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THE
LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

A BACCALAUREATE SERMON

PREACHED IN

MARQUAND CHAPEL, PRINCETON, N. J.

JUNE 8, 1890.

BY THE

REV. FRANCIS L. PATTON, D.D., LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF N. J.

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THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT.

II. COR. iii. 6.—“*For the Letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth Life.*”

There is no doubt, I suppose, that when the Apostle made use of this familiar antithesis he intended, in the first place, to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel; between the written code, with its rigid requirements which can only awaken a sense of helplessness and only intensify the feeling of loss, and the indwelling, grace-bestowing, comfort-giving Spirit. But it can hardly be questioned that the words of this verse may be properly used in a wider sense, and that this wider sense is at least implicitly recognized by the Apostle himself. I should only be illustrating the truth of the text understood in this broader sense, were I to insist upon a literalism of interpretation that would tolerate no application of it outside of the sphere within which it was originally employed; and I think I can better serve the purpose I have in view to-day, and can better adapt my discourse to the circumstances of this time and place, by taking advantage of some of the more obvious contrasts which these words are so well fitted to suggest.

1. It is true that the word *pneuma* here has special reference to the Holy Spirit, but it also signifies the human spirit and with the word *gramma* as the other

term of the antithesis, I think there is nothing violent or strained in making the suggested contrast between Language and Thought the first topic for consideration.

Thought and not the mode of its expression, mind and not the drapery in which it is enveloped, should be our first concern. It is fatal to elevating work to let energy terminate in the letter. The aim of the true scholar is to go behind the letter to the spirit. The bare suggestion of language as the means of communicating thought presents to us one of the most wonderful facts in life. It is the commonplace after all that is the most mysterious. Thought leaps the chasm of two separate personalities and excites no wonder. We lay bare the secrets of our inner life to each other and then wonder at *actio in distans* and cavil at the possibility of divine communication. So easy is it to strain at the gnat and swallow the camel.

To think and speak; to have ideas and register them; to make ourselves plain; to find a common measure of thought among the many coins of speech; to converse with our contemporaries in the morning newspaper and hold fellowship with the dead in the books that keep their memories alive--this, if we only stopped to consider it, is the marvel of existence. A mystery, I grant, and one made no easier of solution by the suicidal philosopher who tries through pages of labored excogitation to reduce thought to mechanism and then sends his book with his compliments to the courteous reader, in the hope that he will think that the author is a thinker of uncommon intellect in thus demonstrating with such convincing logic, and such array of physiological testimony, that there is no thought and no thinker at all.

Thought is mind's protest against materialism. We need no other. Language is thought's portrait, the print of thought's finger. It is easy to see, therefore, why the study of language, as distinguished from literature, should occupy a high place in the Academic curriculum. It is of great moment to understand the forms of thought, to follow its curves and watch its subtleties and niceties of distinction as we are able to do after it has been hardened and colored in speech. You may learn a great deal of psychology from the Greek prepositions. The subjunctive mood will often prove a shorter road to the human mind than the psychometric experiments of Fechner and Wundt. We may, however, make too much of philology, and even though we had to be satisfied with less grammar, I would have more literature. Let us read Milton, rather than read about him, and read him as we love to read him, rather than at the snail's pace indicated by Ruskin. Give us the story of Achilles in the pages of Derby and Bryant if we must choose between an English translation and a few dog's-eared pages of the Greek original:—

Βῆ δ' ἀκίων παρὰ θίνα πολυφλόισβοιο θ' ἰλάσσης.

The line is a picture; the rhythm is exquisite; the sound an echo of the sense. Give us time to follow Chryses as he moves sadly along the shore, and let this vision of beauty excuse us from the "principal parts" of *βαίνο*; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Translation is difficult work, as we have been so recently reminded by Mr. Pater and Mr. Lowell. To do it well requires that we should know the letter, but it requires also—what is more difficult to attain—that we should catch the spirit of the author, that we should see with his

eyes and rethink his thoughts. It is a pretty conceit of Marion Crawford which leads him, in one of his later works, to represent his hero as taking advantage of the recent advances in electrical science—thereby removing the barriers that separate him from the unseen world—and holding face to face fellowship “with the immortals.” This is exactly what a liberal education is intended to do. This is what it has done for you, if you have improved your opportunities here, unless our methods are deplorably bad. This is why we learn Latin and Greek, and master the difficulties of vocabulary. I do not deny that it is of advantage to know the laws of phonetic change, and that there is intellectual training in the knowledge of word forms. But when classical training is useful only as dumbbells and parallel bars are useful, it is writing a commentary on my text. Master syntax for disciplinary ends; and master it also, as Richard de Bury says, that we may thereby open royal roads into literature. But remember that the thought is more than the word; that at best the word is but a symbol, a suggestion of the thought, and rarely its equivalent. He who reads literally reads poorly. Even jurisprudence, the science that holds speech to strictest account, admits that there are times when we must not only judge what a man intends to say by what he says, but what he says by what he obviously meant to say. *Hæret in literâ, hæret in cortice.* There is too little classical study of the purely literary kind among us. We either know as specialists and know little else, or we know practically nothing. And it is probably hard to unite the functions of the general and the special scholar. Few men can expend energy on the letter sufficient to write the notes to Mayor’s Juvenal, and then write an “advertisement” to the

volume that quivers in every line with sympathetic interest in the questions of the day.

I say nothing regarding letters which is not true of science also. For the facts which the man of science handles are only the letters with which he is trying to spell out the thought embodied in them. He may amuse himself with the shapes of these letters, put them in bundles and give them names, but so long as he is simply engaged with facts, he is employed in business no better than playing chess or solving puzzles. It is when he hits upon some key to Nature's cipher; it is when he is using his facts in verification of an hypothesis that stands for thought that he is doing work worthy of scientific fame. Otherwise he is only a census taker in the kingdom of nature; a cataloguer in the library of truth, writing titles and reading the backs of books.

Let not the humanist, however, speak to the disparagement of science, for if he is only using language as material for the exercise of his own thought, if the results of his labors are not the basis of generalizations that stand for thought, then he is simply collecting facts, gathering useless knowledge, printing interminable masses of unreadable material. And indeed this, to a large extent, is the condition of things to-day. We are over-specializing; and the danger is that our scholars will become simply operatives under a great system of contract labor; full of opinions on subjects of which we have no knowledge, and full of knowledge on subjects that give no basis for opinion. We are overwhelmed with material and in danger of being submerged in the mass of facts which we cannot reduce to system. How often, as we see ambition spurred to new endeavor, are we reminded of these words of the text: The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life.

Ah, Science! you want fact. You proclaim the sovereignty of fact, the reign of law, the almightiness of induction, the empire of sense. Your votaries have reduced history to science, and philosophy to science, and religion to science, and language to science; and when you have done all, what have you gained? A mass of unorganized material; a box of Chinese puzzles; a rubbish heap of monographs on Greek adverbs, Coptic manuscripts, Babylonian pottery, the Pythagorean theory of the universe, and so forth, without order and without plan—or else there is a thought, an idea, a generalization behind it all. The destiny of it all is death and the dunghill, or else there is some informing, quickening idea to give it shape and comeliness. Do your best: the philosopher, the apostle of the idea, is needed to make these dry bones live.

Whose thought then lies behind this language of fact? Is it your subjective state that you have been imposing upon nature as the law of her operations when you have formulated the doctrine of gravitation? Is it your subjectivity that imposes a meaning upon Hamlet and Faust, no thanks to Shakespeare and Goethe? Will you split the difference between the two rival philosophers by an arbitrary decision to be objective in your recognition of the fact, and subjective in your explanation of the fact? Or will you see behind the letter the spirit; behind the fact the idea that gives meaning to the fact and makes you a sharer in the thought of God? I do not wonder that the man of science magnifies his office and feels proud of his high calling. Back of the barriers of speech, indeed, that melt away with our knowledge of a foreign tongue stand "the immortals," and we may converse with them

to our heart's content. But back of the syllables of science and waiting only for the spirit of reverence for its enjoyment lies fellowship with God.

The literary artist has recalcitrant material to deal with. With the author thought is too volatile, and with the translator language is too opaque. So that between the incapacity of the containing vessel and the chance of spilling in our attempts to decant it into another, we run the risk of losing some of the wine of genius. This is true of human thought; how much more true must it be of divine thought. We cannot give too much attention then to the very words in which our Bible is written, and the more fully we believe in its inspiration the more anxious we shall be to have a correct text and a close translation. But we may have both and miss the spirit of Revelation. We may have a bald literalism of rendering that sacrifices good English to Greek idiom, and saves the letter at the expense of the spirit. We may load our memory with "various readings" and be so microscopic in our study of the text as to be unable to see the full contour of a Divine idea. We may carry reverence for the Word to the extent of being indiscriminating worshippers of words, and by our unintelligent literalism miss the meaning that the words convey. When I find men treating metaphor as fact and reading poetry as they would construe an act of Congress, seeking a spiritual sense in every common-place expression, missing the point of the parable of the prodigal son by asking who was the "elder brother," and invoking the joint assistance of chemistry and the book of Leviticus in the interpretation of the parable of the leaven, I feel that Matthew Arnold, with all his faults, at least deserves credit for reminding us that

the Bible is to be treated as literature. But we must go further before we can be said to have passed beyond the letter in our study of Scripture. For though as literature, it may be read with due regard to the historical conditions under which it was produced, with proper attention to differences of style and form of composition, we have not read it as we should when we have mastered its geographical details, studied its archæology, learned to prize the beauties of Isaiah and Job, or appreciate the high moral level of the Sermon on the Mount. To regard the Bible simply as literature provokes in me a feeling akin to that which I have for the system once in vogue of making the Gospel of John an easy introduction to the study of Greek. We degrade the book by teaching it under false pretenses. We dishonor truth when we teach it with a *suppressio veri*. I am in full sympathy with the idea that the Bible—the English Bible if you like that way of describing it better—should have a place in the college curriculum, but I want it understood that it is to be taught with distinct regard to its Divine authority, and the great doctrines of Redemption that it contains.

You have made but a poor use of your facilities here, my friends, if you are not able to make the distinction I have named. This indeed is no small part of education. We have tried to train you so as to bring you under the power of ideas. We have aimed to educate you so that you may become scholars and not pedants; jurists and not pettifoggers; men of science and not the bottle washers of a laboratory; theologians and not textualists; religious men who think again through God's word the thoughts of God, and not dealers in cant phrases or slaves of a stupid literalism.

2. The same antithesis with which we are dealing may serve also to stand for the contrast between the accidental and the essential in matters of literary judgment and of religious opinions. Print does not discriminate. Even punctuation is a modern device, and jurisprudence disdains it to this day. It gives no weight to the commas and semi-colons with which we sprinkle our pages, sometimes in default of a clear style, or a correct syntax. It allows no vulgar italics to lend artificial emphasis to what is written, but leaves the thought to make its way to the mind with no other presupposition than the intelligence of the reader. This is indeed often a large demand, but there seems to be as yet no sufficient substitute for brains; and to one normally furnished in this regard it is a self-evident proposition that though the printed word does not say so, all thoughts are not of equal value nor worthy of the same emphasis. No obligation rests upon us, for instance, to treat all the poet's verse as of equal beauty and force because he has not seen fit to show any favoritism to the children of his brain. It is not our fault that there are only three lines worth remembering in Wordsworth's Peter Bell. All that is said is not worth repeating. All human deeds are not worth recording. Worthless when new, they do not gain importance with the lapse of time. The phonograph that listens to-day and reproduces the nonsense of conversation a hundred years hence will amuse, but it will not edify. It occurs to me to say this when I consider the prevalent mania for original research. Just now it is affecting historians and men of letters. You may know history—you may have your Gibbon, your Hallam and your Freeman at your fingers' ends, but you are no his-

torian unless you have studied the sources. If, however, you have discovered a manuscript that will add a new chapter to the life of some tenth-rate Cavalier or Round-head, if you can come forth from your labors with the dust of an old library on your fingers, you have earned the title to fame. But why? Why discriminate thus against the man who knows much in favor of him who produces little? Do I deny that your work is good? By no means. That you have brought something new to light, and so have made a contribution to knowledge? No. Or that your work has given you good training in the use of tools? No. Nor would I deny that it is a useful thing for our young civil engineers to survey the college campus every year, or measure the Brooklyn Bridge. I am only thinking that you lack perspective; that you are mistaking pains and trouble and a monopoly of useless information for history; that you are in danger of putting all facts upon the same level and of ranking the genealogy of a Mayflower family with the Norman Conquest. You are deceived by the letter and miss the spirit. You have adopted Gradgrind's philosophy. The demand is for facts, and so it comes to pass that in the examination paper Oklahoma counts for as much as Thermopylæ, and the date of the last constitutional amendment is thought to have as good a right to a vacant memory cell as A. D. 1453 or 1688.

We read books and study the history of opinion often with the same disregard of proportion—remembering what we ought to forget and forgetting what we ought to remember; making no allowance for circumstances and giving the same value to *obiter dicta* that we accord to reasoned opinions. Find Calvin tripping in a casual remark, then vilify his system: this is what men do. Or

because one calls himself a disciple of Augustine, hold him responsible for all that Augustine taught, as though one must believe in the virtues of tar-water because he is a Berkleyan.

Uneducated men, perhaps, find it hard to make the distinctions between essence and accident here referred to. All statements appear to them like items on a ledger to be reckoned in the same way. But educated men ought to know better. They ought to know that a man can be a Lutheran without believing all that Luther believed, or accept the Hegelian conception of the universe without sympathizing in detail with Hegel's peculiar views. It ought not to be difficult to understand that a creed statement may be accurate in doctrinal content though colored by the time in which it was written, and dealing with conditions of thought that no longer exist. And it must also be evident that it would be hard to avoid the appearance of anachronism if we undertook to weave the thoughts of this generation into a document that on its title-page purports to have been written two hundred and fifty years ago. A little exercise of judgment, however, a little effort to distinguish between essence and accident, abiding fact and accidental setting, in short, to read the spirit in the letter would save all the trouble. We may as well learn to exercise this power of judgment on the creeds, for we shall have to exercise it on the Scriptures. All Scripture is inspired, but it does not all possess the same religious value. All Scripture is truth, but all Scriptural truth is not of equal importance. Essential to the organic structure of the Bible all of it undoubtedly is, but not equally essential to spiritual life and religious education. When men say they wish the Bible to be taught without

doctrine, I reply that the doctrines of the Bible, are more important than much of the Bible itself. The sense of Scripture is the Scripture, and rather than miss the sense we could afford to do without certain forms of Bible knowledge. There is in the Bible as in other literature what may be called the essential and the accidental, and it is an act of intelligence to distinguish between them. I read the Cosmogony and get out of it the doctrine of creation, the ascent of life, the supremacy of man and his primæval purity. I am willing to fill up the great categories of Genesis with the help of science and so make the generalizations that follow the study of one of God's books help in the interpretation of the other. I read in the words of the Saviour the generic ideas that should control social existence and the great principles that should guide conduct, but I do not suppose that the illustration of a principle should be construed with literal exactness. I do not expect to handle venomous reptiles with impunity. I do not expect faith to supersede medical treatment or cure organic disease; and I do not find either in the Sermon on the Mount or in the Apostolic community of goods an argument for socialism and the denial of the rights of property. I believe that Paul was inculcating an important principle when he discouraged the appearance of Christians as litigants in heathen courts; but I would not on that account conclude that all litigation is sin, and that the legal profession is incompatible with Christianity. To be sure the distinction between essence and accident involves serious responsibility, for in attempting to make it we may err. I am sure that Arnold erred and that his literary judgment was warped by his prejudices when he made ethics the main thing in Scrip-

ture and represented the dogmas of Christianity as the accidents of Pauline teaching. For what is the Bible? What is the evolution of Biblical ideas but the growth of a few great dogmatic conceptions? The essence of Scripture, the core of the Old Testament and the New, is the doctrine that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, and that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing unto men their trespasses. It is the Divine purpose that brings the Bible into line with the facts of the material world. It is the Incarnation that gives organic character to Scripture. It is human guilt that constitutes the great presupposition of Revelation. It is the doctrine of faith as man's response to the overtures of love that meets the exigencies of man's moral nature and makes the Bible the best and greatest message that man ever had. Why, then, do men tell me that they wish the Bible taught religiously but not doctrinally? Why do educated men who have been taught to distinguish between the letter and the spirit show such proneness to mistake when they touch religious themes? Yet the world is full of men who speak in this way. These are the men who stand in our pulpits and preach on the patience of Job and the moral courage of Daniel; who find material for sentimental sermons in the seasons, and entertaining sermons in the social follies of the day, and practical sermons on the importance of sleep or the need of restricting immigration, but who are silent respecting the tremendous fact of sin and the dogmatic significance of atoning blood. I do not say that such men are handling the Word of God deceitfully, for I am willing to have them plead guilty if they prefer to an un-scholarly stupidity that prevents them from seeing that

the bleeding Christ is the central fact of Scripture. Let me beg you, gentlemen, to heed this lesson of the text. Cultivate a wise discrimination. Read the best books. Seize upon master thoughts. Get hold of the big end of the questions that invite your scrutiny. Distinguish between what is vital and what is of no importance. Garner the wheat; let the chaff go. Rest your opinions on broad and deep rational foundations. Follow this method in religion. A few principles, a few facts, carry the whole fabric of Christianity. Follow the great trend of evidence and do not halt for minor difficulties. Let the great outlying facts of Christianity determine your faith, and do not let trifles feed your doubt. You are sticking in the bark, you may be sure, when you let a textual difficulty, or an historical discrepancy, or a hard question in ethics, or a dogmatic mystery hinder your acceptance of the historic Christ as the Saviour of the world.

3. I come now to the consideration of another distinction suggested by the text.

It is difficult to resist the feeling that there was in Paul's mind the contrast between the rigid fixity of the letter on the one hand and the plastic spontaneity of the spirit on the other. *Litera scripta manet*. The written word does not change. But the living organism is constantly adjusting itself to new conditions, and changing to suit them. We have then the fixed and the variable, unbending law, and changing life. The history of the world, of society, of religious opinion, is to a large extent the history of these two factors in their relations to each other. The legal code becomes too narrow to suit the exigencies of an expanding life and it changes in fact but not in form. The needed work is done, but the forms

of law are saved by legal fiction. *Ubi jus ibi remedium*; but there is no remedy at common law, and equity finds one through the edict of the Prætor or the decisions of the Chancellor. We have a written constitution as the basis of government, and the powers of the co-ordinate branches of government are defined. But time develops the old conflict between the unyielding law and the living organism, with the odds, as Professor Wilson shows, in favor of the organism. We formulate our faith in creed statements, and after a century or two find that the Church and the creed are not in exact accord. There is nothing to wonder at. It is the old question of the letter and the spirit. The letter has controlled the life. It has given the law to its variations. Political development in this land will follow the lines of the Constitution. Theological development will follow the lines of the creed that controls it. Unless the letter goes into the life of the organism it will become a dead letter; and if it goes into it, it will be modified and colored by circumstances of time and place. Now this question of the fixed and the variable is a much larger one than that of creed revision. It is at the root of nearly all the great questions of to-day. Men are realizing as never before the solidarity of mankind. The old Pelagian conception of individualism is abandoned and there is a tendency to go to the opposite extreme. Individual opinion is hushed in the presence of advancing waves and irresistible movements, as they are called, and we are warned against the folly of trying to stop the rising tide. In the case of very advanced thinkers this worship of the *Zeitgeist* is associated with the denial of all *a priori* ideas. Standards of measurement there are none. The movement is recognized, but there

is no criterion by which to judge it, and the ideas that limit it and give it shape are ignored. Men say one must study the facts in an historical spirit and gather our induction out of what we see. The science of ethics becomes the science of what is, rather than of what ought to be, and if a doctrine of right survives at all, it is the doctrine that whatever is, is right. In the name of reason I protest against this tendency of thought. As a sovereign thinker within the realm of my own activities, I refuse to abdicate under the terrorism of popular sentiment. I refuse to say that because the avalanche is irresistible, therefore it is right. I refuse to drown my reason in a tidal wave. And when any idea in philosophy, or politics, or theology is "in the air," I claim the right to examine its credentials and scrutinize its claims before I give it my acceptance. Historic movements, as well as the actions of individual men, must be judged by fixed principles. It is easy then for me to define my position in regard to what is called progressive theology. Will you tie the Church to the letter or give her the free life of the spirit? How will you adjust the relations between the letter and the spirit; the Church and the creed; the organism and the law of its development? According to Schleiermacher, the New Testament is only the recorded religious experience of the Apostolic age, genetically related to the ages following, but giving no rubric and imposing no law. It follows, then, that there is no standard of faith, that truth is relative, and that the Christian organism is a law unto itself. The Roman Catholic, again, says that the organism is infallible and can speak in the present tense. It is not necessary, therefore, to believe that all Divine revelation is contained in the Bible.

Transubstantiation came by way of doctrinal evolution with the second council of Nice and Papal infallibility within the present generation. The doctrine of evolution applied to theology by Cardinal Newman helps Rome to adjust the relation between the fixed and the variable. Protestants, however, have the written word as their only rule of faith. Changing taste cannot obliterate its doctrines. Organic drifts cannot vacate words of their historic sense. We cannot eliminate doctrines because we do not like them, or insert new ones because popular sentiment calls for them. What is written is written. The Christian consciousness can no more change the meaning of a Greek word than it can upset the multiplication table. There is no legal fiction that can modify or change the Word of God. When men say, as in effect they do, that the old conception of a Sovereign God does not suit our republican ideas, they only blaspheme. And when by and by they will seek to dethrone Him and plainly say that each generation must elect its own Ruler and dictate his administrative policy, they will only carry to their logical consequences some of the prevalent ideas of to-day. I do not deny, however, that important truth is hinted at in the doctrine known as the Christian Consciousness. I am no advocate of ecclesiastical immobility. The Christian Church is not an exact copy in mode of worship, methods of administration and form of government of the Church of the New Testament. We have discontinued the holy kiss, and feet washing is no part of Christian hospitality. We have salaried ministers and surpliced choirs, neither being known to the Apostolic Church. We have tried to foster the Apostolic spirit and perpetuate Apostolic ideas, but the Church has altered her mode of life and work to

suit altered conditions of society. Paul said that under certain circumstances he would refuse the meat offered in sacrifice to idols, and would not drink wine that had any idolatrous associations. Interpret him literally and his words have no application to modern life, for the conditions that controlled his decision no longer exist. Change his decision into a mandate of abstinence and at once you tyrannize over the conscience and rob the act of abstinence of all ethical significance. Generalize the statement, however, and you have the great law of altruistic morality which, after all abatements for selfishness have been made, is the most potent factor in our practical life. And so with doctrine. The dogmas of Christianity are fixed. The Bible does not change and we have no extra-Biblical revelation. But a dogma that is only read in the Bible or stated and subscribed to in a creed is only a dead letter. It must go into our life and be part of our intellectual and moral experience. But going into our individual and our organic life it adjusts itself to changing conditions, although unchanged itself. It will be read with a different emphasis in different periods; it will be interpreted in the light of the burning questions of those periods; it will be brought into relation with science and philosophy and acquire fresh interest from generation to generation from the new polemic conditions that are constantly emerging. Paul's vocabulary was affected by his contact with philosophy. Ours will be. The attempt to eliminate philosophy from theology is a vain attempt. The two departments deal largely with the same subjects and cover common ground. All the material, whatever be its source, whatever be its authority, that goes to make our

theory of the universe, must pass into our life and bear the impress of our thought ; and as we think in philosophy so we shall be compelled to think in theology. We handle the same questions regarding God, freedom, and immortality that Paul did, that Augustine did, that Thomas Aquinas did, that Calvin did, and though the Scriptures have not changed and our reading of them, so far as these topics are concerned, is not materially different from that of the men that have been named, we see the same truth under different conditions. Our heretics are not Cerinthus and Celsus, but Spencer and Kuenen. Our foe is not credulity, but Agnosticism. And as conditions change, our mode of presenting the unchangeable truth must also change. Remember, however, that if the letter without the life is dead, the life needs the letter to give law to its movement. Do not be deceived by the cry that the voice of the people is the voice of God. Do not hastily assume that every great movement is an inspired movement. We have no personal infallibility. We believe in no corporate infallibility. We have no faith in the inspiration of large masses of men. When, therefore, under the influence of those who would have us put our faith in the organism rather than tie it to the written word, we begin to lose faith in the authority of Scripture, we give up our only basis of Christian certitude.

4. The letter killeth, the spirit giveth life. Outward Rule and inward Principle are the two great agencies that operate on human conduct and they seem contrasted in the text. There is the inner principle in bent of inclination and dominant purpose seeking expression in our spontaneities ; and here is the objective code by which we

seek to guide our life and which is put before us as an instructive and restraining influence. The world, says Mr. Lecky, is governed by its ideals. It is what we love to do that we do well. By help of rule alone men write no books and paint no pictures that wear the stamp of genius. They perform no acts of heroism in grudging compliance with law; they shine in none of the beauties of high and holy character when they have simply schooled themselves to follow another's will. Work done in conformity with rule is drudgery and a weariness of the flesh. There is the morality of principle and the morality of outward conformity. That there is a place for the morality of externalism and precept, of law and obedience to command, I do not doubt, yet I sometimes think that life is made more burdensome than it need be, and that we hinder rather than help the higher interests of morality by the excessive multiplication of rules. The State goes as far as it ought in encroaching upon the freedom of the individual, the Church is taking liberties with the rights of conscience in saying that its members shall do this and shall not do that. We go to college and a code of instructions is the first lesson we are required to learn. We enter business and we find ourselves girt about by rule. We are more unwilling every day to assume that men will act right from principle and more disposed to think that they love to do wrong. Wholesale suspicion is the law of society. We are multiplying the machinery of detection. We cry, Who will keep the keepers? We are insuring ourselves at increasing cost against the dishonesty of those whom we have trusted. We watch the clerk at his desk, and the student in his examination. We put a bell-punch in the hands of the conductor and set traps for the night watch-

man. In forms more or less visible and in ways more or less irritating to the feelings we proclaim our inability to trust men and our conviction that all men are liars. Necessary all this may be for protection, though I still believe that we owe more to conscience than to all our complicated machinery of police. But the trouble is that men suppose that all this is moral education. There is an impression that you make men moral when you make them fear to do wrong and that by repressing wrong-doing you are elevating character. Make wrong-doing so difficult that right-doing will be easier and it is thought you will make men moral. And undoubtedly a great deal of the world's morality is of this sort. A man obeys the law, because he fears the penalty. He will lose his place, or incur the odium of society or be visited with social ostracism, or miss his diploma, and therefore he will do as he is told. And there are good men who fail to see that there is no morality in this. Not only do they fail to see it, but the opinion seems to be gaining ground that we can build up character by this system of externalisms. Men not only obey laws imposed by society for its own protection, but they take pledges, make promises, multiply vows for their own edification, and in place of the freedom of the spirit they are going back to the legalism of an older dispensation, are rejoicing in the bondage of the letter. They should know, however, that enforced obedience is not moral education. Character is an endogenous plant and grows from within. Military training teaches men to obey law, but it does not teach them to love it. Deserters are shot; so the soldier does not desert. That is all. Kant is right. The law that comes from without is not ethical. There is no morality in doing right through calculation of con-

sequences. Hence only self-legislated law is moral. Though it be God's law it must be autonomous before it is ethical. It must address the conscience and be approved as good. It must become a maxim of reason and not a mere command. For the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. The State, of course, must protect itself and its main end is therefore not moral education. This must be left to the Church. But what is to be our aim in the administration of a College? Shall we consider the good order of the organization, or the moral improvement of the student? It might be easy to do either; it may be hard to combine the two; but we must combine them. There must be rules, but they should be few, and the application of them should address the conscience. We must prepare men for the franchises which they are so soon to inherit by respecting their manhood and avoiding all petty legislation. We must protect the organism and at the same time labor for the good of the individual. We must hold law subservient to the end for which it is enacted and bend the rule if it be necessary in order to save the man. We must consider, it is true, the welfare of the mass, but we must sometimes, if need be, leave the ninety-and-nine, and care for the one who has gone astray.

The college student is ingenuous, as a rule. He makes mistakes and falls into mischief or sin. But the case is rare when you do not find something in him that draws you to him. He is frank. He will admit that he has abused kindness, trifled with good nature and acted meanly. He is sorry that he did so and his climax of regret is generally the thought of his mother's anguish and his father's sorrow. I have a large place in my heart for the man

who is capable of this filial love. But, my brother, you must stand on higher ground than this. You are going out to face the temptations of the world. You will be confronted with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It is not enough that you recognize the authority of the outward law. You should make it an inner principle. It is not enough that wrong conduct be avoided because it is dishonorable and will bring disgrace. Learn to avoid it, because it is wrong. Learn to do right, because it is right. Learn to feel the sanctions of a higher morality and when your evil-doing fills you with regret, let it be because you have sinned against God and put a stain upon your soul.

5. And now, Gentlemen of the Graduating Class, let me say a single closing word. This week marks an important era in the calendar of your life. It means the severance of old ties; the full assumption of personal responsibility, and the facing of the future. We have tried hard to fit you for the work of life. We have not done what we might have done; partly perhaps through our neglect, partly also through your neglect. But to some extent in all of you, I trust, and to a large extent in most of you, I know, our aim has been realized. In sending you out into the world we are making a contribution to its working force of which we have no reason to be ashamed. We have tried to make the education we have given you a commentary upon the words that I have chosen for my text. We have tried to foster in you high ideals in literature and high aims in science. We have tried to discipline your powers so that you will see the parts of Truth in their proper relations to each other and in just proportion. We have tried to show that the unchanging word

of God is not a fossil to be laid upon the shelf, but the directing principle of the life, the inspiration of its movement and the law of its variation. We have tried to teach you also that the essence of all morality is a self-enunciated law of obligation, commanding without condition and despising calculation. And we have not forgotten in the services of this sanctuary that the contrast between the letter and the spirit, bears witness also to another contrast between Law and Gospel, to which reference was made in the beginning of this discourse. The apostle did not mean to disparage the Law when he contrasted it with the Gospel. The Gospel did not supersede the Law, it only supplemented it. The Law is holy, just and good. It came from God and is the expression of his will. It is perfect but unrelenting. It tells us what we ought to do. It sets before us an ideal that excites our admiration and provokes despair. You accept it as just but you cannot comply with it. You resolve and fail. You promise and break your vow. You make an effort and fall short. But the Law accepts no excuse and makes no allowance. There is no pity in its tones. It meets your contrition with no encouraging word. Its face is rigid and its voice is hard. Your passing grade, it tells you, is a hundred and you have failed. That is all it has to say. It measures, it does not pity. It tabulates results, it does not forgive. The Law is the embodiment of God's will, but there is also another embodiment of that will. And when conscious of your failure you go to Jesus and say, 'Oh Master, I know I ought to have done better, and I feel ashamed,' then will come a look of such exquisite tenderness upon his face that will say before the words are spoken: Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace.

When after fruitless endeavor to learn the lessons of life and do its work we go to him and say: 'Oh Divine Teacher, I would fain learn but I am very slow, and my poor powers are not equal to this high task,' he will say to you again: 'have patience, child, and I will teach thee. I will put my Spirit within thee. I will perfect my strength in thy weakness.' The Law came by Moses but Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ. Have fellowship with Christ. Walk with him. Turn ever to him for comfort, for strength, for guidance. Serve him while you live and by and by you shall be like him, and you shall see him as he is.

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