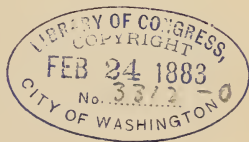


THE
BLIND MAN'S CREED

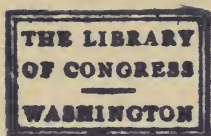
AND
OTHER SERMONS

BY
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NEW YORK
ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY
900 BROADWAY, COR. 20th ST



BX9178
P3B6

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ANSON D. F. RANDOLPH & COMPANY.

EDWARD O. JENKINS,
Printer,
20 North William St.

NEW YORK:

ROBERT RUTTER,
Binder,
116 and 118 East 14th Street.

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I.

THE BLIND MAN'S CREED.

*"He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner,
I know not ; one thing I know, that whereas
I was blind, now I see."*—JOHN ix. 25.

THE text and context formed our morning's Bible-lesson. We found much in the narrative which, I am sure, prepossessed us in the blind man's favor. St. John was evidently interested in him. He has devoted to him an entire chapter; which is exceptional. Though a writer be inspired, we can, nevertheless, tell what he enjoys and admires by the tone and detail in which he writes. An Evangelist, as well as a Gibbon, *betrays* his interest and his sympathies. An author's feelings break through between the paragraphs, and peep out from between the lines. It is so when Abbot writes the life of Napoleon; it is so when St. John writes the life of Christ, and this little sketch of the blind man.

In some unusual way the blind man appears to have been wrought into the plan of our Lord's ministry. He had been born blind, and had remained

blind all those dark, weary, and lonesome years, in order that when Jesus passed along the way that morning he might be there ready by the roadside, and be healed by Him. There was something that made him a special candidate for divine mercy. He healed him without being asked to heal him. It was a fixed fact in the scheme of redemption that this man should have his eyes opened. All lives and events are wrought into that scheme; only this man's more *obviously* so.

It gives an added interest to the event that the blind man was the first confessor in the new kingdom. He was that sort of person that we should suppose our Lord would have found it particularly pleasant to do something for. He was ready to do what he could for himself, if what he could not do for himself the Lord would do for him. And so when he was told to go and wash, he went without making any words about it. Unlike Naaman, Willingness was one characteristic of him. Sturdiness was another. He spoke his mind, even though it cost him the accusation of heresy and the verdict of excommunication. His thoughts were distinct, and, therefore, his utterances were so. "One thing I know: I was blind; now I see." Crisp thinking makes crisp speaking.

The words of our text form a kind of confession of faith, a sort of creed. The man who uttered them was physically submitted to the power of Christ; and

if we may judge from the issue, inwardly submitted to him also. This creed we shall, therefore, designate as a Christian creed. Some elements and peculiarities of it we shall spend a little time in considering.

It is a short creed. "Whether this man be a sinner, I know not; one thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see. *"One thing I know."* A creed with one article. His whole mind and interest are gathered upon one fact. I know nothing else but simply this one thing,—I was blind, now I see. "I can see":—that is his creed; that is his confession of faith; that is his catechism. Shorter catechism. Pretty soon we find his creed enlarging, but it all developed out of this as its small and tense beginning. And one reason why it could be so tense is that it was so small. We have very long creeds now, as compared with those that used to be spoken. It is no matter how long a creed is, indeed the longer the better, if only the man believes it—believes it, that is, as this man believed his. What is there that a Christian would not be capable of to-day if he believed the whole of the Apostles' creed or the whole of the Presbyterian confession of faith in exactly the same way that the man in our story believed his creed when he said, *One thing I know; I can see.* This is no plea then against long creeds. If a creed is believed (and by "believed," I mean,—taken hold of and appropriated by the whole intellectual, emotional, and

moral man), if a creed is believed, the longer it is the better; otherwise, the shorter the better. Creed is like stature, it has to be reached by the *individual*, by slow *growth* from a *small beginning*.

There is some one thing that we shall believe first. Every actual creed of the individual, as of the Church, commences with one article,—"one thing I know." And the intensity with which we believe that will determine a good deal as to our power of believing more. The vitality of the seed will determine how much will come out of it. Every fire begins with a spark. Combustion is a contagion. Combustion generates combustion. I am interested less then in knowing how many things a Christian believes, than in knowing how much he believes a few things. A man believes effectively only so much as he believes easily. The intensity of light varies inversely with the amount of territory over which it is diffused. The intensity of faith varies inversely with the area of doctrine over which it is distributed.

Some of us, I am sure, are trying to believe too much; not more than is true; not more than we ought to be able to believe sometime, either in this world or perhaps not until the next, but more than we have present inward strength for, more than thought can respond to or experience guarantee. We sometimes extinguish a fire by putting on too much fuel. Possibly the Church has been loading

down the piety of Christendom with too much fuel. Possibly some of the infidelity current to-day is only the effort which smouldering Christianity is making to relieve itself of excessive pressure, and that a more ardent piety will presently be the result of it. Perhaps you have seen the fires in a burning brush-heap made brighter and hotter by having the top of the pile pushed over and the imprisoned and discouraged flames released.

However this may be with society and Christendom at large, it is certainly the case with many individual Christians. If a man has been strenuously indoctrinated from his childhood, the time will be very liable to come (especially if he is a thinking man and lives in a questioning age), the time will be very liable to come when he will say to himself, "Why, I don't believe all this." And then as he begins searching and sadly to explore himself, he finds that it is very little after all that he does believe—believe as our confessor did when he said, "I can see." It is a critical time with him. He begins throwing away his creed, one article of it after another. One stick of unkindled fuel after another is laid off, and he gets down very near to the bottom of the pile, very likely, before he finds an ember that is warm and a place that is bright. The spark is there; that is what accounts for his earnestness. All depends on finding it, and cherishing it, and lifting off from it

what smothers it, and tenderly and patiently overlaying it with the gentlenesses which so abound in the word of God. Everything depends on saving that last spark. The possibilities of immense heat are in some hearts in which the fire of faith has at some time burned very low. We must remember how much Jesus has to say in approbation of faith that is no more than a grain of mustard-seed. We must remember how Paul said, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye"; and that the man who was the first confessor of Christ began with a creed of only one article.

Another peculiarity of this creed is that it was *founded in experience*. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." You notice how close the connection between the creed and the confessor. His creed was simply the statement in two words of a fact about himself, "I see." His creed was not separable from himself. It was wrought in him. His creed there would be no possibility of his forgetting. Whenever the sun shone or a star twinkled, he would feel his creed over again, "I can see." It is possible we might be perplexed, some of us, to tell what we believe, if we had not it in print to refer to; experience can dispense with type. "One thing I know, I can see." We used to hear a good deal about men's *experiencing religion*. The expression is less common than formerly. Is the ex-

pression going because the thing it stands for is going? Perhaps there has been sometimes unwisdom and sometimes cant, even, in the way the words have been used. But, after all, "experiencing religion," as a phrase, is good. We can not afford to lose it. It is the statement of a basal fact. Christ works a work in me, and I feel it. That is "experiencing religion." Experience is not always nor often so marked as that of the jailer, or of Saul; but if Christianity is a fact it is an experience; and if Christ has wrought a work in me I feel it; and if I am a Christian I know it; "whereas I was blind, now I see." This experience was really the starting point of all his Christian life. This experience is the soil out of which creed all grows.

Even the truths of God, before they become my true creed, have got to be reproduced in the soil of my own thinking and feeling. A creed is like a tree that starts in a single stalk (one thing I know) and that goes on branching and dividing so long as it is fed at the root; fed by the Spirit and the Word. Men's faith is languid because their experience is languid. Men's creeds stand still because their experience stands still. The creed of our confessor began with one article, but did not end there. Pretty soon we hear him saying that he believed that Christ was the Son of God. We get tired sometimes of believing exactly the same old things in precisely the

same old way. But our creeds will go on thickening and branching, just so long and so constantly as God's work in us goes on. Our creeds have got to come from out our experience of God, and not out of our prayer-book or our confession of faith. We shall be like the tree that has stood all the winter through, bare and waiting, and the spring comes and the airs are softened and the ground is loosened, and the sap flows, and pretty soon the tree feels that it is spring, inside as well as outside, and the buds start and the tree grows again. Creed is experience trying to put itself into forms of thought. Putting on leaves does not bring the spring, but the spring coming puts on the leaves. Creeds will be right enough so long as experience is right, and fresh and strong. Men's creeds will be well enough so long as their hearts are so alive that they keep outgrowing their creeds. That is a poor tree that looks and measures exactly as it did a year ago. He is a poor believer that believes exactly as he did a year ago.

It will follow from this, in the next place, that there will be something very *personal, individual, and peculiar about each man's creed*. Two living Christians can not believe alike any more than two trees can grow alike. It is an evidence of life when men differ doctrinally. Two posts made alike continue alike. Two trees beginning alike become increasingly different. I love to see well-marked characteristics of faith

in the members of the same Church. It betokens life. Two Christians never think alike, except as they neither of them think at all, but leave it to a third party to do in their stead. Excessive doctrinal quietness, either in the Christian or in the communion, implies lethargy. It is only dead men that never turn over. If there is anything in which a man needs to be true to himself, and loyal to his individuality, it is in his religion. I wish we had in all things greater latitude allowed us for our personal idiosyncrasies. I wish there was less that was conventional in life. I wish that men and women could be themselves more largely than usage allows. I think society would be less monotonous and more luxuriant. But in religion, at all hazards, each man must have all the latitude that his individuality demands. A man must be himself in his faiths.

This is one thing that makes our Bible so rich and varied. The writers received the influences of the Spirit, but did not throw away their personal peculiarities. Each book has its distinct style. The rays of divine light all become humanly tinged before they reached the page. Paul does not write like Peter, nor Peter like James. Mark tells his story differently from John, and John differently from Luke. The Holy Ghost is no enemy to personal peculiarities. Each man's experience will be characteristic, and so then must his creed be, that grows

out of his experience. Men, as a rule, are constitutionally one-sided, and this will make their experience and their creed one-sided. Paul's theology is Pauline, Peter's Petrine. A man's proper creed is the name we give to his individuality, when inspired by the Holy Ghost. The majority of most men's character is lodged in one particular bent. When such men become Christians, their experience localizes itself in that bent, and their creed derives itself from it. The root of a man's ism is in his constitution. We can hardly dispute about isms then, more than about complexions. Men bring their ism with them when they come into the kingdom, and will retain it, we presume, when they go up yonder. It makes the Church rich, and will make heaven various.

And now, by the way, is it not a splendid tribute to Jesus Christ, that we can each of us come to Him with our special peculiarity, and find exactly that in Him which will meet that peculiarity and satisfy it? Christ is like a mirror into which all mankind may look, and each man find his own face given back to him. There is only one Christ, but He is in this respect like the one sun which shines upon all objects, and gives to each what satisfies it and helps it to be at its best. No two alike, the sea not like the forest, the pebble not like the snow-flake, but each finding in the sun what helps it to be itself more excellently and perfectly. The poor man ob-

tains from Him what he needs, and the rich man. He satisfies the ignorant man and the scholar. He has made glad the old generations and the new. He answers the demands of the Fiji, and the Greek. There is nothing sectional about Christ, and Christ never gets to be old.

Only one thing more that we notice about this creed is, that it does not embarrass itself with matter that is foreign to the main point. Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. The point with him was that he could see, not how he could see,—vision, not the explanation of vision. The two things were very distinct to him because he had such a thrilling sense of sight. Seeing was the one only thing with him. He was filled with light and wrapped in light. It left no chance for hows and whys. Not till after sundown that night did experience of that splendid fact of vision fall down into philosophizings about the fact of vision. Philosophizing very often comes from the cooling down of experience. It is when the eye begins to grow dim that we commence studying the structure of the eye. It is the disordered functions of the body that drive us to our physiology. Sight does not consist in knowing how we see. Health does not consist in understanding the organs of the body, and salvation does not consist in knowing how we are saved.

The anatomy of salvation is not our *Christian* concern. The physician can cure an ignorant man as readily as he can a scholar, because his medicine does not depend for its efficacy upon the intelligence of the patient. In the same way it is possible for Christ to be the physician of the ignorant man as well as of the scholar, because salvation consists just simply in being saved. A child does not need to be an obstetrician in order to be born, nor does acquaintance with the scheme of redemption help a man to be *re*-born. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. I can not tell why it is that Christ can do so much for me. I do not understand what this being born of God is. I have very little idea how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are related to each other. But I know that something has come into history which has wrought magnificent results there. I know that something has come into the hearts of individual men that has wrought magnificent results there. Sometimes I call it God, and sometimes Christ, and sometimes Holy Ghost. Sometimes one name brings it and sometimes another. But the great Being knows what is desired when it is invoked, and it comes and helps and leaves its power upon me, and fills me with strange strength. I do not know how Christ on the cross wrought the redemption of the generations that were to come, any more than I know how He threw a great backward light over the genera-

tions that were gone before. I know a few facts about Christianity, but it is pretty much all summéd up in this, that I feel a good deal as did the man whose eyes had been opened; whether he be a sinner or no I know not; one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see. I have thought about all these things some, but I do not know as all this thinking has really helped me very much to be a better Christian. The mind falls back wearied, and then the heart cries out plaintively—

“My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine”;

and there is quietness and strength.

An American poet* has well rendered the story of our chapter in the following graceful stanzas :

“He stood before the Sanhedrim :
The scowling rabbis gazed at him.
He recked not of their praise or blame ;
There was no fear, there was no shame
For one upon whose dazzled eyes
The whole world poured its vast surprise.
The open heaven was far too near,
His first day's light too sweet and clear,
To let him waste his new-gained ken
On the hate-clouded face of men.

“But still they questioned,—Who art thou ?
What hast thou been ? What art thou now ?

* John Hay.

Thou art not he who yesterday
Sat here and begged beside the way ;
For he was blind.

“—And I am he ;
For I was blind, but now I see.

“ He told the story o’er and o’er ;
It was his full heart’s only lore.
A prophet on the Sabbath-day
Had touched his sightless eyes with clay,
And made him see who had been blind.
Their words passed by him like the wind
Which raves and howls, but can not shock
The hundred-fathom-rooted rock.

“ Their threats and fury all went wide ;
They could not touch his Hebrew pride.
Their sneers at Jesus and his band,
Nameless and harmless in the land ;
Their boasts of Moses and his Lord,
All could not change him by one word.

“ I know not what this man may be,
Sinner or Saint : but as for me,
One thing I know, that I am he
Who once was blind, and now I see.

“ They were all doctors of renown,
The great men of a famous town,
With deep brows, wrinkled, broad and wise,
Beneath their wide phylacteries ;
The wisdom of the East was theirs ;
And honor crowned their silver hairs.

“ The man they jeered and laughed to scorn
Was unlearned, poor, and humbly born ;
But he knew better far than they,
What came to him that Sabbath-day ;
And what the Christ had done for him
He knew, and not the Sanhedrim.”

II.

POSITIVENESS IN RELIGIOUS BELIEF.

"This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."—GALATIANS v. 16.

THERE are three moral facts readily to be derived from this verse. The first is the fact of man's natural fleshliness. This idea of the flesh is a favorite one in Paul's mind, and therefore plays a large part in the letters he writes and in the sermons he preaches.

Paul was like other preachers in this respect, that he had a few favorite ideas—hobbies, if only you will associate with the word nothing derogatory; and these pet notions of his are continually working to the surface, and pushing themselves into notice, and his epistles are to a considerable extent merely kaleidoscopic re-arrangements under which these few notions variously group themselves.

Important among these is his doctrine of man's natural fleshliness. And by flesh he means considerable more than body physically considered. Flesh

with him is more than man's physical anatomy—an aggregate of bone, muscle, and blood; more than man's physiology—an organism of bone, muscle, and blood. The flesh with Paul was the body in its connection with the unclean moral nature occupying the body; flesh with Paul means the natural man—man in the condition in which he comes into the world and in the character into which he continues more and more to harden after coming into the world, up to the time when by conversion his natural tendencies toward evil have been confronted and overpowered by a new and divinely implanted set of tendencies toward what is good.

This prepares the way for an allusion to the second moral fact of our text. The first fact is man's natural fleshliness, the second is man's acquired spiritualness. "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh,"—fleshliness, spiritualness. The first natural, in the sense of coming along in the ordinary and uniform process of events; the second supernatural, in the sense of an interference with this ordinary and uniform process of events; just as it is natural, lies in the nature of things, that your garden should be overspread with weeds. Remove from the surface of your garden this autumn everything in the shape of vegetation, and by next midsummer it will be clothed with a vestment of weeds of a hundred distinct genera and a thousand different species. It

is natural, lies in the nature of things that it should be so.

And this nature of things will continue in force till it is supernaturally interfered with—until you go into your garden and revolutionize it, and adopt measures and set in operation forces looking to the repression of nature and the extermination of the weeds. Whether it is man in a garden or God in a soul, every energy is a supernatural energy that is able to interfere with the ongoings of nature or interrupt nature's continuity. It is the nature of your garden to be weedy, and a power above nature—yourself or your gardener—has got to enter into your garden and operate there before it can be anything but weedy. So it is the nature of a man to be fleshly, full of evil appetites criminally indulged, and a power above nature has got to enter into a man before he can be anything but fleshly; and the only such power we know anything of from Scripture or experience as fitted to do this work is what the apostle here calls the Spirit: "Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

And this in turn paves the way for a statement of the third moral fact of our text. The first fact is man's natural fleshliness, the second his acquired spiritualness wrought by the Holy Ghost, and the third, and the point upon which we wish to dwell more at length, is that we do not cease to be fleshly

by any direct attempt to be unfleshly, but only by our success in becoming spiritual. "Ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh, *if ye walk in the Spirit*"; that we get out from under the dominion of the evil not by holding ourselves in a negative attitude toward the evil, but by holding ourselves in a positive attitude toward that which is the opposite of the evil.

Now, this idea, so characteristic of the apostle, and so everywhere operative wherever progress is being made, either by the individual or by society at large, is an idea we shall spend some time in illustrating and applying—the idea, namely, that the most direct means of destroying one tendency is by strengthening the tendency that is its opposite; the idea that the readiest method of crowding out what is bad is to crowd in what is good; to labor for *positive* results, and to widen out and build up positive results into a splendid monopoly.

A very simple and homely illustration of this doctrine would be the following: A little plot of ground two rods square was once put in my hands to clear of weeds. The prevailing weed was a tenacious one, and prolific—as weeds are. There was not an inch of that plot to which I did not devote special and interested attention. Nor was my labor superficial. It took notice not only of the surface, but of the subsoil, and, when I hung up my hoe and rake, the upper six inches of the entire plot were as innocent of

all vegetation as a sand lot. This piece of ground lay quite near the house, had been a good deal of an offence to the eye, and I naturally congratulated myself, therefore, on the thoroughness of the work; and the brown earth lay there the remainder of the fall a barren memorial of my fidelity. In the opening spring, that was the first spot in the neighborhood that gave indications of vitality; and throughout the spring there was no other four rods on any side of the house that showed such a tropical profusion of verdure, and the verdure was composed almost exclusively of those same old weeds or their lineal descendants.

Now notice what I had done. My labor had been simply a labor of destruction. My ambition had been not to put something there that should be an ornament, but to *get rid* of something that was a nuisance. I was working *destructively*, not constructively; and laboring for *negative* rather than *positive* results. The next season, some one who understood such matters better than I, cleared the surface of the ground, partially loosened up the soil, enriched it, *threw in grass seed*, and let matters work. And now that plot is as free of plantains and as rich in velvety turf as any plot need be. *He* worked *constructively*, labored for *positive* results, addressed all his energies to the work of establishing and encouraging there a growth of grass, knowing that if once he succeeded in crowd-

ing grass in, the grass would succeed better than he with his sickle or hoe could do in the work of crowding weeds out.

This, I say, illustrates familiarly the general truth of our text, that we get out from under the dominion of the evil, not by holding ourselves in a negative attitude toward the evil, but by holding ourselves in a positive attitude toward that which is the opposite of the evil. You have seen a leaf sometimes in the winter clinging, brown and lone, to the bleak branch of an oak, and the sun plays with it, and the storm pulls at it and bruises it, and the winds scold at it ; but it defies their concerted assault and lingers into the spring, memorial of the summer that is gone, linking the two years into a kind of twinship, till as the mellow months begin again to recur, the sun and the storm and the wind leave pelting the seared leaf, and begin to wake up the life that had been slumbering in the tree ; and they moisten the roots, and warm the fibre, and stir the sap, and the buds begin to swell, and that one particular bud begins to swell, and the tired lone leaf flutters and falls.

What the forces of the sky could not do wrestling directly with the dead leaf they were able in all ease and grace to achieve by stimulating the live branch. Encouraging the grass among the weeds, stimulating the branch among the dead leaves ; these illustrate in a picturesque way the position that it belongs to

a man to take toward everything which is negative and false. Let the negative and false alone, and build up and encourage the positive and the true. Let disease be and seek only to intensify health. Let death be and go on enriching life. Let ignorance be and encourage a larger wisdom. Let unbelief be and go forward constructing a stronger faith, and leave sin to drop like a weary leaf from the branches, at the expulsive power of a tenser, holier and more positive devotement: "This I say then, if ye walk in the Spirit ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."

The power of a man over himself, and his power over others, accrues to him by virtue of his positive attitudes. And this I want to illustrate by a reference (1) to his moral principles, (2) to his religious creed and consecration.

First, his moral principles. The only staunch morality is a *positive* morality, positive in the sense of constructive, positive in the sense of consisting in loyalty to right principle instead of in antipathy to wrong principle. There is a difference between doing right and not doing wrong. One is turning our back on what is wrong, the other is turning our face *to* what is right. Viewed upon the surface, the two may seem quite alike; considered more narrowly they are seen to be essentially distinct. Evidently it is one thing not to be poor, and another thing to *be* rich. It is

one thing not to be a fool, and another to *be* a philosopher. It is one thing not to be a coward, and another thing, and a much finer and more substantial one, to *be* a hero. The man of whom you would think it a sufficient description to say that he is not a coward, is not the man you would put in the forefront of the battle; his muscles are limp; the hero, his muscles are taut. On every battle-ground of whatever sort the victory is won by virtue of the splendid thing that the combatants *are*, and not by virtue of the ignominious thing they are *not*.

For the sake of an example let us apply our doctrine to the moral principle of honesty. There are two sorts of honest men in the world. One sort is of those of whom all is said that it is safe to say when they have been described as disinclined to be unjust. To the other class you have done justice only by describing them as suffused with a glow of admiration, and enkindled with a fire of consecration to all that is just in thought, word, or dealing. Now the latter is the only sort of honesty that it is safe to put in the thick of the fight that is everywhere waging in society, the honesty that is positive and constructive, the honesty, not that leans away from an unprinciple, but that kneels down and worships before a holy principle, that knits and knots itself about an idea, and is fervent and radiant with a brilliant enthusiasm. That is the only honesty that is brave

enough to govern a man's heart and dealings, the only honesty that is powerful enough to communicate to society new impulse along the line of integrity, the only honesty that we really have any heart to admire.

Indeed it is just this positive self-devotement that lies at the basis of a certain admiration that we all have for stupendous rascality. We admire positiveness and we can not help it. There is a certain magnificence about a staunch rascal that there is not about a limp saint. Nothing short of an archangel had sinew enough in him to degenerate into an arch-fiend. The splendor, mark you, is not in the deviltry, but in the whole-heartedness of the commitment to the devil.

One great secret of the moral disasters constantly occurring, the shipwrecks of character that each daily issue of our paper brings to our notice, lies in just this negativeness of current morality. These defaulters, fraudulent cashiers and treasurers that an unbaptized press enjoys publishing as deacons and Sunday-school superintendents, are not men that believe in unrighteousness, but men whose belief in righteousness has in it no positiveness or affirmativeness. They are not positively principled enough to be willing to die for their principles.

Now there are young men in this community that are just moving out into the activities, responsibilities,

and perils of life ; and with many of them the sum and substance of their morality is expressed in this, " I never do anything particularly bad." I have heard that substanceless credal negation a thousand times, and a man who is in that posture is on the direct line to his own self-foreordained destruction. It is so, always has been so, and we understand why it is so. The tree that is not rooted, when the wind comes, blows down. The vessel among the rocks that is not anchored, when the storm comes, goes to pieces ; and a barren negation, the empty absence of wrong-doing can no more hold a man upon his feet under the assault of sharp temptation, than a man can plunge his head in a vacuum and have his lungs impregnated with vital breath.

And so in all friendliness and interested earnestness let me enjoin it upon you to abandon this negative morality, this irresolute sidling off from what is wrong, and crowd your soul and saturate your heaven-born energies with a trenchant affirmativeness, and a heroic, loyal self-devotement to principles that have about them substance enough to sustain you, tenacity enough to anchor you amid the wrenching of the sea and the straining of the storm. Our young men are perishing, falling before the scythe of temptation, not because they believe in what is wrong, but because there is in them no spirited devotement to what is good.

Let us consider this principle, in the second place, in its relations to men's religious creeds. The present age differs from the one that preceded it, and differs also probably from the one that will come after it in respect to the sturdiness of religious convictions. Skepticism, not in its primary sense of healthy inquiry, but in its secondary sense of diseased uncertainty, is the characterizing posture of current thought. Men used to doubt as a means of reaching conviction, and now they doubt for the sake of doubting, and with a larger number than we think, perhaps, "not to believe" is their only "creed."

The point is not that men positively *dis*believe; that would imply a haleness and heartiness of tone that does not prevail. You ask almost any man you meet on the street if he believes that some specific doctrine supposed to be taught in the Scriptures is true, he says "No!" You ask him if he believes it is false? "Well, I don't know as I can say that exactly! I don't believe much about it any way." It is not stout disbelief, but languid unbelief; and of the two, stout disbelief is far less difficult to deal with and make available. For if a man has moral earnestness and intellectual determination enough positively to disbelieve one doctrine, the same qualities will be likely to stimulate him to *believe* some other doctrine; for tremendous disbelief with the thought fixed in one direction is likely to be equally

tremendous belief when the thought is turned in a different direction; *disbelief* is only the obverse of dogmatism, but barren *unbelief*, loose-jointed and limp-limbed, like a torpid paralytic can not be counted upon for anything.

It is a sort of malaria that is abroad in the world and in the Church, to be unpronounced in religious opinion; and good men are drawn under the influence of the tendency; in conference meeting they let themselves down to the level of unbelievers by rehearsing their own unbeliefs, and parading their own instability and indeterminateness; in the pulpit they strive to catch the ear and steal the confidence of negative congregations by loading their own discourses with negations. The conversation of people, especially of the younger and middle-aged portions of community, betrays a leaning toward that mode of presenting the truth of God that shall fall as near between something and nothing as it can, and save its character and preserve its equilibrium. Popularity in the pulpit and in the religious press is to a considerable degree synonymous with indeterminateness of doctrine, and with graceful, winning, rhetorical insipidity in stating that indeterminateness.

Now I believe in a liberal theology, and in a broad platform; but you are aware that the broader a platform, the more timber there has got to be built into it in order to sustain the larger weight to be put

upon it ; and so just *because* I believe in a broad platform, I believe in having it formed of colossal beams hewn from the sturdy positiveness of the Scriptures, and overlaid with planks spiked with the Bible's unflinching affirmativeness. We are not pleading that a man should have a positive opinion about everything ; we only urge that he should be a man of opinions, a man characterized by a certain determinateness of conviction, and that as a Christian he must have about him a certain determinateness of religious conviction. Religion is a thing that if possessed, not only puts new stamina in a man's purposes, and new fervor in his emotions, but new tension in his thoughts ; it not only makes his heart more hearty, but his intellect more intelligent ; it is bound both to take the foulness out of his heart, and the eclipse off of his mind.

The power of a great, holy, personal idea devoutly clung to is something immense in the sway that it usurps over the spirit and the life. What we call Christian self-control is less *self*-control than it is the control of the fine truths, and the splendid impulses from on High that we incarnate. But we are set here not simply to control *ourselves*, but to exercise a measure of sovereignty over the hearts and lives that are adjacent, and the history that is contemporary ; and the men who have done that most grandly, have done it by virtue of the strong truths which

their lives embodied, which their activities proclaimed, and to which their hearts were devoutly consecrated. The men who have been a power to stir their fellows, to communicate profound impulses, to revolutionize society, to organize history, have been each of them some truth let down from God, clothed with flesh till it became visible, clothed with voice till it became eloquent, thrilled with power till it became triumphant.

It was not the mere *idea* of genuineness, of moral and intellectual sincerity, that wrought so mightily among the skeptical and quibbling Athenians at the close of the fourth century before Christ; it was not Socrates that did it—it was the idea become personal in Socrates; it was Socrates wedded to the idea. It was not truth that inaugurated the Christian idea; nor was it God that inaugurated it; it was truth come to its divine impersonation in Jesus Christ. It was no bare doctrine of faith and no mere man named Saul that laid the foundations of Christian theology; rather was it Paul, that glorious offspring of *Saul wedded to faith*, who founded our theology for us.

And whether in these broader or in our own more narrow spheres of influence and achievement man's working power, lifting power, as an agency of progress will vary with the strength and purity of his positive consecration to some everlasting truth that is from God; and so, my hearers, all of us that are in any

way interested (and who of us is not ?), all of us that are in any way interested in the truths of our Scriptures and in the historic facts of our religion and in Jesus Christ—the one fundamental fact of all, let us drop and cease to parade the hollow negations of our unfaith ; let us be done with publishing the brevity of our creeds ; let us cease advertising the irresolution of our religious thought ; and in its stead, as we value our own moral weightiness, and realize that moral power varies with the splendor of the object to which we are yielded up in positive consecration, let us feel rather after whatever truths of God we do believe ; let us glorify them ; let us allow them to strengthen and glorify us ; and then, illumined with the light which they shall shed abroad in us, and clad with the might with which they shall endue us, will our vision gradually let itself into the fruition of a farther prospect, and our strength mount up to a higher and yet higher reach of advantage and of power.

III.

WHY I BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD.

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you."—I PETER iii. 15.

THE ability to state our convictions with clearness and completeness yields two benefits. It makes our convictions *respected*. There is persuasion in the forceful *putting* of a thought, and in sentences sharply drawn and well considered. Considerable of what passes as the weightiness of an opinion is no more than the gravity and dignity of its presentation. The effect of words, as of soldiers, can be trebled by their manner of marshaling. A word aptly chosen is an argument, and a phrase judiciously contrived a syllogism. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." It was the transparent terseness of the man born blind which so inconvenienced the Pharisees. "I was blind, now I see." There was all there that was said, and more beside—a conclusion without its being stated. Here lies the power of proverbs, in their lucid brevity.

And so Peter would have his readers study to state their hopes and the grounds of them in an orderly and intelligent manner, and procure for their convictions in this way a respect, at least, among those whose opinions differed or even antagonized. There is an intellectual fascination about delineations of opinion done cleverly. And one step toward making your neighbor believe what you believe is to cast your opinion in terms that have in them flash enough to engage the eye and strength enough to put a nervy pressure on the mind. That was one design of Peter's admonition, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason [that is, a reasonable account] of the hope that is in you."

Another benefit intended was the effect which the rational statement of an opinion has in giving to that opinion firmer establishment in our *own* minds. A masterly exhibit of doctrine not only weakens the unfaith of opposers, but strengthens the faith of confessors. The most telling power of a word is in its reaction upon the speaker. It is profitable even for our own sakes to canvass on occasion the grounds of our convictions. Our religious beliefs are sometimes irresolute, because we do not know with precision *what* they are, nor with definiteness *why* they are. We are established by feeling the grounds of our establishment. The boat drifts till it *feels* the pull of its anchor. We get a sense of stability by inspecting

the means of our stability. If we are crossing a stream upon a bridge of ice or timber, even though assured of safety, we contemplate with earnest pleasure the massiveness of its icy or oaken beams. Even confidence loves to be reminded of the grounds of its confidence, and wins bravery from their review. The architect lets the buttresses and the broadened courses of basal masonry as far as possible lie out in the light. Such a disposition of facts satisfies the eye because it satisfies the mind. We get a sense of stability by inspecting the means of stability.

And in pursuance of this thought it has occurred to me that we might be rendering a service to ourselves and to one another by rehearsing some of the grounds upon which rests our faith in the Scriptures as the word of God. And this less with an intent to influence such as reject the doctrine of their divinity, but more to the end of revealing to ourselves the structural lines of our own assurance, and suggesting some points around which our devout opinions, when controverted and assailed, might confidently rally.

In the first place, we believe that the Bible is the word of God because we have been taught to believe so. We believe it because our parents believed it. Had they been disbelievers we should probably have been so also. Our convictions in their roots are regularly hereditary. This is true of religious convictions, and none the less so of moral, æsthetic, and

scientific ones. Doctrines of religion, of geography, of geology, of astronomy, lie at the same level in this respect. Everywhere we begin believing by believing as we are *told* to believe. An opinion, like a blade of wheat, starts with something that has been simply posited. We believe in evolution till we get as far back as the seed, but the seed needs to be and to be posited. Planting goes before sprouting. The very first of our Lord's parables was the parable of the Sower.

The young race away back in the old Eden-days had its faith taught to it. What God was to the young race, the parent is to the young child. Revealed religion has to be acted over again in a small, quiet way inside every household. The Bible itself teaches nothing more clearly, and stands by nothing with more of insistence. "These words which I command thee this day (upon Sinai) shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." The child believes what with discretion and persistency he is *taught* to believe. The child's creed is the mother's creed, and with nothing at the start but faith in his mother to guarantee it. He sees through his mother's eyes, thinks in his mother's thoughts, believes through his mother's faith, and calls the Bible *God's Book*, because she taught him to, in all his thinkings, religious as well as otherwise, only nothing more than his mother's articulate echo.

We believe in the Scriptures as the word of God because of their structure and interior harmony. The Bible occupied well on toward two thousand years in the course of its composition; is made up of more than sixty distinct parts, contributed by as many as forty separate authors. These authors were drawn from every social condition,—kings, courtiers, shepherds, fishermen,—and marked by every degree of mental attainment and endowment. Each author develops his own theme, preserves his own idiosyncrasy, occupies his own stand-point, uses his own terms and phrases, employs his own grammatical constructions, enriches his composition with his own distinct graces of style, and stands before us in all his own rich and untrammelled individuality. And yet, writing at such intervals of time as to forbid conspiracy and collusion, the result of their work is not many books, but one book, a book so intensely one as to receive from us the designation, *The Book*. The Bible is, in all its parts, one in its aims, one in its principles, one in its characterizations of God and man. It writes in history and in prophecy, and yet enunciates the same truths; in prose and in verse, but inculcates the same lessons; is lyric and didactic, but falls into no contradictions. We have only to realize the ease with which men fall into differences of opinion regarding the nearest and most commonplace matters, to appreciate how much is denoted by

the harmony of Scripture writers in matters most reticent and profound.

This accord of high idea running through a period of twenty centuries requires something for its explanation. There is nothing like it elsewhere. When an orchestra of forty musicians playing each his own special instrument, rendering, each of them, notes that are unlike those of any other player, and yet the whole orchestra producing associate effects whose distinction is their harmony and unity, we infer that somewhere some one mind has worked governingly upon these forty musicians, that they have severally taken their direction from him, drawn their impulses from him. We can not think of an harmonious result without thinking of one master-mind as its ground.

When we see forty masons engaged in putting up a building, each covering a small space of wall, and the structure daily growing under their hands into a finer and more meaningful perfection of form and serviceableness, it is an easy inference that some one mind in a comprehensive way covers the entire ground which each of these forty traverses in narrow detail. And still more impressive does the sovereignty of the master-mind over the workmen become, when, as in the instance of certain continental cathedrals, the structure has been built slowly up through centuries, and one controlling genius swept

the entire interval of five hundred years from foundation to final.

And if the orchestral rendering presupposes behind it one creative mind that wrought the oratorio; and if the cathedral at Cologne, that oratorio in stone, implies the workings of a single genius, drawing walls and towers and spires into ripening grace and proportion, along the tired process of the centuries, will not the Holy Word, that finest music of the heart, that sublimest temple of thought, require for its composition the presidency of a single genius, able to impress with his own thought, and inspire with his own mind, every workman that wrought upon it?

We believe the Scriptures to be the word of God because of the beneficent results they have achieved. The Bible is a book that works. It is the only book I know of that works. Other books sparkle, but this book lifts. Shakespeare does not lift. Shakespeare does not unaidedly make men better. Cast into a community of savages, his plays would not carry barbarism by the breadth of a hair nearer civilization. Shakespeare does not sow the mind with new impulses, nor endue it with new energies. That is the prerogative of the Bible, and of books that have been directly inspired from it. Where the Bible is present the most operatively, there is the best civilization—witness America, Great Britain, Germany.

It is hazarding nothing to say that, other things be-

ing equal, the political power and promise of nations is in direct ratio with their fidelity to the Word of God. When a pagan ambassador asked Queen Victoria the secret of England's national greatness, she gave him a Bible and said: "That is the secret of the greatness of England." In the Centennial letter which the President of the United States addressed to the American Sunday-schools, he said: "To the influence of the Bible we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization." Froude says in his essay on Calvinism: "All that we call modern civilization, in a sense which deserves the name, is the visible expression of the transforming power of the Gospel."

And I want you to notice the peculiarity of the Bible in just this respect, that it offers us motives *and constrains us to adopt them*; and it is the only book that is competent to do so. It comes to us clothed in light not only, but armed with power. A Brahmin said to the missionary, "What is it that makes the Bible have such *power* over the lives of those that embrace it? Our Vedas have no such power." Another asked: "What is it that makes this Bible give such nerve and such courage to those who receive it?" It was a heathen enemy of the Christian religion that said: "In all our sacred books there is nothing to compare with the Bible for goodness and purity and holiness and love, and *for motives of action*."

What I mean by the Bible as a working energy you will appreciate by a reference in a recent address of Sir Bartle Frere, who mentioned an instance that had been carefully investigated, where all the inhabitants of a certain village had cast away their idols, abjured caste, and adopted a form of Christianity which they had worked out for themselves by studying a single gospel and a few tracts that had been left, along with other cast-off things, by a departing merchant. Where is a second book, uninspired by Scripture, that has demonstrated its inherent and unassisted energy to take hold of life, grapple with it, transform it, regenerate it, and lead it out into the likeness of the life of God?

We believe that the Bible is the word of God, because, while it does not purport to be a revelation of natural things, it yet holds itself in such a relation to the material universe, that the discoveries of science seem never to go beyond it or put it to the blush. There is an honest flexibility in its utterances on these matters that, while it does not anticipate scientific discovery, finds room to receive into itself without stress or detriment all the disclosures that science is able to render.

The difference between the Biblical cosmogony and the heathen cosmogonies in this respect is worthy of the Christian student's most delighted regard. Discovery in this way only makes the Bible more

true; causes it to glow with a greater wealth of illumination, as a diamond that is fitted to sparkle with a brilliancy varying with the intensity of the light that is poured upon it.

Scripture seems to run around the outer margin of all possible discovery, and so to be true without being scientific. Examples are the description of the creation, the hint as to the rotatory motion of storms, the revolution of the earth upon its axis, the dependence of the earth upon the heavens instead of the dependence of the heavens upon the earth, as taught in heathen systems and even in the Christian system till the time of Copernicus. "Canst thou bind the sweet influence of Pleiades?" God asks of Job. This would serve as a charming and inspiring illustration of the way in which Scripture coasts the outer margin of all possible discovery, if it shall prove, as has been by competent authority elaborately conjectured, that Alcyone, the middle star of Pleiades, is the cosmic center around which the whole starry host of the sky is moving its rounds in silent rhythm and inaudible song.

Another reason why we believe that the Bible is the word of God is the extraordinary and indefatigable pains taken by men of obscure integrity to get rid of the Bible. The things that bad men hate, it will, as a rule, be safe for good men to believe in. Men's hearts stain through onto their philosophy. It never

ceases to be true that every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reproved. Light always shows the spots. Bad men congregate under the shadows. Men like to have the Bible vilified because it eases a little the pressure on their conscience. It is always possible to gather an audience to listen to an unbeliever. Men do not want to believe, and are glad to hear the man that will meet them at the level of their wish. If they did not consciously stand beneath the Bible's reproof they would hardly have an interest in hearing it maligned.

And we should win wondrous confidence in these staunch, sturdy Scriptures of God, if we could for a moment see this one volume standing up in all the serenity of its celestial powers, begirt by all the thousands upon thousands of panoplied books that have been sent out to beat it down. The strength of a champion is measured by the strength of the men that are needed to overmaster him. And yet there was never a time when the Bible stood more evidently sovereign of the field and sovereign of human hearts than to-day. The Bible has taken no detriment. The rents its enemies have made are hardly such as to reward the pains of their valor. As has been elegantly said: "They are like scratches on the stones of the Milan Cathedral; like the breaking of a single pane of its pictured glass. The great struct-

ure stands unimpaired, shining imperial in the serene Italian air."

And then these destroyers of the Bible give us nothing in its place. They belabor the poor Hebrews and scant fishermen who composed for us the Law and the Gospel, but never go about throwing their better wit and finer genius into the work of making a Gospel that is superior. It was a motto of Napoleon's, "To replace is to conquer." These antagonists of the Bible will have to give us something in place of the Bible before they can break the power of the Bible. And if they have the courage to crush the fulcrum on which civilization has pivoted for forty centuries, what is the meaning of their modest hesitancy in setting up something that shall make the abstraction good?

When St. Boniface had hewn down the sacred oak worshipped by the savages in the tangled forests of Germany he did not stop with destroying it, but, when it was felled, built out of its fallen and splintered fragments the chapel of St. Peter, and in the room of the worship of Thor the Thunderer left the worship of Christ the Crucified. "To *replace* is to conquer," and the theology of the forests fled back abashed before the theology of the cross.

And so with these destructionists: let them show themselves constructionists as well. Out of the ruins of the old let them build us a comfortable little

chapel of the new. It is but just; it is but honest; it is but the rendering of an equivalent. Removing old support, let them give us something in its place that heart and mind can lean upon; something that will go forward beautifying the home, purifying society, cultivating kindly relations among nations, holding men in proper relations with men, developing character, repressing the baser passions, stimulating the finer ones, creating in men peace and joy, robbing the death-chamber of its gloom and the grave of its shadow, and suffusing life with that beautiful serenity with which the Word of God has been for three thousand years so triumphantly demonstrating *its* power to do. And so I believe the Bible is the word of God, because bad men are so bad as to hate it, and brilliant wickedness incompetent to offer anything in its stead.

And, once more, we believe that the Bible is the word of God, because of its universal adaptedness. Only He that made all hearts could produce a book that should go to the wants of all hearts. Other books have each their special circle of readers: there is the book for the wise man and the book for the untaught; the book for the civilized and for the semi-civilized; the book for the child and the book for the adult; the book for the scientist, for the philosopher, for the artist, and for the poet. These books belong, each of them, to some one stage in the unfolding of

history, or to some one aspect in the evolution of individual mind and character. They are not world books. They smack of the age they were formed in. They are fraught with mannerisms of idea and expression. They do not run the whole gamut of thought and passion, nor address themselves to that in the reader which is present in every man. Only He who knows *man* could have made *man* a book. "I see," wrote Hallam, "that the Bible fits into every fold and crevice of the human heart. I am a man, and I believe that this is God's book because it is man's book."

The Bible is thus as great as all men, and, therefore, greater than any man. It is the Bible of the rich and of the poor, of the old man and of the child, of the rejoicing and of the sorrowing. It moistens the eye that is cold and pitiless, and wipes the tears from the eye that is overflowing. It startles the mind that is careless, and breathes a great benediction of peace upon the mind that is tired and crushed. It is like a mountain standing out under the line and running up through all climes and bearing upon its broad beneficent slopes the produce of every zone.

Into whatever quarter of the globe the Bible is carried, men find it a mirror into which they look and find the deepest things of their own hearts discovered and disclosed. When Dr. Chamberlain had read to

the natives of an East Indian city the first chapter of Romans, an intelligent Brahmin said to him: "Sir, that chapter must have been written for us Hindus; it fits us exactly." After preaching an evening in the city of Lyons, Mr. McAll was accosted by a rude auditor, who, with tears running down his cheeks, said to him: "Never in my life have I heard the truth so explained. My conscience answers to it." That is what I desire you to notice, "My conscience answers to it." The Bible lays its finger easily on the hiddenmost thing in us. Of a truth "the Word of God *is* quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

It is this universality that makes it so easy of translation into other languages. It is the only book we know that suffers in no appreciable degree by being taken out of its original dialect. It has been said that Shakespeare even, translated into French, is emasculated. And how would it fare with the master-pieces of English literature generally introduced into the vernacular of the Chinese, Madagascans, Patagonians, Fijis, and Choctaws? The Bible moves at such a pace that heart-beats the world over synchronize with it. It thinks in thoughts that all men think in, and sighs with longings that press upon the

heart universal. And so the Bible has borne the crucial test, and, in the words of one deeply conversant with the work of Bible dissemination and translation: "From Greenland to Patagonia in the Western hemisphere; from Iceland through Europe and Asia to the Japanese and the Australians in the Eastern; from the Copts of Egypt to the Kafirs of South Africa; from the South Sea Islands of the Pacific through the oceans to Madagascar, the Bible has been rendered into their language with triumphant success."

This adaptedness is shown by the uncounted numbers of every clime and complexion that to-day accept the Bible and believe in it as a heavenly oracle. Among the English-speaking world there has never been so great a literary sensation as the issuing of the new Revision of the New Testament Scriptures. We believe more profoundly because others are believing so numerously. The Bible never had such a hold upon man at large as to-day, and there is nothing to account for its stately march of triumph but the Godhood that is in it, and the waiting needs of men that find themselves gloriously replenished in it.

And there are wants innumerable that the Bible meets which no development of science, carried to whatever extreme, can avail to do. There is a vast area of passions, penitences, remorse, and aspira-

tions which the progress of science will never intersect, however far her researches be pushed and to whatever point her advances be prolonged. Science moves at a different plane, and, with her glass adjusted to traverse the ground, can not sweep that zone of sky where are constellated the soul's higher affiliations and appetences. Science can neither satisfy these appetences nor wash them away. It is Tyndall who says in the *Fortnightly Review*, "Religious feeling is as much a verity as any other fact of human consciousness, and against it, on its subjective side, the waves of science beat in vain."

The Gospel can be replaced only by a better Gospel, and science is no Gospel. It teaches not one of those elements that are finest in manhood, or that make manhood worth our while. It is as has been so excellently written, "Whatever the advances of modern science, there will still be the poison of sin which no earthly antidote can neutralize; there will still be the sorrow of bereavement, to be solaced only by the vision of the angel at the door of the sepulchre; there will still be the sense of loneliness stealing over the heart, even amid the bustle of the world, to be dispelled only by the consciousness of the Saviour's presence; there will still be the spirit shudder at the thought of death, which only faith in Christ can change into the desire to depart and to be with Him, which is far better. For these things sci-

ence has no remedy and philosophy no solace ; and, strong in its adaptations to these irrepressible necessities of the human heart, the Gospel of Christ will outlive all philosophical attack and survive every form of scientific belief."

And so the Gospel has established for it a certain future, if for no other reason, in that it touches life at a deeper point than all logic or philosophy. The currents of religious sentiment run at a lower level than the currents of scientific thought, and, therefore, logic can not reach down to cut religion's springs. And so the results of science can not displace the Bible any more than a lever can pry the sunshine from the ground, or a broom brush the rainbow from the sky. The irrepressible sunshine gilds with splendor the very lever with which you seek to dislodge it, and saturates with drops of iridescence the very sponge with which you seek to wash the sun-picture from the canvas of cloud. And so we shall expect to go on hearing every little while of Ingersolls who can not conclude a tender eulogy at the grave-side of a loved brother without setting just ajar the door that swings into a beauteous immortality, and of Littrés who have lived lives of staunchest materialism, but unable to lie down to their last sleep, till—they have received the sacrament !

Into the deepest spaces of our spirits may the dew

of the heavenly Word distill ; working in us all kinds of inward freshening, cleansing, sweetening, and accomplishing that holy quiet and profound satisfaction that shall argue to our souls with full persuasiveness the Bible's grace, wisdom, power, and DIVINE-NESS.

IV.

WHAT IS IT TO BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."—ACTS xvi. 31.

TO any who may be in honest perplexity as to the true nature and character of Jesus Christ, a careful and searching study of the gospels will discover, beyond any possibility of mistake, what it was, at any rate, that Christ professed and pretended to be. There is nothing more clearly deducible from any extant biography of anybody anywhere, than that the man whose life is written out in four narratives at the beginning of the New Testament, at least claimed that he was the Son of God.

This in itself proves nothing, yet has very direct and significant bearings. It is indeed an exceedingly important point gained when a man settles squarely and firmly into the position of believing that Christ intended to have it understood that He was divine, in a sense unique and peculiar; in a sense that set Him at a distinct remove from every other man; in such a sense that His will was God's will, His power God's power, His hatred of sin God's hatred of sin,

and His love God's love. And I can not understand how any man can suppose that Christ had any other intention in the matter, provided only the records that remain to us of Him be consulted by us with thoroughness, honesty, and an intense desire to get at the facts.

Evidently enough, then, if He was what He claimed to be He was the Son of God. Now if He was not the Son of God, He claimed to be, all the same; and how are you going to get *along* with those claims and explain them? It is evident at a glance that if His claims were false they can be explained only on the ground of His lunacy or His knavery. No other alternative remains. He was continually asserting that He was divine. If He was not divine, He deceived others purposely, and was a consummate liar, or He unintentionally deceived Himself, and was a helpless lunatic. So that there are only three things that you and I can think of the man of the gospels, either that He was a maniac, or a villain, or the Son of God.

Now there are some statements that are in themselves an argument; and that is one of them—major and minor premise and conclusion, all packed into one clause. And I do not think that I am venturing too much in assuming that that way of putting the matter has been weighing as an argument on some of these minds during the week past. I pray God

that it may have been so, and that there may be some here this morning upon whose minds divine light has broken along the lines and sentences spoken here a week ago; and that there are some here who a week ago were tangled in the meshes of honest uncertainty, who, if the question of last Sunday were put to them again, "What think ye of Christ?" would be ready to answer with all the *intellectual* strength, at least, that is in them,—I think that He is the Son of God.

To these, and to all others who have gone so far, but no farther, I come now with my text out of the book of the Acts of the Apostles,—"*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ." To *think* that Christ is the Son of God is one thing; to *believe on* Him in that character is another. The first is only an affair of the mind; the second is a personal matter, and means getting into personal connection with Him as the Son of God.

Now this is no fanciful discrimination between words that mean the same thing. It is using these words with exactly the same distinction that we make between them in matters that are secular. You say of a certain physician that you think he is a skillful physician. That means only that you have arrived at a cool and intelligent conviction of his medical ability. You say of another physician, "I believe in him." That means that when you are sick you go to him, and when your wife and children are sick you

put them under his care. It is a more personal matter now; it is an affair now of getting into direct connection with him. You may never have gone to the trouble of thinking the difference all out, but you *feel* the difference the instant it is stated, and you know that you are using the words continually with just this distinction.

Or take another illustration. You say in regard to a certain life insurance company that you think it a good and safe company. That only means that you have examined, more or less carefully, its financial status, and have familiarized yourself in a degree with its methods of administration; in consequence of all which a clear conviction has shaped itself in your mind, that it is a good and safe company to insure in. And yet while thinking all that, you may say in regard to some other institution of insurance, "But the company that I *believe in* is, so and so." Which means not only that you think that this second company is a good and safe one in which to take out a policy, but that it is the company where you have gone and taken out *your* policy; and the man who hears you phrase yourself in that way will *infer* certainly that you stand yourself in a personal relation to the concern, and nine times out of ten he will think right.

"Believing in" or "believing on" always has wrapped in it that idea of personal relation and direct

conviction. So that when Paul said to the jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," the matter did not stop with any opinions the jailer may have had of Christ—it *commenced* there undoubtedly, but it *stopped* only with the act of coming into direct personal connection with Christ as *his* Christ. It was with the jailer as it was with Thomas after the Resurrection. Thomas thought, and balanced, and deliberated, and finally became convinced that the man that stood before him with the nail-prints in his hands was indeed the same Christ he had walked with aforetime and seen crucified, but on the instant of the conviction his heart shot clear ahead of his conviction, and he cried out: "*My* Lord and *my* God." He commenced with thinking, which was quite right, and sound, and prudent; but when he had just reached the point of turning around and saying to Peter and the rest of them in a settled and philosophical way, "I think that this is all so, and that Christ has indeed risen," his cold mental conviction flashed forth into a hot cordial flame of intense personal faith and self-commitment, and forgetting all about Peter and the rest, he threw himself before the Lord in deep recognition, loyal devotement, and absolute surrender.

And that is why I feel always to make so much of Thomas' ejaculation as a true Christian creed. It was not a statement of what he thought *about* Christ,

but of what he felt *to* Him. It is so easy by comparison to think all sorts of correct things *about* Christ; to think *about* Christ that He is the Son of God; to think *about* Him that He came on earth to be to us wisdom, and salvation, and authority, Prophet, Priest, and King; but it is such another thing to come to our Lord in Thomas' direct and personal way and say, "*My* Prophet, *my* Priest, *my* King!"

I can conceive of some one of you whose heart has not quite moved out into this matter yet. I can conceive of some such one thinking with all theological keenness and accuracy along the lines of Christian doctrine, accepting our creed, and even repeating it aloud in tones that are clear, strong, and confident—saying among other, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord." But just imagine how different a thing it would be for such an one to go quietly and stilly into his own closet, and kneeling down in the silence where only God is, to speak *to* God the same words that in the great congregation he had just spoken *about* God: "I believe in Thee, O God, *my* Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and I believe in Thee, O Christ, the Father's only Son, *my* Lord." Exactly at that point is the rub with so many of our dear friends. Their utterances in regard to Christ, their thinkings about Him, have in them all the ring of the Scripture, and the

very flavor of orthodoxy in all its refinement. But thinking about Christ with calculating and elaborate accuracy is world-wide removed from believing on Him in warm attachment and loving acknowledgment.

Let me use another illustration. I want that this thing should not only be drawn in clear lines to your intellectual regard, but that it should as well be pressed close to your heart-appreciation. Supposing you are the father of a family of children, and that one of these children, more astute than the rest, draws up a document setting forth in studied and polished phrase his estimate of you in your paternal capacity. We will assume that in your relation to them you are all that a kind, and wise, and helpful father ought to be, and that they are quick to discover the discretion, tenderness, and fidelity with which you meet the obligations that the fatherly relation imposes. And accordingly, one of the older and more clever members of your family, in behalf of his younger brothers and sisters, formulates his opinions of you, and puts them down in black and white, somewhat to this effect : " We, children of so and so, believe in our father as a kind friend, and an ample provider. He daily shows himself quick to anticipate our desires, and generous and gracious to meet and answer them. We believe in him as a trustworthy counsellor and teacher. His wisdom has always shown

itself adequate to our ignorance, and suited to our extremest exigency. We believe in him as one that is suited to rule and direct us. We have always found that we did what was best for ourselves when we did what conformed most closely with his expressed wish." And so on. And then we will suppose that when this little creed—we might call it—has been drawn up, copies of it are distributed around among your offspring, and that they set about learning it, committing it to memory. We will suppose that notwithstanding all this trouble they are putting themselves to, they nevertheless take always good care as far as possible to keep out of your way. They are *bright* children, but they never do or say anything that leads you to suspect that they have any *heart*. They never seem sorry when you go away, and show no symptom of being glad when you come home. They never express any gratitude to you for what you do for them, but take what you give them as a matter of course. They never come to you to ask you to forgive them when they do wrong, but take it for granted that you forgive, and that this is part of what you are for. And yet all this time they are going about with those little stilted creeds in their pockets learning them as fast as ever they can, and after they have got them thoroughly committed, once a week, or such a matter, they all troop off together into some out-of-the-way room in the house, and

stand up together like boys in a spelling class, and repeat their little ritual about their father being a kind friend and ample provider, and the rest, and then think that all that elaborate and artistic mum-mery constitutes them grateful and affectionate children. Now if you, as a father, should get on the track of such a silly bit of formulary, would it not be your prayer to God that your children would dispense with this pen-and-ink devoutness of theirs, and once in a while come right to you and print a warm kiss on your cheek, and take hold of your hand in that grasping and hearty way that means so much, and tell you, face to face and eye to eye, that they love you, and that they feel all the time how good you are to them, and how kindly you protect them from harm, and lead them in the way that is best for them?

Well now, my friend (if you will not be offended at the saying of it), you are playing exactly the part of those little amateur liturgists, when you try to make the saying of correct things about Jesus Christ take the place of saying and feeling the same things directly to Him. You have no objections to your boys' going up-stairs and reciting pretty things about you. But you have the feeling very properly that he is not much of a son unless he comes down-stairs sometimes and says filial things *to* you.

I am not making light of creeds. It is a good thing

to know what we think about Jesus Christ, and to be able to state it in apt phrases, and it is a good thing for a congregation from time to time to repeat its creed together; it gives us a sense of fellowship in our faith. But our Christianity does not consist in the way in which our *minds* stand affected toward the *truth* of Christ, but in the way in which *we* stand affected toward *Christ*. The essence of the matter is the direct personal cordiality between you and Him exactly as between your son and you.

But if I have not succeeded in expressing the difference between the two in a way that makes it palpable to you, and you want to have it made palpable to you, I have only to recommend what I have recommended already, that when you go home you retire to your closet, and upon your knees pray directly *to* God some of those same expressions which you find it so easy to repeat as a part of your creed *about* God, and observe the difference. *You feel* this matter of coming into direct personal relation to God. It means vastly much that a man is brought to his knees, for it means that for the time being philosophy is displaced by religion, and that God is transformed from a fact far off to a person near by. Prayer is the dividing line between philosophy and religion. Our nice thinking about the things of God is all of it philosophy up to the point of kneeling. When the Lord would convince Ananias that Saul had become

converted to Christ, he said of him: "Behold, he prayeth."

I remember very well the case of a man who had hard work to give up his will to God. I said to him: "Why not kneel and ask God to help you?" "Oh! no! kneeling and asking would be to yield the whole point." He had a clear head, and was well instructed in the truths of our religion and thoroughly persuaded of them. He was willing enough to say of Christ: "He is *the* Saviour"; but it was two days before he would say *to* Him: "*My* Saviour."

Now, by all this long variety of illustration is shown the difference between thinking that Christ is the Son of God, and believing on Him as the Son of God. One is a matter of the head, and in point of character, impulse, and the like, leaves us just where it finds us. The other is a matter of the heart and life, and takes hold on the life everlasting. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Now, my dear friend, no human influences are going to *make* you take this step, and compel you upward from the merely doctrinal position of thinking that Christ is the Son of God, to the Christian position of believing on Him *as* such, and personally loving, and living close to Him and serving Him as such. Even God is never going to compel you to take the step. All that I can do, or all that any teacher of God's truth can do, is to put the case in clear, firm lines

directly before your eye. The matter of taking steps is your matter, not mine, not God's, but yours purely and simply.

The words of our text are not, it is true, Christ's *own* words, but we have words to exactly the same import that are His, and that are spoken by Him in one form or another over and over again, so that there is no mistaking Christ's intention in the matter, as when Christ says in the third of John, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*. And if you have looked with any studious carefulness at Christ's words as they are scattered through the Gospel, you know that believing in Him is just what it has this morning been represented as being. Everywhere Christ is seen trying to draw men right close to Him, just as you try to draw your little son close to you. "Follow me," He said to one and another. "Come unto me."

He does not go around with difficult propositions for men to repeat after Him. He never wrote out anything for men to swear by after He had gone. The only thing He ever wrote, so far as we know, was what He wrote on the ground while the Pharisees were waiting for Him to pass judgment on the woman that was a sinner; and that we have no clew to. And there is significance in that. He wanted men to believe just simply on *Him*. Paul did not

write to Timothy, "I know *what* I have believed," but "I know *whom* I have believed." And in reading Paul's life as it is sketched in the Acts, and as hints of it are afforded in his letters, the appreciative student is all the way clearly reminded how completely in Paul's experience and esteem Christianity was all summed up in having his own life possessed and mastered by the life of Christ. "For me to live is Christ." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "The life which I now live I live by faith of the Son of God." If you object that about all such language there is a great deal of heat and mysticism—no great heat or mysticism about it; only about the same that exists in the relation that you want should obtain between your child and you. You want to be inspiration to your child in his incertitude, do you not? and impulse to him in his purposelessness? and strength to make good his weakness? and wisdom to supply the defects of his understanding? You are never staggered by that sort of mysticism. Nothing would please you more than to know that the life which your little child now lives he lives by faith in you. He is no true child unless he does live in that way, and you no true Christian unless in your life you lean on Christ, and draw from Him and live in Him in the *same* way, believing what He says because it is He that says it, resting in His salvation because it is He that has wrought it, and

doing what He bids because it is He that Has commanded it; thus standing to Him hourly in what our catechism excellently designates as His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.

Now, dear friends, my address to you has been to one, as we assumed at the outset, who thinks that Christ is God's Son, in such a sense that what Christ commands is God's own command. Now there is nothing clearer in the gospels than that Christ calls upon you at once—to-day, now—to believe on Him in exactly that way in which belief on Him has been this morning represented to you; that you should cease barely thinking that He is God's Son, and that you should come to Him and give up to Him, and walk with Him, and lean upon Him, and serve Him. God, then, who holds the universe in His hand, says to you this instant, "Believe on my Son." There are you, there is the command freighted with all the might and all the love of the Omnipotent Father. Dear friend, you stand this instant face to face with the God of all the worlds! Settle it now! I am an ambassador for Christ, as though God did beseech you by me. I pray you in Christ's stead be you reconciled to God!

V.

PROMPTITUDE OF FAITH.

"Then saith He to the man (with the withered hand), Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth, and it was restored whole, like as the other."—MATTHEW xii. 13.

IF the man in our story had stopped to think a moment, he most certainly would never have done as our Lord bade him. It was required of him to do a thing which, from the very circumstance of the case, he was without power to do. His infirmity was in the nature of paralysis, most likely, and, as such, involved the powerlessness of the member affected. The command put upon him was out of proportion with his resources for obeying it; and the longer his mind dwelt upon it, the greater that disproportion would have been felt to be. The command was quite without reason, as that word reason gets used by us, and the more diligently he conferred with himself upon the matter, and the more his conclusions were determined by the canons of correct reasoning, the more conspicuous would its unreason have be-

come. It was in a sense unreasonable, and yet the Lord enjoined it. It was in a very true sense impossible, and yet the man performed it.

That he did not wait to consider the case nicely and analytically will easily be seen to have been the saving of him, at least the saving of his palsied hand. Had time been given or taken for reflection, his first thought would have been: "I am told to do a thing for which the prime condition is wanting. Stretching forth my hand implies muscular energy, and that precisely is what I have not got. The lack of it is exactly the thing that is the matter with me." And the longer he thought about it, the more clearly would his conviction shape itself, the more appreciable his muscular impotency become, and the more impossible, therefore, anything like compliance with Christ's command.

This seems like an attempt to impeach accurate thinking. It is generally assumed that careful thinking, deliberate thinking, is always in place. We make of it a virtue sometimes, and accept it as a hopeful symptom in others that duty is scanned by us or by them with such deliberate and painstaking carefulness. The man reflected upon in Luke's gospel for going about to build a tower before counting the cost of it has been, ever since Christ told the story, a standing argument for chronic indecision. Had the man in our text, however, confronted his obliga-

tion with any such fastidious calculations and computations, he would never have had his withered hand restored whole like as the other.

Thinking is sometimes beneficial, but in certain matters is quite as likely to be detrimental. It sometimes leads us directly toward the truth and into the truth; at other times the more we think and the more logically we think, the further astray we get. This explains the fact that not many wise men are called. It is the very instinct of learning to leave out every question to the arbitrament of close thinking. Wise men, learned men never enter the kingdom of heaven till they have learned so to distrust and resign their thinking powers as to come into the kingdom precisely as children and other untaught people come in. If the man in our text had been a scholar, his thought most likely would have risen up in instant protest against Christ's command. Had he been a physicist, had he in particular been an anatomist, he could hardly have been healed. He would have thought too much. He would instantly have fallen into reasoning upon the utter anatomical and physiological impossibility of a withered hand stretching itself out; and such thinking would have been ruinous. Thomas was constitutionally a thinker. He left conviction to be determined by thinking.

It is here that religion and science break fellowship. Science thinks everything out. Thought is from its

very nature surgical ; it cuts in pieces. It is analytic, and unjoints and unhinges. Suppose that you are in the presence of a speaker that powerfully affects you. You realize his hand upon you and his mastery over you. This wakes up your inquisitiveness, and puts you upon asking the secret of his power, its elements. Thought begins at once to show how surgical it is ; and before the speaker's address is completed you have his oratorical talent accurately and elegantly dissected ; such a percentage due to figure, such a percentage to manner, to matter, and the rest. And yet the process of analyzing his power has, so far as relates to you, destroyed his power, and you go home with the pocketed ingredients of his power when you might have gone home with an inspiration. You thought too much and too nicely.

If that is your mental habit, had you been one of the Twelve, you would have been Thomas, and gone feeling after the nail-prints. Had you been the man in our story, you would have been arrested by the physical absurdities of the situation, and paid for your thoughtfulness by the impotence of your unrestored hand. For a man to do a thing that he has not in him the power to do is to all appearance a break in the logical thread, and while you were investigating the break or trying to tie together the broken ends, the miracle-working Lord would most likely have passed on. So that it was a good deal to

the advantage of our paralytic that he had not a passion for thinking things out clear to the end.

In trying to think out the problems of our religion we get into the same difficulty our man would have fallen into had he tried disentangling the perplexities of his situation. It is impossible for a mind with scholarly habits not to be delighted with the feats of ratiocination exhibited to us in our theological disquisitions and reviews. The amount of heavy philosophy and theological profundity obtainable for a good deal less than a penny a page is a feature of the times. But these essays convince no one but their author, and very few read them but such as already sympathize with their conclusions. Religion is not a philosophy, nor is a treatise on religious topics a means of religious illumination, however valuable it may be as mental gymnastics. Religion does not slip into a man along the line of his thoughts, but between his thoughts.

And it is remarkable how Christ in His intercourse with His disciples labored to keep their thoughts quiet. He never provoked argument. He never explained things. He indulges in no definition-making. It is noticeable how few problems got started in their minds while He was with them. Hows and wherefores He regularly discouraged. Nicodemus wanted the matter of the rebirth stated analytically. Christ declined. One of the disciples wanted a statement

of the methods of the Spirit's operation. Christ declined. One trouble with our thinking powers is that they work at such a level as to *create* more problems than they *solve*. They are like a fly caught in a web, whose very struggles and buzzing only draw the tangled skein about it the more imprisoningly.

All that saved the man in our story was that he did not stop to think. He proceeded as though there were no difficulties, and forthwith for him there were none. It is instructive to notice how easy Peter found it to walk upon the water till he commenced to observe the wind and compute specific gravities ; and then he began to sink. If his thought had kept as quiet as that of the man in our story, it would have saved him a wetting and a rebuke. The first mistake Adam made was to *think* when he ought to have obeyed. The temper of mind that would have induced the paralytic to question the feasibility of Christ's command, was what disposed Adam to think about his duty and argue about it, instead of doing it. Adam thought too much. Thinking about duty instead of doing it was the entering wedge to human misery.

The unconverted men in our congregation can see just where this presses. All Christ's commands to you are in the present tense, which means that the command is issued without any allowance of time for comprehending the mysteries of salvation, or for ac

quiring power to become a saved man. It is simply levelled to the range of the instant ; not because thought is not advantageous in some circumstances, but because it is not in point here. The paralytic, with never so much thinking, would never have seen his way clear to do as he was told. There is no unconverted man here that will ever see his way clear to become a Christian. There are difficulties enough ; difficulties of a doctrinal kind, difficulties of a moral kind. But they are difficulties that will never be abated by any thought you may give to them, but aggravated rather and complicated.

Giving ourselves to Christ is not a matter of *understanding* what we are doing, but a matter of *doing* ; something as when you tell your boy to raise his hand ; he does not know how he raises his hand, and you know no more about it than he as regards the physiological intricacies of the act. And if he were to decline raising it until he understood the matter, you would tell him to do it first and understand at his leisure ; your command was aimed at his will, and his resort to the intricacies of physiology only a side issue raised to divert your attention from his insubordination. God's commands stand out of all relation to human power to grasp the problems, moral or theological, associated with obedience to those commands. God's commands are like the pole-star, which with swift intuition finds out the magnetic-needle as

easily by night-light as by daylight, and beats upon it with relentless compulsion equally in the darkness and the sunshine.

They are not a question of can, but a question of will ; and with the will once trembling obediently on the verge of action, all needed resource of power is at its instant service. This is another lesson of our text. In the case of the paralytic, God's power came in just after the man's will to stretch forth his hand, and just before the stretching act. As he had the will to do, God furnished him the power to do with, and that made out the miracle. It was pretty much the same thing done divinely as is done humanly when a child goes tottering and clambering up a staircase that is too steep for it, and the parent takes hold of the child's hand liftingly. The child has the will to go up, and the parent puts some of his own strength at the service of that will ; and in this way weakness does impossibilities by virtue of superior strength temporarily loaned. This is the incident of the paralytic turned into terms and relations of familiar experience.

It is of the utmost necessity that we should feel that this case of the paralytic stands in Scripture to represent the continuous action of God, the continuous miracle of God, if you please, in so lending Himself to us as to match our power to the measure of our holy intents, and so making us *able* to do that

which there is in us a righteous will to do ; precisely as in our story Christ evened up the paralytic's power exactly to the level of his willingness. It would not be easy to determine whether in this way Christ still works miraculously in the region of physical necessities and ailments ; although there is some warrant in Scripture for expecting occurrences of the sort ; and whenever we pray that God will bless to the recovery of a sick friend, the appliance used for his restoration, if we mean anything in particular by the petition, we mean that we desire of Him that He will so add His own energy to the natural power of the restoratives, as to make results greater than we should have any right to expect from the restoratives used alone and unsupplemented.

But however this may be, it is the intent of our story, as it is the whole combined import of Scripture, to teach us the fact and familiarize us with it, that in the interior events of life, in the processes of our thoughts, in our resistance to evil inward and outward, God's resources of strength and wisdom are in a miraculous way, yet in a way most real and practical, constantly at our service ; that when we have a perfectly holy ambition, we may draw on God to even up our power to the level of our ambition.

This ought not to disturb us as implying a familiar and presumptuous dependence upon the divine re-

sources and bounty. It is only doing in the spiritual realm what every man does in a greater or less measure in the physical one. The forces that we call natural, that we use in every foot-tread, in the transportation of every pound of merchandise by wind or by steam, in the carrying of every shuttle and revolution of every spindle, these forces are as truly grounded in God as are the influences that emanate from the Holy Ghost, and that work in us holier purposes and affections of heart. It is from Him that cometh down *every* good and perfect gift. We are His beneficiaries in everything. It is as much making use of God to unfurl our sail in the draft of the west wind as it is to spread out our unfilled capacities of emotion and action in the draft of a spiritual Pentecost. It is a part of God that He yields Himself in all this rich diversity of ways to piece out man's infirmity. There is no way in which we can so well serve Him as by letting Him serve us in our pursuit of holy ends. It is in this way that our religion comes for the first time to mean something, and to be to us a positive increment of power. We have ideas enough, but too few energies.

Religious ideas get their only value from their fitness to serve as conduits for the conveyance of divine supply. We have all our city under-laid with water-mains, but we prize them only because there is water in the reservoir that works down through those mains

and presses up into our dwellings. Ideas do not strengthen us any more than the water-pipe refreshes or gas-pipe illuminates. And faith is not conceiving of God as an idea, but it is laying hold upon Him as a power and utilizing Him to the ends of holy living and Christian achieving, in just the same strenuous and practical way in which we lay hold on wind-pressure and steam-power, and let them even our resources up to the level of our secular ambition.

And in every possible variety of experience He has indicated His readiness to do for us each in a spiritual way all and everything that He did for the paralytic in a physical way. "Ask and ye shall receive." "No good thing will be withheld from those that walk uprightly." He will give us wisdom, He says, and strength to bear up under sorrow; and will arm us to cope with temptation. Christianity everywhere exhibits itself in the Gospel not as a philosophy, but as a dynamic agency; a substantial increment of power to every Christian life in exactly the measure in which every Christian life consents in all faith to be dynamically re-enforced. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "Ye shall be endued with power from on high."

If now the Church would link all its energies, all its devout desires as confidently to the spiritual influences of God as the world links its ambitions to His

cosmic energies of earth, sea, and air, hardly are there any results possible to be named that might not be achieved for the glory of God and the saving of men before the dawn of the approaching new century.

And then one other lesson that follows on directly from this is the position of enlarged accountability and responsibility in which we are set. It is a common thing for us to say that we are responsible for our use of the talents we have; that present power is the measure of accountability. It appears from what we have seen in our story and from the general drift of Scripture in fact, that our responsibility lies all the way around beyond the outer edge of our power and talent. The man in our text was responsible not only for his use of what was in him, but for what, as a result of his faith, he was able to have divinely added to him. All the way through Scripture God was continually commanding men to do more than they in themselves had the means to do, exactly as in our verse. He commanded His disciples to feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. This, of course, was to undertake the impossible; but when they once set themselves about it, the impossible presently became possible. One object of the miracle was to show that by faith we acquire a property in power that to our unfaith lies at an utter remove from us. This gives us the meaning of the expression in Mark, "To him that believeth,

all things are possible." At another time He bade His disciples cast their net into the sea. This also was to undertake the impossible as the impossible lay shaped to them; but, with Jesus alongside of them in the boat, the circle of possibility widened itself out until it inclosed a great draught of fishes—a hundred, fifty, and three. It was in the same way that God told the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea; and prior to that bade Moses champion the people. The sea was impassable and Moses incapable.

The sequel in all these cases shows that there is in faith a power to make God's resources our own tributaries and auxiliaries. The great reason why we make such slow gains in our own religious life in the warfare with inward sin, selfishness, and pride, is that we make no calculation for any strength but our own, and do not muster in our reserves. We are in this respect where manufacturing was in mechanical life a hundred years ago, when everything was done by hand; where traveling was fifty years ago, when everything was done by stage; where communication was twenty-five years ago, when all messages were sent by post. We do not calculate on a margin. We are doing all by a dead lift.

We *work* our characters into shape. We put bits into our bad dispositions and lash our good dispositions into spasmodic canter. Everything betrays poverty of working power. We pray for this thing,

that, and the other; but continue in just about the same condition of spiritual debility. We pray for quickening and inward enlargement. We ask for faith—partly from habit, partly because it is the Scriptural thing to do—forgetting that it is just as much the Scriptural thing to get faith as it is to ask for it. We ask for all these things, and yet we do not count on receiving them, and all our plans of crusade show no standing-room for auxiliaries. Every time we pray we invite God into partnership with us, and yet our arrangements are made mostly with the expectation of having to get on alone. We can hardly look at our own experience, and at the impulse of it say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The same holds also in regard to Christian work for others. We never quite expect great things, and so great things do not come. We are always just on the edge of a blessing. We are like some regions of country in dry times in regard to which we say that “the showers all go round.” We differ from the man in our text, and do not act on the basis of any resources but those we have in hand, and have nicely inventoried. Everything great in secular attainment has been achieved by a kind of venture that we call enterprise. Now if just that enterprise could be imported into evangelization and be called faith, it would exactly cover the point of our necessity.

Now the prosperity of the Church in times of its majestic strides forward, as in the earlier period of its existence, for example, was due to a certain apostolic audacity. It was very nicely said by the author of "Ecce Homo," that "in periods which are wanting in inspiration, piety assumes the character of caution." We need some of the old-time audacity—some Pauline and Petrine presumption, which was audacious, not because it was *uncalculating*, but just because it was so grandly and discerningly *calculating*, and calculated not only on its own intrinsic force, but on a magnificent increment of working energy from on high.

Now you appreciate the force of all this in a general way, but just make of it for an instant a *particular* matter. There is in a good many quarters a certain diffidence about taking hold in a practical way of the sin that is in the world, which in the light of our text and our discussion is seen to be due to the simple barrenness of our faith. We measure ourselves against the bad thing in the world, in Church, in society, in State; we see that the evil is larger than we are, and so say: "It is of no use!" Mr. Moody in one of his recent sermons said: "I have a great admiration for the colpred woman who said that, 'If the Lord told her to jump through a stone wall, it was her business to jump, and the getting through was God's business.'" An appeal is made to you to

do some specific Christian work. You plead your sense of incapacity; the work is more than you feel yourself adequate to. Probably; you are just in the predicament of the man with the withered hand. *You are* inadequate to it. But it is the special excellence of Christianity as a spiritual dynamic that it capacitates incapacity. Sense of incapacity, so far from releasing you from obligation, is one of the prime conditions of your success: "My strength is *made perfect* in weakness," said the Lord to Paul.

Now just there is our present need as Christians and as churches, to get over feeling that *we* have got these things to do ourselves. Such an idea is out of all consonance with Scripture and with church history. You may call God's importation of His power into us the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or designate it by any other term. But just that is the bottom fact of our holy religion that it empowers, capacitates; qualifies paralysis to do the work of health, and man to achieve results that are divine.

And we want as Christians or otherwise, just now and here, to get right in under the light of this idea, and under the pressure of this power. Let us ask ourselves if this does not point out to us just the need that we individually feel, and a need that we are sure that the blessed Lord can supply for us. Dear brothers, let us no longer hover on the edge of a blessing, but come right in under the shadow of

God's wing, and by our faith enter directly into the fruition of the divine supply, going no longer about with hands that are palsied and powers that are blighted, but responding with quick and confident obedience to every command of our Lord, find the power welling up within us which shall lift us to the level of every blessed privilege that it is ours to enjoy, to the level of every perplexing and arduous duty that it is in us, with the help of God, right manfully and successfully to discharge.

VI.

THE CALL TO APOSTLESHIP.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—ACTS i. 8.

THE book of the Acts, beginning with the second chapter, has for its object to detail as history just that which in this verse is outlined as prophecy. The last twenty-seven chapters of this book are to this eighth verse in the first chapter just what the oak is to the acorn, the literal, orderly, and sublime unfolding and fulfilling of the acorn. This verse is the table of contents of the body of the work. It is not stated to be such, but it is such with close exactness.

Christ says, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." The second chapter gives the narrative of this divine empowering. Christ says that when His apostles have been thus inwardly furnished they shall be witnesses unto Him. The rest of the book is engrossed with the history of apostolic witness-bearing. He says that they shall be

witnesses to Him first in Jerusalem. The account of their activity in Jerusalem we read in the third, fourth, and fifth chapters. Second, "in all Judea." The occasion of their dispersion throughout Judea is related in the sixth and seventh chapters. Third, "in Samaria." The preaching to the Samaritans is the subject of the eighth chapter. Fourth, "unto the uttermost part of the earth." The conversion of Saul is described in the following chapter, the ninth, and from that point on to the close of the book, the subject of the narrative is apostolic activity among the Gentiles, which reaches to the ends of the earth—unto its uttermost part. Thus this text of ours is the whole of the Acts in prophetic miniature.

This verse again is of interest as involving the conditions upon which waits all human success. Success in its conditioning principles is the same in every line of engagement. The looms in our manufactories turn out all sorts of woven fabrics, and yet all these looms are built upon one mechanical principle.

The machinery of success is substantially one for all varieties of success; and success in every line of occupation is made out of power converged upon an object. Means in our hand, an end in our eye, resources and purpose, the one at the beginning, the other at the end, the alpha and omega of success.

Our failures are of two kinds, therefore. They are due sometimes to our attempting too much, trying

to carry burdens that are beyond our strength, cherishing ambitions that are too ambitious ; like the man in the Bible story, more considerate of the design according to which we are building than of the limited resources we are trying to build with. .

But I am of the impression that the saddest failures in the world are due not to our over-estimating our power and trying to do too much, but to the indecision of our aim and not knowing what we are trying to do ; that men, especially in the higher relations of life, are unproductive, not because they are feeble, but because they are purposeless ; that the world's power is abortive because it is divergent instead of convergent, and dissipated instead of focused ; and that a purpose, definite and intelligent, lying athwart the track of a man's energies of heart and mind, is what a burning glass is lying across the path of the sunbeam, a means of tension and the pledge of result.

At this solemn moment, then, in which Christ turns over mankind into the hands of the Eleven, it is noteworthy that the last service which He renders His disciples is to tell them in simple and precise terms, what it is exactly that they as disciples are to do. The power with which they are to do it, He has already stated : the power which shall be wrought in them by the Holy Ghost ; and now the last moment of holy intercourse is spent in telling them

what they shall do with that power, and upon what precise object it shall be gathered and centered. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," that is, ye shall labor to make real to others that which is real to you. That exactly is the meaning of witness-bearing, making real to others that which is real to us.

Christ had spent three years and a half in making Himself the most real of all real things in the thoughts and affections of the Eleven ; and now as He ascends from out their midst and they go away to their little room of devotion and conference, Christ is to them the most substantial, the most real thing in all the universe of God. He has accomplished what at the beginning of His ministry He undertook to accomplish.

Go back with me for a moment from the last words which He spoke to His disciples, to the first word that He spoke to them, to Peter and Andrew, the two fishermen first nominated by Him to the discipleship, and we shall see that what He said to them last upon Olivet is but the fulfilling of what He said to them first by Gennesaret. "Follow me," He said to Peter and Andrew, as they cast their net into the sea, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And now for above three years He has been doing for them what He said He would do for them. He has been making them fishers of men, has been teaching them the holy art of Christian angling, and

He possessed them of the art by creating within them gradually a sense of Him as the one real thing.

And now they have learned this art, He is to them the one real thing. Father, mother, wife, and children are real, but Christ was to them more real; and therefore they could forsake father, mother, wife, and children to follow Christ. Property was very real, but Christ was more real and so they could endure poverty. Pain was fearfully real; but pain they could bear readily for Christ's sake. Death is an obstinate and a supreme terror, but it was not to them so real as Jesus Christ.

In this way the art of angling after men has been made familiar to them; the angling rod put into their hands. Christ is to them now the one real thing of all real things. He has done for them what He undertook to do. There is nothing more that He can do. The sooner He leaves them the better it will be for them; and so in a word that is very tender because it is the last word, and very full of weight because it reaches back to Gennesaret and forward to us, He says to them in parting, "What is so real to *you*, do you go out into the midst of men and make real to *them* also; and so soon as the power of the Holy Ghost is come upon you, ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Now, on the basis of the foregoing, there are some things proper to be addressed to the Christians of this congregation and addressed to them, first, in their individual character as Christians, and addressed to them, second, in their associate capacity as members of this church. And you will bear with me if I use great simplicity and frankness.

In acknowledging Christ as our Master we accept the Gospel both as a law of doctrine and as a rule of conduct. Orthodoxy of belief is no more indispensable to Christianity than orthodoxy of behavior. The Gospel allows us not one particle more liberty of act religiously than it does liberty of thought religiously. The Church, it is true, has burned a great many men for thinking unscripturally, without concerning itself much about the men who act unscripturally, and yet we learn from the twentieth of Revelation, that the books with which we shall be confronted when we stand before the great white throne will be books which register not our creeds, but our conduct; and that, not because creed is of no account, but because conduct and heart creed are of the same complexion, and either is a safe index of the other.

When, therefore, we know what the Gospel would have us do, and we do not do it, our heresy is as much an outrage upon God as when we know what the Gospel would have us believe and do not believe

it. Christianity does not consist in submitting our judgment to Christ and keeping our behavior in our own hands. It is more a matter of doing the will of our Father which is in heaven than it is a matter of crying: "Lord! Lord!"

If we have, therefore, any suspicion that the Scriptures are interested in portraying Christianity as an agency relative to the unconverted as well as a condition relative to us, we shall, as faithful students of the Scriptures, be as concerned to know what they would have us do, as what they would have us be, and we shall, as loyal followers of Christ, be as anxious to carry ourselves evangelically outwardly as to be evangelical inwardly.

You are aware that the science of mechanics is reducible to two divisions. One division is occupied with statics and the other with dynamics. Statics concerns itself with forces in equilibrium; dynamics treats of forces in motion. One gives us physical condition; the other physical agency. One is a matter of being; the other a matter of doing. Christianity is a sort of mechanics likewise, hidden and spiritual. And the New Testament is an inspired treatise on spiritual mechanics, and deals with the matter in something the way that the grosser mechanics of matter does, and expounds both the doctrine of spiritual statics and the doctrine of spiritual dynamics, and exhibits to us Christianity as a splen-

did equilibrium of the soul, and Christianity as an energy that everywhere goes about upsetting equilibrium—statics and dynamics.

The trouble with a great many of our Christians is that they never get beyond the statics. They stop with Christianity as an inward composure. "My peace I leave with you," completes their conception of the Gospel. They do not reach the point of seizing their inward composure, and hurling it in all its holy equipoise into the midst of unholy men to their unutterable discomposure. They stop with reading the four gospels of condition without going on to read the fifth gospel of "Acts."

And when we contemplate the dynamic character, the equilibrium-disturbing character of apostolic Christianity, we are not to conceive of the apostles as any exception to Christ's general intent of what Christians at large shall be, and import. Acts, Epistles, and Revelation, are all of them one prolonged and multitudinous exposition of Christianity in its innermost being and outermost expression. It is all of it God's best endeavor to set before the world the very ideal of manhood as a serenity and as an activity; and that ideal is as relative to you and to me as it is to the most enraptured Johns, the most impetuous Peters, the most indefatigable Pauls, that history has ever produced.

The original disciples were not elected and disci-

plined by Jesus Christ in order to produce a class, a caste, that should forever stand apart and distinct from the disciples that in other nations and generations should come after them, unapproached and unapproachable by their successors either in the sturdiness of their faith or in the immensity of their evangelizing activity. Those disciples were taken and trained in order to show to the world what it was the very nature of Christianity to transform common every-day manhood into : and if you and I have not the profound serenity of spirit which the apostles had, and if, especially, we have not the passionate ambition to make Christ a reality in the minds and hearts of those about us that the apostles had, it is not because we are not equal to the apostles in natural depth, or their match in intellectual compass : it is because we have not let Christ become as real to us as they let Him become to them : it is because we have not let Christ take hold of us as they let Him take hold of them, and crowd the depths of our being with His fulness, and fill out the compass of our mind and heart with the plenitude of His wisdom and fervor. Everything which they became, everything which they did, is only so much in the way of explaining to you and to me just what Christianity in its innermost nature is.

If they had stopped with being disciples, then we should have said that Christianity meant nothing

then and means nothing to-day but discipleship. But if they went on from being absorbent disciples and became at last radiant apostles, with their mouths full of persuasion, and their lives all running over with the demonstration of the Gospel, then we shall be obliged to say that then and now Christianity means apostleship just as much as it means discipleship. It means purpose just as much as it means power; it means making others Christians just as much as it means being Christians ourselves; it means making Christ a real thing in the minds and hearts of others, just as much as it means having Christ made a real thing to us; it means to-day in New York as much as it meant 1,850 years ago at Olivet, bearing witness to the Son of God in the narrower circle of the home, the broader circle of the community, and forth even to the uttermost part of the earth.

These things when carefully and prayerfully considered will create within us a deep sense of our own individual and personal responsibility. It is a part of Christianity to be apostolic. The anointing of the Holy Ghost sets each one of us—man, woman, and child—in the line of the true apostolic succession; and, as after the ascension of Christ mankind lay in the hands of the original apostles for them to convert, so to-day the conversion of the world pertains to us as their spiritual representatives and successors.

I saw the other day a numerical calculation in

which I was greatly interested, and which is fitted to affect us deeply. Assuming the unevangelized population of the globe to be one billion and a seventh, and the number of true followers of Jesus Christ to be ten millions, allowing that each Christian were from this time forward to make one convert each year, within eight years from the present time the whole population of the globe would be at the foot of the Cross! "Behold, they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever."

But not only do we exist as individual Christians having aims toward which our spiritual power is individually directed, we exist also in the associate relation of a Church. Individual Christianity means individual apostleship. What does associate Christianity mean? What is a church for? What is this church for? It is worth a great deal even to have the idea that it is for something. It is a precious instinct we all have that a thing is not good unless it is good for something; that excellence is not excellent unless it is preliminary to usefulness. Value and valor are the same word, etymologically, and valor we can not think of separate from some sort of drawn sword. God is the only being that is its own reason for being, and even God is not quite God to us except as we see Him running over in beneficence,

and putting even Himself under some kind of contribution. It is well, then, that we should so much as ask ourselves what reason this church has for being. A church is Christianity organized. What advantage does Christianity gain by being organized?

These questions I will answer at the outset in a negative way, by saying, first, that a church does not exist, properly, for the sake of its sanctuary ministrations, whether of the pulpit or of the choir. There are churches—and we are using the word church, now, in its strict technical sense—there are churches that can be pointed to everywhere, that to all outward appearance fulfill their entire function by building a house of worship, settling a pastor, engaging a choir, and gathering themselves weekly within the consecrated walls for purposes of holy entertainment and spiritual edification.

My friends, supposing that after the ascension of their Lord the original Church of the Apostles had done just that thing. Supposing that they as a church had made organized Christianity to consist as a permanency, in praying and singing and preaching to each other once a week, and gathering together in mid-week a desultory few of them for purposes of supplication, although with no tangible notion as to what there was for them to pray for!

I have the impression that there are churches—in this city, perhaps, certainly elsewhere—where supine-

ness is only another name for spiritual laziness, induced by excess of sanctuary nourishment, and who do not bestir themselves sufficiently to prevent even the bread of life from working within them as a slow and subtle poison. There are churches whose membership may be numbered by hundreds, churches that have had the Gospel preached to them earnestly and spiritually for fifty years, and that yet in the course of the entire half century have not begun to produce such a flame as was kindled all over Jerusalem by the Church of the Eleven within fifteen days after the Lord's ascension.

Again, a church does not exist for the sake of sustaining its weaker members. Of course there is a great deal that it can do and ought to do in that direction. We all depend, in a considerable degree, on each other. Christ said to Peter, "When thou art converted, strengthen the brethren." But somehow in this century of the Church a large number of those who apply for admission to the Church give as a reason for joining that they want, not to strengthen the brethren, but to have the brethren strengthen them.

It is easy to see that when an army is quartered in the enemy's country, the safest place for soldiers is inside of the camp; but a regiment recruited for the purpose of having its members protect each other is a poor addendum to the fighting resources of the

brigade. We learn heroism in the face of danger; children learn to swim by being thrown into the water; and the original Church never flinched after once it had taken up its position in the open field.

Again, it hardly needs to be said that a church does not exist for the sake of its denomination. Denomination is harness worn by us for the purpose of dragging the chariot of the Gospel. It may chafe some—all harness is liable to. The harness must be made as easy as is possible consistently with its strength and durability; but the harness is a necessity. Still, it must be always remembered that the harness exists for the sake of the chariot, and not the chariot for the sake of the harness; and he serves his denomination best who serves the Church of Christ best.

And now by indicating what the Church does *not* exist for, we have already implied the object for which it does exist. A Church, as an efficiency of God for the conversion of men, is the interweaving of the individual strands of strength fused into a solid bolt of force and hurled at the adversaries of the Lord; and no desultory skirmishing of individual Christians will begin to take the place of the grand concentrated bombardment of a confederate Church.

We regularly proceed upon that principle in the achievement of large secular results. We organize

for purposes of government; we organize for purposes of warfare; we organize for purposes of improvement; we organize for purposes of revolution and of discovery. One great secret of the tremendous power of the Young Men's Christian Associations throughout the country is the splendid thoroughness of their organization; and one great reason why these associations exist is, for the purpose of doing what the churches ought to do, and what they would be in superb condition to do, if they were as thoroughly pervaded as these associations with the missionary idea, as profoundly thrilled with the Holy Ghost, and as consecratedly administered and judiciously manned. They do the work that the churches are not doing, because in their constitution and animus they are more perfectly conformed than the churches to the model of the old Apostolic Eleven. They, like the Church of the Apostles, exist confessedly and professedly, theoretically and practically, for the conversion of men. They combine for battle; they muster around the cross; they charge upon the enemy; and God sends them home every day laden with victory and with souls.

I have no apology to make for my earnestness and abruptness. I know and feel the truth of it, and every man knows it that has had a taste of Pentecost, and under the splendid stimulus of that Pentecost has read these burning chapters of the Acts. And I

have no prayer that I can offer for this church that so drinks up into itself the passion and longing of my soul as that God will stamp upon the heart of every member of the church in lines of fire the object for which alone this church has any right to be a church, and that, having convinced us of our collective mission, He will endue us with the power from on high that shall equip us to fulfill our mission; welding us till we are one, warming us till we glow with holy apostolic passion, and leading us forward to that associate victory that waits to be conferred upon every church that loves Christ better than it loves the world, that reckons souls saved to be the finest treasure, and that accounts apostleship to be the very glory of the religion of Jesus.

VII.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

*"Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may
be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*

—EPH. vi. 11.

ST. PAUL was a born warrior. Most of us are what we are by ordination of circumstance. Here and there one is what he is by ordination of nature. It was Paul's *genius* to be belligerent, and his life would have been an epic, lived anywhere. Even in Eden he would have done what his great ancestor neglected to do, stood against the wiles of the devil. Adam had no genius.

Even the years of Paul's quiet student life had no effect to cool his enthusiasm or stay his impetuosity. If a man has genius, everything he touches ministers to it, everything he feeds on turns out to be nutriment to it. We can hardly conceive of anything more repressing and withering than the old Jewish law when taught as it was accustomed to be taught by the Jewish divines, the Hebrew rabbis. But to the young disciple of Gamaliel, it was meat, fuel, inspiration. To his hot soul everything proved com-

bustible, fusible. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house; and hailing men and women, committed them to prison." "And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high-priest and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." Every word helps make the picture more vivid. He is not satisfied any longer to hold the clothes (as at Stephen's martyrdom), but takes up arms in his own right and as his own matter.

Then he went to Damascus and saw a great light, and Saul became Paul. But making a changed man of him did not make another man of him. Saul and Paul are one person structurally. Reversing a locomotive does not make a new locomotive of it. Change of direction, but not change of power. Paul is Saul reversed, the same man fronting the other way. Conversion did not interfere in any way with his genius. Conversion never does. Conversion changed the working direction of his genius. He was belligerent by nature and belligerent by grace. Nature made the motion and grace seconded it.

"His life," Martineau says, "was a battle, from which in intervals of the good fight his words arose as songs of victory." It was the supreme feat of the Gospel to convert such a man. He is *the* superlative

trophy of the Christian Church. Paul is the miracle of Christianity, one of those incontestable evidences of Christianity that leaves the mind satisfied. It was more to make Saul over into Paul than it was to make water over into wine. Power that could do the former would be at no loss to do the latter.

The martial quality of this old Napoleon of the cross betrays itself in what he does and in the way he does it, and in every bend and turn of life. The record of his moving hitherward and thitherward reads like the chronicles of an Alexander. He dared difficulties like Hannibal, and grasped details with the omniscience and omnipresence of the first emperor. His visits were invasions, his letters war dispatches, and his whole life campaign. It is noticeable how easily and habitually his thought drops into forms of the camp.

There is nothing so like a man as the language he uses. The same word in Greek, you remember, means both reason and word. That which a man *says* is his second self. Christ, the Word of God, is the second self of God. Paul's belligerency attests itself in his utterances and in the very forms in which those utterances are cast. Paul had certainly seen a great deal more of art than he had of warfare. He had been in Athens, had lived in Corinth and Ephesus, and was familiar with the finest products of Hellenic taste. He had moved among the splendors of Grecian

landscape, threaded the island-dotted Ægean; standing at Thessalonica, had looked away across the sea to cloud-girt Olympus; had looked down from the Areopagus of Athens upon a luxurious environment of sea, river, and mountain, had passed under the shadow of Ætna and Vesuvius, and witnessed the soft sunny beauty of the bay of Naples.

But his soul had no sensitiveness to graces of form. There was no beauty in his eye, no æsthetics in his letters. His letters are not sketchy or newsy, in them are no interpolated art notes. Notes from the battlefield rather, hot with fiery purpose and strenuous with iron resolve. "He is the only man I know of," said Cassaubon, "who wrote not with fingers, pen and ink, but with his very heart, passion, and bare nerves."

That is Paul, the Napoleon of the cross, the mailed and helmeted belligerent of the Gospel of peace. And this martial impulse, I say, is everywhere in his letters incessantly declaring itself. It is in our text, "Put on the whole *armor* of God." And the whole ensuing passage is in the same vein. Truth is to be the *girdle*, righteousness the *breastplate*, the preparation of the Gospel of peace the *sandals*, faith the *shield*, salvation the *helmet*, and the Word of God the *sword*. There is no beauty in Paul's eye, but war is in his eye and everything he sees becomes the reflection of his eye, takes the color of his thought.

He writes to Timothy: "Fight the good fight of faith." He encourages Timothy to a life of valor by the stimulus of his own example and says to him, "I have fought a good fight." In this sixth chapter he writes to the Ephesians, "We *wrestle* not against flesh and blood, but we *wrestle* against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." "So fight I, not as one that beateth the air," he says to the Corinthians. His reference is to the pugilist. While among the Corinthians he had quite likely watched the boxers at the Isthmian games, celebrated near by. He had forgotten all about the art treasures of Corinth, but remembered everything that was in the nature of a fierce antagonism.

To the same Corinthians he says in his second letter, "Approving ourselves as the ministers of God by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,"—the sword-hand and the shield-hand,—righteousness offensive and righteousness defensive.

Again, in the tenth chapter of the same letter: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." We think that when a boy the fiery Saul must have had told him the story of the pirates that had their little strongholds all along the coast of his native Cilicia; and how when their maraudings became unendurable Pompey was sent out with an army

from Rome, and in one magnificent sea-fight conquered the pirates, took 10,000 of them prisoners and captured 120 of their strongholds.

He cared nothing for the statues that he saw at Corinth, but he remembered the boxers at the Isthmus. He draws none of his imagery from the Taurus or the Mediterranean, but decks his sturdy rhetoric with the grim metaphors of the squadron and brigade, and utilizes everything that is instinct with a firm antagonism; and so he writes: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself [every fortress that raiseth itself] against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ [leading captive every thought into subjection to Christ]." Hardly is there a word in that entire passage that is not in some way a war-echo, a reverberation from the camp and the field. And so to the Romans he says: "Let us put on the armor of light"; and to the Thessalonians: "Let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation."

All of them are detached but consonant symptoms of Paul's belligerency. He was a fighting apostle after he was converted, a fighting persecutor before he was converted, and a fighting boy, I presume,

among his playmates at Tarsus. (The trouble with boys now, is not that they are fighting boys, but that they fight the wrong thing,—what is good instead of what is bad, and each other instead of themselves.)

And now it is precisely this war-spirit of Paul that helps to explain his eminence in the apostolic Church. When God chose Paul (“He is a chosen vessel unto me,” said God)—when God chose Paul, He chose him with regard to the work to be done, and with regard to Paul’s fitness to do it. He chose the Hebrews to be His people instead of the Chinese or East-Indians, because there was something in the Hebrews that was apt to His purpose. His choice of Paul was an apt choice, because Paul was an apt man, and He went on in a way to adapt Paul, because Paul was already natively adaptable. . And one element of his aptness was his combativeness. A fighting Church, a Church militant, belligerent, could be humanly championed by nothing less than a fighting apostle, an apostle militant, belligerent. St. John had visions of the Church triumphant, and was, in his temper and spirit, a kind of representation and prophecy of the Church triumphant. St. Paul stands for the Church of the present, the Church upon the field, the Church in armor, and the apostle of the armed spirit is fitly the historic champion of the Church in armor. And we shall gain in many ways

by contemplating Christian service under Paul's aspect and imagery.

Christianity is in its very nature and intent a crusade. Ours is a Gospel of peace, but it is anything but a peaceful Gospel, and the more Scripturally it is put the more it betrays its animosity toward everything that in spirit contradicts the Gospel; as the brighter the light, the more it differs from darkness, and the greater and swifter the inroad that it makes into darkness.

It was Christ who said: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword." And again: "I am come to send fire on the earth; and, what will I, if it be already kindled?" "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you nay, but rather division." In Christianity a light is come into the world, and because men's deeds are evil they hate the light, and the more purely and intensely it shines the *more* they hate it.

Christianity is the most distinct declaration of war against sin that God ever made, and every luminous Christian is only another echo of the original declaration. It is in the very nature of godliness that it irritates ungodliness. Unflinching honesty always aggravates dishonesty, unflecked purity is a standing indictment against lust, and every pronounced virtue and its pronounced opposite are duellists, and the

only Christianity that can get along in the world without harassing and worrying ungodliness is what Christ called the "bushel-covered" Christianity. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you." "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."

Christianity is in its nature belligerent, and the peace of the Gospel comes only as the fruitage of battle, and as the aftermath of victory. "What communion hath light with darkness?" asked Paul. Between sanctity and sin there is deadly enmity, which will disappear only with the extermination of one or the other of the belligerents. The moral tranquillization of the world is obtainable by no policy of compromise. Diplomacy has no role to play here. "Put on the whole armor of God." The call is for soldiers, not diplomats; for regiments, not embassies. The victory is to be fought out, not negotiated.

Of course there is courtesy in war as well as elsewhere. There is a consideration due to men as such, be they wicked or otherwise, but there is no consideration due to wickedness. Wickedness has to be handled without gloves, and designated without euphemisms. The act and the actor have to be discriminated. The two lie a little apart from each other in God's thought. Said the Psalmist to Jehovah, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though

Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." Courtesy toward a wicked man is Christian; courtesy toward wickedness is poltroonery and perhaps diabolism. All such irresoluteness postpones victory, not wins it. Sooner or later the whole matter has got to be determined by the arbitrament of the sword. There are instances in which there is no evading Waterloo.

The competition of good and evil is such an instance. We may domesticate sin, and array it in terms of elegant Latinity, but sooner or later that same sin will have to be proscribed without mercy and hunted down as an outlaw. We will treat with all the beautiful tenderness of the Gospel, men and women that are knavish, yes, that are adulterous, but we must remember that honesty and dishonesty, purity and uncleanness, are in implacable feud, and that either righteousness or sin has got to go under before there can be peace on the earth. We want then the courage of our convictions to enable us to name things according to their true character, to state things as they are, to deal with things as they are, and heroically to refuse all quarter to everything that declines to be led captive into subjection to Christ. As soldiers of the Lord we want large bestowment of sanctified stubbornness.

There is another object that will be accomplished by recognizing the belligerent spirit of Christianity. Two divisions of the same army will hardly train

their guns on each other, so long as they are consciously in sight of a common enemy. It is fearful to contemplate the amount of ammunition which through a period of eighteen centuries the several divisions and regiments of the Lord's army have expended on each other, all from the laxity of their loyalty to their common captain, and the laxity of their hatred to their common foe.

There is but one thing for you and me as Christians to fight, and that is—sin; and every shot, gibe, pulpit or newspaper fling that we discharge upon a loyal fellow-soldier or fellow-regiment of Christ's army, is in effect so much musketry put in the hands of Satan and used to sin's aggrandizement and the enfeeblement of the Church. The most intense aggression of the Church has been its intestine aggression. We can not afford it. Who can tell whether the Church might not already have doffed its armor and donned its crown had sin, from the first hour of Pentecost, been fixedly held under the concentrated fire of a one-hearted Christendom?

You remember how Christ treated the matter. John said to Him, "We saw one casting out devils in Thy name." (That is the precise mission of the Church of all time, casting out devils.) "We saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not *us*." What bruised John's feelings is bruising feelings eighteen centuries later, casting out devils,

but he followeth not *us*, “and we forbade him because he followeth not *us*.” Jealous clergy and jealous laity are in effect doing the same thing to-day and for the same reason. Jesus said, “Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is on our part.” That bands in one Christ’s followers, and makes it treason against Christ to stab a co-militant.

And now this warfare between righteousness and sin is waging everywhere ; wherever we stand, we stand on battle-ground. Every inch gained is gained by the sword ; and at whatever point we severally touch society, there is the point at which our sword is to be wielded and our blows dealt. The place where our vocation plants us, and our usual duties and relations engage us, is the one where we shall wear and use God’s armor to best effect.

You remember the ruinous desolation in which Nehemiah found Jerusalem when he visited it from Shushan. The people were few and abased, the houses fallen, the walls broken down, and the gates thereof burned with fire. While men slept, guided by the uncertain night-light, the devout old patriot traced out the circuit of the olden wall he loved so well, found again the gateways through which had once flowed and ebbd the tide of a busy, happy life, and in the stillness and the darkness pondered devoutly how Jerusalem might once more become a walled and gated town, a strong city of God. And

he said to the people in the morning: "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire; come and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. And they said, Let us rise up and build; so they strengthened their hands for their good work."

And now the point of interest is to inquire how they set themselves about the lifting up of that which was fallen down. And we read in the third chapter of Nehemiah, that "the dwellers in the city rebuilt each that portion of the wall that lay next to his own house; Benjamin and Hashub that which was against their house. After them repaired Azariah by his house. From above the horse-gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house. After them repaired Zadok over against his house." And so the rest. At whatever point we touch the moral desolation of society, there is our place of building. At whatever spot we touch sin, there is our place of fighting. The place where our vocation plants us, and our usual duties and relations engage us, is the one where we shall wear and use God's armor to best effect.

It probably seemed to Azariah a very arduous undertaking to rebuild the whole city wall, and so it might have done if he had had it all to do. But he did his little, and Benjamin did his little; all worked

against their own door, and the work was completed inside of two months.

It seems to you a great undertaking to improve the sociability of this church, for instance, and so it would be if any one of us had got it all to do. But if I do my little, and "A" and "B" do their little, and each works over against his own door, it would not take even so long as it did to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

It seems to you a great undertaking to improve the commercial integrity of the city of New York. But the commercial integrity of the city is only the sum of the commercial integrity that is contributed from each store, office, and counting-house of the city. It depends on the fidelity with which each man builds over against his own door. The politics of the city of New York have the reputation of being in a corrupt state. If they are ever in any better condition it will be brought about only by what men do individually to make them better. The indecency of American politics is only the sum of the indecencies of individual citizens, and our amelioration will have to be individual before ever it can be general. It will come about by each citizen rebuilding that portion of the wall that lies against his own door.

Men are saying these days that American politics are too corrupt to make participation in them reasonable or respectable. The more diseased a body is,

the more interest it needs to have taken in it. Things that are depreciating rarely appreciate by a policy of abandonment. Nehemiah stumbling about that night on the ragged stones of Jerusalem's fallen wall might have said that Jerusalem was too ruinous to make recovery reasonable or masonry creditable; but Benjamin, Meshullam, and Malchiah, and the rest built each over against his own house, and the wall was finished in fifty and two days. At whatever point we touch the moral desolation of society, there is our place of building. At whatever spot we touch sin, there is our place of fighting. Wherefore put on the whole armor of God.

My friend, there are only two sides to this controversy, the side of Christ and the side of antichrist. You can not be on *both* sides. "No man can serve *two* masters," said Christ. On which *one* of the two sides are you? If you are not promoting godliness, you are hindering it. If you are not building up Christianity, you are breaking it down. "He that is not with me is against me."

VIII.

SAMUEL, THE CHILD-CHRISTIAN.

"I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."—I SAM. i. 28.

OUR morning Bible-lesson has introduced us to the little child-prophet of Shiloh. The story has formed with us all a part of our cradle-scripture. For our one Bible falls easily into a number of particular Bibles. Each condition, experience, age, compiles from all the various material of the Word a little Gospel of its own. Sorrow gathers together such a little Testament and uses it. Gladness makes its collection and reads it. Years that are old and tired bind the selected comforts of God into a little volume of their own; and the child, too, has his child-bible, and the story of the boy-priest of Shiloh has formed with us all a part of our child-bible—one chapter in our cradle-scriptures.

The career of Samuel, in whatever portion considered, works in us lively interest and admiration. In its purity, strength, and symmetry, it is, I believe, the most perfect instance of human life that Script-

ure has left detailed to us. We want to know something of the childhood out from which such a man grew; the dawn out of which such a day sprang.

And the little fellow becomes very easily and pleasantly known to us. Just those incidents and details are preserved that work upon our hearts coaxingly, and shape him to our imaginations without effort, making us love him and feel at home with him quite before we know why. And then, besides all this, the references made to his childhood cover just those stages of young development that are at once most interesting to us and least understood by us—the religious ones.

It is a wonder to me that there is not more said about the children in the Bible. The pulpit is a little afraid of them; the Bible says not much to them or of them. A child is a little conundrum, which Scripture does not much to solve. All the converts in the New Testament appear to have been adult converts. The children are an unknown quantity. A child does not admit of statement. The ordinary processes of conversion do not seem quite to apply to them, either that they do not know enough to be made better, or are not quite bad enough to be made better.

This sort of indeterminateness puts parents and pastors upon dealing with the lambs of the flock tentatively. We have thought we should like to see a child's

nature mapped, arranged chronologically, processes and transitions dated. These little people have a vast amount of experience that lies up pretty close, at least, to religion, but experience that does not formulate readily, nor reduce willingly to rules, nor fall into adult grooves. In this way the minds of these Christian mothers become all full of questions and hesitancies. I have thought that something would be obtainable by them from the record that is left us of the child-prophet and boy-Christian of Shiloh.

But in order to get the benefit that we seek from these chapters of child-biography, we shall need to proceed upon the assurance that however exceptional a child Samuel may have been, he was not an abnormal child. Samuel's boyhood differed, in particulars, from the boyhood of a great many children, certainly; but there is nothing in the narrative to suggest that he started in life with a dowry differing from that with which children born of godly parents regularly start, or that influences were gathered about him that were essentially distinct from those that might ordinarily be expected to obtain in the usual associations of the Christian home and the Christian sanctuary. He may have been in certain respects an unusual child, but he was not a miracle child, not what we should call an impossible child.

And this we need to feel certainly and clearly, in

order to have the story help us much. You can gather little from him if in essential points he lies at a different plane from that at which your children lie. There is nothing practical in an impracticable model; nothing exemplary in an inimitable example. And so, as there is nothing in the Bible account to hinder, we shall treat Samuel as naturally conceived, naturally born, naturally developed and matured.

But before specifying any of the delicate and exquisite qualities of the little Samuel, we shall have to say something about his parents. There is no child explicable apart from his parentage. The foundations of one generation are in all respects laid in the antecedent generation. In an important sense the boy begins to live when his father begins to live. The child is the parent continued down into a new generation. And so Scripture biography, much of it, begins with a statement and exposition of parentage. You remember how it was with Jesus, with John the Baptist, and now with Samuel. Science to-day lays large stress on heredity. Revelation emphasized heredity long before science was born. Francillon says that "the lives of the *mothers* of great men form an important branch of biographical literature." The author of the old Hebrew chapter quietly asserts the same fact by going about to narrate to us Samuel by first acquainting us with his mother.

And then, as believers in Revelation we have an

interest in heredity that it is beyond the power of secular science either to induce or to appreciate. There are numerous intimations in Scripture that in the bequest of spiritual legacies the law of heritage works with peculiar constancy and vigor. "The promise is unto you and to your children." And that occurs as a frequent and favorite thought, "I will establish my covenant with Isaac for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." And this principle is wrought into the structure of the whole Jewish record. It is as though God held parent and child in one individual compact of grace, parental faith throwing itself forward upon the child, and working in and for the child vicariously; the faith of the parent becoming in time the child's faith, just as by a physical law the features of the father and mother reappear in time in the child's face, in growing distinctness. And so St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice," exactly as though the faith which Timothy had was the identical faith that his mother and then his grandmother had had before him, a constant spiritual heirloom, only passing from hand to hand, or rather from heart to heart, with the transference of the years and the succession of the generations.

Of Elkanah, Samuel's father, little notice is taken.

A single remark of his indicates the mutual loyalty and confidences of husband and wife, and along the course of the first chapter is shown his faithful observance of religious obligations. But Samuel was pre-eminently his mother's boy, as boys are apt to be. It was his mother that prayed for him; his mother that took him to Shiloh with the bullocks, the flour, and the wine; his mother that offered him in consecration, and said: "I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord"; his mother that praised God for the child in a song of triumph and holy thanksgiving; and his mother that "made him a little coat and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice."

And then, as exhibiting the real strength of her heart and depth of her devout insight and foresight, it is instructive to notice the parallelism between Hannah's song and the Magnificat of the Virgin Mary—not only in substance, but even in point of form; a song, too, remarkable especially, as one has said, "as containing the first designation of the Messiah under that name."

Appreciating the quality of the parentage, then, we have laid for us a basis of just expectancy touching the quality of the offspring. This gives us the spiritual home-atmosphere from which the religious possibilities of the child caught their first impulses of

quickenings and enlargement, and puts it quite in my way to say that if you, as mothers, would have the quiet, orderly Christian development of Samuel duplicated in the development of your boy, then you must take care that you be duplicates of Hannah in warmth and vigor of maternal faith.

And now there are some things in Samuel that I would like to notice, in order to parental guidance and encouragement, but which we shall have to notice with some brevity. It was while Samuel was still a child, that, lying asleep in the Tabernacle, ere the lamp of God went out, the Lord called him, and he answered, "Here am I," and running unto Eli, who was sleeping hard by, said: "Here am I, for thou calledst me." There is a good deal of interest lying just underneath the story-like form of the narrative. It seems like a kind of day-dawn in his young dewy soul. It is rather a pleasing coincidence that this twilight scene in the lad's life should have transpired just at the twilight hour of the morning. The season plays a pleasant accompaniment to the event.

Of course we do not know how many times before influences which he did not understand may have fallen upon him, and a voice, audible or still, that he could not name, have sounded within him. Impressions as distinct as this, perhaps imply earlier ones of less distinctness leading up to this. The outer day is

always a good while dawning; it is natural that the inner day should be. But the day was not yet fully come. He heard the voice, or felt it, at least, but felt it as Eli's. He sensed the divine impression, and with nimble promptness responded to it, and yet he did not know it as a divine impression, and said to Eli, "Thou calledst me." "Samuel did not yet know the Lord," the story goes on to say.

We gather from all this that religion may be in a child and sway the child, stirring him into strange disquiet as it did Samuel, and waking in him movings of thought and mind that ordinary causes decline to account for, before even the child comprehends the influence under which he has passed or knows how distinctly to think about it or accurately to name it.

The incident encourages us in the opinion that religion is one of the very early facts of a little child's life; that it is in no way dependent upon, and only in a loose way associated with, the strength of the young intellect or the precision of the young thought (just as the woods and the rocks and the rivers lie out under the eclipse of the night long after the sky begins to wear the certain marks of the morrow); that religion is not something which comes to the child at an established stage in its development, but something which begins to shape itself in the child back among its primitive years, like the formless elements of nature moving into comeliness un-

der the brooding of the Spirit back in the old creative week. Religion in the child is like buds in April, only waiting for soft airs to breathe across them. The mental attainments of the boy may not understand clearly nor record with much accuracy the noiseless and undefined dawning that is going forward in his spirit, just as the sun-dial is unconscious of the aurora.

Another thing by which Samuel is distinguished—already implied in the foregoing—is that there was no break in the thread of his religious life. He *grew up* into a holy man. We discover at no point symptoms of jar or convulsion. He became what he became along a steady, constant line of unfolding. If we use the term technically, we shall have to say that he was never converted. It was not necessary for him when he became sixteen or eighteen to have everything undone in him which up to that time had been done, and so to have a third of his natural life counted out and erased. He passed through no crisis of revolution that strewed all his after-life with the wreck of young years that had to be broken down and abandoned. He did not spend the last half of life fighting the first half, and trying to wear out the bad momentum of a misspent youth.

His life was not, therefore, two half-lives that had no particular relation to each other, but a single life that was continuous and coherent. "In him at

least," as some one has said of him, "the boy was father to the man, and his days had been bound each to each by natural piety." Each day melted gradually and easily into the next, as color strengthens into color along the spectrum. Conversion means a complete turning about. Samuel never turned completely about. In his life there is no retreat. He *grew up* to be godly. He moved on a right line. He came into the kingdom of heaven as a plant moves into the air and sunshine, by *growing* into it. "As long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord." Such an event needs to have room made for it in our theology.

This is no attempt to make light of the divine grace or to dispense with its holy and necessary offices. Only the case of this little Christian at Shiloh, who was never converted, shows us that the same grace of God that can recover a man from the error of his ways, if applied early enough and with proper constancy, can keep the boy from straying into ways of error. The boy that has religious character enough to admit of his being ungodly, has religious character enough to admit of God's grace keeping him godly. If a child is far enough along to go astray, he is far enough along to have God's grace keep him from going astray. A little tottering child does not need to be lame before its mother's helping hand can work sustainingly and deliveringly for him ;

nor does the grace of God get its efficacy from the disadvantage at which it works. We want room in our theology, then, for Samuel, and room in our faith to pray and labor that he may be a frequent occurrence in our times and homes.

We must just mention Samuel's early connection with the church and the sanctuary. I suppose that this, too, had its strengthening and educating effect. It was just in the midst of the sanctuary that the Lord's presence became manifest to him, and that the divine voice sounded clearly and intelligibly in his ears. We may gather from the fact that there is great virtue in early and affectionate association with the church, and in earnest participation in things that concern the church. Things become related to us only by our coming into affectionate relation with them. There was room in the tabernacle at Shiloh for the young Samuel to do something. He was not only early planted in the house of the Lord, but early established also in the practical service of the Lord.

But great as is the supplementary service which the church can render the child, the home is at once his physical birth-place and his proper spiritual birth-place. It is a Spanish proverb that an ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy. The home is the first church, the hearth-stone the first altar, and the father and mother the first priests. The home-atmos-

phere is the element in which all the material suited to the nurture of the child becomes prepared and adapted. And so the more home there is in the home, the more readily and completely does it fulfill its offices as a child-church. It is for this reason that no prayers ever touch us so tenderly or remain with us so faithfully as the home-prayers. John Randolph once said: "I should have been an atheist if it had not been for one recollection, and that was that my departed mother used to take my little hands in hers and cause me on my knees to say, 'Our Father, which art in heaven.'"

And the home, for the same reason, is the child's proper Sunday-school. It is not quite evident how Christian parents can ever farm out their children to the spiritual nurture of strangers. There are attainments in Bible knowledge that can be best made very likely by accomplished teachers in the church-school, so that such a school fills a large and important office; but the catechism that saves a child is a certain inimitable commingling of truth and mother, and he is an unhappy child and an ill-omened one who does not have the helpful lessons of God whispered into his young life from Sunday to Sunday and from day to day in words that are as tender as they are wise.

And then, only once more in a word, there is something very symbolic in that *little* linen ephod. Samuel did not attempt to minister in the old priest's

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robes. He had an ephod that was made to *fit him*. He was a priest, and yet he was a priest in a little way. Because he was engaged in holy services he did not ape or affect maturity in the doing of them. This represents to us the fact that we are not to expect nor to want adult opinions, experiences, or behavior from child Christians. Christianity that is truly in the child and of him will be exactly as fresh and dewy as the child is fresh and dewy. It is part of the perfection of unripe fruit that it is not mellow. First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.

And if you are concerned about your child, who is a Christian, because he or she does not think with much exactness about religious things or have anything but a nebulous sort of experience, or live in a manner that quite comports with your sense of the proprieties and dignities of the holy calling, remember that Eli had his ephod and Samuel had his, and that Samuel's was purposely made so small that he could put it on without difficulty and serve in it without embarrassment or inconvenience.

And now, may God bless the dear children of this church, keep their little feet from straying, lead them through years of beautiful home-nurture, ripen them with time into strength and stability of holy thought, affection, and life; and gather them and us at last within the portals of the heavenly home and into the loves and fellowships of the one family of God.

IX.

DAILY BREAD.

"Give us this day our daily bread."—MATTHEW vi. 11.

THIS you will recall as the fourth petition, the middle petition, in the prayer of our Lord. In this the petitioner is asking something for himself. All that he has asked for before has been for God. "Hallowed be *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom come, *Thy* will be done." His thought now drops to the level of his own necessities. Give *us* our bread; forgive *us* our debts; lead *us* not into temptation; deliver *us* from evil.

The Lord's prayer thus, like the Decalogue, falls in two: two tables of law, two leaves of petition. The first table of the law concerns our duties to *God*; the first leaf of the prayer concerns the glory of *God*. The second table respects our duties to *man*; the second leaf respects the needs of *man*. The first table contains the laws that are the hardest to obey sincerely; the first leaf, the petitions that are the hardest to pray sincerely. Obeying the laws of the

first table is what qualifies us to obey those of the second. Praying the petitions of the first leaf is what qualifies us to pray those of the second.

Yet we never suppose that the prayer was composed with any reference to the Decalogue. All resemblance ceases to be interesting as soon as it is felt to be imitation. Resemblance by imitation betrays the mechanic; resemblance without imitation argues the artist, the creator. The earth did not become spherical to imitate the sun, nor do the leaves on one branch become serrate to imitate each other. Those leaves unfold up into an outward likeness because they unfolded out of an inward likeness. The Decalogue was not made, it unfolded. The prayer was not made, it unfolded; it was not built, it grew. And because Decalogue and prayer both are unfolded from out the one mind of God, leaves upon one branch, blossoms upon one stem, they show the same hues and take the same orderly arrangement.

That is what makes the study of natural resemblances and of Scriptural likenesses interesting; it is that which gives such zest and entertainment to the study of the analogies between nature and the Bible—the sense we bring to it that all was germinal in *one* divine mind, and that the laws which govern the processes of the intellect, decide the destiny of the soul, determine the moulding of a leaf, and rule the sweep of a star, all hide their roots in the deep soil of God's

eternal thought. God's oneness makes all creation kin.

Our prayer was not made, then ; it grew. This fact lends even to the very form of its structure a significance. We feel now at once that there is nothing casual in any part of it. And even the order in which its petitions occur is a part of the prayer, a part of the meaning of the prayer.

And we want to notice this order a moment. This fourth petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," is the first one, we have seen, in which the petitioner appears to have any thought about himself. This is quite exceptional to usage. There are few of us that put "daily bread" on the second leaf. We regularly make ourselves the topic of our devotions. Prayer is apt to be little more than selfishness under the patronage of religion ; beggary under the mask of worship. In the average prayer, self is the keynote, and God and His kingdom only the chord in which the strain concludes. In the Lord's prayer the music is set in the key of God's glory.

And this we may believe is the natural order, the order in which an angel prays, the form congenial to any spirit untouched by the finger of sin. It is the order in which Christ prayed, God's glory first and personal wants afterward. It is a great accomplishment to be able to make the Lord's prayer in this respect perfectly our prayer. I am not sure that we

are any of us altogether competent to do so. I am not sure that there is not some affectation in praying any prayer that makes private interests second to the coming of God's kingdom. So easy is it to recognize the beauty of an ideal and still be inadequate to it, to want to pray like the Son of God and still be unable to. I bless God that there is a beatitude also for those who only hunger and thirst after righteousness.

As we repeat this formula with its bread and private interests deferred to the second leaf, I think it will occur to us sometimes how much has still to be wrought within us before the order of desires in our heart will conform to the order of desires in this prayer, and before we can sincerely comply with the requirement of our Lord, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye." So much for the place which the petition of our text occupies in the prayer.

Another of its features of interest is that it authorizes us to carry our religion into the details and every-day affairs of life,—Give us bread. It singles out a common matter and puts us in religious relation to it. It lets religion into the interior of life, instead of putting it upon the margin as an appendix or after-thought. There is no danger of giving to religion an exaggerated greatness, but there is of giving to it an isolated greatness—holding it apart, pushing it into the firmament, and making an inaccessible

sun of it, instead of making of it the familiar *sunshine*, enswathing every little thing with light, lying down among all the valleys, putting a finer life into every blade of grass, and a beautiful tint on every bead of dew.

There is truth in what an Englishman has said: "We are not to look at religion itself, but at surrounding things with the help of religion." Our text reminds us that we may look at so common a thing as bread "with the help of religion." St. Paul's word is a reminder to the same effect, when he bids us eat and drink to the glory of God. Bread in our text is representative; it means not bread only, but any one of the ten thousand little things that go to compose life, to help life and minister to it.

So that our text is a suggestion that there is nothing belonging to life so petty as to make it unfit for us to have a holy desire about it and to reflect upon it religiously. There are more little things than anything else in life, and the whole can not be holy except as the little things that compose it are so. The ground is white in winter because there are so many little snow-flakes that are so. The forest is green in June because there are so many little leaves that are so. The earth is beautiful at large because of the scrupulous beauty of its particles, and the vast mass of our globe bends toward the sun in solar attraction because of the delicate responsiveness of each sepa-

rate atom out of which the mass is built. And all these things are God's parables reminding us of that of which our text reminds us, that the only way in which life can be holy is by having holiness in each of the little atoms that add themselves together to build life—atoms of desire, of thought, of act, of interest.

It is worth something to know that the fault is in us, and not in things, that our life is incessantly falling apart into fractions—one religious fraction and one secular one. It is worth something to know it, even though it lie neither in nature nor in grace to have the wrong completely righted yet; just as it is worth something to know that withal our earth is so ragged and brown, there is a point high up in the sky where its grim crust might be seen to beam like Uranus and Neptune, even though no Jacob's ladder is let down to us out of heaven upon which we might ascend to the point of splendid outlook.

This oscillation between two moods is the secret of a great deal that is awkward and uncomfortable in life. We try to enjoy things by themselves and religion by itself, and this hinders both a Christian enjoyment of things and a rational enjoyment of religion; and so *we* injure religion and things injure *us*. How to relate the two so that each shall add beauty and neither take tarnish is the problem; how so to live that neither our secular life shall be atheistic nor

our religious life pietistic, and how to get into that firm constant mood where we shall be able to think about commonplace things religiously without affectation, and be able to speak about commonplace things devoutly without cant. This, too, is another of those ideals whose mission is less fulfilled in helping us than in showing us how much we need help; another of those bare rocks on the beach that only tell us how far the sea is out and how deeply the tide has ebbed.

And so, as we repeat this formula of devotion with its allusion to life's commonplaces, I think we shall sometimes be reminded how much has still to be wrought within us by effort and by grace, before the little things of man and the great things of God will affiliate in our minds and lives easily, and before we can perfectly accede to the requirement of our Lord, "After this manner, therefore, pray ye."

Another fact of which our text reminds us is, that God is the author and dispenser of our common benefits; that God is personally near us, and that His thought and interest run out into all our little concerns. "O God, do *Thou* give to us bread!" This petition is composed in the spirit with which the whole of Scripture is animated, that God is personally immanent in all which transpires, and personally sympathetic with all which needs and suffers. "He watereth the hills from His chambers; the earth is

satisfied with the fruit of Thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man." "Consider the grass, God arrayeth it; the lilies, God clotheth them; the ravens, He feedeth them. Give us this day our daily bread."

All this is full of childlikeness and simple-mindedness. It makes God's relation to us very immediate, and His goodness to us very direct and personal. It almost lifts us over onto the inner-side of God's mercy-seat, and sets us almost at the exact spot where God keeps His bounties. It is, I say, a very childlike way of putting the case, "Give us bread to-day." It sounds a little foreign and strange when uttered by persons of thoughtful and mature years. It sounds like an echo from out different times and distant generations. Children pray in that way to-day, but adults do not unless they are praying an inherited prayer brought in from another age.

And it is remarkable that although our Lord's prayer is so short, room was made in it for the doctrine that in every event of nature God is the personal agent. That is all involved in the petition of our text. So that while it is the habit of to-day to interpolate all sorts of factors between God and His creatures that would put God beyond the reach of our hands and our desires, nevertheless the whole Church universal is praying to-day, "O God, do *Thou* give to us to-day our daily bread!" I think there is

a Providence in this. The Lord's prayer seems to me in this respect to be very like the little ark among the rushes, secreting for future service a little out-cast full of beauty and promise.

Of course, we have no controversy with the intellectual mood of the age, nor with the scientific conception of that universe out of whose bosom our daily sustenance flows. We have no objections to natural laws, only we shall insist on maintaining that those laws are not in *such* a sense the habits of *things*, that they are not also in a truer sense the habits of *God*. We may not perhaps be interested to take exception even to the doctrine of evolution. We may incline to the opinion that the details of the life-history of the globe are quite as much the province of the schoolmen as of the priest or the church. Only if it shall be the final verdict of science that the history of the universe is a history of development, of interminable budding and blossoming, we will insist on our right still to maintain that it is God's finger always that pushes the sepals aside and lifts the blossom out. Faith will continue then to hold us fast in the assurance of God, and science shall be encouraged to go on instructing us in the lines along which He works.

In this mood of holy faith everything we receive is warm with the pressure of His hand, who gave it. His thoughtfulness and mindfulness are in everything.

Everything is revelation. Everything comes along an avenue of communication between Him and us. We sit at a table spread with His bounty. Everything speaks of Him; every line that is drawn is autographic. We are within hearing and speaking distance of Him—within praying distance of Him.

We are not insensible to the perplexities that environ us, nor to the mysteries that invest petitions like that of our text; but that God should be deaf and dumb would be to faith more of a mystery, and that there should be no way out through nature and up to God a more perplexing perplexity. The little telegraphic coil lies far under the tide, along which messages of affection and thought flash from continent to continent, but those messages do not tire in the abyss nor falter in the darkness, and thoughts meet, and hearts are made near across the mystery of the sea. So up into the great stillness, on the swift telegraphy of prayer, do we send to God our thoughts, our loves, and our desires, assured that no message falters or grows weary, and that thoughts meet and hearts are made near across the mystery of the sky.

The last thing we shall notice about this petition is that it teaches us to ask God for one day's benefits at a time: Give us this day (give us to-day) our daily bread. It looks as though the petition contemplated quite another condition of things and state of society from what now exists. Christ and His disci-

ples could appreciate the exact form of this request. We can not. It is not easy to pray devoutly for sustenance that we already have in store. We are not concerned for to-day. Our desires outrun the clock. We pray about to-day, but think about to-morrow and the day after. We have all we need now, but are afraid we shall not have by and by. No man is contented with enough ; and yet a man's life consisteth not in the *abundance* of the things which he possesseth. To be discontented is to desire to find a week's manna fallen on the morning of each day.

One passage in the sermon on the mount teaches that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. This passage teaches us that sufficient unto the day is the good thereof, "Give us to-day our daily bread." It is wanting a surplus above our needs that lies at the basis of human worriment. Man is the only animal that worries. He is the only animal that prays, and the only animal that worries ; and when he worries, he worries, as a rule, not about to-day, but about to-morrow. I suppose the major part of our suffering is in anticipation of what never occurs, and most of our pain is of our own making.

It is a difficult thing to pray, "Give us *this* day our daily bread." It is spoken often, but prayed rarely. To all appearance the assurances with which the Bible is so full that God really takes care of us import little to us ; He takes care of the flowers and

the birds, but man has to shift for himself. We pray as though we were children, and drudge as though we were outlaws. And Christians slave as hard as other people to get that abundance in which the Word of God tells us that a man's life doth not consist. We pray as though we had a Father, and toil, strain, and worry as though we were orphans; and inconsistencies like this destroy the confidence of "worldly men" both in our faith and in our religion. The only way that Christians can persuade the world that God is trustworthy, is by trusting Him ourselves, and carrying ourselves serenely in the presence of contingencies. It is useless urging men to come and lay all their cares on Jesus unless our life makes it evident that we have laid our own there.

"Give us this day our daily bread," then, means that the Christian policy of life is to receive life's necessities, bear its burdens, meet its temptations, encounter its uncertainties, and endure its griefs one day at a time, and to depend upon God to make us sufficient for each day's crosses and emergencies. It is better to go to sleep to-night thanking God for what He has helped us do to-day than asking Him to help us do as much and more to-morrow. "Give us to-day our daily bread,"—there is nothing in the Lord's prayer about to-morrow. It is Christian to feel as the night-traveller does, who knows that the road before his feet will become light just as fast as it is illu-

mined by the candle which he carries and which moves as he moves.

How much we admire serenity becomes evident by reflecting how impossible it would be to conceive of Jesus Christ as worrying. One instance of Christ's worrying would break the power of the Gospel, and we *weaken* it when we worry. The mirage makes distant things seem more beautiful than they are; why should not the heart be as generous as the eye?

But anxiety is a chill that strikes back from to-morrow into to-day. It multiplies ill and at the same time subtracts comfort. It doubles evils and halves joys, and so quadruples life's disagreeablenesses. Worrying destroys our power to discharge well to-day's duties. It divides our power and doubles our burden. It spoils our work and spoils us. Anxiety how we are going to get along to-morrow wears out more lives than considering how we *are* getting along to-day. And to-day's failures brought about by to-day's worry go far toward breaking us down by to-morrow's burdens when they come. The days all fit into each other. To-day's success is half-parent to to-morrow's success; and failure, too, genders after its kind.

And so life becomes after all a matter of to-day, "Give us *to-day* our daily bread"; each moment is a crisis, and all eternity is the child of now. That life is blessed that is made up of days that are manly,

and that day is manly whose moments are severally filled with the strength of God.

And now may this petition of our text be to us evermore a meaningful spot in the prayer of our Lord ; may it establish us more and more in a holy appreciation of the little things of life, letting us hear again the voice which spoke unto Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." May it nurture in us the fixed assurance of God as the personal power that works in every event, and the personal goodness that resides in every benefit, knitting us in close gratitude to Him from whom cometh down every good and every perfect gift. And finally, may it foster within us that quiet confidence, that beautiful serenity, that belongs of right to him who rests upon the hourly might of God, and who lades each separate day with the finest fruits of his manliness and of his power.

X.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."—MATTHEW vi. 13.

THE prayer of which these words form the conclusion is known by the Church as the Lord's prayer. And it *is* the Lord's prayer, in the main at least, not only in the sense that the Lord was the author of it, and the teacher of it, but in the deeper sense that it is our Lord's own wants speaking themselves up to God. It *is* the Lord's prayer. He prayed it; He not only prescribed it, He prayed it. He did not *say* it to His disciples for them to pray it after Him, but it became their prayer through its first having been His prayer. It was the best prayer He knew how to offer. It couched His own deepest longing. It betrays His own deepest sense. It is the picture of His own soul turned Godward.

It is, then, a wonderful prayer of revelation. As such we want always to regard it. Some of the longest, deepest looks that we gain into the spirit of Christ we gain while watching Him at His devotions. And when we use this formula of devotion we want

to feel always that these are just the words in which Jesus poured out His own deepest needs to His Father. The sense will bring Jesus nearer to us, and will encourage us by the reflection that *we* are deemed worthy of trying to pray as good a prayer as our Lord knew how to pray. He is not trying to pray down at our level, but trying to stimulate us to pray up at His level. It is only an instance of what our dear Lord was all the time trying to do—trying to lift men; who was sent into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

As soon as we feel that this prayer was really the Lord's voicing of His own aspirations and necessities, we begin at once to realize what a commentary is this closing petition on our Lord's own inward possibilities of sin:—Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. It reminds us of what is said of Christ in the letter to the Hebrews, "For we have not an high-priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are." How easy, how necessary, then, it was for Christ to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." He could not have succeeded in redeeming us unless He had been so human as to make it possible for Him to sin while attempting to redeem us. For in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to *succor*

them that are tempted. This very letter to the Hebrews which, with such fertility of illustration, exhibits the priestliness of Jesus, is the letter which seems to be trying to exhibit with greatest possible graphicalness His humanness, His nearness to us, and likeness to us in point of susceptibility to evil and need of the great help of God. And this we mention not to belittle Jesus, but to get Jesus so close to us that the fulness of the *Godhead* dwelling in Him may become available to us for our deliverance.

Perhaps this was not the first time that He had prayed this same prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name," and so along to the petition of our text, Deliver us from evil. "Cold mountains and the midnight air witnessed the fervor of His prayer"; and witnessed possibly the fervor of this same prayer that He now teaches to His disciples, and that He now teaches them, it may be, because of the splendiddness of the service which it had already rendered *Him*.

As soon as we begin to conceive how much of our Lord's own soul there was in this prayer, I think we shall feel drawn more and more to associate the closing petition of it with the sore temptation so recently experienced by Him in the wilderness. I think this final request is an echo from out the forty days. Men's best prayers are always the outcome of their experience, the fruitage of life. Their prayers can be only

as intense as their lives are intense. It is experience always that has to inflame the incense of our devotions. Jesus had in the wilderness come under the power of temptation. He had not stood alone against it, but had been strengthened by the power of God ; armed with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God ; ministered unto by the angels, which are the messengers of God, and had in this way come off conqueror over the evil one. Ever after it would have been spontaneous with Jesus to cry, O Father, lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from evil. And as He foresaw the wildernesses of trial through which all His disciples would have to pass, He could hardly do otherwise than say to them, " After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Thus the prayer acquires new preciousness in our eyes as carrying within it the fulness of Christ's soul, and bearing upon it the stamp of His history. It is henceforth not only the model prayer, an expression which smacks of the cabinet-shop,—it is a prayer that is intensely biographical of Christ.

As soon now as we begin to trace a connection between this petition and our Lord's own temptation and deliverance, I am sure we shall almost insensibly grow into the conjecture that what He here prays for is not simply that He and they may be delivered from evil, but from the Evil One, just as He had been.

It was not the evil considered as a principle, but the Evil One considered as a person, that Jesus had confronted, and by divine help conquered in the wilderness. In the form in which the petition of our text stands in the Greek it may be either the one or the other. The authorities are very evenly divided upon the interpretation proper to be accorded it. Certainly the expression gains greatly in strength and liveliness if rendered personally, "Deliver us from the Evil One."

Mere *abstract principle*, whether good or bad, neither comes very close to us, nor takes very strong hold upon us. As Schiller once wrote, "It is the personal always that has to prevail." *Evil* principle is as much actualized and intensified by having the Devil behind it, as *good* principle is by having God behind it. The Scriptures do not treat the evil as a bald abstraction. In something the same way, though less in degree, of course, we suffer by dropping the Devil from our creeds that we do in dropping God from our creeds. In one case the personal strength of the good is gone, so that we do not respect it so much, and in the other the personal strength of the evil is gone, so that we do not fear it and abhor it so much.

The evil was a very personal thing, evidently, both to Christ and to the writers of the New Testament. It was the wicked One that catcheth away the seed

that was sown in the heart. It was the Devil that Jesus confronted in the wilderness. It was Satan that entered into Judas Iscariot. It was that He might destroy the Devil that Christ became partaker of flesh and blood; so we read in Hebrews. It is emphatically person against person. Likewise in the sixth of Ephesians, it was because their crusade was against the energies and hosts of Satan that the Ephesian Christians were enjoined to put on the whole armor of God. "Arm yourselves with God's complete panoply, seeing that it is with nothing less than the Devil that you have to cope, for our wrestling is not against man, but against the governments and powers of darkness, against the spiritual armies of wickedness."

You discover in it all the out-and-out *personal* character of the engagement—not the Church against the world, not the Church against the abstract principles of evil, but the Church against the Devil and the personal hosts of the Devil. Above all (this is the way in which he continues his strain of inspiriting injunction), above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked—which is singular in the Greek, and means, therefore, all the fiery darts of the wicked One. And so in general, as we come closer to the Bible conception of the moral warfare that is waging in the world, the more impressed I am sure we shall be with the

intense personality of the whole engagement—the more natural we shall find it to suppose that when Jesus composed this final petition He remembered the Evil One that He had encountered in the wilderness, and so taught His disciples also to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.”

And now sometimes when we have prayed this petition—“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil”—I think we have been a little puzzled to know what it is really that we have prayed for. There are two or three things about it over which our ideas are liable to trip. Our faith tries to move along through it, but is held back a little by our thoughts that do get entangled sometimes in the doctrinal difficulties of the petition. It is considerable strain to a man’s faith to offer a petition that he is not clear upon, and then expect God both to reconstruct the petition so that it shall be intelligent and to answer it in the spirit of its reconstruction. He does much of that, doubtless. His gifts are full of light, though our asking may be full of darkness. His answers are adjusted to better requests than we are wise enough to offer. Nevertheless, it is a great help to faith that it be intelligent, and a great relief to devotion that it understand itself. So that our prayer will become richer and stronger as our thought clears itself, and as we understand with some precis-

ion what it is we plead for when we pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

And here we must not be satisfied to interrogate the single passage that is before us. That is a way of studying the Bible that is always getting men into trouble. It will not answer to say that the sun's light is red because we get red light from the sun, or that it is green because we get green light from the grass. So these separate texts that we preach from, and isolated chapters that we read, are only so many divided strands of color that need to be combined to form the pure white light radiant from God in His holy Word. What majestic breadth of doctrine we shall have in the Christian Church when it is understood that a man needs to understand the whole Bible in order to appreciate the truth of any part of it, and that whatever text we are considering, the whole volume of revealed truth ranges itself in front of that text as its fit vestibule of entrance. Let us remember that this morning and always.

Now the first thing perhaps in our text that has embarrassed us when we have attempted to pray it, is that it implies that temptation is a thing to be deprecated; "Lead us not into temptation." We are quite persuaded from our own experience and from the general tenor of Scripture that temptation, whatever its possibilities of harm, is nevertheless matter of gratitude rather than of lament. Temptation has

led us into sin a great many times. Without temptation Adam would not have fallen; without temptation you and I would not have fallen. But without temptation would any of us have *risen*? What would character be without temptation?

Life is a great training-school. The revelations of God and the great redemption of God, with all its accessories, are for the sake of character. Character is the one only thing on earth that will not admit of being put upon the market. Character is treasure laid up in heaven; character is salvation; character is life eternal.

And how are we going to *obtain* character? How do we gain bodily stamina? How but by having the body submitted to physical test, trial,—which is only another name for physical temptation. The very innermost idea of temptation is testing, straining. The exact idea of all discipline is to make a man larger by straining judiciously the thing that he is at present. Children are not sent to school that they may know how to work problems in duodecimals, but that they may have their mental powers tested, and so have mental stamina wrought within them. And character is in the heart: just what intellect is in the mind, and muscle in the body; it is moral stamina, ethical toughness, and nothing toughens but discipline; and discipline means trial, strain, temptation. That is what our experience teaches. Temptation is moral gymnastics.

We must not confound innocence with character. Innocence is only the possibility of character. Innocence is to character what the white spotless page is to the strong lines and glowing periods that are put upon that page. The very word character has a fine philosophy in it, and means an imprint—a sculpturing, and temptation is the chisel. Innocence is only the white marble out of which is chiselled the figure of the man, and upon which is wrought the lineaments of the man. And temptation is the chisel. Adam failed, not because he had not innocence, but because he had not character. Adam out among the thorns and the thistles, eating bread in the sweat of his brow, was a better thing than Adam blamelessly luxuriating among the delicacies of the garden.

Innocence is poor capital upon which to do the business of life. Innocence is negative, character is positive. A large part of manhood is made up of sturdiness, and sturdiness means warfare, and warfare means an enemy. Character in man is what gnarliness is in the oak, and gnarliness in the oak is tempest converted into knotted fibre. I could not pray, then, to be exempt from temptation. I shall have to understand something other than this from our petition, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

The Bible, too, only repeats the lesson that experience teaches. History really began with the tempta-

tion. The Bible takes no interest in what transpired in Eden till the Devil came in. It is all pure platitudes till there is warfare—meaningless to the innocent pair that lived, meaningless to the guilty generations that came after. History began only when character began to be wrought out in our first parents by the graving tool of temptation. So Noah was tested into fitness to become the second progenitor of the race. We read in the eighth of Deuteronomy that God led Israel forty years in the wilderness to humble them and to prove them. Peter was *sifted* by Satan, Paul was *buffeted* by Satan, and our Lord graduated into the ministry from under the tutelage of Satan. “We glory in tribulations,” Paul writes to the Romans, “knowing that tribulation worketh endurance.” Even the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. “Who are those which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they? They are they which came out of great tribulation.” “Therefore, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience (that is, endurance), and let endurance have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” I could not pray, then, to be exempt from temptation, and shall have to understand something other than this from our petition, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

And then I mention in a word, one other thing about this petition that sometimes perplexes some of us when we undertake to repeat it and to pray it; and that is, that it implies that God does sometimes lead men into temptation, and deliberately exposes them to the possibility of being seduced into evil; notwithstanding that it is taught by St. James, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God can not be tempted of evil, *neither tempteth He any man.*"

We have seen with what power temptation operates to the establishment and enlargement of human manliness. A tuition so fraught with beneficent influence it is spontaneous with us to suppose must have been under divine supervision and control. And with the supposition the utterances of God's Word are almost invariably in evident accord. We remember that Israel's education of trial in the wilderness was under the direction of God. We recall that it was by the Spirit that Christ was led up into the wilderness for the express purpose of being tempted by the Devil. St. Paul distinctly recognizes his thorn in the flesh as having been thrust into him in conformity with God's will and in furtherance of God's purpose. In the tenth of first Corinthians the apostle in utmost distinctness represents God as the maker of our temptations, the wisdom that adjusts them to our powers of resistance, and the grace that provides for us a way

of escape. And when St. James says that God is not tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man, it is not after all to deny God's agency in the shaping of our temptations. This appears readily from what follows on a little later. It is only to rebuke the disposition (prevalent then as it is now) to suppose that God so shapes His temptations and so forces them upon us as to allow us no alternative but to submit to them, and to evade human responsibility for sin by vesting the responsibility exclusively in God. Such position is cowardly, and contradicts every man's consciousness, and so James sharply rebukes it.

This touches the difficulties with which we are most likely to be embarrassed in this petition.

And now, with the Calvinists, we shall not let the two clauses of our text stand, each of them, for a distinct petition, as though "Lead us not into temptation" was a little prayer by itself, and "Deliver us from evil" another little prayer by itself; rather shall we discover in them one desire making two attempts to declare itself—the Christly desire that God, who is the soul's true disciplinarian, will not be to us the author of temptation without being to us at the same time the author of deliverance. All of which St. Paul expresses a little differently when he says that God "will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape that we may be able to bear it." God

led St. Paul into temptation in the bestowal of the thorn, but not without delivering him from the power of the evil; and He said unto him, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the presence of the Devil, but not without delivering Him from the power of the Devil. "Then the Devil leaveth Him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Lead us not into temptation without delivering us from the power of the evil.

Therefore, my friends, we will ever remember that life is a training-school; that its appliances are arranged with reference to the establishment within us of that which is undecaying, and which we may carry over with us into the vast life we are so rapidly entering. We will try and not repine at the warfare we have so constantly to wage against the evil that is within us and without us. Every thorn in the flesh and in the heart, we will remember, has in it a gracious purpose; is pressed by a divine hand and nicely adjusted to our endurance; that there is nothing in life so corrupt that it *need* defile us, nothing in experience so heavy that it *need* crush us. Only we will remember that it is not safe for us to go into our wildernesses alone, but like Jesus, who entered there in the power of the Spirit. Under the stress of trial and difficulty of any kind it is only God's grace that is sufficient for us, and in that grace will we find our security. We will take God into partnership

with us in sustaining the pressure of life, and evermore pray of Thee, O Father, that Thou wilt never lead us into temptation without also standing by us to lead us *through* the temptation out into strong and gracious deliverance from its evil power, "For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen."

XI.

PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."—MATTHEW
xiii. 3.

JESUS was at the seaside. You have remarked how little of our Lord's preaching was done in the town or between walls. The founder of Christianity had no house, and the world learned its first lessons in Christian doctrine out of doors. The first apostles were out-of-door men. Eighteen centuries of Christianity have been colored by that fact. We never can get far away from our bodies or the physical influences that environ them. Our thoughts take a complexion from the air we breathe.

Not only the New Testament, but the Old was made out where the sun was shining and the wind blowing. As has been said of Moses: "From the time when his parents put him on the waters in the wicker-boat to the time when he passed from the crest of a mountain into heaven, Moses was a child of nature." And so on, through the later worthies of the old time, clear out to the last of the Twelve

camping out in Patmos, seeing visions, while he listened to the sea breaking over the rocks with the voice of many waters. And this parable of the sower could only have grown up out of doors. Our Lord had extemporized a church and a pulpit. His congregation was on the shore, and He spoke to them from off the prow of a little fishing-smack.

It is one of the features of the Lake of Gennesaret that it is girt with hills edging themselves seaward with a margin of beach upon which the little waves from off the Lake roll up plashing to-day, just as on that morning they crept up over the fine white sand and touched the bare feet of the Lord's nearest auditors. There were points, are points, where the hills recede farther from the water-edge than elsewhere; and it was in some just such pocket of intervalle, quite likely, that the assembled country-men and country-women stood listening to the sermon of the boat-preacher.

All the facts of husbandry wrought into the parable of the sower were very probably illustrated along the slopes lying under the sun in easy view of Jesus and His lake-side congregation. It was a sort of object-teaching, a kind of picture-book lesson; and it is impressive the degree in which human speech has become fraught with the simple metaphors imported into it that day on the western shore of Gennesaret. All the languages are in this way having Christ's

touch put upon them, and there seems almost a prophetic import in the polyglot inscription that marked the Lord's cross on Calvary.

An English traveller has himself visited and described a nook upon this same beach that so perfectly fulfills the features of the parable, that it might have been the exact spot at which the little pulpit-boat lay moored, heaving languidly with the gentle swell from the Lake, while Jesus talked with His hearers of the sower that went forth to sow.

These words introduce the first of Christ's parables. His parables admit of pretty easy classification into three groups, delivered at successive periods of His ministry, and adapted to successive stages in the development of His doctrine. The first group, numbering eight (one additional to the seven found here in this thirteenth of Matthew), are only occupied with a presentation of the kingdom of heaven in certain of its general laws and governing principles. They are in a manner formal and preparatory, and do not by any means let us into the best, sweetest, or deepest things of the heavenly kingdom. And of this preliminary group the parable introduced by our text is the initial one.

And it can hardly have been an accident that it occupies this position of pre-eminence. It intimates some things in regard to the kingdom that would hardly have been left long unsaid. It indicates that

Christ thought it His mission to set in operation some forces that lay off from the track of man's natural development, and to introduce into individual life and into civilization, something that the human heart was not competent in itself to produce, and that it did not lie along the course of any historic development to afford.

He sets it forth in this His initial parable, that Christianity, the kingdom of heaven, is a new thing in the heart and in the world, and not some old thing attained to a higher point of evolution. It comes forth from the heart, but not till something has been put into the heart, that the heart of itself never could have yielded. The Galilean hill-slopes were to yield a wheat-harvest, but not till something had been covered up beneath their warm and juicy soil which no tropical fertility even could unaidedly have engendered. The heart, when once it has taken hold of the seed-truths of God, with warm and fertilizing embrace, can lead them forth into germination, and press them forward to fruitage; but not the loam without the wheat-kernels can procure the harvest of wheat, and not the heart without the seed-truths can work an inward heavenly yield.

And that is one of Christianity's most distinctive features, and naturally came to prompt expression. The heart, like the soil, can not yield an increase till it has been planted, and the seed-kernels of Christian

character are the truths of God. No urgency of culture pressing upon the unsowed soil can entice from it or extort from it a harvest. It is not in the soil to cover itself with fruitage till it has first received something into it which is not *of* it. Christian character is not human nature coming forward into blossom along a line of natural unfolding. This was so vast and startling a thought that it demanded from the Lord quick and clear illustration. Culture regularly aims to make the most of what a man is by nature; Christianity aims to sow him with possibilities that are not in him by nature, and so to make of him a different thing from what he is by nature, and a better.

That is the meaning of the dropping of the seed upon the Gennesaret hillside. We encounter everywhere the doctrine and the fact of development. This early parable takes pains to teach that the kingdom of heaven in a man is *not* a thing of *development*; that it is not in a man to be a Christian except as the revealed truths of God work in him a new set of possibilities, that natural generation knows nothing of. It is a homely illustration, but a pertinent one, that tadpoles in a dark box, though placed in running water, will increase in size, become larger tadpoles, but it requires light to change them into frogs. And, so, it is one of the threshold lessons of our parable that Christianity is not a late blossom upon the branch of antecedent civilization, but that it is a new

force, dropped from God like a seed-kernel out of the air, deposited and germinating in the soil of the matured heart and of the old civilization.

And a second reason why the parable of the sower naturally heads the list of parables is, that it has to do with a matter that is really preliminary to all real Gospel effects. Its specific object is not so much to plant in the hearts of auditors any of the essential truths of the Gospel as to consider the various degrees of readiness with which different classes of hearers consent to having them planted. This parable of our Lord's is not a sermon on the Gospel so much as it is a sermon on Gospel-HEARING. The first thing that a boy on commencing to study has to learn is *how* to study. The first thing needed by those who would become profited hearers of the Gospel was *how* to hear the Gospel. Christ's first parabolic discourse then, naturally enough, was not on the Gospel, but on how to hear the Gospel.

We could conceive of some means having been adopted by which the divine element necessary to conversion could have been conveyed, other than that of the spoken word and the hearing ear. But that is the method which God has selected, and the one which He most regularly blesses. The kingdom of God begins in a man by the lodgment in him of a divine truth, and that lodgment is quite uniformly effected by the hearing of the ear. "Faith cometh

by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." So that the first point of concern is that men should become good hearers. "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them which believe." Christ's final command to His disciples was, that they should "go into all the world and preach the Gospel." The Holy Ghost glorified this chosen method of propagating the Gospel by revealing itself at Pentecost in the form of flaming tongues.

With the truth which we are to preach prescribed, successful preaching becomes primarily, then, a matter of good hearing. It is the good hearer that makes the good sermon. Quite naturally, then, Christ's first parable would not aim so much to set forth Gospel truth as to set forth the attitude in which, in this matter of hearing, auditors should hold themselves toward Gospel truth. This parable we will always remember, then, as a discourse on hearing, and so when Christ has come to the end of it, He aptly sums it all up by saying, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear."

Hearers He resolves into four classes; and, following the lead of Christ's thought and illustration, we shall notice rather briefly what sort of hearers each of these four groups includes.

The first are the pathway hearers--what our version calls the wayside hearers. Paths were worn across the field by the frequent passage of man and beast, and seed that was thrown upon such trodden and compacted ground would lie there without rooting till the wind blew it away or the birds came and devoured it up. The soil at these points was as good as any the field afforded, quite likely; in fact, there is no disparaging word said of the *soil* in this whole parable; but the seed that fell on the pathways really came into no relation with the soil. The possibilities of the seed were not reached by the possibilities of the ground. Soil remained soil and seed seed. Each let the other alone.

These "pathway" hearers are not necessarily inattentive or uninterested ones. Some of the most careful listeners in every congregation are of the number, and never let the truth lodge in them at a point lower than the surface, and work down into that spot of moral fertility and spiritual juiciness in them where truth is set germinating. Christian truth gets viewed by these people as a purely foreign and outside matter. A sermon is to them pretty much the same thing as a lecture, with some little difference in topic and method of treatment. A sermon becomes to these people food for thought, and in that sense educating and disciplinary; but it takes no moral hold of them. It and they are so far apart that it gains no

grip upon them. They will not be stimulated to-morrow to do the thing which the sermon encourages to-day. It slides over them without leaving any interior effects. It is not let into adjacence to the springs of character. It does not germinate, therefore; protrudes no roots.

These hearers are intellectual hearers; brainy, but not hearty. There is a light in their eye, but light without warmth would make winter out of midsummer anywhere. They are taken by brilliancy and sparkle. They go away and think about the sermon, discuss it; but there is no blood in their thinking and no pulse in their criticisms. They dissect the sermon in the same manner of heartlessness that an anatomist does a dead body. They are like him in regarding the subject of their cutting and carving as not being really a living thing; it is with them only the taking to pieces of a manikin.

The soil that lay along these pathways about the Gennesaret fields was as full of fertile possibilities, so far as we can gather, as any other portion of ground; but the seed and the fertility did not get so near to one another as mutually to react. It is so with these "pathway" hearers. They have heart enough, and genial mellow impulse enough. Some of the most impassioned and exuberant people we have are of the class we are considering, but the difficulty is that the revealed truths of God do not get down into the

warm spot of their exuberance, and so never get fertilized. And so they see only with their eyes and feel only with their brains. They rate preaching on the basis of its smartness. Such men come to church with a keen intellectual curiosity, but not spiritually hungry. They come with something of that same mood of mind with which we gather about the table at some elaborate banquet, more interested to see how the table is laid than to find something which will reach a hungry spot and send us away interiorly fed.

The second class of hearers is denoted by the seed which fell on stony ground. This mode of rendering hardly gives us a fair picture of the thing intended. The new Revision says that some seed fell upon rocky places—places, that is, where only a thin skin of soil lay over an understratum of rock. Every Galilean would immediately appreciate the allusion, and over some one of the limestone slopes lying just before the eye of the preacher may have been laid that thin coating of earth which would aptly illustrate his reference.

In this class of hearers there is, then, something of a gain over the former. The first did not open themselves up at all to receive the seed; these latter let the seed in a little ways. They do appreciate the moral import of the truth, and let it down far enough into their hearts to have the seed roused to

germination; but there was not yielded up place enough to give large room for root. This gives us as our second class the shallow-rooted hearers. Having little room for root and little space for growing downward, for a little they grow all the more rapidly upward.

This is not intended to represent shallow men, but men who take hold of the revealed truth of God in only a shallow and half-hearted way. They receive the Word of God and welcome it up to a certain point. They never reach high water, and have no purpose to. Only a fraction of their powers and impulses get drawn into moral and Christian play. They hold themselves considerably in reserve, and hardly rise above a certain level. What growing they do is done during the first few weeks or days of their Christian life. They have what answers fairly well to conversion, but do not make large advances into the forward-lying territory of sanctification; sanctification is conversion spreading through the whole man. They are uniform in their behavior and experience and eminently fixed in their views. The root presses into no deeper soil, and so the top rises into no higher sky.

These Christians are without experience, save an old experience. So that they have no experience to speak of. They do not grow. They press against rock—which is well in building, but bad in growing.

They gain no new victories, but are like the children of Israel, who, when they came into the Promised Land, cast out at once all the Canaanites they ever cast out, and the rest they kept a place for to the perpetual embarrassment of their history and impoverishment of their life. They have no root in themselves, and consequently can have no great dependence placed upon them in times of stress. When put to the test they fall away. They are like trees whose roots lie along the surface of the ground — dry weather makes bad work with them and wind blows them down.

They attend to the truth and desire to hear it preached in its full breadth and scope, but reserve to themselves the right to utilize just as much or little of that truth as suits their pleasure and convenience. They are not ready to become all that the truth, if left to its own workings in them, would make of them. They *began* well. They are like the Galatians, to whom Paul wrote: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you?"

And these Christians get to the point where really truth does not seem to do much for them. New truth slides off from them. They are like ground out of which the frost has only partly come in the spring, so that when the rain falls it can not enter the earth penetratingly, but runs off uselessly and fruitlessly. The pulpit keeps giving them truth, but

knows perfectly well that with their present reach of root they have already all the truth that they have any capacity for. They seem never to have an ambition to be saved with an immense salvation. I heard one of these rocky-ground Christians saying awhile ago, "If I can get into heaven, that is all I want." The higher ranges of Christian living and doing they seem to stand out of all appreciation of. Their roots are pressing against a rock—and so their stalk is meagre, their foliage is wilted, and their fruit wizened.

The second class we have found to be more in earnest than the first, and now the third class is made up of those who have received the truth, and who react upon it with at least a deeper seriousness than our rocky-ground Christians. The impediment here is of a different nature. The soil is sufficiently friable and abundantly deep, but its juices and energies are distributed between growths of two different sorts—attempting to grow wheat and thorns at the same time, our God-Mammon hearers.

The same energy of soil that will go to form wheat, will also compose tares, or minister to thorn-bushes. The same personal energies that make a man successful in righteousness make him likewise successful in wickedness. A good man is a bad man turned about and going the other way. The same wind that drives one vessel straight into port will dash another vessel

on the rocks. The same water that runs the mill may drown the miller. The same energies that made Saul a terrible persecutor made Paul a magnificent apostle. It is a question not of new energy, but of the direction that is going to be taken by the old energy. The difficulty with the soil of the third sort is not after all with the soil, but in the fact that a part of its fertility gets diverted from the wheat-seed, and goes to form thorn-bushes. No man has such a fund of personal energy that he can be more than one thing successfully. "Ye can not serve God and Mammon."

Now this does not involve the exclusion from life of all cares or all pleasures. There is no necessary incompatibility between Christianity and a good time, and no necessary incompatibility between Christianity and a busy time. But the reference in the parable may furnish us a valuable hint as to the proper way of settling some doubtful questions of Christian duty and consistency. The husbandman objects to the presence and growth of nothing in his wheat-field that is not going to draw on those energies of the soil that are necessary to the completest development of his wheat; so we need discourage no engagements or diversions in our life that are not going to interfere with the best development of our Christian character, or the best exercise of our Christian activities.

When, for example, I confront the question whether

I shall indulge myself in some specific amusement (of what particular kind is an indifferent matter), the point I have to settle with myself is not whether I see any particular harm in it, nor whether this or that estimable person allows himself that indulgence. The prime question is whether allowing myself the indulgence in any manner unfits me to be a Christian in my thoughts, deeds, and devotions; whether when I come back from my indulgence I return with an eye just as quick to detect the divine presence, and a heart that just as promptly and sensitively feels the helpful strength of God issuing from the pages of His Word; whether the diversion helps to open or tends a little to close the closet of prayer, and whether it tends to fill or to clip the wings of my devotion. Such questions are always three-quarters solved the instant we have no wish but to have them rightly solved.

Of course the question of influence over others must not be discarded. But that aside for the moment, to any young Christian anxious for nothing so much as to be wholly a Christian, and act wholly the part of a Christian, I would say by way of counsel, do anything you please that will not dry the fresh dew from your Bible, or still the gracious whispers of God in your closet. Everything else give a wide berth to.

And now we have already said by implication all

that need be said of the fourth class of hearers, the hearers with the "good and honest heart." This sort of auditor approaches the truth of God prepared to become whatever that truth will make of him. He comes to the truth-laden table hungry, inwardly hungry, and wishing, and expecting to find there the meat in whose strength he shall go for many days. Unlike the pathway hearer, he comes into instant association with the best and truest thing that is spoken. Both rhetoric and logic are to him only channels for the conveyance of what is to him of finer worth, just as there is no petal in the rose-bloom so beautiful and delicate that the honey-bee will hesitate to stand and trample upon it in his efforts to get at the saccharine drop which he wants more.

Coming in this mood and temper of spirit, he is not repulsed and made uneasy by the presentation of truth that fastens firmly upon the defects or excrescences of his own Christian life. That is the only thing that the truth is for. There is no way in which a hearer makes it so evident that he is not an honest hearer as by taking exception to those presentations of truth that come most snugly home to his own infirmities and blemishes of character; provided, of course, that the speaker be preaching *to* his whole people and not *at* a part of them, and that it be done in all graciousness and sincerity of heart.

And, then, this very hunger of soul which is the characteristic of the good and honest hearer will operate to make him just a little selfish in his hearing, more apt to realize that the truth which is spoken is relevant to himself than to think about its relevancy to other people. Supposing, for example, your pastor were to preach a discourse on the peculiar perils of rich men, and the small likelihood of a rich man's being saved. Now, unless the grace of God should in rather an exceptional manner intervene, this congregation would instantly single out a few of its more wealthy members, and with a self-forgetfulness which under other circumstances might be admirable would yield to that wealthy few, as regards the bearings of that discourse, full and unquestioning monopoly. Now just here we can learn a lesson from the incident recorded in the tenth of Mark. Christ *had* just been preaching a sermon on rich men and the small likelihood of their being saved. The disciples had little property, but instead of limiting their Lord's discourse to the one rich man who had just gone away grieved, they instantly said, "Why, who then can be saved?" realizing with singular discernment that a poor man may love his little property just as fatally as a millionaire his great property, and that a silver dime held close enough to the eye will shade the sun as readily as a gold eagle. Now, that was the very acme of "good and honest" hearing, which ignored

the particular *form* under which the truth happened to be presented, and submitted itself candidly to the pressure of truth's *gist*.

The Lord make His preachers anxious only to preach *His* truth, and make us all solicitous for nothing so much as to become everything that His truth is fitted to make of us.

XII.

CHRISTIAN APPRECIATION OF LITTLE THINGS.

"For who hath despised the day of small things?"
—ZECHARIAH iv. 10.

THE prophecy from which these words of our text are taken was pronounced by Zechariah in order to the encouragement of Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was Prince of Judah during the days of the Captivity, and, when orders were issued by King Cyrus, of Persia, looking to the rebuilding of the temple at Jerusalem, it was this Zerubbabel that put himself at the head of such of his fellow-captives as God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord, and that took the initiative in gathering materials and collecting masons and carpenters for the great work in hand.

The foundations of the new temple were successfully laid, and the occasion celebrated with much of pomp and holy ceremony. Although the work had been thus auspiciously begun, it was soon interrupted, and the Prince and his countrymen sub-

jected to all kinds of vexatious delays and interferences. The consequence of all this was that they lost heart. The end of their enterprise seemed a great ways removed; the new future of their people, to which they had looked forward with exulting confidence, appeared now to be pushed far out into the years, and the small beginning that had been already made, to be to them more a reminder of present extremity than a promise of future aggrandizement and heavenly succor.

It was exactly at this time that the prophet Zechariah is sent to Zerubbabel charged with words of heavenly comfort and inspiring. It was the recurrence of what had so often transpired in Jewish history, and in all history, in fact, that "when the tale of bricks is doubled, Moses comes." Precisely at this juncture, then, when events hung in suspense, balanced upon a pivot of uncertainty, the prophet appeared to Zerubbabel and cast into the balance that contained the destiny of Judah, words of cheer from the Lord, and turned the scale in favor of a better and gladder future. And the prophet spoke to Zerubbabel, saying: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house: his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things?"

In this way Zerubbabel was taught of the Lord to

hold in due esteem even the imperfect commencement already made, and to regard with a degree of assurance and satisfaction the feeble results his hands had already wrought. And this is but one of the uncounted instances, both in Scripture and in nature, of the affectionate interest with which God regards *little things*, and so affords it to us as the topic of our morning's meditation,—*Christian living in its relation to little things.*

And it will be worth a great deal to us just here if we will at the outset accustom ourselves to thinking of *God* as One whose thought and interest run out into little things easily and rest on little things affectionately. We shall gain from just this a warrant for letting our own minds hold the small concerns of life in more earnest esteem, and for letting our own hands seize the little employments and minor duties of life with a more appreciative and resolute regard.

And indeed it is not quite easy and natural for us to think of God as putting all the skill of His thought and interest of His heart in the small matters of His Providence and His workmanship. And you can readily settle this point for yourselves by reflecting how much more native to us it is to conceive of God as enthroned in the heavens, with the stars blazing as jewels in the coronet of His glory, than to think of Him as tabernacled in a dew-drop, palaced in a sunbeam, and His excellent beauty traced in the

crystal strokes of a snow-flake. In all our attempts to figure and localize Him we resort instantly and spontaneously to words that represent immensity of height and breadth and circuit. It is not the drop, but the ocean—not the pebble, but the mountain that seems to us redolent of divine suggestion and freighted with divine presence.

“The strength of the hills is His also.” Even *inspired* thought, you perceive, felt a holy nearness in the great things of nature that it did not as readily feel in the lesser ones. Almost all of David’s imagery is a quotation from the sky rather than from the ground. With him it is the heavens that declare the glory of God, and the firmament that showeth His handiwork. His thought regularly seeks after the immense and the magnificent in nature, as instrument for symbolizing the divine mind and power. We shall find some change in this respect as we turn over the leaf into the midst of the Gospel characterizations of God. But back in the old Bible it is the most stirring crises of history and the most startling features of nature that seem to the writers to yield the fittest expression of God’s Providence and inworking. In the like spirit was composed Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple, when he prayed: “But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens can not contain Thee; how much less this house which I have built?”

So all our church and cathedral architecture is a struggle with this same idea that Solomon had of the spatial immensity of God, and climbs along the lines of vast proportion and huge dimension, if perhaps it may become capacious enough to contain God. All those huge piles of solemn masonry that lie out crumbling amid the silence and desolation of the Euphrates and the Nile, or that spire up in chastened splendor among the refined cities and worshipping populations of Europe and America, are the endeavor in stone to approach to the being of God along the lines of numerical dimension.

It is this same tendency of thought that prompts us to see God in the flashing of the lightning and hear Him in the pealing of the thunder, but that makes us deaf to Him in the pattering of the rain, the sighing of the wind, and the twittering of the sparrow, and blind to Him in the gentle splendor that looks up into our eye from out the daisy, or that scatters down before us from off the tremulous wing of the humming-bird and the butterfly. And it was that deeper discernment of the wild prophet out of Gilead that charges with considerable of its interest the strange mountain-scene upon Horeb, when it was not in the wind with which the Lord caused the rocks to be rent that Elijah discerned the presence of the Lord, nor in the earthquake with which He caused the mountain to be shaken, nor in the fire with which

He caused it to be inflamed ; but in the *still, small* voice, down into which the tones of God's utterance dropped when the louder and more startling demonstrations of His power were by. And happy is the man and the prophet everywhere that has the ear to detect the divineness that lodges in the little quiet voices of God's works and providences.

And indeed if you have examined with a microscope, or with an eye microscopically adjusted, any of the lesser or least of the creatures of God's workmanship, you have discovered that as far into the minute intricacies of things as your eye can reach, creative thought working deftly and with exquisiteness of refinement has gone on before you. Looking up into the astronomic firmament you can not discover the frontier star, nor overtake the march of God's thought in its magnificent sweep outward ; nor, looking down into the microscopic firmament, can you any more detect the sentinel that guards the inner line of exquisite finish and beauty, nor overtake the tread of God's thought in its stealthy procession inward. You know always that there is another world of magnificent splendor lying still outside the utmost discernible star, and you know also that there is another world of exquisite splendor lying still inside the last discernible grace of the mote or the atom ; and, as has been exquisitely said by another : "The last discernible particle dies out of our sight

with the same divine glory on it, as on the last orb that glimmers in the skirt of the universe."

And this is one way in which with endless variety of discourse God everywhere and always preaches to men of His infinite interest in, and infinite affection for, the little things that are the units of value in the consummated wealth of nature. This is just hinted at in the fortieth of Isaiah, where the prophet says of God, "He hath comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure"; and, in the thirty-sixth of Job, "He maketh small the drops of water."

But it is only when we pass along into the New Testament that we get the best assurances of God's distributed regard, and of His detailed interest and affection. You know it is the very genius of the Gospel to try and convince men of God's fatherly concern for us. But fatherly concern always particularizes and individualizes; and so in the Gospel there is not much about the sky, but a great deal about the ground; not much about masses of men, but about individual men. The great bundle of light that in the Old Bible is seen streaming down upon men and things in the mass, is in the New Bible all unbound and cloven into minute pencils of light that touch down, each of them, upon its own specific object and person. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father?" We hear nothing more about the heavens and the

firmament, but God feeds the bird, paints the lily, clothes the grass. "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." It characterizes His parables,—the shepherd seeking after the one sheep; the woman searching for the one lost piece of silver; the little leaven working in the midst of the meal; the joy in heaven over the one sinner that repenteth; the benediction pronounced upon the little faith that is no larger than a mustard grain; the blessing spoken over the five loaves and two fishes, and the careful saving of the fragments that remained: "Take heed that ye despise not *one* of these little ones"; and then He goes on to show how each of those little ones has its own guardian angel beholding ever the face of its heavenly Father.

If you will study the history of Christ's ministry from Baptism to Ascension, you will discover that it is mostly made up of *little* words, *little* deeds, *little* prayers, *little* sympathies, adding themselves together in unwearied succession. The Gospel is full of divine attempts to help and heal, in body, mind, and heart, individual men. The completed beauty of Christ's life is only the added beauty of little inconspicuous acts of beauty—talking with the woman at the well; going far up into the North country to talk with the Syrophenician woman; showing the young ruler the stealthy ambition laid away in his heart that kept him out of the kingdom of heaven; shedding a tear

at the grave of Lazarus ; teaching a little knot of followers how to pray ; preaching the Gospel one Sunday afternoon to two disciples going out to Emmaus ; kindling a fire and broiling fish that His disciples might have a breakfast waiting for them when they came ashore from a night of fishing, cold, tired, and discouraged. All of these things, you see, let us in so easily into the real quality and tone of God's interests, so specific, so narrowed down, so enlisted in what is small, so engrossed with what is minute.

And now that we have come through these two convergent avenues of Nature and Gospel into an appreciation of the detailed way in which God's thoughts and affections work, I am sure we shall turn back with a little different and juster regard to the small things that add themselves together to compose the tissue of our Christian living, joying, and working.

And in the first place, I think that one reason why we have no more continuous and solid comfort in our Christian life is, that we are looking and feeling after great joys, and neglecting and failing to economize the multitude of little blessings that are within reach, and that, if husbanded and cultivated, would go, in most cases, to compose a life quite substantially delightful and quite solidly comfortable. One great tree, even though loaded down with an exuberance of foliage, standing in the midst of a field otherwise

barren, will not begin, in point of beauty, to take the place of a harvest of minuter verdure distributed throughout the entire plot. It is the unbroken coherency of humble and inconspicuous greenness that gives to the field and the pasture its inimitable solidity of elegance. It is drop melting into drop, each with its own little play of color in it, that goes to compose a belt of splendor broad and sweeping enough to be called God's bow of promise. It is drop melting into drop, each with its own little tidal play, that goes to compose the ocean-swell, strong enough to rock a navy, and send pulsations of health up every river and against every shore.

I do not know as it is well to pray for great joys. There is something disturbing and unsettling in them. It is a great deal better, I am sure, to pray that we may have our hearts let into an appreciation of our every-day joys, and into an appreciation of the goodness of God that in these every-day joys comes to a very quiet but very steady expression. We want a Christian genius for infusing sublimity into trifles, and for coming into communication with God, as Elijah did, at the level of His still utterances and commonplace conferments.

Some one has said, "It is better that joy should be spread over all the day, in the form of strength, than that it should be concentrated into ecstasies, full of danger and followed by reactions." We should

be surprised, some of us, to find how rich we are, if we should go to work and make an inventory of our little comforts and mercies, and contemplate the footings that denote the sum total of each day's inconspicuous benefits. If we were to do that, the prayers of some of us would be longer than they are now, and be composed in good part, too, of gratitude to God for His wonderful and manifold goodness to us.

And not only should we be more joyous and more thankful if we so opened out our hearts as to let them feel the incessant droppings of heavenly mercy, our lives would be made more fruitful by the means. When the ground has become dried, and burnt, and baked, then the rain can fall upon it without being allowed to soak into the ground saturatingly, and to play around the roots, and be drawn up into them, to become new life in the tree, new freshness in the leaf, and new impulse at the bud. So this constant dropping of God's little goodnesses seems designed not so much for their own sakes, but like the constant dropping of the rain, that they may be to us a kind of heavenly fertility, soaking in at the soul's pores, and sinking down around the roots of our manly Christian purposes, nourishing those purposes, becoming absorbed into them, and so quickening them, and building them up, and pushing them on to fructification.

And then, again, if we gave somewhat more respect

to the small occurrences and little occasions of everyday life, we might be surprised to discover what capacity even the most commonplace living has for affording us discipline. Life is generally conceded to be disciplinary. Its aim is to take the fine impulses that God in Christ implants in us, and then to school those impulses till they have been wrought into immanent purposes and settled habits. And because we have not had friends, or property, or health taken from us, or our lives torn and mangled by any kind of distress, we are not obliged to think that God has forgotten *our* need of discipline, or failed to put us within reach of the influences and irritants adequate to the working within us of all needed chastening.

And there is hardly a day passes with us, probably, in which discipline in some one of its inconspicuous forms does not get declined by us, and in which we do not evade the pressure of some little annoyance, or vexation, or other urgency, which God has pressed against us, and so fail of a blessing, because declining to hold ourselves patiently against the attrition divinely contrived to produce us into new grace of spiritual contour, and new wealth of spiritual lustre. We are like the marble full of the possibilities of beauty, or like the unpolished diamond charged with the possibilities of brilliancy, and yet needing the chisel or the lapidary's wheel to pare and rub away our ungrace. And just such cloud-flecks as every sun-

niest day brings with it, and just such little aggravations, thorn-twinges, and tensions, as no most congenial hour is quite free from, *are* the chisels and polishing-wheels beneficently pressed against us, and whose good work we can by no means afford not to have wrought upon us.

A good angel really hides in every provocation and petty exasperation; and if we fail to detect it, it only shows the more how much we need the angel. Every irritation encountered on the street, in the office, or at the home, is God's way of rapping at some deformity of ours that needs to loosen and fall off from us; it is His way of holding attention to some infirmity of purpose or of character, where more of moral exercise needs to be had, and more of divine grace needs to be supplied.

There are respects even in which these little tests that are given to our temper, to our faith, to our affection, to our consecration, are more efficacious than the larger and more imposing ones. They are more tell-tale. They take us when we are off our guard, and so, with more accuracy than *great afflictions*, betray the real quality of the man. A man that could easily stand at the stake without a tremor might not be able to submit to the prick of a thorn without flinching. There is something in great occasions that nerves us to powers of endurance not properly our own.

Something of this kind was probably intended by the wise man in his proverb, "He that ruleth his own spirit is better than he that taketh a city." Great enduring power, staying power, was required in the capture of a town or fortress, particularly in the old methods of warfare. But in so great an enterprise there was, of course, considerable of exhilaration. The occasion itself was full of intensity and inspiring that made fortitude easy and endurance a pastime. But the occasions that necessitate our drawing a tight rein on our spirits leap forth unheralded from each most inconspicuous niche of our experience. They do not come so often when we are at our best, and strained by some exhilaration of large occasion or high achievement, but they take us at our average. And so it is exactly these petty stresses of character and the ignominious irritations—that are without power to rouse us to constrained heroism—that really we need to give most conscientious heed to and yield most punctilious respect to, for it is these exactly that can best tell us the thing about ourselves that we most need to know, and that touch us at the point of our most exceeding need.

And now I have left me only a moment in which to present one other aspect of this doctrine of little things. The emphasis which we have seen that Christ's life lay on simple, unstrained continuance in well-doing, ought to induce in us great respect for lit-

tle opportunities of service. If you will think of it, it is not so much great doing as it is a holy and untiring persistency in common doing, that Christ, by His own life and that of His apostles, commends to our admiration and imitation—lives made up of little fidelities.

Since the beginning of the year two men* have passed up from this church into the fellowship of the saints above, whose lives were intimately interwoven with almost all the great original charities of the city. And those lives present themselves to us, who survive, as lives full of grand stimulus and splendidly worthy of all Christian imitation. And yet I have never learned that either of these noblemen of God ever did any single thing that could be technically named as a *great* thing. They lived great lives, and yet the greatness of their lives was only the summing up of the little deeds of fidelity and beneficence that went on adding themselves together and piling themselves up through all the days of the year and all the years of a long life.

And it is exactly this kind of greatness that Christ's followers as a rule are called to. There are not many great men, in the technical sense of the word; not many geniuses, unless perhaps genius reduces in the last analysis to just this unintermittent doing of the next little thing that demands to be done. But even

* Apollos R. Wetmore and Robert M. Hartley.

if it means something other and more than this, the genius needed by a Christian is a genius for small and consecutive fidelities. Perhaps it is the most difficult of all genius to be possessed of, as it is certainly the most advantageous of all genius to have exercised.

And there is a great deal that renders difficult this patient continuance in doing little Christian duties and rendering inconspicuous Christian services without fits and starts and with no recess or vacation. There is nothing specially exhilarating about doing a little thing with no prospect before us but to do another little thing similar to it when that first little one is finished. We are helped always by great occasions. But along our lowly lines of continuous small doing we do not encounter many great occasions. We do not get nerved and fired; circumstances do not work in us with strong inspiring. Perhaps we are teaching a class in the Sunday-school, perhaps we are helping a poor family, perhaps we are ministering to a sick friend, perhaps we are trying to preach the Gospel of Christ over and over in a commonplace way; but in it all we only go on adding little service to little service, forgetting, or perhaps even without the power to appreciate what continuance in well-doing really means, either in its cumulative results or in the thoughts and estimate of God; like the ocean steamer out of sight of land that goes on under the sunlight and in the darkness, creeping steadily through

the waves, adding league to league, unconscious of the receding shore and the approaching haven. We are in it all so like Naaman; "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some *great* thing, wouldst thou not have done it?"

And so I know not how better we can do than bring to our encouragement and re-enforcement the incentives of Christ's example and words, who ever recommended to His followers to speak the little word that came next to be spoken, to render the little service that came nearest their hand, and carry the little burden that lay immediately at their feet; the alabaster-cruise of ointment poured upon the Lord's head, the cup of cold water offered to the thirsty disciple, the tear shed in sympathy, the mite dropped into the treasury. Each little moment comes freighted with its little Christian obligation and little Christian opportunity. A life grandly holy is only the adding together of minutes scrupulously holy. "He that is faithful in that which is least, *is* faithful also in much"; and then when the suitable time comes, it will be said to us: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a *few things*; I will make thee ruler over many things."

XIII.

MAN'S UNCONSCIOUS IMMORTALITY.

"He must increase, but I must decrease."—
JOHN iii. 30.

THESE are a few of the words of John the Baptist. He is trying to make clear to his own disciples the preparatory relation which his work sustained to Christ's work. John came before Christ, to open the door for Christ, and to introduce Christ to the world. When you introduce to one another those who have been mutually strangers, as soon as the act of introduction is accomplished, *you* become at once unnecessary—in the way, in fact. John has opened the door; has put Christ and the people of Palestine more or less at their ease with one another, and he feels already that his occupation is gone, that he is not needed any more. There are very few of God's workmen who know as well as John did what their mission is, or when their commission expires. "He must increase, but I must decrease."

John died a little after. I suppose we always expire on the day when our *commission* is dated to
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expire. There are two pleasant reflections that the laborers of God may derive from that supposition, and one is, that He keeps us here as long as we are of use ; and the other is, that He does not detain us after we have ceased to be of use. That ought to be a great stimulus to those who are in vigor, and a sweet consolation to those who through age, or feebleness, or other limitation seem to themselves to be of no further account.

It appears sometimes as though we should do better work if, like John, we could see clearly just what and how much it is we are doing ; if we could see distinctly outlined the place we are to fill, and definitely stated the amount of the contribution that we personally are to make to the weal of man and of our generation. And yet perhaps it is so little that any of us do really, that to know would hardly be as stimulating as *not* to know. And it is supposable that it was with an inflection of regret and disappointment that John uttered the words of our text and declared that his own little day was waning toward its nightfall.

"I must decrease." It has been conjectured that John in saying this had a presentiment of his martyrdom so soon to be accomplished across the river in the fortress of Machaerus. That is indeed possible. And yet certainly it is not so fine an accomplishment to be able to foresee what is going to happen, as to

be able to feel what in the very nature of things must happen. Insight is better than foresight. It would not be so great an achievement, for instance, to have transiently loaned to us the miraculous power to see that on a certain day and hour the sun is to be eclipsed, as it would be to be so versed in the cosmic laws which determine the positions of the heavenly bodies, as to know that on that certain day and hour the sun *must* be eclipsed. Insight is vastly more than foresight, and indeed contains foresight.

And it is far more probable to suppose that the Baptist foretold his own decline, and disappearance from the stage of event, not because he foresaw the headsman's axe, but because he so fully appreciated the laws of event as to feel that the generation must soon have no further need of him; in something the same way as that in which Christ, quite likely, anticipated His own crucifixion and foretold it, not because He foresaw Calvary and the three crosses and Himself suspended in the midst, but because He so well understood men, and the trend of event, and the underlying laws of event, as to know and feel that He and that generation *could* only for a little time get along together. All divine foresight certainly is insight. And it is just this insight which John had into event and into his relation to event that has prompted my selection of this passage for purposes of our morning study.

In the first place, John realized that he signified nothing individually as compared with the generation he was set in the midst of, and the race whose destiny he was commissioned to serve. He would cease to be of account when he ceased to be of use. His worth was his utility. History is for the sake of man, not for the sake of men. History makes little account of individuals. "I must decrease." The redemptive scheme shelved the Baptist as soon as the Baptist had done his part in promoting the redemptive scheme.

It is not characteristic of history to be grateful. The years speed past us, and we put a little something into the years, perhaps, as they move, but the years do not take us up and carry us; we always get left. We are instruments, and the work hardly thanks the instrument, and as soon as the instrument has done its work it is hung up or thrown away. "He must increase, but I must decrease." A man soon becomes obsolete. We value the gifts that the past has bequeathed to us, but we care exceedingly little about the givers. And the next generation will treat this generation just as this one is now treating the foregoing. There is very little to hope for in the shape of future appreciation. It is law that the individual should denote less and less, "decrease."

The men whose praises were everywhere fifty years ago are hardly named to-day. Fifty years hence we

shall almost every one of us be asleep ; and how many of our names then will ever be spoken or written ? It will not be because there are not many here, even in this congregation, that are an enrichment to the world, starting lines of influence that will go on propagating benefits to the end of time ; and men will walk in the joy and strength of those benefits, but they will know nothing of you, and if possible will care less.

You will erect monuments to perpetuate your memory. Perhaps you are a man whose name is familiar to half the population of this city, made familiar, too, by your nobility of character and life and act. Fifty years hence, in the year 1932, people who live in the street or avenue where your residence now is, will go past your monument, decipher the sculptured lines which years will have softened and moss inlaid, and wonder who he was whose name the granite has tried so hard to keep fresh and conspicuous ; and yet this city may at that time be in essential respects a different town from what it would have been had you not lived in it, spoken heroic words and acted a manly part in it. But about you and me *personally* the next century will care nothing and probably know nothing. I do not know who it is that has written,

“Not myself, but the truth that in life I have spoken,
Not myself, but the seed that in life I have sown,

Shall pass on to ages,—all about me forgotten,
Save the truth I have spoken, the deeds I have done.”

And now, my hearer, in your mind and mine it is liable to be just a tilt between these two ideas, the idea on the one hand of wanting to ride, ourselves, in conspicuous stateliness in the chariot of event, and the idea on the other hand of aspiring to be only the track along which the wheel of the chariot rolls. One is wanting to be the statue elevated into conspicuity by the underlying pedestal; the other is seeking to be the pedestal desirous only of helping into conspicuity the super-imposed statue.

Two or three illustrations will help put these two antagonizing ideas in greater distinctness. Supposing you are a man of large intellectual endowment and mental calibre, and your name is Smith. Now such genius is in its very nature an illumination. It will illuminate something; and it depends upon you what that something shall be. You can so shade that light in, and so focus it upon yourself, that it will become the means of your own transfiguration, and set the features of your own personality before the gaze of admirers in lines of fire, so that when you do anything or say anything the world shall lift up hands of applause and shout “Smith!” or you can hide in the eclipse of your own splendid talent; like the forthcoming statue of Liberty in New York harbor, you can lift high above you the censer of flame, and while

you stand in twilight, and in the colossal repose of an humble spirit, waters and lands and cities, with hardly a thought of you, shall lie out, and shall walk, in the lustre that radiates from your high uplifted torch.

Supposing you are a man of large wealth. Wealth is power, royalty. Now, my wealthy hearer, it is for you to decide whether your wealth is to work the coronation of you, or whether you are going to work the coronation of your wealth. You can make a movable throne out of your gold, and as it passes to and fro, men's eyes will be dazzled by the yellow glitter of it, and by the flash of the diamonds that glisten in your coronet; and your possessions and your stocks will range themselves about you a circle of flaming lights, focused all upon *you*, setting *you* in an apocalypse of brightness; and men will see the gold shining in your face. That is one thing you can do; and when men look at you, the light that comes back into their eyes is a yellow light, and when they shake hands with you, the grasp that answers back to theirs is a metallic grasp.

This is no draught on the imagination. You could count up scores of men that become so identified with their possessions that they come to mean hardly anything but possession—a sort of amalgam of man and money, wealth come to its impersonation, a kind of mint on foot. That, I say, is one thing you can

do and be. The other thing would be to let your soul inspirit your possessions, instead of letting your possessions metallize your soul ; to step over from the blaze of your possessions, and live in their shadow, not to stand yourself at the focus of the splendor, but to be the bearer of the uplifted censer in which the incense is inflamed ; carrying yourself and your splendid power something as the sun carries itself, which lies back in the sky in quiet distance, but continuously sends to the ground, and into the air, and into the hearts of men silent and stealthy messages of beauty and warmth along the nimble telegraphy of the sunbeams, baptizing us with hourly munificence, but leaving us almost unsuspecting of the inaudible fountain out from which this incessant sacrament of benefit flows.

Now, clearly enough that is the intent of history. The individual is only an incident, is only an accident of history. That is the principle around which Christianity crystallizes. Sacrifice is the innermost kernel of Christianity. Christianity began in sacrifice. The deep idea of Christianity is to be nothing for the sake of the many—to be a little stone wrought, in some lowly place, in some invisible place, perhaps, into the structure of the wall, in order that the palace may be complete. You are for the world, my friend, and not the world for you. And if you, by your exquisite graces, or brilliant endowments, or princely afflu-

ence, strive to win from your contemporaries a coronation, and to knot the generation in any manner around you, instead of knotting yourself to the generation, and letting the best jewel in your treasures, and the best thought of your mind, and the best blood in your heart, flow to the weal, and mingle in the wealth of the era and the race, then you misunderstand what you were made for; you are out of step with the best spirit of the century; you are brake on the wheel, instead of track under the wheel, or draught at the yoke; you are bound to live, even if others have to suffer and to bleed, unparticipant in the genius of the Lord, who opened His own veins that others might be charged with the currents of a richer life; you are bound to mount into comfort, power, and conspicuity at whatever level of debasement and discomfort thousands about you stand—unparticipant in the genius of the Baptist, whose motto it was, "*He* must increase, but *I* must decrease."

Again (and only a few sentences on this point), the Baptist appreciated that he was not a finality; he was only a forerunner; he was only erecting the platform upon which a coming laborer was to stand and render service that should be more complete and effective, because of what had been done before. Even the ministry of the Son of God was made a success through the preparatory work of the human John.

That admits of two applications: I will mention

them and leave it for you to develop them at your leisure. The first takes the shape of an encouragement. If a man has his heart thoroughly set to help make the world better, it is a trying reflection to him that he is liable at any time to be cut down in the midst of his years and usefulness, and to leave his work sharply interrupted. And now, my Christian co-laborer, here comes in our comfort, that you and I are only somebody's forerunner; we are only doing platform work upon which our successors are going to carry along to the finish, or toward the finish, what we only begin.

Now, if it is our own glory that we are thinking about, then what we begin we shall want to see our own hands complete, that the finished work may remain as a kind of rounded memorial of our fidelity and skill. That is natural; I would not wonder if John felt a little so; I am quite sure that Moses felt somehow so, when he was compelled, before the host crossed the Jordan, to transfer to the hands of Joshua the captaincy of Israel. But just so far as we slip out of our own regards, and the universal weal slips in, this consideration reduces toward zero.

We are for the Church, and not the Church for us; we are for the sake of the extension of Christ's kingdom, and not the extension of the kingdom for our sake; one man may sow, and another reap; it is all part of one grand work. It is as much to sow as to

reap ; and so let us sow, and sow, and reap if we may. Nothing stops ; the grand doctrine of the conservation of force holds in spirituals as well as in materials. No true word is spoken, no holy deed done, that is not done forever. Every seed tells in the harvest. Every beginning is at its stage a completion ; and everything completed is at its stage a beginning. The harvest is the end of one sowing, but it is the beginning of a new sowing. And so as other men have labored, and we are entered into their labors, let it not be so much our ambition to be able to count the sheaves as to multiply the stalks into which in due time, by us or by those after us, the sickle shall be thrust, rejoicing that we do not stand at the end of the years, and rejoicing that when the time comes for us to say, "I must decrease," we shall be able to say of some other who shall stand in your place and mine, "He must increase."

The other application is admonitory, although at the same time one of encouragement. It is that as John was the forerunner of Christ, so in a close sense *each* Christian workman is Christ's forerunner. In whatever capacity we may be teaching and preaching Christianity, our work is, at its core, a teaching and preaching of Christ. We stand before Him ; we run before Him ; we point to Him. "Behold the Lamb of God," said John. "Behold the Lamb of God," say we. Christ can convert the unconverted ; we

can not. Christ can baptize with the Holy Ghost; we can not. Christ stands at the door of the impenitent heart; we by word or example may help persuade some impenitent to open the door to Him. But it is Christ that must go in to that heart and abide there, and work there. We, like John, can introduce Christ to sinners, and in that way prepare the way before Him. So although we come a good while after the Baptist, our work is still a good deal like that of the Baptist. And in this we, too, have a great deal to rejoice, that just when our work stops Christ's begins, and that just when we begin to "decrease" the Son of God is at the verge of His "increase."

I mention only one other point of which John had evident appreciation, which is this, that the perfection of his own work was shown just in this, that he could be so easily dispensed with, and that he could drop out of history with so little of disturbance to the steady progress of the redemptive work. Now, the measure of a great and good man's power is just the facility with which, when he is gone, the world can get along without him.

This is copiously illustrated in Scripture. I suppose you have noticed that when the most impressive characters of Bible story de cease there is given the least of jar to the historic equipoise. Moses administered the affairs of Israel for forty years with

conspicuous ability and success, and yet at his death there was no slightest break in the continuity of their national life, and at no time in their career did they carry themselves with more dignity or with greater loyalty to God and fidelity to their own mission than in the forty years that followed his death. Similar things might be said of Samuel, Elijah, David, John, and, most strikingly of all, of our Lord himself. Indeed, for reasons not hard to seek, it might almost always be said of such what our Lord said of Himself to His disciples: "It is *expedient* for you that I go away." History rather ascends than descends along the stairway of great men's graves.

And this is hardly an accident. It was a part of Moses' success not only that he marshaled the host, but that he duplicated and reduplicated his own spirit and purpose in such as came under the impress of his presence and power, and the greater the power the more numerous the reduplication and the deeper graven the lines of imprint. So that not only in a special way was Moses formed anew in the person of Joshua, but in a general way the whole host of Israel became the recipients of his mantle, and the children and heirs of his genius. So Elijah's mantle fell on Elisha, David's on Solomon. So Christ formed Himself anew and multiplied Himself in His discipleship, and Christ's following grew far more rapidly after ascension than before.

Familiar instances of this occur in the concerns of common life. If a man builds up a great business, which all goes to pieces after his death, that he is shown to be indispensable to the business is far more suggestive of his weakness than it is demonstrative of his power. A part of the genius of a merchant as of a Moses is shown not only in his power to administer while he lives, but in his power so to repeat himself in others as to throw out strong administrative impulses over the years that come after his death.

I have in mind one of our most brilliant and aggressive provincial journals. When a little while ago the editor-in-chief died, hardly a reader would have suspected the retirement of the editorial head and governing spirit; so had he conformed his subordinates to his own likeness and moulded them along the lines of his own image, that the journal dropped into his successors' hands with no sacrifice of its character and no abridgment of its prosperity.

The power of a statesman, the power of a pastor, is in so re-begetting himself in others, that when he goes the Church suffers no jar and the State takes no detriment. Most impressively illustrative of this is the dignity and sobriety with which this Government carried itself after the martyrdom of Lincoln and again after the martyrdom of Garfield. I believe the death of either of these did more to elevate than to depress the tone of national sentiment, and more

to strengthen than to relax the bands of the national life. The assassination, taken in connection with the character of the men assassinated, worked something like the crucifixion of Christ taken in connection with His being and character, in reduplicating and multiplying them a thousand times over in the hearts of our true American citizenship. So that the grandeur of our two martyr-Presidents is shown most conspicuously just in the facility with which after they were gone the nation could get along without them.

In the loss of a beloved parent—a strong father or a dear mother—you have had experience of the same. You are keenly sensible of their loss, but realize that in all that goes to compose the structure and the stamina of your life and character they are still perpetuated in you; so that you are as composed and as strong and as balanced as when they were personally present with you. Your habits of good are only the tendencies which they planted and nurtured come to maturing. You are slipping along to-day in grooves of blessing and mercy which by prayerful effort and tuition they cut for you. You miss them, indeed; but in all that relates to manliness of character and nobility of life and success in achievement, you are certainly as well without them as with them. And the reason you need them now so little is because back in the by-gone years they filled your needs so well; and the measure of *their* greatness and good-

ness is just the facility with which, now that they are gone, you can get along without them.

And perhaps there is no illustration of this principle which will be so apt, and come so close to you collectively, as by reference to this church in its relations to the reverend and sainted founder of this church. The ease, the quietness, the composure with which you survived the shock of your first pastor's decease, is to me one of the most impressive features of this church, as it is certainly the most eloquent tribute to the mingled sweetness and grandeur of him who so long led this flock through pastures of living green. Just as the young man with streaming eyes turns away from the casket that is being closed upon the white face of his dear father, and then goes back into the world pure and strong and brave and true, because the heart that he inherited from his sire beats in his bosom; so the solidity and the loyalty and the consecration of this church is, in exceeding measure, but the soul of him who in Jesus Christ hath begotten you in the Gospel, divided, distributed, and multiplied over and over in the lives of those who rejoice always to name Dr. Adams their spiritual father; and the measure of *his* goodness and greatness is just the facility with which, now that he is gone, this church lives and works without him.

Let us, then, brothers and sisters, adopt it as a high and sanctioned ambition in life to make our-

selves unnecessary, to anticipate our departure hence by reduplicating in others such energies of holy purpose and such graces of heavenly tenderness, as by the renewing Spirit of God we may have had wrought within us, so that when our time of "decrease" is come and our *single* life is done, our *multiplied* life may survive; and then, when the last tear shed for us has been dried, and the last memory of us has been erased by time, the energies that issued from us, at any rate, shall leap along the years, and our unconscious selves go scattering multiplying blessings along the broadening furrows of the generations.

XIV.

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall SEE God."—MATTHEW v. 8.

I HAVE purposely set the emphasis on the word *see*. A change in inflection, like a jar of the kaleidoscope, will sometimes work a transformation as sudden as it is full of delicacy and surprise. We fall into rigid and frozen habits of reading the Bible. We put an emphasis at established points, as the clock always strikes when the pointer is at the top.

Our inflection gets stereotyped, because our thought gets stereotyped. As the thoughts warm and become flexible, intonations and stress begin to vary, exactly as the river cuts for itself a new bed in the time of the spring rains. I love to hear a man read a passage from the Holy Word in a manner different from my own. Without costing me my idea, it gains me his. If we could hear the Bible *read* as it ought to be, we could dispense with most of our commentaries. I have, for example, several commentaries on Romans; but how willingly—yea, gladly—I

would burn them all, if I could only once have St. Paul read me his letter to the Romans.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God. This is one instance out of many of the success with which the Bible speaks a great truth without putting any unpleasant strain upon the words made use of in uttering that truth. In this particular the Bible stands by itself. Jesus Christ never wrestles with the truths He attempts to tell. Our words and phrases regularly bear the marks of a struggle. Our long sentences betray the distance there is between us and the thing we are attempting to tell. What we see clearly, we can say plainly. An elaborate paragraph is only a laboring mind articulating its distress. This, I think, will put us upon laying greater emphasis upon the lucid brevities of our Scriptures, especially of our Gospels. And there are few finer examples of this than the Beatitudes, and this sixth Beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God."

One troublesome difficulty with which Bible speakers and writers had to contend was, that the words they were obliged to use carried with them, primarily, not spiritual meanings, but sensuous ones. Our words, all of them, come not from the sky, but from the ground, and bear upon them still the marks of a coarse parentage.

So fine a thought as that of "spirit" has to be

spoken by a word that never meant "spirit" till it had for a great while meant "breath." So that old words, and words, too, that are coarsely related, have to be educated to the carrying of finer and finer meanings; exactly as God took the old rainbow that perhaps for a million years had been smiling down upon the green grass after rain—took the old rainbow, spelled out with its gifted characters of color a better sentiment, and let it hang in the sky henceforward as a visible covenant of grace; so that what denoted once only the smile of the sun after storm, denotes to us now the smile of God after storm. And so words, too, especially when the Gospel teaches them, learn to absorb deeper truth and to become qualified to the office of a finer and finer symbolism.

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God." And this word "see" is one of those that have been disciplined into higher powers and aptitudes. It reminds us at first, of course, of the body—the eye. It is there that all idea of sight begins to form itself. I would not quarrel with any one who expects that sometime God is going to be looked upon by us just as we look upon one another now. If a little child were to ask me what it means that we are going to *see* God, I should tell him that it means exactly what it says. Perhaps he would carry away a very material idea of the matter, but he will be a good deal nearer the truth than he would be after I

had tried to replace his idea by one too large for him to comprehend and too fine for him to appreciate. It is cruel to step on these little philosophies and little theologies of the children. They are just as true for them as ours are for us. Theirs might not be true for us; ours certainly would not be true for them.

If a child were to ask me if there would be harps and pianos—yes, and hobby-horses, in heaven, I would tell him “yes”; that is, if he was fond of those things; because that would be the truest answer I could make him. What I should mean by it would be, that there would be that there which would just as nicely fit into his heavenly desires as the hobby-horse does into his earthly desires. Heaven means satisfaction. And if it takes a hobby-horse to satisfy him now, and I tell him there will be nothing of that kind there, then to him I make heaven unsatisfactory and so falsify the fact. There is an untruthful way of telling the truth and a truthful way of telling an untruth.

This truthful way of telling an untruth is abundantly illustrated in the glowing imagery of the Apocalypse. We, some of us, possibly accept it as a literal statement of fact that the streets of the new city of God will be of gold and its walls of jasper and its gates a several pearl. Many of us—most of us, presumably—look upon the gorgeous description as being rather an accommodation to the weakness of

our thoughts and the limitedness of our experience, just as the hobby-horse was an accommodation to the limitations of the boy.

And this forms one of the inimitable features of the Bible, that there is in it always just as much as we have wit, heart, and experience to find in it. It is valid exactly at the level of its reader—be he child or adult, scholarly or unlearned. It grows as we grow, rises as we rise, deepens as we deepen; like the rainbow which incessantly slides along the sky to keep pace with our moving step and changing eye.

So that if the little child were to ask me what it means that the pure in heart shall *see* God, I should tell him that it means exactly what it says, and leave him in the delicious confidence of a child-theology, that thinks of God as easily and certainly as of a toy or playmate; while to the person of more adult comprehension I should say that the *seeing* intended in our Beatitude, is something quite aside from the eye; that reference is made to sight only because that is the sense upon which we most rely for certitude; and that our text means that, if a man has a clean heart, he is able to know God with a certainty and satisfaction as great as that with which his eye enables him to know the things that are about him. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God.

Now, unless I mistake the temper of the times, there is a longing among men, not only outside of

the Church, but to some degree inside of it, after more stalwart convictions of religious things; a nearer approach to, a profounder consciousness of, and a more restful reliance upon, the Divine. Men get tired of mere believing. There is a great deal of what passes for religious experience that is pure dreariness; a great deal of life-long waiting for sunrise that never comes; a great deal of what we encourage ourselves by calling faith, that is only a desperate and numb holding on.

Such faith gets tired. Like Noah's dove it wearies with hovering and longs to be taken in. Dogged uncertainty is sadly unsustaining. We hunger for something, for somebody that is real. Is there anything real beyond us, above us? and can we know it *as* real? We are willing to believe what God says, if only we can know that it is God who says it. We are willing to leave almost everything undecided, but there must be something that lies in us as a certainty and works in us as an assurance.

It is in vain to tell men that in so great a matter as religion they ought to be willing to take everything on trust. It is just *because* religion is so great a matter that it is impossible to take everything on trust. If we can not know something, we will not believe anything. There is no belief, with either merit or power in it, that does not lean on certainty. Faith is a blossom on the stalk of assurance. God is too

great a thing to be caught in the meshes of a syllogism. There are no premises ample enough to give us God in the third term. Arguments to prove God entertain intellect, but there is in them no bread of life to the soul. A logical demonstration that underneath are the everlasting arms, serves the purpose of a disquisition, but does not help a tired soul feel the sustaining *power* of those arms. It removes indecision from the mind, very likely, but leaves a great sad "if" in the heart.

In this lies something of the fascination of physical science. In nature there are at least some things that are known. We can get standing-room there. Facts carry themselves there, in considerable numbers, with an air of self-respect. They do not apologize for asking to be accepted and believed in. Perhaps science is too positive and affirmative sometimes, but part of that comes from knowing that it is under no necessity of reviewing its primary facts.

Religious reviews are trying to prove to-day that God is, and that men may know Him. Scientific reviews do not feel required to utilize the best scholarship of the schools in demonstrating that the sun is, and that men may see it. Those primary facts are all settled. The scientists are not all of them sure about the courses of masonry that are being laid to-day. But they know that underneath them, at least,

are blocks of granite that will never have to be stirred. A part of the arrogance of science is only a sense of the security of its primary facts. Now, if the Church was as conscious of its primary fact, namely, God, as the schools are of theirs, then the Church, too, could abandon its attitude of defense and apology, and stand up with the attitude and move forward with the carriage of a commanding assurance and self-respect.

Now, it is with an appreciation of all this that I have submitted to you our Lord's Beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God." Remembering that sight stands for certainty, we have laid down for us in these words the royal highway to religious assurance. We are told here that if a man has a clean heart he is able to know God with a satisfaction as complete as that with which his eye enables him to know the things that are about him. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

And from this we gather that if to any of us God is not known as a certainty, it is not in Him that He is not seen, but in us that we do not see Him. There is something here, not there, that obscures Him. He is like the sun, which the earth sometimes fails to look upon, not because clouds invest the sun, but because fogs enswathe the earth. "It is your sins that have hid His face from you," Isaiah wrote to the

ancient church. The pure heart is the transparent firmament of blue, up through which we get into God's great daylight.

And it is to be attended to, that the word "pure" in our text carries upon it no meaning that is peculiar or limited. It designates the absence of no special sort of taint or tarnish, as of in chastity or the like; but denotes instead, the absence of everything that can blur the heart's moral transparency. So that our text means, that if we do not see God and know Him as an assured fact, it is because there still nests in our heart some sort of unrelinquished unrighteousness. "The pure in heart shall see God." So that if the heavens are not open above us, and our firmament is not flooded with the light of a near and a known God, we gain from our Beatitude the Gospel's complete explanation of the matter.

And it takes but a fleck of cloud to hide the sun; and that last remaining unforsaken sin is sufficient to shut out from us the splendid presence of God. It was no accident that the man who could stand up in the presence of the Sanhedrim and say, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day," was the man who received from God a revelation that has enkindled eighteen centuries with the light of its reflected splendor. The pure in heart shall *see* God. It lies as strictly in the nature of things as that sunlight should sift down

through an open sky and overspread the earth with beauty, warmth, and fertility.

It needs but a single fleck of cloud to hide the sun. I am reminded here of a case that has passed under my own observation, that is exactly in point. A young man was converted, at least he showed some of the more formal symptoms of conversion. He rose for prayers, and he was prayed for. He applied for admission to the church and was accepted, and his name put upon the church-rolls. But there was in his Christianity no heartiness, and in his face none of that brightness and fervor that showed that he was walking in the near and dear light of God. It happened that he afterward attended an evening meeting in which the topic was, "The power of one unrelinquished sin to work the hidings of God's face." He came to a friend the next morning and rehearsed to him in all its details one act of restitution that he had neglected to perform, adding, "I have resolved to make the old matter right, whatever it may cost me in the way of money or humiliation." And though his eyes were full of tears, his face was all beaming with gladness. God fulfilled to him then and there His promise, "Bring ye all the tithes, and I will pour you out a blessing." His walk was henceforward in the light. His very countenance from that time on betrayed the solidity of his inward assurance, and he is now a power in the church where

he has membership, and in the midst of which he stands as a bright and shining light. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God."

As another illustration of the same, I want to add here a few lines from the *Contemporary Review*. They are from an article upon Horace Bushnell; and in the article the writer is quoting from a sermon of Bushnell's on the "Dissolving of Doubts." It is well that you should understand at the outset that the story, which Bushnell here tells in his sermon, is probably only a passage from his own life and experience. He goes on to describe a young man (and now I give you Bushnell's exact words), "Clear of all the vices, having a naturally active-minded, inquiring habit, never meaning to get away from the truth, who has yet relapsed into such doubt as to find that he has nearly lost the conviction of God, and can not, if he would, say with emphasis that God exists. Such a one pacing his chamber, comes some day suddenly upon the question—Is there then no truth that I do believe? Yes, there is one; there is a distinction of right and wrong, that I never doubted, and can see not how I can. Nay, I am even quite sure of this. Then forthwith starts up the question—Have I ever taken the principle of right for my law? Have I ever thrown my life out on it, to become *all* that it requires of me? No matter what becomes of my difficulties, if I can not take a first principle so inevi-

tably true and live in it. Here, then, will I begin. If there is a God, as I rather hope than dimly believe there is, then He is a right God. If I have lost Him in wrong, perhaps I shall find Him in right. Will He not help me, or, perchance, even be discovered to me? Then he prays to the dim God so dimly felt. It is an awfully dark prayer in the first look of it; but it is the truest and best that he can; the better and more true that he puts no orthodox colors on it; and the prayer and the vow are so profoundly meant that his soul is borne up with God's help, as it were by some unseen chariot, and permitted to see the opening of heaven. He rises, and it is as if he had gotten wings. The whole sky is luminous about him. It is the morning of a new eternity. After this all troublesome doubt of God's reality is gone. A being so profoundly felt must inevitably be."

The writer goes on to add: "We feel certainly that Dr. Bushnell was here describing his own experience. He was preaching in the chapel of Yale College, and after the above description occurs this bracketed passage in his sermon: ['There is a story lodged in a little bedroom of one of these dormitories, which, I pray God, His recording angel may note, allowing it never to be lost.']"

That is the sixth Beatitude submitted to practical test, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." God does not leave Himself unrevealed to

the man who seeks after Him in the appointed way. And it is only when we get where we know God as a fact, and feel Him as a certainty that is beyond impeachment, that anything that can properly be called religion really begins. All our philosophy is well enough as philosophy. All our dogma may be correct enough as dogma. Pictures of the sun may answer excellently well as pictures, but they give no light. Theories of God may be wrought out with consummate acuteness and delicacy, but they work in us no assurance and minister to us no comfort. God, not as a topic that we can ponder upon, but as a personal presence into which we can come, and find ourselves gifted and assured, is what you and I actually want, and what we can not be satisfied without obtaining.

And our Beatitude lays out for us the avenue to this satisfaction. God is visible to the heart that is clean. We can call it seeing God, or walking with God, or being hid with Christ in God. The phraseology matters nothing so long as the one deep fact is there. And then all our suspense ceases. Our life is filled with wonderful composure. We have touched solid rock. We can believe largely now because we know profoundly. The last ingredient of infidelity is cleansed from our faith. We can bear burdens that are heavy because we have certain footing. How *high* we shall build will depend ; but one

thing is settled: the foundation is fixed, and that will not have to be stirred any more. We know the Lord, and all that remains to us is to *go on* to know the Lord.

And armed with a faith in which is no taint of insincerity, the words with which we appeal to others become also charged with strong and availing persuasion. There is nothing that convinces like conviction. "That man will go far; he believes every word he says," said Mirabeau of Robespierre. And all the griefs and crosses of life will then press upon us less painfully, when, with the olden man of God, we have learned to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

"Blessed," then, "are the pure in heart, for they shall *see* God." The dear Lord help us to let go from our hearts the last unrelinquished uncleanness—help us to bring into His storehouse that last ungathered tithe, and so lead us forth into the brightness, and the strength, and the beautiful peace of His known and intimate presence.

XV.

NO MORE SEA.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth ; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea."—REVELATION xxi. 1.

"And there was no more sea." The expression is perplexing. Scholarship has been tried by it. The commentators treat it tentatively, and propose for it solutions that are hesitant and discrepant. The perplexity is not that the New Jerusalem is to be shoreless and sealess. Our ignorance of future conditions is so entire that hardly any single fact given in inspired description would be a surprise. The perplexity is rather that such a feature should by Scripture, most of all by St. John, be noted, remarked upon. It is not the kind of fact that we look into Scripture to find ; and having found it, if read literally, we are hardly made the wiser or the better by it.

The Bible is not a manual of geography, either of the old earth we are living upon, or of the new earth we hope to live upon. About such facts the New Testament, in particular, is uniformly reticent ; de-

signedly and scrupulously reticent. We have nothing to do at present with the precise conditions under which life in the future world is to be administered. Curiosity, of course, is on the alert, but our Scriptures distinguish themselves from all other sacred books so called, by declining to satisfy curiosity. It might not even be to our advantage to know that there is a future life, could the sanctities of the present life be guaranteed otherwise. What little knowledge we have of the future is for the sake of its effects upon the present. "Take no thought for the morrow" reaches a great way. The only thing needing to be wrought in us is daily preparedness, so that whenever the future may come, and in whatever shape it may overtake us, it may find us where we can be taken into it with ease, and carried through it with surety and with blessing.

And still John tells us, "There shall be no more sea." This fact can be read physically. It would be the easiest reading; but perhaps not the only one, nor the most satisfying and helpful one. Rendered physically, it would neither satisfy curiosity nor offer stimulus. It would add nothing practically to our knowledge of the future, because we know nothing of the other physical conditions with which this fact of sealessness would stand in relation; and no fact means anything when standing alone. It neither impresses us intellectually nor stirs us emotionally.

Only the fraction of a thing, the minority of a thing, is in itself; the majority of it is in its relationship and accompaniments. So that if I am told that the new earth is to be all granite or all sand—all continent, or all ocean, some related feature will have to be added before that knowledge will become available or that fact appreciable. No fact means anything when standing alone. And still John says, "There shall be no more sea," and leaves the fact there, unsupported and unexplained.

Read physically, this statement also seems foreign to the genius of the apostle who makes it, and out of consonance with his temper. The study of John's gospel, letters, and visions has acquainted us with the quality of his thought, and it is doubtful if John would ever have appreciated a purely *physical* fact of the new heaven or new earth, or if God would ever have attempted to run such a fact in the mold of such a mind. It is a truth of acoustics, you are aware, that no ear can appreciate as tone any sound which lies either above or below its own distinctive gamut. Each ear has its own gamut, and, spiritually, St. John had his. And it is easier to believe that God always adapts His revelations to the quality of the spirit He is using, and suits His music to the temper and compass of the genius upon which He is playing.

John, it is true, tells us that in heaven there will

be no tears. But that is because tears mean sorrow. And he tells us that the holy city will have no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; but not, however, as a part of the *astronomy* of the new earth, but to declare the finer light with which its firmament will be suffused when "the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof." And he adds, that he saw no temple therein, not, however, as an isolated fact of architecture, but because temples and churches spring from the exigencies of men and not from the needs of God, and will have no farther part to perform, therefore, when we have learned to worship God as a Spirit, and the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are become our sufficient temple and our alone sanctuary.

His material allusions are made in the interest of spiritual references; and John, with every nerve quivering with quick responsiveness to the spiritual realities of man and God and the Eternal City, could hardly have appreciated the barren and unflowering fact that there was to be no water in that city or about it, and would only painfully have burdened his record with it had the communication been divinely made. So that the question still confronts us, What spiritual fact is intended by the apostle in his statement of the sealessness and shorelessness of the New City of God?

Every man in conceiving the things which are eternal has to think in terms of time : and in conceiving the things which are celestial, has to think in terms of earth. In our most spiritual moods we can not get away from our common surroundings or from our every-day vocabulary. We have only one language in which to phrase present experience and heavenly anticipations. And when John tries to describe the streets of the New City of God, the best he can do is to say that they are of gold, the walls of jasper, and the gates of pearl; and celestial beauty, in his mouth, becomes no more than the finest earthly beauty, with which he was conversant, pushed to its extreme; terrestrial beauty enlarged and flung upon the sky. The finest pictures which our thought paints of the things which are unseen and eternal, are done in tints gathered from off a pallet of earthly color.

An illustration is furnished in this same book of Revelation: John was an exile on the barren and cruel little island of Patmos. And his months of loneliness and separation there had familiarized him with the multitudinous voice of the sea, as it beat about the bars and dashed against the doors of his little prison island. And when he comes to describe the Son of man seen in holy vision, he says of Him that His voice was *as the sound of many waters*—a quotation from the sea. And when he describes the mighty Hallelujah that answered back to

the voice from out the throne, he says of it, that it was *as the voice of many waters*; and the stormy Ægean lent its tumultuous murmur to describe the utterance of God; and the finest pictures which St. John's thought painted of the things that are unseen and eternal, were done in tints gathered from off a pallet of earthly color.

But the forms not only which describe heaven, but the fruitions also which, to us, compose heaven, have their basis in what is earthly, and are hardly more than present longings satisfied, present comforts expanded, earthly fruitions standing tiptoe. If we are weary, then heaven means rest; if we are sinsick, then heaven means holiness; if we are lonely, then heaven means reunion with the loved ones that have gone on before; if we are girt about with difficulties, hampered with weaknesses, insulated by infirmity of any kind, then heaven means recall from exile, and emancipation into completest liberty. If any kind of barrier invests us, we think that in heaven that barrier will be erased.

In the sailor-boy's dream of home, no buffeting waves or tempestuous sea divide longer between him and the old hearth-stone. For the time being, there is with him *no more sea*. And could you and I have stepped down onto little sea-locked Patmos, with the yearning apostle severed by the Ægean from the friends he loved, and from the glorious activities to

which he aspired, we might have found in those waters of imprisonment the finest commentary upon our text, and have detected in them the symbol of all those human limitations which shall no longer hedge between the soul and its object, when once we are come into the sealess city of God.

This, I think, gives us a part at least of the meaning of the singular utterance of our text, "And there was no more sea." It is an instance in which John, in an inspired moment, does that which we also do in our uninspired moments—build heaven out of the material of present desire and exigency. Whatever we find here that makes us glad, we think will be repeated in heaven on a scale that is larger and in a quality that is finer. And whatever we find here that makes us sad, we think will drop out of the experience to be had by us in the New City of God. Heaven is earth with its unpleasantnesses omitted, and all its best things led forth into perfect blossom. We conceive it so; John, the inspired John, conceived it so. There no thralldom would longer hold him from his object, no exile should insulate him from his home, no *Ægean* should divide between him and the field of his labor and his love. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea."

Now, my friends, there are many phases of life,

many limitations by which we are hedged in, upon which this sentiment of our text, and of the apocalypse at large, falls with a singular power of stimulus and of comfort; so that it might almost be said that the more closely these cords of limitation are bound about us, and the more completely these waters of separation sunder us, and exile us from our soul's object, the more richly freighted with fruition does the new and the sealess city become to us; so that even all our infirmities become as ladder-rounds along which we climb into a higher, broader, and more beauteous prospect; and the dissatisfactions of the old earth only make the satisfactions of the new earth the more delectable.

There are in the first place our *physical* limitations, by which we are so many of us so closely and painfully walled. Only one with whom sickness and enfeeblement are a constant part of life can realize justly the perfection of a heaven in which there is no disease and no pain. Physical disability of any kind puts a clog upon all our powers of achieving, and throws a shadow over all our seasons of rejoicing. The body, freighted with ailment and decrepitude, stands always between us and our soul's best purpose. Much of our severity and acidity is only indigestion become a mental fact, and a good deal of our solicitude and distrust are no more than an enfeebled condition of the blood telling upon the spirit.

The body made to be the helpmeet of the soul is become its adversary.

Much of sin is the offspring of the body. This seems to be hinted at in the story of Eden. You remember Paul's description of the war waging between the mind and the members. It was the apostle that was stricken and undermined by bodily infirmity, that has depicted the most glowingly the power and blessedness of the bodily resurrection. There is reason in this. It is only another instance, like those we find in Revelation, of building heaven's joy out of the material of to-day's exigency and limitation. That may have been one object of St. Paul's thorn in the flesh, to qualify him to appreciate more justly the joy that would become man's when restored into colleagueship with a redeemed body.

The body needs saving as much as the soul. There is no true life and no certain immortality where reconciliation has not been wrought between body and mind, as well as between mind and God. Redemption and immortality are as much of the body as of the mind. The new body does not play as large a part in the theology of the nineteenth century as it did in that of the first. We slur over the relation in which Christ's resurrection stands to our physical renewal. Easter morning means also that the time is coming when there shall be no crippled members, no days of weariness and nights of pain, no arms that

are palsied, no eyes that are blind, no ears that are deaf, no physical limitations between the soul and its object, no more sea in the New City of God.

Then there are our mental limitations. Men want to know, but they do not know how to know. They feel the beauty of truth, but are like the child looking up into the sky, and feeling the warm light, but unable to reach the sun out of which it flows. A broad firmament divides between the child and the sun it desires to handle; a broad sea divides between us and the things we wish to know. Almost the sum of our earthly knowledge is to know how little can be known; and that we know only faultily and partially. We suppose a good deal, but know very little. Only here and there the rock perforates to the surface. Almost all our opinions are provisional. They are good until something better is found to take their place. Our philosophy is tentative. Thinking is trying experiments mostly. We think different things at different times, and no two men think the same thing, as no two eyes see the same rainbow. Like a man shut in a ravine, almost all we see is our horizon. Philosophy means only love of the truth. It does not mean attainment of the truth; a fit word justly chosen.

And then most of that which we do know is of things that are going to last but a little; as it were, a gathering of wilting flowers. All knowledge is

transient that is of things that are transient, as the splendor fades from off the hills as the sun passes under the west. So that "whether there *be* knowledge it shall vanish away, for we know in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." "Then shall we know even as also we are known"; our wall of mental limitation shall be broken down, our exile repealed, the island made continuous with the continent, and no more sea in the New City of God.

There are also our *moral* limitations. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." *Shall be*. It's a thing of by and by. Holiness is yonder, and there is a great gulf fixed. Peter said unto Him, "Lord, why can not I follow Thee now?" An excellent discourse has recently been given to the public by a Boston clergyman on "The withheld completions of life." "Lord, why can not I follow Thee now? And Jesus answered, Whither I go thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterward." We can abstain from acts of sin, but do not succeed in becoming clean through and through.

Perhaps you have ceased sinning. You have not ceased wanting to sin. The serpent keeps finding its way back into the garden. Our hands are clean, possibly, but there are the traces still of inward stain. "When I would do good, evil is present with me."

There is some sin still that easily besets ; still some one remaining chord in our hearts that vibrates at the touch of evil. The old drift is not exhausted, the old momentum is not expended. Our wishes outrun our attainments. Our bodies hold us back ; our past holds us back ; our surroundings detain us. We want to be perfect, as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. We want it should become our nature to do right. But we are at sea, and holiness is a continent lying low down on our horizon. But blessed are they that even hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. It lies in the future, but it is a sure fact of the future, and our wall of moral separation shall be broken down, our exile repealed, the island made continuous with the continent, and no more sea in the New City of God.

And then, how strangely we are isolated, and how painfully we are insulated from the dear ones that have gone into the future before us. No word of tidings comes to us from across the sea. By night we send up deep, strong thoughts into the spirit land, but we feel no answer, and our sigh dies away among the silence and the stars. Not one dear word has passed between us, since away back in the months and the years the fluttering spirit breathed its last, long good-bye, and looked its last love-look out of eyes that were clouding and closing. And the hand fell, and the pulse faltered ; and it was done ; and the

spirit was fled, the spirit that was woven into ours as with meshes of steel. And now, not one lisp out of the sky, not one whisper out of the night, to tell us and comfort us. Mystic orphanage of spirits that are filial; mystic divorce of spirits that are wedded. And the years move on. We remember *them*, and they remember *us*, we think. They worship there and we worship here,—a broken chorus rendering one psalm. They with eyes from which all the tears have been tenderly wiped, and with faces beautiful with looking upon the front of God; we with eyes all tear-bedimmed, stumbling over the roughness of life, wondering, hoping, and waiting; waiting till our exile shall be repealed, our little island of loneliness and expectation be made continuous with the continent of the redeemed, and no more sea in the New City of God.

And so we will not go through life repining at its deprivations, or crushed by its limitations. Our sky is still gilded with the bow of promise. And sad experience and glorious expectation shall mingle themselves together to make us steadfast and brave. And though this life of tired bodies, of weary minds, of sinsick souls, of bitter bereavements, be to us a very Patmos of exile, still, as was St. John's so may our little Patmos be one in which the voice of the Lord shall sound down upon us; in which the revelation

of His glory shall come into our souls ; and in which we shall be enveloped in the close folds of His continuous and sustaining presence.

And so will we move on, with tears in our eyes perhaps, but with strength in our hearts, till our exile is repealed, and our citizenship begun, in the New City of God,—a city that is sunless, for that God is the light thereof ; templeless, for that the Lamb is the sanctuary of it ; and without sea, for that no tide shall sever longer between the soul and the beautiful objects of its desire and of its love.

XVI.

HEAVEN.

"And I, John, saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."—

REV. xxi. 2.

THE solemn beauty and majestic sweetness of these closing chapters of the Holy Word, set the seal of authenticity to the whole collective Testament of Jesus Christ. They are the benediction after prayer, the farewell beams lingering among the clouds when the day is done; the melody still trembling along the wires after the song is sung.

These chapters, and this twenty-first chapter, set us down at a point of splendid moment in the tireless procession of the ages. Another act in the sublime tragedy of event has been played to its close, and another link has clasped into its companion link in the endless chain of forever and forever.

Human history easily falls into eras. These eras combined compose the sum of time. I think there are also eras of God that add themselves together to

form duration everlasting, history eternal. One such stupendous era I find ushering itself in with the prefatory clause of God's Holy Word, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Who shall recount the splendors of that transcendent moment? God breaking in upon the eternal silence with His infinite word, and filling up the shoreless and pathless spaces with His infinite deed! Another such era of God I find entering with the dying words of the Son of God, "It is finished"; and the trembling earth, and the rending rocks, and the opening graves, celebrated with solemn rites the passing of the old and the incoming of the new--the new link of God in the endless chain of forever and forever.

And still the years set onward and the centuries forge forward. In this era of Christ, inaugurated by the words uttered upon the Cross, we are now advanced well on toward two thousand years; only a few furlongs of time forward of us stands the eighteenth century stone. One after another *we* are falling by the way, but the race never dies and history never rests. We have walked in this era of Christ sufficiently long to understand very well its quality and import. It is an era in which the destroying agencies of Satan wage indecisive warfare with the redemptive energies of the Son of God.

Dating from the Cross, it is the era of the Cross, the era of apostles, martyrs, witnesses, the era of the

baptism of blood—a period of encounter, of defeat, of victory deferred—a period in which there rests above the cross no crown, but only certain faintly distinguishable threads of light that we know are being woven into a crown. It is, like a portion of that which preceded it, an era in which there are hearts that are burdened, and lives that are tired. It is an era of hope postponed, of disappointment forestalled. It is an era in which almost everybody is familiar with pain, every household intimate with death, and every eye acquainted with tears.

In this we are not masking the era in the disguise of our own sallow imaginings, but only surveying the era in the pensive lineaments she so natively wears. We are thus enabled to understand what it is that this era of the Cross represents, although quite without means for ascertaining the era's duration. We only know that the same wise beneficence that initiated it will guide it to its consummation. It was born on Calvary, and where and when it will expire God knows. Perhaps its setting will be as far off in the years that lie to the west of us, as was the rising of the preceding era far away among the years of the great Orient.

But John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day," and, girt about by the Ægean, in his lonely island of exile, the soul of this prophet of the new covenant fell to pondering the problems locked up in the fast-

nesses of the future. And his eye was unsealed, and he saw the things that were to come, as you and I have eyes this morning to see the things that are past. The present no longer pressed its line of partition between what has been and what shall be. Distinctions of tense (that constitutional infirmity of the human intellect) ceased for a season to blur and falsify his mental vision. His thought had power given it to outrun the slow, toilsome tread of the centuries; and while his body abode upon Patmos, his spirit was wandering hither and thither throughout the great temple of God, moving up and down the aisles of the ages, till it paused and beheld another "It is done," closing up the story of the blood-baptized, tear-bedimmed era of the Cross; ushering in, in its stead, still another period that reaches way out into the times that lie beyond the shore of the revealed Word of God.

It is at this point where the era of the Cross stops, and all things are again made new, that our text sets us down. Standing there with John, the things which shall fill up the final act of the present tragic era are all seen as *done*, and we are invited, in imagination, to take our place there with him on the farther shore of the broad tumultuous ocean of years that flows between us and the beautiful continent wherein shall be built the New Jerusalem, the City of God come down from heaven.

It is a singular and a thrilling experience coming to every one, I imagine, near the close of his first voyage across the Atlantic, when he first sights the coast-line of the other continent. All our associations and acquaintance have been with the country we have left. America has been to us the only actual continent upon the globe—all others have been ideal. And so as we move out of Boston or New York, seaward, Europe-ward, Europe is only a great inconceivable somewhere lying beyond the sea; all the efforts that our mind makes to comprehend it and to realize it are full of infirmity, uncertainty, and distrust, and our thoughts are steady and assured only in their references to the country which lies back of us; and this attitude of the mind continues to be maintained. We reach mid-ocean, we pass mid-ocean, and still every thought of our situation geographically starts with the American coast and brings up in a point of interrogation. We come to the morning of the last day of our voyage, and as it appears to us Europe is still the continent across the sea, and we are, we know not where exactly, but somewhere out from New York. But every delusion is moving toward the moment of its dissipation, and the first glimpse of the rising, emerging coast-line of the other country practically translates us, in an instant of time, over an interval of three thousand miles, and our thought, building itself up now from the port into

which we are upon the point of entering, looks backward over the weary leagues we have traversed, and feels for the first time that it is no longer Europe, but America, that is the continent beyond the sea.

How full of thrill and of thought unspeakable must be the soul, when, awaking amid the realities of the eternal world, it feels for the first time that it is no longer eternity but time that is the continent beyond the sea; life spent, death passed, and the everlasting begun. It was into this entrance-haven of the eternal world that the prophet of the apocalypse was come when he beheld the Holy City, the Jerusalem of God.

And now, "it is done." The old has given place to the new, the era of the Cross has yielded to the era of the crown. The dead, small and great, have been gathered before the great white throne, and judged out of the open books, each man according to his works. The sea has given up its dead, the grave surrendered its tenant; death and the grave abolished; and whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, cast into the lake of fire. Before the face of Him who sat upon the throne, the heavens and the earth were fled away, and a new heaven and a new earth ushered in, to be the abode of the sons and daughters of God. "And I, John, saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."

With the advent of this new era of the Heavenly City, God himself steps down into new and dearer intimacy with His children. He is no longer their inaccessible "Sky-Father"; henceforth He tents *in the midst* of His children. "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is *with* men, and He will dwell *with* them, and He will be 'God-with-them,' their God." It is in the Heavenly City that the old Emmanuel promise comes first to its perfect fulfilling; "and He shall be 'God-with-them.'"

In the beautiful homes that shall throng the glorious city, no twilight hours of sad foreboding, or of lonely remembering, shall intrude upon the glad music of the satisfied and restful spirit; for there shall be no more sorrow nor crying, for God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And over its streets of gold, and out through its gates of pearl, no gathering of bereaved ones shall file in still procession, and group around an open grave in service of deep interment and long farewell, for "the grave has been cast into the lake of fire," "and there shall be no more death." A city in whose homes there is no pang, and without whose gates there is no God's-acre!

"No dread of wasting sickness,
No thought of ache or pain,
No fretting hours of weakness,
Shall mar our peace again.

No death our homes o'ershading
Shall e'er our harps unstring,
For all is life unfading
In presence of our King."

It is another feature of the Heavenly City that in it there shall be no sin. Inwardly re-created into the likeness of the divine Spirit, outwardly renewed by the power of a holy resurrection, we shall thus enter into our glorified citizenship thoroughly reconstructed into harmony with the divine arrangements and holy appointments of our celestial estate.

Before we enter there the sad tutelage of life will have taught us something of the exceeding unsanctity of sin and of the ineffable beauty of holiness. Sin, in all its diversity of form—murder, adultery, idolatry, untruth—will have been cast beyond the walls of jasper into the lake of fire. Sin, in all its deep concealment and dark defilement, will have been plucked from our bosoms by the power of God's Spirit and washed into whiteness by the power of God's blood. And, besides all this, we shall be living in the dear companionship of the great paternal Presence, whom to feel and to love is to obey. And, intrenched in this fourfold security, we shall abide in unshaken holiness amid the splendid delights and sublime activities that shall throng and compact the great forever of our citizenship in the Jerusalem of God.

Measured in terms of years, it is a long way from

the old Paradise of Eden to the new Paradise come down from God out of heaven; but the vastness of the years is only justly commensurate with the vastness of the transition from the faltering characterlessness of man primeval to the founded holiness of the citizens that shall people the City of God.

And then "there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, for the Lord God giveth them light." There shall be no ignorance of a sort to mislead us, and no perplexities of a kind to baffle us, for the mind of God shall be in us, and our thoughts suffused with a divine irradiation. And we shall be swift to know the truth, for that our wills will be nimble to do the truth, for there His servants shall serve Him, and His name shall be in their foreheads. There is no candle so full of ministration, no sun so replete with guidance, as is the inward life of one whose heart is so lifted in filial service as to catch the light that beams from off the front of God.

And the prophet further adds to his description of the City by saying: "And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." It seems upon the surface of it a strange omission that the City come down from heaven should be a city without church or tabernacle. All our earthly experience of things divine is more or less intimately bound up with chosen spots and selected days, temples and Sabbaths. And

yet, after all, as our thought enters into the matter more deeply, how wondrously is this feature specified by John felt to be in accord with the innermost sense of the devout and reverent spirit! How are we not chafed sometimes by the rude mechanics of our religion that runs its coarse partition through the days, walling between time holy and time unholy (six days secular, one day sabbatical), and that drags the surveyor's insensate chain along the earth, to separate ground that is consecrate from ground that is profane. And how finest of all fine fulfilment is this untempled city of God, of the prophecy of the Lord spoken to the woman at the base of temple-clad Gerizim, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. The hour cometh when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in *spirit*. God is a *Spirit*, and they that worship Him must worship Him in *spirit*."

As already discovered, it is characteristic of this new era of the crown, and of the heavenly Jerusalem, that everything is clothed with the form and instinct with the spirit of a bright and beauteous renewal. All is new, but not new in such a way as to be bewildering. There shall be *new* heavens, but they are going to be *heavens* still; a *new* earth, but an *earth* nevertheless; a *new* city, holy, and descended from God out of heaven, but a *city* notwithstanding.

I should prefer to remain here, and never go into the golden-streeted city of the redeemed, if I did not believe that, in the first dawn of my celestial consciousness, there would rise within me a great placid sense of home, whose surroundings should be composed in a partial measure of the glorified intimacies of the earthly life, and its spiritual music composed in the same key and along the same gamut in which are wrought the purest and finest harmonies of the present. We praise God for the confidence produced in us by the glowing but familiar imagery of the apocalypse, that no soul shall awake in the beautiful home whither the sons and daughters of God are tending, only to have its eyes dazzled and blinded by the splendors of God, and the brightness of the jasper walls, or its spirit clouded over with the shadow of a vast aloneness.

We can not attend to St. John's description of the coming city without noticing how singularly that description harmonizes with the Gospel doctrine of the soul's rebirth. The more we study those precious final chapters, the more we feel that all the threads of Bible truth are in them gathered into one golden knot. It is a thought that aspires to rule the minds of men, that the tendency of things naturally and universally is toward betterment; that things not only, but men as well, both in their individual and associate character, tend to rise into a finer life and

nobler organization under the constraint of the inherent and unaided energies of their being. This doctrine, disparaged by the whole tenor of biography, from that of apostatizing Adam forward and downward, encounters its personal and flat contradiction at the lips of Jesus Christ, "Ye must be born again"; which signifies to us, that cultivate native endowments as we will, and nurse them as we may, by no system of tutelage will a son of Adam graduate into a son of God. The roots of our human nature are cast in the ground; the roots of our divine nature must knit into the sky.

It is the doctrine of the Gospel, that sainted man is not built up from below, but built down from above; and it is the coincident doctrine of the apocalypse, that sainted, glorified society is not formed, developed, and matured from beneath, but comes down from God out of heaven. These relations that we call conjugal, parental, filial, are of the ground, and no improvement of them will transmute them into the familyhood of heaven. This organization that we call social is of the earth, and no transfiguration of it will refine it into the society of heaven. *Redeemed society*, in its structure, organization, administration, will be achieved by no evolution upward from the monarchies or the commonwealths of man's originating, but by purely divine establishment, when the old Jerusalem founded upon the rock-ridge

of Judea shall fade away before the new Jerusalem come down out of the bosom of God.

And now I invite you to notice very briefly in closing, that the consummating thought of God's Word is seen thus to be not the salvation of men, but the salvation of man ; not redeemed individuals, but a glorified city. We understand very well what the word "city" imports. It stands to us as no barren sum of separate individualities, but as a vast, subtly organized complex—earnest, intense, impassioned, gathering into one great collective life all special lives in mingling contribution—animated by one coalition of thought, constrained by one conspiracy of desire, and energizing in one co-operant endeavor. That is a city, and as much finer than any citizen that has membership in it, as is the tree finer than any atom of fibre present in the tree ; as is the body fairer than any member that helps to compose the body ; as is the great flashing commonwealth of stars that people the sky, more sublime than the separate pebble that rolls and crushes beneath your feet.

And now, such a city glorified, a city come down out of heaven, whose administration is divine, its organization wrought in God as the centre of its being, and the fund of its life and power, that is the great final goal of the Scriptures of God, the unsailed and unsounded sea, into which empty themselves all the streams of power and currents of influence that

drain the uplands, and traverse the lowlands over all the territory of the Holy Word, through all the domain of nations and ages historic.

And now, my dear friends, one after another the sons and daughters of God are moving out of our midst, and passing onward, and upward to the *open portals* of the Holy City. From the North and the South, and the East and the West, are gathering the sainted host, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, passing the gates of pearl, and mingling together, brother with brother, sister with sister, friend with friend, within the walls of jasper, upon the streets of gold; and above each portal of the many-gated city is inscribed in the dear handwriting of God, "The Spirit and the bride say, '*Come*'!"