean of God and of infinity with a certain and silent motion." Men and women of genuine Christian conscience appear, like a river, to be always *en route*. They crave a diviner order for the world and more Christlike spirits for themselves, and these cravings of their souls, like the pull of gravitation on water drawing it towards sea-level, create in them a flow setting forth towards love, towards God who is love, towards the vast deep of love's full life for all. In their company one catches "murmurs and scents of the infinite sea." They feel with the hymn-writer:

Rivers to the ocean run,
  Nor stay in all their course; . . .
So my soul, derived from God,
Pants to view His glorious face,
Forward tends to His abode,
  To rest in His embrace.

A second life has no attraction for those who are bored with this. Those who "kill time" here, are not allured by the prospect of an eternity "to kill" yonder. But they whose aims for themselves, for their beloved, for mankind, are as far-reaching as those of Jesus need limitless scope for their achievement. And as the river in its steady movement bears witness to the existence of the ocean towards which it glides, so men and women moving towards divine purposes testify to the existence of a spiritual sea-level in the universe—to God and life eternal in and with Him. The river is always moving out from the land which has formed its banks, but its waters are not lost. "The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

We began our discussion with the somewhat impatient and cynical question: "What is there in religion anyhow?" We have used the Hudson River as a parable of the various benefits which the stream of the Spirit of faith renders to believers. Many think that there is nothing but self-hypnosis in religious belief. Men fancy a God, driven to this imagination by their sex impulse, or by some other unsatisfied element in their natures; and then they derive comforts and incentives from the contemplation of this imagined Lover, Father and Friend. But does that explanation really account for the facts? One need not deny that the religious impulse is closely related with those of sex and of hunger. Indeed it belongs with the most primitive and strongest impulses in man's make-up; it is an essential component of his being. But is it conceivable that from an illusion men and women through many generations have derived refreshment, cleansing, power, illumination, fruitfulness, buoyancy, adventure, beauty, unity, a sense of permanence? It is no imaginary Hudson which affords corresponding benefits to those who live in its neighborhood. Why should the stream of religion, conferring these vastly more valuable spiritual benefits, be any more illusory? In response to a Questionnaire sent out by Professor Pratt, now of Williams College, William James wrote that he believed in God because "the whole line of testimony on this point is so strong that I cannot pooh-pooh it away. No doubt there is a germ in me of something similar that makes response."

If the religious impulse in man be intimately allied with that of sex, why is it not an evidence of an equally objective reality? Do not organisms develop in response to external stimuli—plants evolving chlorophyll in answer to light, bodies the hæmoglobin in red corpuscles in answer to oxygen? Is not faith a response in the soul to as real a God? As chlorophyll appropriates the sunlight and builds up the plant, as hæmoglobin in blood corpuscles appropriates oxygen and aërates the system, producing combustion and supplying physical energy, faith appropriates the Spirit of God and brings His life to strengthen and energize ours. Why should God be more illusory than the mate to whom the sex impulse points, or the light to which chlorophyll responds, or the oxygen to which hæmoglobin answers?

And were this stream of the Spirit, were the living God, an illusion, would He have retained His permanent place in human trust through all the ages? Would not the illusion have been found out—as time and again some skeptical thinker has declared the fraud unmasked—and would not the notion of a companionable God have remained discredited? Had nature made a misstep when she built up chlorophyll in plants, it would never have become the very common element which it is. Had man made a mistake when his spirit reached forth in trust, religion could not have become the almost universal and enduring component in human nature which it is. Chlorophyll is itself a witness to the existence of sunlight, the sex impulse a witness to the existence of mates, religion a witness to the reality of God.

We have been stressing the permanency of the Hudson River, despite the constant flowing away of the water which composes it. That permanency is due to its connection with the fabric of the world, the scheme of nature. The sun in the heavens drawing up moisture and forming clouds, the showers which fill the springs and keep moist the slopes of the mountains, the snows which pile up on those uplands every winter, the lie of the land furnishing a watershed down the valley towards the Atlantic—all combine to assure the continued existence of the Hudson River which is constantly gliding away. Is not the only reasonable interpretation of the abiding presence of religion in the life of men that it, too, is connected with the spiritual basis of the universe, that God is as actual as sun and showers and mountains and valley and ocean?

It is one thing to know of the Hudson River, because you happen to have learned of it from a geography, and to have seen its line on a map; it is quite another thing to spend your life beside it, to find your recreation in the summits where it rises and do your work in a city which it cleanses and provides with harbor, to know from experience its refreshment and loveliness and utility. It is one thing to be convinced that the God and Father of Jesus Christ exists, because He seems the reasonable explanation of the faith of those who claim to know Him, and to accord Him a place on your map of being; it is quite another thing to pass your life in His companionship, and know for yourself "the fullness of God."

Date Due
