

My First Communion

Hugh T. Kerr, D.D.

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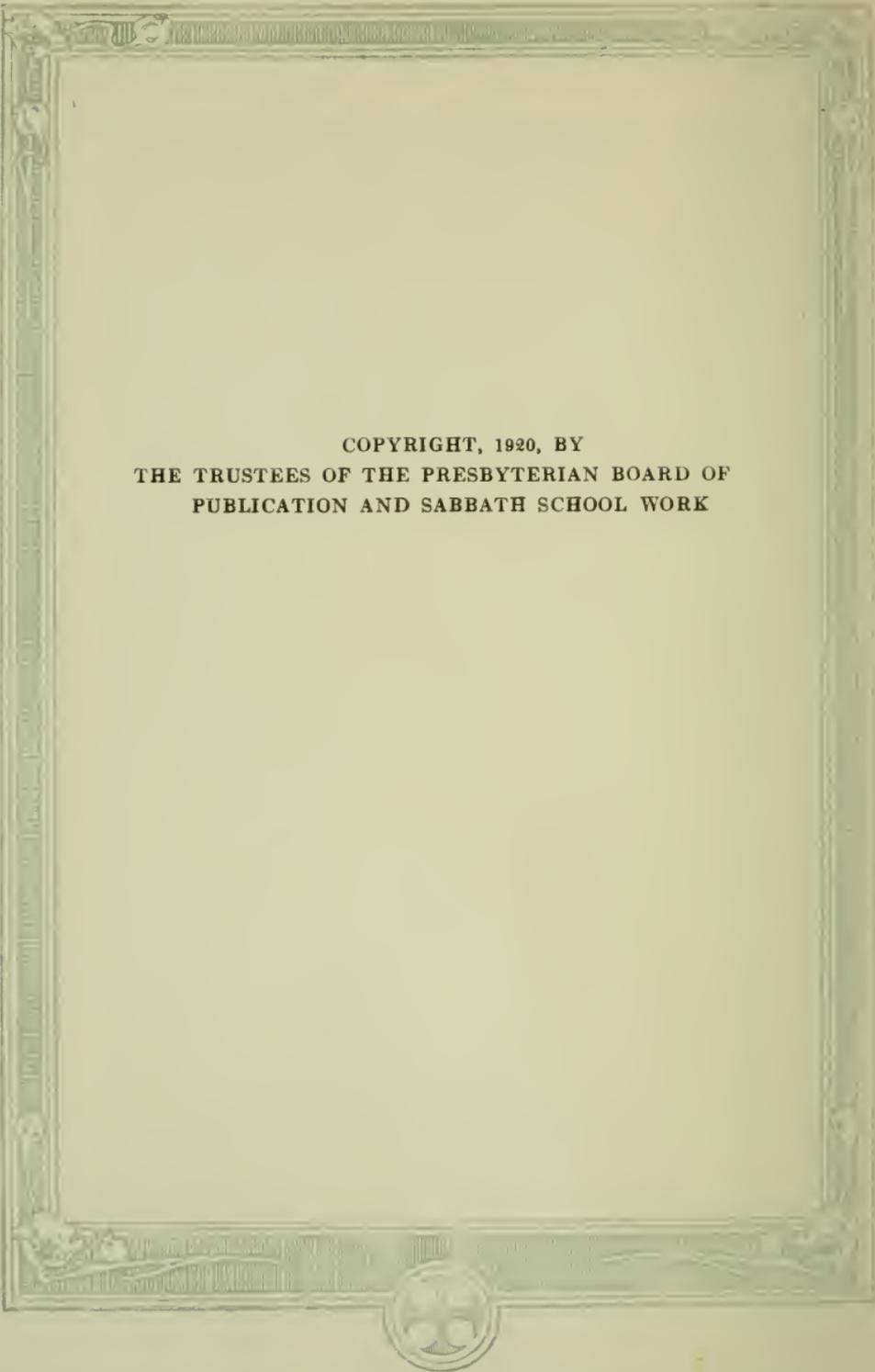
My First Communion

By
Hugh T. Kerr, D. D.



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*This is to Certify
that*

*has publicly confessed Jesus Christ
as Lord and Saviour, and has been
received into the full membership of
the*

Church of

*on this _____ day of _____
in the year of our Lord 192_*

Pastor

MY COVENANT

O Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
Be thou forever near me,
My Master and my Friend:
I shall not fear the battle
If thou art by my side,
Nor wander from the pathway
If thou wilt be my Guide.

O let me feel thee near me,
The world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle,
The tempting sounds I hear:
My foes are ever near me,
Around me and within;
But, Jesus, draw thou nearer,
And shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear thee speaking
In accents clear and still,
Above the storms of passion,
The murmurs of self-will:
O speak to reassure me,
To hasten or control;
O speak, and make me listen,
Thou Guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, thou hast promised
To all who follow thee
That where thou art in glory
There shall thy servant be;
And, Jesus, I have promised
To serve thee to the end;
O give me grace to follow
My Master and my Friend.

Rev. John E. Bode

CHAPTER I

MY FIRST COMMUNION

THE first Communion is a sacred time in the life of the Christian. It marks a definite step in life. It is an act of faith in which the Christian gives himself to the Saviour and in which the Saviour gives himself to the Christian. Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me." In the Communion service we draw near to him and he draws near to us.

Those who have been baptized in infancy are already members of the Church and the Communion service is for them the confirmation of the vows which were undertaken for them by their parents at the time of their baptism. Those who have not been baptized in infancy are first instructed in the Christian faith and then baptized. They are then received immediately into full membership of the Church and to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

It is the happy privilege of the pastor to seek and to find those who wish to confess and confirm their faith in the Lord Jesus, by participating in the Holy Communion, and it is his joy to prepare them for their first Communion, and to instruct them concerning the Christian life. Either individually, or through a communicants' class he leads them into an

intelligent faith concerning the things most surely believed by the Christian Church, and by that branch of the Church with which they wish to unite, and then the session, which is the governing body in the Presbyterian Church, being satisfied as to their sincere desire and Christian training, receives them into full membership in the Church and they are given all the rights and privileges of Church members.

In the Presbyterian Church, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is observed four or more times a year and usually at the Sunday morning service. At this service those who have been received into full membership of the Church by the session, are publicly welcomed by the members of the Church. The service on Communion Sunday is not quite the same as on other Sundays. The Communion table is covered with white linen and on the table are bread and wine. The service is unusually quiet and reverent and hymns and Scripture speak of Christ and his sacrifice for us upon the cross. The minister may give a Communion address, or he may occupy the entire time in the observance of the sacrament. When the Communion service begins, the minister and the elders take their places around the table. After stating briefly the purpose and meaning of the sacrament, the minister in the name of Christ invites "all that are truly sorry for their sins and would be



delivered from the burden of them, all that humbly put their trust in Christ, and desire his grace that they may lead a holy life," to come to the sacrament.

A Communion hymn is sung and then the beautiful words about the Lord's Supper found in I Cor. 11:23-26 are read:

"I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."

After the bread has been broken, and the prayer of consecration offered, the minister takes the bread and, as the elders stand ready to receive it, says,

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the same night in which He was betrayed, having taken Bread, and blessed and broken it, gave it to His disciples; as I, ministering in His Name, give this Bread unto you; saying, Take, eat: this is My Body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of Me."



Then the minister, who is also himself to communicate, gives the bread to the elders to be distributed, and when all the people have communicated, the minister serves the bread to the elders.

The bread is received as a symbol of the body of our Lord. Jesus said, "This is my body, which is broken for you." He called himself "the bread of life." Just as we take bread to nourish our bodies, so we take Christ to be the food of our souls. Jesus frequently spoke about the hunger of the soul and his power to satisfy. "He that cometh to me shall not hunger." When Jesus died for us upon the cross, it was in order that, through his death, we might have eternal life. In this sacred service, by faith, we take Jesus to be our Saviour.

After the bread, the wine is served in like manner. The minister takes the cup and says:

"After the same manner our Saviour also took the Cup; and having given thanks, as hath been done in His Name, He gave it to His disciples, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in My Blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins: drink ye all of it."

The wine is a symbol of the blood of Christ, "which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The whole service brings us into fellowship with the Lord Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us.



The Lord's Supper is the visible and outward sign and seal of the invisible and inward life of Christ in us, by which we live. It proclaims the Lord's death. It ministers to our souls, and it points us forward to the time when he will come again. In the Scottish Highlands there is a spring at which Prince Albert once drank. The owner of the spring fenced it around and placed there a monument. Travelers from far and wide stop at that little mountain spring and recall the prince to whose memory the spring is now dedicated. The spring is thus both a memorial and a blessing. In a much more sacred sense, it is so with the Lord's Supper. The sacrament brings to our remembrance him who loved us and gave himself for us, and at the same time it ministers grace to our hearts.

Care should be taken to come to the Communion with prepared hearts. All services held preparatory to the Communion should be faithfully observed. Above all we should examine our own hearts and prepare ourselves to be Christ's guests. The hymn called "My Covenant" (page 6) is a beautiful consecration hymn, and may be used as a prayer. While the service is one of quiet reverence and deep devotion, it should be also a service of thankfulness and joy. Before coming to the service, and upon entering the church, God's blessing should be invoked. A prayer such as this will be helpful:



“Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name; through Christ our Lord Amen.”

After partaking of the bread, and also after partaking of the wine, the time of silence, with closed eyes and bowed heads, should be used for meditation and prayer. At this time the persons dearest to our hearts may be brought to God in prayer, and his guidance and blessing asked concerning the things which hold our hearts. Familiar words of Scripture and favorite hymns may be called to mind. The words of hymns such as “Just as I Am,” “Rock of Ages,” “My Faith Looks up to Thee,” “O Jesus, I Have Promised,” “Jesus Calls Us; O'er the Tumult,” may be used.

After the distribution of the wine, turning to praise and thanksgiving the following prayer may be used:

“Heavenly Father, we lift our hearts to Thee in gratitude and praise. We thank Thee, O Lord, for this hour of blessed fellowship, for the faith by which we have fed upon Christ, for the sense of Thy near Presence, for the assurance of our forgiveness, and for all the spiritual strength and



comfort Thou hast imparted to our souls. Grant us Thy divine help to keep the vows we have made; may the uplifting sense of Thy Presence leave us not as we leave Thy House, but remain to guide and defend our lives. Grant unto us patience and perseverance, that as often as we faint and grow weary we may be strengthened by Thy grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Such a service will make the entire day one of blessed memory and quiet joy. As we leave the church the Presence of Jesus, will go with us and in company with him, at home and at our work, we shall know the Christian's secret of a happy life.



CHAPTER II

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

There is no prescribed form of service either in the case of children of the Church who publicly confirm their baptismal vows or of those from outside the Church who are to receive the sacrament of baptism before they can come to the Communion.

There are therefore included in this chapter the orders for these services from "The Book of Common Worship" prepared by a committee of our General Assembly. They set forth clearly just what is the nature of the vows the new communicant takes; and where these services have been originally used, to read them time and again may well serve as a wholesome reminder of our transactions with God.

THE ORDER FOR
THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM
TO ADULTS

AND
THEIR RECEPTION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

¶ *When unbaptized persons apply for admission into the Church, they shall, in ordinary cases, after giving satisfaction with respect to their knowledge and piety, make a public profession of their faith in the presence of the congregation; and thereupon be baptized.—Directory for Worship, Chap. x, Sec. 4.*

¶ *The Candidates appearing before the Minister, he shall say,*

HEAR the Words of the Institution of this holy Sacrament, as delivered by our Lord and Saviour to His disciples, before His ascension to the right hand of God:

“All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Hence St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, called upon the people, saying, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that He will number among His people *these* present Persons, truly repenting and coming unto Him by



faith, and that this Baptism with water in His Name shall be unto *them* the sign and seal of the washing away of their sins, their engrafting into Christ, their regeneration by His Holy Spirit, and their engagement to be the Lord's.

¶ *The Minister shall then say to the Persons to be baptized, and each one shall answer, as follows:*

DEARLY beloved, who are come hither desiring to be baptized, you are now faithfully, for your part, in the presence of God and this congregation, to promise and answer to the following Questions.

Question. Do you receive and profess the Christian faith, and in this faith do you desire to be baptized?

Answer. I do.

Question. Do you confess your sins, and turn from them with godly sorrow, and put all your trust in the mercy of God, which is in Christ Jesus; and do you promise in His strength to lead a sober, righteous, and godly life?

Answer. I do.

¶ *The Question here following is to be omitted at this point in case this Order of Baptism is used in connection with that for the Confirmation of Baptismal Vows.*

Question. Now desiring to be received to the Lord's Supper, do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, submitting yourself to the lawful



authority and guidance of the Church,
and continuing in the peace and
fellowship of the people of God?

Answer. I do.

¶ *Then the Minister shall say,*

Let us pray.

WE beseech Thee, O Lord, that it may please
Thee to receive, and to sanctify with Thy
Spirit, *these Persons* now to be baptized according
to Thy Word; that *they* may obtain the fulness of
Thy grace, and ever remain in the number of Thy
faithful children; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

¶ *Then, all present reverently standing, the Person to be baptized
will kneel down, and the Minister, pronouncing his name,
shall pour or sprinkle water upon his forehead, saying,*

N—, I baptize thee in the Name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. *Amen.*

¶ *Then the Minister shall say,*

WE receive *this Person* into the congregation of
Christ's flock; in the confidence that *he* shall
never be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ
crucified, and to continue Christ's faithful *soldier*
and *servant* unto *his life's end*.

¶ *Here, if Persons who have been baptized in infancy are to
be received to the Lord's Supper, they may be called to come
forward; and the Minister, omitting the remainder of this
Order, may proceed with the Order for the Confirmation of
Baptismal Vows, the newly baptized persons still standing
in their places before him.*

¶ *Then the Minister (laying his hand, if such be his discretion, upon the head of every one in order kneeling before him) shall say,*

DEFEND, O Lord, *this Thy Child* with Thy heavenly grace; that *he* may continue Thine for ever; and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until *he* come unto Thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.

Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, we give Thee hearty thanks and praise that Thou hast not withheld Thy loving kindness from *these Thy servants*, but hast given *them* shelter within the covenant of Thy peace, and makest *them* to sit down at Thy Table. We entreat Thee of Thy great mercy to perfect in *them* the good work Thou hast begun; that *they*, being defended by Thy fatherly hand, and strengthened with power through Thy Spirit in the inward man, may be enabled to keep this covenant without spot, unrebukable, until the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

NOW unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

¶ *Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to Him.—Larger Catechism, 166.*



THE ORDER FOR
THE CONFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL
VOWS

AND
RECEPTION TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

¶ *At the time appointed, the Minister shall say,*

THESE Persons now to be named, who are baptized children of the Church, have been examined, and approved by the Session as to their knowledge and piety, and now present themselves publicly to confirm the vows made for them in Baptism.

¶ *The Minister shall then read their names, and they will come forward, and stand before him.*

¶ *Then addressing them, the Minister shall say,*

DEARLY beloved, in your Baptism you received the sign and seal of your engrafting into Christ, and were solemnly engaged to be the Lord's. And forasmuch as you now desire to confirm the covenant then made in your behalf, and to obey His commandment by confessing Him before men, you are to make answer faithfully to the following Questions.

Question. Do you here, in the presence of God and this congregation, confess Christ as your Lord, and adhere to that Christian faith wherein you were baptized?

Answer. I do.

Question. Do you ratify and confirm the vows of your Baptism, and promise with God's help to serve the Lord, and keep His commandments all the days of your life?

Answer. I do.

¶ *Here, if any Adults have been baptized at the same Service, the Minister shall address the following Question to them as well as to those who were baptized in infancy, and they shall be included in the following parts of this Order.*

Question. Now desiring to be received to the Lord's Supper, do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, submitting yourself to the lawful authority and guidance of the Church, and continuing in the peace and fellowship of the people of God?

Answer. I do.

¶ *Then the Minister (laying his hand, if such be his discretion, upon the head of every one in order kneeling before him) shall say,*

DEFEND, O Lord, *this Thy Child* with Thy heavenly grace; that *he* may continue Thine for ever; and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until *he* come unto Thy everlasting kingdom. Amen.

Let us pray.

ALMMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, we give Thee hearty thanks and praise that Thou hast not withheld Thy loving kindness from *these Thy servants*, but hast given *them* shelter within the



covenant of Thy peace, and makest *them* to sit down at Thy Table. We entreat Thee of Thy great mercy to perfect in *them* the good work Thou hast begun; that *they*, being defended by Thy fatherly hand, and strengthened with power through Thy Spirit in the inward man, may be enabled to keep this covenant without spot, unrebukable, until the day of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

NOW unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. *Amen.*

¶ *Children born within the pale of the visible Church, and dedicated to God in Baptism, are under the inspection and government of the Church; and are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper.—Directory for Worship, Chap. x, Sec. 1.*

¶ *The years of discretion in young Christians cannot be precisely fixed. This must be left to the prudence of the eldership. The Officers of the church are the judges of the qualifications of those to be admitted to scaling ordinances, and of the time when it is proper to admit young Christians to them.—Directory for Worship, Chap. x, Sec. 2.*

¶ *A public Service for the reception of baptized persons to the Communion is not to be regarded as a part of either Sacrament, nor as an invariable condition of their admission to the Lord's Supper, but simply as a method advisable in ordinary cases, the occasions when it may be necessary or proper to use some other method being left to the prudence and judgment of the Officers of the Church.*

CHAPTER III

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

A CHRISTIAN is one in whom Christ lives. The Christian bears the same name as Christ. It was not the only name used to describe the followers of Jesus. They were called "disciples." Jesus was their teacher. They were his pupils. They were called "believers" because they attached themselves to him in loving loyalty. They were called "saints" because they had separated themselves from the pagan world and had pledged themselves to purity. As their numbers grew they called themselves "brethren" for a bond united them that death could not break. Gradually, however, the followers of Jesus came to be called "Christians." We first meet with the name in the book of The Acts. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Acts 11:26. The name was first given in a spirit of scorn and ridicule, and in the New Testament it seems to have that meaning. Acts 26:28; I Peter. 4:16. The name identified Christians with Christ who had been crucified, and because the name was the truest of all descriptions it has lived and has become a word of love and loyalty. What greater honor could a Christian desire than to be

identified with Christ? A Christian is one in whom the Spirit of Christ lives. He has the mind of Christ.

It is possible to show how very simple and yet how very real this definition is. When the question is asked, "What is an American?" the reply is, "An American is one who loves America and is loyal to American ideals. He is one in whom the spirit of America lives." In like manner a Christian is one who loves Christ and is loyal to him. Robert Browning, the poet, so loved Italy and so identified himself with Italy that he could say:

Open my heart, and you will see
Graved inside of it "Italy."

A Christian can say, "Open my heart, and you will see graven inside of it 'Christ.'" The Apostle Paul was so united in faith and life to Jesus that he said, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me." The Christian bears the name of Christ and Christ's Spirit lives in him.

All that Jesus is means something to the Christian. Every name he bears is related to the need of the Christian. In a European city there are twelve statues of Christ erected upon the great bridge over the river. There are figures of Christ as a carpenter, a sower, a physician, a pilot, a friend, and before each, according to their need, the devout people of that Roman Catholic country wait and worship.



There is, of course, only one Christ, and yet he comes to each one of us according to his need. Every name of Jesus relates the Christian to his Lord.

“Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
Accept the praise I bring.”

In the New Testament Jesus bears a threefold name. This threefold name alone adequately describes him, and a Christian is one who lives in the spirit of all that is implied in this triple name: The Lord Jesus Christ.

1. He is called the Lord. The Christian should therefore follow him. The first thing Jesus demanded of those who professed faith in him was that they follow him. He called one after another to him saying, “Follow me,” and among the very first doctrines of the Church is the one which simply stated the fact, “Jesus is Lord.” I Cor. 12:3.

Jesus did not expect his disciples to understand him fully. He asked them to follow him, to obey him, to live with him, and in his presence they would come to know him. It was only after the disciples had been with Jesus many months that he said, “Who say ye that I am?” and because they had followed him and lived with him, Peter was able to say, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”



In speaking to boys and girls about becoming Christians, Henry Drummond once said, "If any of you want to know how to begin to be a Christian, all I can say is that you should begin to do the next thing you find to do as Christ would have done it."

A Christian then is one whose Master is the Lord Jesus Christ. What Jesus wants him to be, he will try to be, and what Jesus wants him to do, he will try to do. The prayer of his heart will be,

"O Master, let me walk with thee,
In lowly paths of service free."

2. He is called Jesus. Before he was born it was said of him, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." For this reason there is no name sweeter than the name of Jesus. We call him Jesus because he is our Saviour. He is our Saviour from the sin of our own hearts. We only know what a terrible thing sin is when we see Jesus. It was for our sin he suffered and died upon the cross. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin," and in his death we find life. When we speak of sin, we mean not only wrong acts and wrong words, but wrong thoughts and wrong feelings. We sin in wandering from his ways, in wasting his gifts, in forgetting his love, and in Jesus we find not only pardon and peace but power to live true to him.

When King Oscar of Sweden was on his deathbed the queen, a beautiful Christian woman, bent over him and whispered in his ear, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The king opened his eyes and said, "Thanks be to Jesus." Those were his last words, and in that name he fell asleep trusting. In life, as in death, we, too, can trust and not be afraid.

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

3. He is called Christ. When the first disciples were able to say, "Jesus is the Christ," they became by that confession Christians. To call Jesus "Christ" is to confess that he is God's Anointed, God's King, and that in him the Kingdom of God has come. In him all God's promises and revelations are perfected. He is Son of Man, and Son of God. Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." For us Jesus is God.

This is the faith of the Christian. This faith is expressed in most wonderful words by the Apostle Paul. Phil. 2:5-11. Every Christian should know these matchless verses and treasure them in his heart; "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to



be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The Christian believes that Jesus is God. He worships and adores him, and the hope of his heart is that some day he will see him as he is. A Christian is one who has the mind of Christ. In him the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and his one ambition is to be like Christ. The motto of his life is, "For me to live is Christ." The prayer of the apostle is his prayer, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

In one of his sermons Phillips Brooks pictured Michelangelo, the great artist, standing at a window looking into a house where the canvas was stretched,



the paints all prepared, the brushes arranged and ready. As he stood looking he said, "If I were inside what a picture I could paint!" The story contains a parable. Suppose we forget Michelangelo and think of Jesus. It is he who stands looking in upon us. Talent and thought, affection and all great possibilities, await his coming. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man . . . open the door, I will come in." When he comes, life becomes Christian, for a Christian is one in whom Christ lives.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT IT MEANS TO CONFESS CHRIST

A CHRISTIAN cannot be a coward. He cannot be a Christian and not acknowledge his relation to Christ. Not to openly confess Jesus is to deny him. Somewhere the story is told of a village church which possessed a clock that had no hands. Year by year the clock was faithfully wound up and kept in running order. It gave the sexton much trouble and the village no service. A Christian who does not confess Christ is like a clock that lacks both hands. If we are friends of Jesus we cannot be ashamed of him. Jesus spoke in strong words concerning those who were ashamed of him. He said, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words . . . the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him." A young student who had lived a selfish Christian life, without openly acknowledging Jesus, said on his deathbed, "I am not afraid to die, but I am ashamed."

All life must express itself. The sun must shine and the river flow. The flame that is smothered dies. The life that is denied expression disappears, and it is for this reason that faith and confession are placed side by side in the gospel. The Apostle

Paul said: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

There are various ways of confessing Christ. We confess him when we take our places publicly beside those who love him. Those who call themselves Christians meet together for fellowship and worship, and wherever they meet there is found the Christian church. The Church is not the building, but the people who worship in the building. Even if they worshiped in the open air they would still form a church. The Church is the Christian people who meet together for worship. Jesus himself said that where two or three meet together he is in the midst. If we are true Christians we will seek the fellowship of those who love the Lord. This is what we mean by "joining the Church." We do not join an organization, or unite with a building, but we unite ourselves to those who love the Lord. In publicly uniting with the Church we confess our Christian faith.

The great act of confession on the part of Christians is the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Communion is the great public avowal on the part of the Church of its faith in Jesus. Communion



means "common life" and in that service we proclaim that Christians live in fellowship with one another and with their Lord. Sometimes this service is called the "sacrament." This is not a Bible word, but it is a word of deep significance. The "sacramentum" was the oath of loyalty to the emperor which was administered to Roman soldiers, and for us the "sacrament" means that we have pledged allegiance to Christ, our King. Sometimes the Communion is called the "Eucharist" which means "thanksgiving" and is taken from the words used in the New Testament, "He gave thanks." We speak of it also as the "Lord's Supper." It is the Lord Jesus who invites us as guests to his table, and there we confess our need of him and our dependence upon him. We receive from Christ's hands our spiritual food. He is the Giver, we are the recipients, and the grace which comes to us comes not from the bread or the wine, but through faith in him, who is the Giver of every good and perfect gift.

To proclaim ourselves Christians with our lips and deny Christ in our lives is hypocrisy. The true confession of Christ is by means of a consistent Christian life. The life of the Christian is to be a living epistle to be read by all men, and the test of Jesus is final: "By their fruits ye shall know them." The Christian life is the highest type of life. A



Christian should be a better student, a better brother, a better sister, a better son, a better daughter, a better friend, than one who is not a Christian. In speaking of consistency of life, Emerson once said, "What you are stands over you the while and thunders so that I cannot hear what you say to the contrary."

We should confess Christ to ourselves. We may accustom ourselves to think and feel and act as Christians. We can hold ourselves to our best. When we are tempted to do or to say anything unworthy, we can assert our Christian standing to our own hearts: "No, I cannot do it, I cannot say it, I cannot think it, I cannot desire it; I am a Christian." Every day, and many times a day, we can say to ourselves, "I am a child of the King; Jesus is my Saviour; I cannot deny him; I am a Christian." We can choose our companions and our life work in conformity with our Christian faith. It is a wonderful thing to confess Christ to ourselves, and to determine in our hearts that we shall always and everywhere be loyal to him.

CHAPTER V

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHURCH MEMBER

IN the Apostles' Creed we say, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." The word "catholic" means "universal" and describes the Church of Christ throughout the world. The Christian Church is divided into three great sections: The Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic, and the Protestant. The Protestant Church is divided into many denominations, such as the Presbyterian, the Methodist, the Episcopalian, the Baptist, the Lutheran, the Congregational. In the United States there are at least twelve separate denominations classified as Presbyterian in creed and form of government.

Every Christian should have an intelligent understanding as to what Church membership means, and every Presbyterian should be a consistent and an informed Church member. He should know the things for which the Presbyterian Church stands. He should know why he is a Presbyterian. He should know both the creed and the government of his Church.

The creed of the Presbyterian Church is "Calvinistic." John Calvin was a great scholar and Bible

student, and he formulated the teaching of the Bible into a consistent system of theology. This system of doctrine found expression in "The Westminster Standards" of the Presbyterian Church: "The Confession of Faith," "The Larger Catechism," and "The Shorter Catechism," which were prepared during the seventeenth century, and are accepted by this Church as Standards of Doctrine and Government subordinate to the Holy Scriptures. These Standards have been slightly revised since but on the whole they remain substantially the same as when prepared. A "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith" which was adopted by the Church in 1902 may be found in "The Hymnal." This creed has been held by the Waldenses of Italy, the Reformers of Holland, Germany, and Switzerland, the Puritans of England, the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Calvinists of Wales, the Huguenots of France, and all those holding the Presbyterian faith in all the world.

The Roman Catholic Church believes in the infallibility of the Pope, and denies that there is salvation outside of that Church. The Protestant Episcopal Church, like the Roman Catholic, believes that the priestly ordination of the clergy comes through "an uninterrupted succession of bishops and through them of priests and deacons in the Church," and that only those who are so ordained are



qualified to administer the sacraments, and that this qualification in regard to "apostolic succession" does not belong to ministers of other Protestant Churches. The Baptist Church administers baptism to adults only and by immersion only. The Presbyterians administer baptism by the sprinkling of water, yet hold that immersion also is valid and that children of Christian homes are to be baptized. In the past the Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church were separated in their teaching concerning the doctrine of election, the Presbyterian Church asserting the sovereignty of God in the bestowal of the grace that accompanies salvation; the Methodist Church holding to the freedom and power of the human heart to resist divine grace. Many controversies that once divided the Protestant Church are no longer considered of importance, and in essentials the Christian Church was never so united as it is now and never more loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Presbyterian Church has always stood unreservedly for the sovereignty of God in the bestowal of grace, the supremacy of the Scriptures, the right of the people to rule themselves, the freedom and responsibility of man, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, and the obligation to preach the gospel to the whole world. The terms of Church membership, however, are simple. While officers give their

allegiance to the creed of the Church as outlined in the Standards, the door of entrance into the membership of the Presbyterian Church is as wide as the door of heaven itself. In the "Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith" the Presbyterian Church has written down these notable words.

"We receive to our communion all who confess and obey Christ as their divine Lord and Saviour, and we hold fellowship with all believers in him."

A distinguishing mark of the Presbyterian Church is its government. Generally speaking there are four types of Church government: The Papal or Roman Catholic; the Episcopal; the Congregational, and the Presbyterian. The Roman Catholic looks to the Pope of Rome as its supreme head. It corresponds in civil government to an absolute monarchy. The Episcopal form of government looks to control by diocesan bishops and is followed in America by the Protestant Episcopal and in a modified form by the Methodist Episcopal Churches. The Congregational or Independent form of government holds each congregation supreme in itself, and is followed by Congregationalists, Baptists, and Disciples of Christ.

The Presbyterian Church follows a representative form of government and is similar in its organization to the government of the United States. It is



democratic and representative. There are four courts of the Church: The church session, the presbytery, the synod, and the General Assembly.

The session consists of the pastor and the elders of the local church, chosen by the vote of the members of the church. The church session maintains "the spiritual government of the congregation." It has power "to receive members into the church; to admonish, to rebuke, to suspend or exclude from the sacraments, those who are found to deserve censure; to concert the best measures for promoting the spiritual interests of the congregation; to supervise the Sabbath school and the various societies or agencies of the congregation; and to appoint delegates to the higher judicatories of the Church."

The presbytery is composed of all ministers and one elder from each of the churches in a certain district. It is the unit of authority in the Presbyterian Church. It deals with all matters brought before it from church sessions, examines and ordains candidates for the ministry; installs and removes pastors; safeguards the purity and peace, and watches over the welfare, of the churches under its care.

The synod is composed of the presbyteries in a certain area, usually within the limits of the

state. We speak, for example, of the Presbytery of New York, which is made up of the churches within the radius of New York City. The Synod of New York, however, is formed by the union of all the presbyteries within New York State. The synod reviews the records of the presbyteries within its bounds, and oversees the work of the presbyteries under its care.

The General Assembly is the highest court of the Church. It consists of an equal number of ministers and elders chosen by each presbytery in proportion to its membership. The Assembly meets once a year and passes decision on all matters brought to it by presbyteries or synods. The Assembly cannot alter the creed or form of government of the Church without the approval of the majority of the presbyteries. We see from this that the presbytery is the unit of authority. This is why our Church is called Presbyterian.

The Presbyterian Church member should support his church, both in its local expenses and in its benevolent and missionary program. He should consider it a privilege to be able to carry forward the work of his Church. He should ask himself the question, "What kind of church would my church be, if all the members were just like me?" There is work within the local church for each

member, and each should determine where his place is. It may be in the Sunday school, or the Young People's Society, or in connection with the women's work, or the men's work, or the missionary and social service program of the church.

Every Church member should carry not only his share of the work of the Church but also of the financial burden of the Church. One of the joys of Church membership is in sharing with others the support of the work of the Church, and it is the duty of every member of the Church to discover the method by which the Church carries forward its local and benevolent work and participate and share in that program.

The Presbyterian Church carries on a nation-wide and a world-wide missionary program. The members of the Presbyterian Church are organized into nearly ten thousand congregations. In the Sunday schools of these churches nearly a million and a half pupils are enrolled. The program for the enlargement of the missionary work of the Church calls for a large increase. The Church has at present nine benevolent and missionary Boards, and several permanent committees, which carry on the work of the Church at home and abroad. These Presbyterian agencies are: The Board of Home Missions; The Woman's Board of Home Missions; the Board of Foreign Missions; The Board of



Publication and Sabbath School Work; The Board of Church Election; The Board of Ministerial Relief and Sustentation; The Board of Missions for Freedmen; The General Board of Education; The Board of Temperance and Moral Welfare; The Executive Commission; The Permanent Committee on Evangelism; The Permanent Committee on Vacancy and Supply; The Permanent Committee on Men's Work; and The Committee on Sabbath Observance. Every Presbyterian should be proud of the work which is being done and should rejoice in the joy of participation. Only to those who give themselves to the Church in loving loyalty and in constant service will the Church contribute all that it has to give.



CHAPTER VI

GROWING IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE Japanese have cultivated the art of growing great forest trees in flower pots. Some of these dwarf trees are a century old and yet are only two or three feet high. The gardener instead of growing trees at their best takes pains to keep them little. They are repressed, crippled, stunted, starved, dwarfed. God meant them to be giant trees of the forest. Instead of giant trees they are dwarfs.

It is often so with Christians. God means that we shall "attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Instead of growing and becoming perfect we often become repressed and dwarfed. God wishes us to grow, to grow strong, to grow beautiful, to grow useful. Peter admonished the Christians of his day to "grow in the grace and knowledge of . . . Jesus Christ." Salvation is ever going forward unto perfection. In the language of the New Testament we are "being saved." God wants us to be stalwart and not dwarfed Christians. We are

called upon to add to our faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.

Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow." "They are found in their proper place. They are where they were meant to be, if they are growing; not only so, the flowers are working in harmony with great laws. Every flower draws its beauty from the sun: the flower roots itself in dark places, and prays with open face for the great light, and holds itself out with gracious willingness to catch every drop of dew that it can hold. So we must be in our proper spheres, in our right relations: we must keep the company of life and nature as God has established it, then we shall truly, with a wide and healthy wisdom, behold the fowls and and consider the lilies." It will help us if we are careful to keep our lives in touch with the great Christian laws under which growth is made possible.

The first of these laws is the law of public worship. The growing Christian is a worshiping Christian. The trees of the forest have intertwined branches because they have interlocked roots. It is for this reason the New Testament warns Christians not to forsake the assembling of themselves together. The voice of praise, the common worship, the fellowship

of confession, the sacred hush of the heart, are the atmosphere in which life unfolds. In the sacraments we are fed with the Bread that cometh down from heaven. A Christian who neglects public worship dwarfs his soul and makes growth impossible. When the Sabbath came, Jesus was found in his place in the synagogue. He might easily have excused himself, and could have discovered many reasons why he should absent himself from the synagogue of his day. The synagogue of his day was bankrupt, but Jesus had formed the habit of churchgoing in his childhood and maintained it to the end of his life. Whatever young people miss in life, they should not miss the service for worship. Be in your place before the service begins. "Study to be quiet." Learn how to pray, avoid criticism, learn to listen to God. Worship is an art. In it we are not spectators; we are participants. Toward the end of his life, Theodore Roosevelt wrote down the following reasons for churchgoing:

1. In this actual world, a churchless community, a community where men have abandoned and scoffed at or ignored their religious needs, is a community on the rapid down grade.

2. Church work and church attendance mean the cultivation of the habit of feeling some responsibility for others.



3. There are enough holidays for most of us. Sundays differ from other holidays in the fact that there are fifty-two of them every year—therefore on Sundays go to church.

4. Yes, I know all the excuses. I know that one can worship the Creator in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in a man's own house, just as well as in a church. But I also know, as a matter of cold fact, the average man does not thus worship.

5. He may not hear a good sermon at church. He will hear a sermon by a good man who, with his good wife, is engaged all the week in making hard lives a little easier.

6. He will listen to and take part in reading some beautiful passages from the Bible. And if he is not familiar with the Bible, he has suffered a loss.

7. He will take part in singing some good hymns.

8. He will meet and nod or speak to good, quiet neighbors. He will come away feeling a little more charitable toward all the world, even toward those excessively foolish young men who regard church-going as a soft performance.

9. I advocate a man's joining in church work for the sake of showing his faith by his work.



The second law is the law of prayer. Nothing else will give tone to our lives like private prayer. Prayer will either kill our sin, or sin will kill our prayer. Prayer is communion with God. It is the expression of religious life. It is the bond that unites us to the unseen. In its true sense it is not the effort to bend God's will to meet ours, but the surrender of our wills to his. When he was ill in America, Rudyard Kipling, in the delirium of fever, murmured his childhood prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." The nurse who had bent over him to catch his words, drew back saying, "Oh, I thought you wanted something." He opened his eyes and said: "I do want something, I want my heavenly Father. He only can help me." They that wait upon God shall renew their strength.

The third law is the law of Bible study. In prayer we speak to God. When we read the Bible we permit God to speak with us. Bible study is the great maker of character. We are what our aspirations and our friendships are. In the Bible we keep close company with the great spirits of the religious world, and through their lives and ideals we are lifted up and made strong. Above all we hold fellowship there with Jesus Christ our Lord and Master, and the words which he speaks unto us are words of life.

Speaking of the influence of the Bible upon his

life, John Ruskin said, "I have just opened my oldest (in use) Bible . . . Yellow, now, with age, and flexible, but not unclean, with much use, except that the lower corners of the pages at 8th of 1st Kings, and 32d Deuteronomy, are worn somewhat thin and dark, the learning of these two chapters having cost me much pains. My mother's list of the chapters with which, thus learned, she established my soul in life, has just fallen out of it. I will take what indulgence the incurious reader can give me, for printing the list thus accidentally occurrent: Exodus 15 and 20; II Samuel 1; I Kings 8; Psalm 23, 32, 90, 91, 103, 112, 119, 139; Proverbs 2, 3, 8, 12; Isaiah 58; Matthew 5, 6, 7; Acts 26; I Corinthians 13, 15; James 4; Revelation 5, 6.

"And truly, though I have picked up the elements of a little further knowledge. . . I count very confidently the most precious, and, on the whole, the one essential part of my education."

Every Christian should strive earnestly not only to create but to establish in his life habits of private Bible study.

The fourth law is the law of expression. One of the great students of psychology has said, "That which is not expressed dies. If there is, therefore, within one any desire, thought, feeling, or purpose,



that he would kill, he must simply deny it all expression; it will die—though a merely negative method here, too, may not wholly succeed. On the other hand, if there is anything he wishes to have live, he must express it. If we would have our purposes mean anything, we must put them into acts." The Christian life finds expression in a thousand different ways, in the home, in the church, on the street, and in the market place.

The Christian life expresses itself in witness-bearing. Among his last words, Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye shall be my witnesses." If our religion means anything to us, we ought to feel that it may mean just as much to others, and it should be the burden of our hearts to try to bring those we love and those we know into fellowship with Jesus Christ, our Lord. A little boy, whose father was a physician, was asked as to the whereabouts of his father. The lad replied, "I do not know, but he is helping somewhere." The Christian is always helping somewhere, and above all he is helping to bring others to Christ.

The fifth law is the law of stewardship. We are stewards. Sooner or later we must give an account to God of our stewardship. We hold our lives in trust for God. Time and talent and property are all held in trust. To give of our means for the furthering of the gospel requires serious thought.



More is required of us than to give. We must give wisely. The New Testament sets before us definite rules for Christian stewardship: "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper." In this great verse the apostle laid down three principles. The first of these is the principle of personal responsibility. No exception is made for anyone. One of the duties of every Church member is to carry his share of responsibility. The second principle is that of system; "Upon the first day of the week." The third is the principle of proportion; "As he may prosper."

The rule in the Old Testament was to give one tenth of one's income to the Lord. This is a wise and helpful plan, and among Christians, many of the most generous are those who follow the practice of tithing. The words of William E. Gladstone, the great English statesman, who in his lifetime gave away nearly half a million dollars, are exceedingly interesting: "In regard to money, there is a great advantage in its methodical use. Especially is it wise to dedicate a certain portion of our means to purposes of charity and religion, and this is more easily begun in youth than in after life. The greatest advantage of making a little fund of this kind is, that when we are asked to give, competition is not between self on the one hand and any charity



on the other, but between the different purposes of religion and charity with one another, among which we ought to make the most careful choice. It is desirable that the tenth of our means be dedicated to God, and it tends to bring a blessing on the rest. No one can tell the richness of the blessings that come to those who thus honor the Lord with their substance."

These are some of the laws by which the Christian will grow in grace and in spiritual helpfulness. They are means of grace to those who will follow them. The aim and goal of the Christian life is to be like Christ. The habits of his life should become the habits of our lives, and to become like him our fondest hope. "Now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."

CHAPTER VII

THE TRUTH ABOUT TEMPTATION

ONE of the world's religious leaders has said that there is only one subject worth talking about to young people, and that is the subject of temptation. When you come to think of it, that is the only subject worth talking about to anyone whether he is young or old, for in the last analysis life is just a battle, a struggle, a contest, in which we succeed or fail. We speak of the battle of life, the fight for character, the struggle for existence, and it means that day by day, and year by year, we are face to face with the testing of life which assumes the form of temptation.

The first fact about temptation is that it holds in its keeping the element of surprise. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Men fail as a rule where they are strongest and least on their guard. Temptation changes its form but the element of surprise never disappears. The Old Testament representation of temptation as a serpent, wily, deceptive, but very alert, is true to the facts as we know them. Henry Drummond says that when he went to Africa he thought he would escape the temptations which beset him in Scotland, but

he found that even in Africa, in the very heart of the dark continent, the old temptations which had dogged his steps in Edinburgh, lifted the door of his tent and looked him in the face. No one of us knows the secret struggles, the unworthy surrenders, the silent victories, which go on in the lives of others. We see the failure sometimes but we do not know the long fight against the temptation. It is the part of wisdom to remember that the strongest line of our life may be the very place where the enemy may break through. The attack comes where we least expect it.

The second fact about temptation is that it is a human trait. Temptation is common to our humanity. Temptation grows out of the fact that we are human. We cannot run away from it any more than we can run away from our own shadows. St. Anthony found in the desert the same temptations that possessed his heart in the great city. We carry our own temptations with us. The prodigal son did not need to travel by train or carriage to reach the far country. The far country could be discovered in his own heart, in his own thoughts, and in his own imagination.

There is nothing new, therefore, about any temptation that overtakes any one of us. The temptations that dog our steps are as old as the race, as old as the ages. The temptations that lure men on

to-day are the very temptations that the men of Babylon and Egypt and Greece and Rome faced centuries ago. It is not out of conditions that temptations grow but out of the heart of man. There the victory must be won, and there the triumph must be achieved.

But in this there is encouragement and hope. There is nothing exceptional about your condition whatever it may be. Others have traveled the road that you find so difficult for your feet. There is nothing peculiar or unique about your moral problems. Others have faced the same allurements to doubt, to indulgence, and to evil. Other men have passed over the face of the same precipice and found a footing there. Other men have threaded the raging rapids and avoided the rocks. Where they have gone you can go, too. This is the timeless battle that knows no armistice. In the last analysis every man must fight and win his battle alone.

The third fact about temptation is that it has a meaning. There is an intelligent purpose about it. It is under control. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able." Temptation is not a high-powered car in the hands of a child, but is a high-powered car in the hands of a skilled mechanic who knows how to guide it wisely and well. God does not originate the temptation but he guides and controls it. There is no other



way for God than to trust us and test us. Like the athlete we must struggle against some resistance if we are to develop our moral muscle. Temptation is like the sand on the sliding car track which gives the wheel its grip. It is like the kit on the soldier's back which gives him the power to endure. It is like the lion in the way opposing our progress, past which we must go if we are to gain the Palace Beautiful.

Temptation is just the testing of life. It is neutral and goes with us to the very end, to be turned into victory or to turn us into weakness. We do not grow out of it even when we grow stronger and wiser and cleaner in thought and life. We may grow out of the temptations that once beset us, but we shall then meet with temptations in more subtle and sinister forms. Temptation met Jesus on the threshold of his life, and, although he mastered it, it left him only "for a season." It looked him in the face when he hung upon the cross. When a man becomes a Christian he does not escape temptation. Jesus was made perfect through suffering. Temptation is the proving of character, the tempering of life to nobler issues.

The fourth fact about temptation is that it is powerless. Temptation is not a blind alley. With every temptation there is a way of escape. The road is not closed but opens out into liberty and

freedom. In the old days the Spartans whispered to each other that the battle could never be too fierce, nor the way too rough, nor the struggle too severe, for always there was a way of escape and the door stood open. They meant, of course, that they need never be beaten, for if the struggle became too hard, suicide offered a way out. Paul, however, was thinking of another open door, not the open door of defeat, but the door of escape, of salvation, and of victory. It relieves the pressure and the strain of life to know that victory lies beyond the struggle. Physicians who deal with nervousness, state that the first and fundamental condition is to lodge in the patient's mind the assurance that nervousness is curable. They concentrate their efforts upon making this fact perfectly clear, and by repeated assertions that nervousness is curable they arouse the spirit of hope and faith. Out of every temptation there is a way of escape. There is an open door and a path that leads into peace.

The Duke of Wellington once wished to lead his forces across a wide and bridgeless river. Standing upon a hillside, he took his field glass and followed the course of the river until he discovered on one side a village and opposite that village a little town. "There must be some communication between those two places," he said as he lowered his glass, and, leading his forces down, he found that the river

could be crossed at that place. Let us be sure that there is some path, some way of escape, out of the fears that press upon us. The way of escape is never closed. This fact about temptation holds in its keeping the promise of victory.

Let us be sure that God will not fail us, for he is faithful and will not suffer us to be defeated. He will not stand aside. His sword will not be sheathed until we find deliverance. But let us not fight alone. Our will power is just as weak as we are ourselves, and unless the eternal God undergirds and re-enforces our wills, we shall be overcome and vanquished in the struggle.

Herein lies our hope. Let us not fight alone. The eternal God is our refuge. Call to mind the old story of Ulysses who passed the sirens with their fascinating music because he was tied to the mast. That is one way of overcoming temptation. You may sign your declaration of independence in your own blood, but your resolve and your endurance will depend upon your own weak will. Call to mind the sequel of that classic story and remember how the Argonauts passed the rocks and the sirens with all their allurements because they had on board one who could sing a sweeter song than the sirens ever knew. Charmed by the music of Orpheus the bewitching music of the sirens lost its charm. You, too, may call to your side One who sings the



song of victory, who fought the fight and who overcame, and who stands in the center of life victorious. Temptations lose their power when he is nigh. He came to proclaim release to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bound. He is the Master of men; with him defeat is impossible. Give yourself to him in a glad surrender and discover for yourself that he is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless, when the fight is done.



CHAPTER VIII

LOYAL UNTO THE LAST

TO be loyal to one's covenanted promise is the first mark of true nobility. No nation and no individual can violate a pledged promise without disaster and ultimate ruin. Life may be surrendered, but truth and fidelity, righteousness and loyalty, will endure throughout eternity. Recall to mind a familiar page in classic history. Regulus was a prisoner of Rome's ancient enemy, Carthage. He was sent by the Carthaginians to Rome to persuade his people to make peace. He took an oath that if peace were not declared he would return. He went to Rome and instead of pleading for peace urged his people to continue the war. The senate and the high priest absolved him from his bond saying that it had been extorted from him and was not binding. Regulus replied: "I am a Roman. Would you dishonor me? I have sworn to return. It is my duty to go. Let the gods take care of the rest." He returned to Carthage, where he was tortured and put to death.

God is a holy God. He is jealous of his name and his honor. He is God and will not lie. He is a covenant-keeping God, keeping covenant from

generation to generation. "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie." If you follow the history of that covenant you will strike the path that leads to Calvary and the cross. The burden of man's broken covenant fell upon God. Man's treachery made God's burden and the cross of Christ. He suffered the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, to make reconciliation for the sin of the world. We, too, are under promise. We have taken our sacramental oath to be loyal. Let us keep faith forever.

1. Let us keep faith with ourselves. A Christian must possess a fine self-respect and keep faith with himself. When all is said and done a man must live with himself. He must keep faith with the best that is in him, if he is to have fellowship with himself. He must be true to the divine voice within him. He must be loyal to his own high calling and to the dignity that is his as a child of God. "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Respect your divine Guest. We read that Napoleon once stabled his horses in Cologne Cathedral. We instinctively resent the needless desecration. But such desecration is pure compared with the life that gives to evil an abiding place. Keep your heart pure. Be loyal to yourself.



2. Let us keep faith with others. Let us keep faith with those who love and trust us. We are often thrown into new and untried situations, and the happiness and well-being of others, who love us better than life, are always in our keeping. The dedication of a remarkably popular war book is as interesting as the book itself. When the book was written, the author was far from home and had been in many strange places and with many strange people. He had faced new friends and new forms of frightfulness, but when he came to send forth the book that made him famous, he dedicated it, "To my mother and my sister." That is a fine tribute to the mother and the sister of the author, but it is also a fine tribute to the author himself. One likes to feel that the pledge of youth is kept with those who have been best beloved and whose love lasts longest. One remembers Penelope and her unfinished task. Her soldier husband had gone to the war and was thought lost. Suitors sought her hand. She promised to wed when the web she was weaving was finished. But it was never finished. What was done in the day was unraveled in the night, and, in that faith and loyalty, she waited and won. Her unfinished task has become a proverb of work that is useless and incomplete, but in the truest sense she kept the faith and held her love inviolate to the end. It is in that spirit that our home folks



watch and wait, and in our hands are their hearts and their happiness.

3. Let us keep faith with God. We have entered into covenant relations with him. Recognize the truth that religion is not an extra obligation but the motive power of all obligation. Cast yourself upon God. Let no one rob you of your confidence. In new and untried circumstances be true to him in whose hands are the issues of life and death. He will not fail you.

The history of the last of the royal line of France, the young Prince Louis, has always been veiled in fascinating mystery. Taken in boyhood from the palace he was cast among immoral persons and set in unworthy surroundings, so as to degrade his soul and allow his claim to the throne to sink into oblivion. Tempted and tried, harassed on every side, dogged by those who sought to submerge his soul, he would again and again resent the suggestions and revolt from the influences that were thrown around him saying: "I can't do it. I can't say it. I was born to be a king." Assert your royalty. Let no man take your crown. Keep covenant with God and keep faith with your own soul.

And be sure of this: God, the eternal God, will keep faith with you. Cast at his feet the burden of your care. Make his cause yours. It is not you who exalt the cause but the cause that ennobles



and exalts you. You are coworkers with him. He will never leave you. He will never forsake and never forget you. Heaven and earth may pass but his Word will not pass. In life and in death he will prove faithful. Alan Seeger, the young American poet, who fell in the first days of the war, wrote the beautiful lines:

I have a rendezvous with Death
At some disputed barricade.

Let us change the word "death." The Christian has no rendezvous with death. He has a rendezvous with Christ, who is eternal life. Then let us say:

"I have a rendezvous with Christ

When Spring trips north again this year,
And I to my pledged word am true,
I shall not fail that rendezvous."



