

S E R M O N S.

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SERMONS.

“GOD’S THOUGHTS.”

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord.”—ISAIAH, lv. 8.

THE word “thought” is here used objectively. It expresses a result and not a process. Essentially perhaps all thought-power is alike. Certainly in all our attempts to consider God, we must reason analogically from the finite. We can form no idea of any divine attribute except from its miniature in humanity. And we are to regard it not as a mere figure of speech, that God made man in his own image as well mental as moral. The Divine intellect may be spoken of as the glorious archetype after which finite mind was cast. And although, as bringing infinity into conditions of time and space, all language must express falsehood when concerned with Deity, yet when the Bible speaks of God as in the exercise of volitions and emotions, we are not to regard it as mere accommodation to a false *usus loquendi*, but as a true representation. The Godhead is not an impassible composite of infinite wisdom and power. His purposes are not immense icebergs floating downward

in a fathomless inexorable gulf-stream of sovereignty. He is my Heavenly Father, and all his sovereignty is love. We do not dishonor God by likening him unto man. We only honor man as God honored him when made in his own image, when we say that in regard of faculties in essence, and feelings in exercise, the human mind was fashioned after the infinite Archetype.

The assertion of the text that "*God's thoughts are not man's thoughts*" describes a result not a process, and with this necessary and manifest limitation let us proceed to consider it. We are first to illustrate and then apply the truth, that God's thoughts are not our own thoughts.

First, we are to illustrate it. And here we need only contrast the human with the Divine style of thinking. Observe some particulars: 1. *Creation*—I mean the material universe in its forms and phenomena. This is one of God's thoughts. As every product of human skill is but a human thought realized—inasmuch as painting, sculpture, architecture, are but expressions in materialism of simple pre-existent ideas in the mind of the artist, just so is it of God's handiwork. The visible creation that surrounds us on every side and spreads away into immensity beyond us, is only an embodied thought of the infinite, uncreated Intelligence.

Or, dividing this vast whole into parts, and regarding each part as a particular thought of the Eternal, you may speak of this earth as one of God's thoughts, and yonder sun as one of God's thoughts.

Or, still further descending, you may regard the human body, and the soul, and the ocean, and the cataract, and the volcano, and the singing-bird, and the lily, and the dew-

drop, and the rainbow, and the lightning, and the murmuring stream, and the roaring thunder—these, and indeed all various material forms and phenomena, you may regard as nothing else than God's goodful and glorious thoughts, expressed physically, written radiantly on the tablets, or uttered musically in the voices of the universe.

Creation, then, in all its grand complication, is only a manifest thought of the Infinite Intelligence.

And tell me if it be at all like one of man's thoughts! Equip man with omnipotence, and set him to create a universe—and would it resemble the universe as it is? By no means! For, observe, 1st. That man's universe would be absolutely *consolidated*. Into one immense continent would all these world-islands be cast, and all tribes and types of life inhabit it as a common dwelling! And yet how unlike this is the divine work. You find throughout it comparatively no grand consolidations, but innumerable worlds, all immeasurably separated, each hopelessly secluded.

And this is not after man's thought. For his agonizing regret this day is that he can not fling the line of a mighty telegraph from star to star, and thus, even in face of the immutable ordinances of heaven, gather these isolated islands of life into one vast virtual consolidation!

Observe, 2dly. That a universe projected by man would be *motionless and steadfast*. We build our homes, not on the waters, that they may be locomotive, but on the shore, that they may be fixed. But God's universe is in everlasting motion. The earth whereon we dwell, and the systems of worlds that surround it, are rushing through space with inconceivable velocity. And all this is assuredly not according to human wisdom. We may,

indeed, upon reflection, learn the optimism of the arrangement ; but confessedly, *a priori*, we should not so have ordered it.

And so, without further argument, it appears manifest that a universe so divided, and revolving, is not such a material system as an almighty *man* would have contrived ; and standing forth this day as one of God's thoughts made manifest, it clearly demonstrates the text's truth, *That the thoughts of God are not like man's thoughts.*

Or, descending from the survey of a universe of worlds to consider the economy of a single world, even with greater force shall we feel the same truth. Set a man to construct a single world, and would it be like this world ? Would man have spread over three-quarters of its entire surface this waste of waters ? or have flung up these immense mountain-ranges ? or spread out these desolate sand-plains ? Would he have produced, after their kinds, these tribes of brutal life, and filled the wilderness with ravening beasts, and the ocean with monsters ? Would he, in short, have made such a world as this ? I am not, indeed, intimating that any wise man really thinks he could have contrived a better one. The man who honestly believes he can improve a divine work is no son of Solomon. And true philosophy will ever confess that what seemeth "the foolishness of God is wiser than men." But I am insisting here that there is a broad difference between a human and a divine ideal of world-making.

And I repeat, that such a world as this no wise man would have created. He would have filled up the ocean with plow-ground, and sloped the mountains gently

for vineyards, and covered with rich verdure the sands of the wilderness. And the waters would have brought forth after their kind only beautiful things, and every creature moving in the forests would have been musical and fair; and the sky would have been without cloud on its rich blue, and the year without winter or storm in its long summer of loveliness. So that a world fresh from the hand of a human creator would have seemed, as well in the economy of its life as of its materialism, altogether unlike the world we inhabit. For this world is one of God's thoughts, and such a world would be one of man's thoughts; and herein is the truth made manifest, that God's thoughts are not like man's thoughts.

Now we might pursue this line of thought indefinitely, but with this simple indication of our meaning, let us pass to another general illustration, and observe,

Secondly, That *Providence* is one of God's peculiar thoughts. I use the word here in its widest sense, as expressing God's management of his universe after its creation. And whether we regard the entire economy of Providence as a stupendous whole, or each successive development in its separation, the same truth will be manifest.

Endow a wise man with omnipotence, and enthrone him as sovereign of the universe, and would he govern it as God has governed, and does yet govern, it? Study that economy of Providence as it had to do with our world before man inhabited it. Read with geology the record written on the planet's crust, and you will perceive how, during innumerable ages, earth was the home of successive races, each of a higher life and finer organization than its predecessor; so that the grand

law of that Providence was an almost imperceptible progress through incalculable ages of ages,—and would a wise man so have ordered it? Why, so unphilosophic does all this seem, that we can hardly persuade ourselves to accept God's handwriting on these adamantine tablets as true records of our doings? Man certainly would have ordered the whole thing differently. Instead of those mysterious periods of slowly ascending life, he would have rounded earth into beauty at first as a home for immortals, and breathed divine life into man made in God's image.

Or if we confine our thoughts to the present economy of Providence, the same truth will be apparent. Surely a wise man would not order things as Jehovah orders them. The history of a human administration would not read like the world's history through the last sixty centuries. That destruction of the primitive Eden; those ages of antediluvian abomination; those wanderings and wars of God's chosen people; those periodic visitations of famine and pestilence, mantling earth with sackcloth; those barbaric battles, wherein eighteen times the entire population of the globe has been swept away in carnage; these, and such as these, are God's providential thoughts; and are they like man's thoughts?

Nay, look at the providential aspect of things even now on the face of the planet—how darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people!—of the hundreds of millions of living men, at least three quarters degraded to the depths of ignorance and superstition! Behold how righteousness is depressed, and iniquity enthroned and triumphant! How unequal the distribution of the evil and the good! how limited the dif-

fusion of Christianity and civilization! Yea, behold what oppressions, what violence, what boastful iniquity, what throes of agony, what convulsions among kingdoms and nations, as if the great heart of the race were breaking in the overstrain of its bondage, until all this air, once musical with the song of the sons of God, is filled with lamentation and requiem!

Now endow a wise and good man with divine sovereignty, and would he manage things in this way? I do not ask if he could devise better things? I know he could not. I may not understand it, yet certain I am that in the sublime purpose of bringing good out of evil, there is manifest in the present providential economy the most absolute omniscience. Our dissatisfaction with God's doings is the result of our finitude. We judge *prematurely*—calling the fruit sour, because it hath not ripened. We judge *selfishly*—bemoaning the pearly shell as it breaks round the plumes of the imperial eagle. We judge *partially*—observing only the one wheel which seems aimlessly revolving in mire and dust, and not the whole flaming chariot in its career of victory. We judge *from wrong stand-points*—looking from the footstool upward to the cloud's dark side, and not downward from the throne of God upon its ineffable brightness. Our judgments are false, because finite. And yet swayed by such judgments, I repeat it, as Jehovah governs the world to-day no wise man would govern it. Surely on this point "God's thoughts are not our thoughts." Place at the head of human affairs an omnipotent philanthropist, and how soon would every dark thing be swept from a groaning creation. How the captive would leap from his chain, and the con-

queror lay off his mail, and the cries of violence cease, and the rod of the oppressor be broken! How these dark places of cruelty would be irradiated with heavenly light, and Christianity, borne as on angel-wings, circle the round world; and man in the glory of his primitive creation, yea, in the higher glory of his redeemed and regenerated nature would stand gloriously up on a renewed earth to mate with the crowned children of the skies, in the looking-for of destinies as high, in the inspiration of energies as unabating!

Surely we all must acknowledge this! A world under a human providence would be in all aspects unlike the world as it is. For such a providence would be a thought of man, and Providence as it is, is a thought of God, and herein again is the text's truth illustrated thus "*Your thoughts are not my thoughts, saith the Lord.*"

Now were there limits and a necessity, the same train of illustration might be pursued in regard of things spiritual; and quite as apparent would it be that finite human wisdom would not have written such a book as this Bible, nor devised such a plan of salvation as it embodies. But we may not enlarge. And indeed, as we may be addressing some disposed to cavil at revelation on just this ground, what we have to say on this point will best be said under our other division.

Passing then from the text argument, let us attend, Secondly, *to its Application.*

I. And our first remark is addressed to this very class, who reject the Bible because to their finitude it seems either unwise or incomprehensible.

You will not mistake the application. We are not admitting that there is in the Bible aught but a display of the very highest wisdom. On this point every infidel cavil has been a thousand times answered, and we need not here pause to review the advocacy. We would simply bring upon the unbeliever's conscience the truth we have in hand. We have shown you how in creation and Providence there are many things hard to be understood, and bearing, at first view, the seeming of foolishness. So that had man been the architect and administrator, there would have been a different world and a different economy of government. And so, mark you, from all this you must draw arguments against creation and Providence as the manifest "thoughts of God," ere, from the same things observable in the Bible, you object to it as a divine revelation.

Indeed, were there occasion, we might here exhibit an analogy so wonderfully fine between nature and revelation as to demonstrate their common origin and inspiration. They are evidently "thoughts" of the same supreme intellect.

Alas for the consistency of unbelief! Every argument against inspiration is an argument for atheism! You tell me of large portions of the Bible, such as its long catalogues of barbaric names which seem utterly useless. And I tell you that along the surface of our globe there are vast regions of desert and rock as apparently useless.

You tell me how God, in the Bible, allowed and sanctioned bloody wars demonstrative of cruelty. And I tell you that under God's providential rule, have been

permitted wars more terrible and destructive than inspired men ever dreamed of!

You tell me that the Bible's grand central truth—man's redemption by an Incarnate God—is an absurdity; that the very thought of such infinite condescension of the Divine nature is the egotism of human madness. And I tell you that the great central truth of Creation and Providence—that God hath condescended to create and preserve man—is just as absurd.

Yes, and I might carry this comparison between the hard things of nature and the hard things of revelation, to any conceivable extent; and fast as you proved from the one that there is no God in the Bible, I would prove out of your own mouth, as well, that there is no God in the universe.

In all these declamatory cavils against revelation, men are forgetting the great truth, written as with sunbeams on the very forefront of the universe, that, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's thoughts higher than man's thoughts!"

The poor erring creature of an hour, who can not build a hovel that will not leak, nor weave a perfect garment to cover him, he—wonderful man that he is—would lift his thoughts into brotherhood with God's thoughts, and adjust the complicate sublimities of revelation by the square and the line of his insignificant faculties! Why, the sceptic should begin further back and earlier with his scepticism! As his arguments lie as strongly against creation and Providence—upon them, as God's earliest mistakes, he should lift up his logic. Go to, then, ye despisers of this Bible! Get ye to the councils of eternity, and enlighten the Divine mind on the true philoso-

phy of world-making and world-managing! Go level yonder mountain! Go subdue this raging ocean! Go free yonder sun from its spots! Go bestud yonder firmament with gems of greater glory! Go roll those constellations through the skies in more harmonious and magnificent revolutions! Go persuade the Eternal One that your thoughts are best when worlds are to be created and governed! And then you shall have full license to lift up hammer and ax upon the carved work of our sanctuary; and then will God delight to sit at your feet, learning how to reveal himself as a God and a Saviour. For then will our text be only a great falsehood—“*And your ways will be God's ways, and your thoughts will be God's thoughts, saith the Lord of Hosts.*”

II. But though I may not be addressing infidelity as bold as this, yet I am surely addressing infidelity, if of a milder type, yet as sadly disastrous. Within our own time a new philosophy hath invaded the church of Christ, with its watchwords “spiritual insight,” and “the moral reason,” and “intuitional capacity,” setting itself to overthrow the indispensable condition of all true piety—the entire, unquestioning, adoring submission alike of life, and conscience, and intellect unto God. And while the church receives not this philosophy formally—for this were openly to deny the faith—yet, under its insidious and malign influence, there has come to pass a setting up within Zion of our own intellectual and moral judgments as critic and arbiter of the great doctrines of revelation.

Doctrines that are profound or mysterious, if not openly rejected, are at least modified to square with our philosophy. And the positive declarations of God are lowered to the comprehension of our natural reason.

For example: The doctrine of the adorable Trinity in unity, while clearly revealed in Scripture, is confessedly altogether above our reason, which we are to accept intellectually on the alone ground, that unquestioning faith in God's word is the highest function and exhibition of reason; and yet men, thinking to subject the infinite to the finite, ply this great truth with their logic until, on the one hand, the Divine unity is lost in a threefold Godhead, or, on the other, the Divine Trinity sunk with a threefold manifestation—the simple *dramatis personæ* of a Divine revelation!

And so of the doctrine of the two natures in Christ, of the Divine sovereignty as it stands related to human free-agency, of original sin, and imputation, and justification by faith, and the regeneration of the spirit, and the resurrection of the body; these doctrines, and others of this type, are all subjected to our poor finite logic, to be lowered to our comprehension or adjusted into the harmony of a philosophic creed.

And in all this we are practically and fearfully infidel. We are putting this fair body of God's truth to the torture, to compel a false utterance! We are claiming for our reason a positive Omniscience! *We are making our thoughts God's thoughts, and God's thoughts our thoughts.*

Alas, foolish reasoner! dare you carry the same canons of cavil into God's world of nature? Are there no mysteries, either in Creation or Providence, which you can neither comprehend in their separation, nor compass in their harmonious co-existence? Is there no mystery in this whole present march and management of things beyond the line of your logic? Is there no mystery in this universal mingling of evil with good—this virtue

depressed—this vice enthroned and triumphant? In that tear in the eye of faith, in that pang in the heart of love? Can you reconcile it with your Arcadian ideal of infinite goodness—the barbarity of great national warfare—the baleful comet scattering terror through the skies—the earthquake engulfing great cities—the volcano destroying great provinces—this awful reign and shadow of Death making earth one great sepulchre? Can you understand all these things and their mighty God unto perfection? Alas! alas! my hearers, we have not yet become like gods! The serpent-tempter lied when he promised it! We are, as yet learners in God's school-room, not advisers in his council-chamber! We shall understand things better by and by, when eternity flings its full light on the page of our scholarship! But until then humility is the apt temper of a learner. And faith, not comprehension, the great law of the scholarship! Till then ours must be the submission of an infantile mind to an Infinite Intelligence—the trust of a short-sighted child in an all-seeing Father—receiving in unquestioning faith every truth of God, in all its marvel and mystery. “*For our thoughts are not God's thoughts, saith the Lord of Hosts.*”

III. But the thought under consideration applies as well to the phenomena of Christianity as to its facts. Take, for example, *its gradual increase and development.*

The characteristic of the age is impatience of any thing but a demonstrative and headlong progress. In the accumulation of wealth, in the diffusion of knowledge, in the processes of locomotion, indeed in all the march and movement of human life, the old standard of

steady but slow advance satisfies no one. And, sad to tell, this impatience goes with us into Christian faith and experience. God's operation in converting the world seems too slow to be real. And we are overborne with doubt and despondency when we see how, after eighteen long centuries of struggle, the Gospel hath no fuller course and no greater glory. We are impatient for moral miracles. We would have nations born to God in a day, and every high thing that exalteth itself against Heaven, cast down as a dead tree by a storm, in the triumphant march of the Redeemer. And yet, in all this, our desire is only—alas! to have, “our thoughts God's thoughts, and God's thoughts our thoughts.”

For tell me where, either in creation or Providence, God thus hurries to conclusions? How many ages were consumed in the slow progress whereby this planet became fitted for human habitation? Why, the very fuel consumed in your houses is the slow product of countless years. And the tiny gem of your adornment was crystallized only in an immensity of generations! Jehovah's great law of work is no hurrying and headlong progress. He works slowly, and in circles of immense sweep! A thousand years are but as a day in the majesty of his movements. And in all this quiet and slow progress how truly Godlike he seems! Man, poor man, in the evolution of his purposes, may well be impatient and restless, for he distrusts his own power and the wisdom of his own devices—his whole life is a hand's breadth, and he hath no space for delay. But in regard of God working with infinite resources and eternal duration, how glorious is the majestic quietude wherewith he slowly evolves his stupendous purposes.

It is a wonderful manifestation of infinite power, and wisdom, and changelessness. *It is Godlike*—GOD-LIKE!

And as verily Godlike, mark you, in redemption as in creation and Providence! We ought to look for and glory in the same great law in the spiritual as in the natural, to find the history of grace written in the same character and style as the history of creation. And what is the style of God's natural history? Why the student of earth's progress, recorded in the hieroglyphs of geology, finds that for immense periods this world was peopled by monsters, and that innumerable generations of such terrible and gigantic forms of life constituted the very steps in its progress to its final glory as man's dwelling-place.

And why then should we wonder, nay, why rather should we not rejoice, to find an analogy to all this in the records of the spiritual?—that, so to speak, the moral geology of the planet is but a counterpart, or transcript, of the physical; that in its spiritual strata, as well, embosomed in the church's annals of successive generations, there should be found just such monstrous shapes, great heresies, gigantic apostasies, dark semi-heathenisms, terrible infidelities, foul Christian abominations, the moral mammoths and mastodons of those transition ages of the church wherein she went slowly on to her glorious consummation!

This is the way God works always. And if you accept it in the natural, why complain of it in the spiritual? If you rejoice to know that the jewel set in the frontlet of a king is the slow product of ages, how can you look that he shall crystallize in the years of a

generation the great brilliants that are to glorify the diadem of a God!

Indeed, so far from discouragements in this slow progress of Christianity, we have therein only fuller proof of its Divine origin, nobler prophecy of its ultimate consummation. It is demonstrating its adaptation to every stage of human society, every order of human mind, every form of human government. "All other religious systems have proved local and temporary; carried across a few lines of longitude and latitude, they perish as exotics; perpetuated a few generations, they become superannuated!" But in the slow, sure, steadfast march of Christianity abroad over all lands, and adown the generations, it approves its divine life and origin. Indeed, had the Gospel sprung into full glory at once, we should mistrust it as a momentary triumph of the human and the carnal.

It comes—sure as the Eternal One sitteth on the throne of the universe, it comes—the glory of a Gospel triumphant over all enemies, and established among all nations! But it comes not as man's work comes. *It comes not with observation.* It comes in the slow, and quiet, and resistless might wherewith Omnipotence ever works. And alas for our feeble faith and our feeble reason, that would have it otherwise! We would have diamonds frozen in a single hour like a winter rain drop! We would have oak-trees grown in a single night like the gourd of the prophet! We would have the great earth shaken by miracle, and dead empires quickened in a moment as at the trumpet of the Resurrection! "*We would have our thoughts God's thoughts, and God's thoughts our thoughts.*"

IV. Finally: There is a still more consoling application of this truth to things unseen and eternal—Immortality—*Immortality!* The state of the redeemed and risen spirit! How we love to consider its conditions, and ponder the realities of its “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!” And all this is well if we think reverently and wisely, for it brightens the eye and strengthens the nerve of the racer to catch the sparkle of the crown-gems that glorify the goal! But we should advance in this high path, remembering how unlike human thoughts are the thoughts of the Infinite One, and not presuming to build heaven’s great realities out of our own imaginations!

The grand characteristic and charm of the eternal world is its *utter unlikeness to the* temporal and earthly. And therefore unto the human imagination, powerful only to recombine images of its experience, all the realities of heaven must remain for the present, unspeakable, inconceivable.

A Christian on earth is a king’s child far away from the royal palace, and kept under teachers—a poor pilgrim in a desert making painful progress to an unseen and unknown city and kingdom, with no experience, and, therefore, no ideas of the splendors of royalty. And suppose, that in respect of the earth, a king’s child, born in some province, and never leaving the sphere of provincial instructors, should set himself to conceive of the glorious realities of the paternal palace and kingdom. Or that a pilgrim, born and bred amid the sands of the wilderness, should think to paint for himself the splendors of the imperial metropolis. Then how partial and pitiful would be their loftiest ideal! The boy’s dream

of the palace would be only a larger school-room, its appointments perhaps lovelier, and its tasks less! And the pilgrim's picture of metropolitan glories would be only a larger encampment, with perhaps gaudier tents in the wilderness.

And just so is it of eternity. With an imagination creative only in rebuilding things visible, man can not even conceive of the unseen and eternal. Nor does revelation attempt to supply the deficiency. It tells us, indeed, what *there is not in heaven!* And in a few figures gathered from present experience, sets forth some accessories of its physical realities. But it tells us no more. And, alas, with this little the mind is not satisfied! It sets itself ambitiously to conceive of the whole grand reality. It gathers together the fine metaphors of revelation—the trees of life, and the rivers of gladness, and the palms of victory, and the thrones of power; and taking what is at the most only figure for literal description, and what is at best an accessory for a grand element, dresses up for itself a realm of fancy, whose entire fashion and furniture are of “*things seen*” and “*things temporal.*”

Alas, foolish reasoner! All as foolish as a tiny chrysalis which should dream of the broad heaven into which it was just bursting, as only its poor opaque shell expanded a few feet in circumference! As foolish as the poor children of the Polar world fashioning the toys of their holidays, in the likeness of sledge, and boat, and walrus-spear, the very implements of their fathers' forlorn and perilous labor!

Oh, beware, how, in regard of the all-glorious future, you make *your thoughts God's thoughts!* Gates of

pearl, and rivers of bright water, and flowers of wondrous hue, and skies of cloudless splendor. Yea, reunited families dwelling in glorious mansions, and the flash of angel-plumes, and the swell of angel voices. Why, all these have been known and experienced in mortal lives! They are all “of the earth, earthy!” They are only the soiled and faded drapery of God’s trampled foot-stool! And beware how you think to lift so coarse a foot-cloth, and spread it as a true regalia of purple and ermine over the blaze of God’s throne!

Beware how you work those poor earthly colors on the eternal canvas—or model the many mansions of God’s House after a human architecture! Heaven, as you are wont think of it, is only the imperfect dream of a poor finite imagination. *But yonder heaven unto which we aspire, is the realization of the loftiest conception of the imagination of God.*

“*And as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, saith the Lord.*”

THE ONE IDEA.

"This one thing I do."—PHILIPPIANS, iii. 13.

THIS was Paul's great motto. He was a man of one idea; one master-passion moved upon all his life-springs; one great object he cared for; one great thing he did. And though the phrase has fallen into disrepute through misapplication, yet the history of Paul teaches that no man's mind is large enough to entertain more than one idea; and no man's life long enough to realize more than one idea.

We shall see presently that there are, in certain minds, notions often classified under the title of "The One Idea," which have really no right to it. They are at the most only imperfect and fragmentary notions or thoughts, half ideas, or quarter ideas, and so not large enough to fill a man's whole soul; and the mind which fastens on such a mutilated idea, either finds itself, in its expansion, half-empty, or else, collapsing to embrace it, becomes a very little soul. But Paul's experience teaches us, that one un mutilated and entire idea, is as much as a man can entertain in his soul, or actualize in his lifetime.

Nor herein was Paul's experience anomalous. Such has been the experience as well of all truly efficient men. None of them ever entertained more than one

great aim or purpose of being. All truly good and great men, in these sacred records, belong to the same class.

Noah was a man of one idea. His idea was an ark! And though he did other things, took care of his household, educated his children, mingled in antediluvian society, and took part in antediluvian politics, yet the one great thought moving as a glorious dream through all his chambers of imagery, was something that would float upon stormy and shoreless seas! And this one thing he did—*he built*.

Abraham was of this same class. His one idea was *a city!* He too did other things; he trained his servants; he commanded his household after him; he was a kind father, a faithful friend; a princely old patriarch in all lands wherein he sojourned. But amid his fairest dreams by the ancestral waters, a great voice out of heaven spake to him of “a city which had foundations builded by God.” And behold! ever afterward it was haunting his soul; a vision of unearthly splendor; and his eye was ever uplifted to the firmament, as if in its far depths he could catch the flash of glorious pinnacles. Of one great thing he thought—toward one great thing he journeyed. “*A city which had foundations, whose builder was God.*” And in this purpose we perceive only an illustration of the truth, that as the true primitive man was made in God’s image, so the truly regenerate man resumes that image. For in all this man becomes Godlike. The divine nature is of the same type of being. It lives and acts in realization of one great idea, love! LOVE! Differing, indeed, in mode and manifestation, like the Theophany of the

Exodus, sometimes an overshadowing gloom, sometimes a surpassing glory. Yet ever, amid the immensity and multiplicity of its operations, from the enamel of a flower and the feathering of an insect's wing to the pomp of the starry heavens and the soaring wing of the archangel, making the truth manifest that benevolence is the very essence of the Infinite—that omnipotence is only almighty love, omniscience only all-wise love, and omnipresence only an immense love—that God lives, and operates, and governs, only to love.

Nor of regenerated men only is the thought true—of all men who retain amid their moral ruins some lines of the mutilated divine image—is this a characteristic. A singleness of aim and effort ever hath been—ever will be—the secret of all noble human accomplishment. Napoleon was the most efficient man of his own time, yea, of all time; not because gifted above his fellows, either physically or intellectually, but because universal empire was his single aim—he lived only to conquer! Demosthenes was the prince of all earth's orators, not because God gave him a splendid voice, and exquisite grace of motion, but because eloquence was his one idea. He lived only to sweep, as with a roused tempest, over all the Æolian sympathies of the human heart. Newton was the king of astronomers, not because his eye was keener as it scanned the heavens, nor because God gave him mighty wings to sweep through the empyrean, but because, with the power of an omnipresent dream, the constellations of heaven were flashing on his soul! The stars were in his heart. His life was in the stars. So is it

ever: singleness of aim, oneness of effort—the gathering of thought, feeling, heart, soul, life into one intense absorbing passion—is the secret of all greatness. And no wonder that Paul was the very chief of the apostles, so that the earth shook at his tread, as when a giant goes on pilgrimage; not because he had read Grecian lore, in Cilician schools, and mastered the Hebrew law at Gamaliel's feet, but because, with his heart all afire within him, and his eye, as the eagle's on the sun, fixed on one sublime purpose—in that one thing he gloried—to that one thing he tended. And the secret of his apostolic power and evangelical achievement was in the text's motto and watchword, "This one thing I do."

Paul—we repeat—was greatly efficient just because he was pre-eminently a man of one idea. But then, be it observed, his was a whole one! and not a poor fragment of a thought. We have seen that there are men, termed men "of one idea," who have no claim to the title. In popular language—an idea is the image, or form, of a thing in the mind. A complete idea must therefore be the image of a whole thing, and not merely of one of its parts. And so we term those men, only men of half an idea—who in architecture think only of the house's foundation—or in education care for only one class of mental faculties—or in politics labor for only one state, or section, or color, in a great nation—or in theology look ever only on one aspect of a many-sided truth, as the Antinomian seeing only God's sovereignty in salvation, or the Arminian seeing only man's free-agency, both practically separating faith and good works as they lie indissolubly wedded in the Divine thought—or in practical morality regard

some one of the great sisterhood of human virtues as alone important, so that they become intemperate in their advocacy of temperance, and licentious in their conflicts with impurity, or Sabbath-breaking in their efforts to sanctify the Sabbath.

All such men's notions of things are mutilations, and therefore not ideas at all, but only fragments of ideas; and as half an idea is too small to fill a whole heart and soul, they roll about in the mental vacuity, making the poor man as noisy as a child's rattle, and for the same reason—his mind is not half full!

But differing from all such men, Paul's one idea was a complete one, entire in all its parts, symmetrical in its proportions.

Let us consider it carefully that we may learn what it was.

"This one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind and reaching forth unto the things that are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

He uses here his favorite figure of the old race-course. Before his faith-lit eye was flashing, at life's far goal, heaven's unfading crown of righteousness, and like the Grecian athlete, night and day, might and main, body and soul, he strove and struggled onward and upward. And the end of all his efforts, and the aim of all his strugglings, was progress in holiness, progress toward heaven! This one thing he did, *he pressed toward glory!*

Other things indeed he did, and did earnestly and nobly. But then they were all subordinate things, or rather they were only parts of this same great one thing!

Paul made tents, and I doubt not was the most industrious and faithful artisan in Corinth, and that his workmanship was in great demand in the Corinthian market-places. For his religion was the great inspiration of his life, passing beyond sanctuaries and Sabbaths, and pervading the whole economy of the secular and the social, rendering him not merely a flaming apostle, but in every possible relation of life an earnest and honest man. Paul wrought for his daily bread in the workshop of Aquila. But his craft was part of his Christianity. "*Holiness to the Lord*," was inscribed on the tent-shop! "*These are Christ's*" was written on every tool of his bench, and the cord, and the canvas. And when most busy at his work he was still doing his one thing, adding gems to his crown of righteousness—pressing toward heaven!

Paul, too, preached the Gospel; and never since hath human voice been lifted in such resistless eloquence to save imperiled souls. But then his pulpit, like his tent-shop, was in his own way to glory. He preached as he ran, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, his back to the multitude, his face toward heaven. The Gospel he preached was a Gospel he practiced. The cross he gloried in was a cross he carried. And amid all his unwearying toil for others, his most earnest care was "*to keep his own body under, that he himself should not be at last a castaway!*" Heaven—heaven—as a great city of radiant pinnacles, seemed ever the great reality of his being, and, as he cast away every hinderance, and broke from every entanglement, and pressed untiringly on to its enrapturing glories, the utterance alike of his lip and his life was, "*This one thing I do.*"

But, as recorded in the context, even in his religious

life he seems to have been doing several things. Therefore, let us consider how they were only essential parts of this one thing.

I. And first, Paul cherished in his heart a constant dissatisfaction with his present spiritual attainment. These are his words: "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.*" Here, in his own behalf, is a positive disclaimer of all Christian perfection. High as seems to us his spiritual stature, he repeatedly assures us that to himself he seemed almost the least of saints—the chief of sinners. And here he expresses profound dissatisfaction with his gracious attainments, and here we find the great secret of his rapid Christian progress. Yea, and here we find the secret of all progress, either sacred or secular. *Dissatisfaction* is always the first step in improvement. Dissatisfied with the pen, man invented the printing-press. Dissatisfied with the chariot, man careers on the locomotive. Dissatisfied with the velocity even of steam, man links his thoughts to God's thunderbolts! This, in regard of all things, is the true inspiration. A being fully contented with present attainments, with no aspirations unto things above and beyond him, should be either a god or an idiot! Heaven's pity on the poor soul on this earth all restful and satisfied! Genius—high genius—the most Godlike of intellectual gifts, is only this restless creative agony, an impulse driving the spirit to beat its wings like an imprisoned eagle, till there be blood on the plumes and the wires of the prison-house! forcing the yearning heart abroad, like an unblessed spirit, away from the actual in search of the possible; to dig in every desert for a living spring; to climb every mountain-top for a farther

look into heaven. Cæsar was the very demi-god of his generation, because a possessed world could not satisfy him. Paul was the very chief of the apostles, because, sick of all present attainments, he "*counted himself not to have apprehended.*" Meanwhile,

II. Paul fastened his eye on farther and loftier Christian states and attainments, "forgetting the things that are behind, *and reaching forth unto the things that are before!*"

There are men, alas, how many! in their self-examinations, always either reviewing the past, or scrutinizing the present, of their gracious experience. Ask them for the evidences of regeneration, and they tell you how, years ago, they found peace in believing, or that even now they feel happy in Christ. But Paul's eye and thought fastened neither on the things behind, nor the things around him. Not of the glorious light in the way to Damascus, not of the manifold labors of his apostleship, does he speak. Far away, at the end of his course, stood the great "Finisher of his faith," and to him alone he looked. Far away from his low stand-point stretched, in ever-ascending grandeur, peak upon peak, the mountain ranges of godliness, and he reached forward, like an iron-shod pilgrim, all eager to climb. And herein was another secret of his progress, and of all progress. This yearning ambition within the soul of man, which, goading him away from all heights of present attainment, fastens the eye on vaster acquisitions of knowledge, nobler forms of love, and hope, and joy, and faith—filling the whole future with a perspective of grander prizes to be struggled for, and filling the soul, which no present gladness can satisfy, with those restless and irrepressible

desires for the glories that are far away and beyond it.

Paul was dissatisfied with the present, and intensely ambitious for great things in the future. Meanwhile,

III. His ambition was pre-eminently *practical*. These gracious desires became the inspiration of his life. Religion in him was no frame and feeling of ecstasy and rapture. It was sinewed with steel—sandaled with iron. The New Jerusalem, with its flashing pinnacles, was no city in the clouds, which a child sees at sunset in the purpling west, and lies down to dream about. It was a city with foundations, coming out to the eye of faith at the terminus of his life-walk; and as its ever-haunting splendors fell round him, he tightened the girdle of his loins, the latehet of his sandals, and, like an earnest and strong man, pressed toward the goal. “*I press—I press toward the mark for the prize of the high culling of God in Christ Jesus.*” “*This one thing I do.*” Relying entirely on Christ, as he did, for salvation, yet he felt that he had for himself a great work to do in this progress toward glory. It was a practical progress in every Christian grace; and those graces, miraculously implanted at regeneration, follow afterward the law of all life, and thrive only with culture. While God’s power wrought inwardly “to will and to do,” his own power must work outwardly, “with fear and trembling.” Christ Jesus would no more relieve him of all spiritual than of all secular labor; no more run the Christian race for him than make tents for him. So Paul felt: “*I—I press toward the prize of the high calling in Christ.*” “*This one thing I do!*”

The accomplishment of salvation was a work—yea, was *his* work. His theory of religion was not that of a

glad voyage over tranquil waters, down stream and restful, lulled by murmuring wind and wave, until, anchored for eternity, he should go ashore in glory! To him it seemed a race-course, in which every step of progress must be a labor—the limb strained, the eye steadfast. Though resting, as the everlasting rock of his hope, on the truth of God's sovereignty, yet he would trust to no Divine purpose to bring him at last, safely sleeping, to glory. The wearer of the crown must be winner of the crown. The racer who triumphed must be the racer who toiled. To attain to the sanctified state passively, by meditations and raptures, or even by a miraculous destruction of sin in the members, in answer to prayer! to attain to entire sanctification, save by bringing the body under in a life of active labor for Christ—a labor life-long and intense as the racer's struggling toward the goal! Why, Paul would as soon have expected to have ascended in a silken balloon to the radiant heights of the City of Holiness! Christian life to him was a toil—the concentration of all the powers of his ardent and regenerated nature in one mighty struggle; and quivering lip, and strained limb, and steadfast and earnest life, gave utterance to the same motto and watch-word of his life—“*This one thing I do!*”

And thus all the several things Paul is said to do in the context, are but essential parts of the same great “one thing”—“Toward the prize of the high calling of God he pressed,” *i. e.*, “*He made progress toward heaven!*”

And a wise man he was, surely, in this choice of the great end of his being. Many another thing he might have done nobly. In him were combined, in wonderful strength, the mental and moral qualities fitting man for

great deeds. His was the temperament which produces heroes. His, intellectually, the strong logical faculty, and the splendid imagination characterizing great orators. His, every way, the resistless, indomitable energy, rendering human life a success. He might have rivaled Demosthenes in the pomp of his eloquence! He might have flung abroad banners of battle glorious as Cæsar's! But bring him back now from the skies, in the glory of his white robe, and sceptre, and diadem, and bid him declare frankly whether it was done well and wisely, this doing but one thing!

Ah me! The tongue of the old orator is silent, and the laurels of the great conqueror are withered and dead. But brightening ever in its glory as eternity wears on, new laurels in the chaplet, new gems in the crown, new anthems to be sung, new heights to be soared—the prize of that high calling in Christ Jesus flashes lustroously still!

Wise?—wise? Yes, he was wise. He went forth like an old athlete to the great race-course for glory, and for a while, calmly watching the girded runners, he counted the cost and the toil. And then did this poor world do its best to beguile him from the struggle. Pleasure smiled on him in her wondrous beauty, and whispered her incantations. And Honor waved an enchanter's wand, and to his wrapt eye rose a far perspective of unbounded earthly splendor. And Riches, and Power, and the Lusts of the flesh, and the Pride of life, wrought upon his heart with spells almost omnipotent. Yes; and then in the contrast, such labors, and sacrifices, and sufferings, even unto death, were to be endured for the Master. And the narrow way upward to the skies looked so cold, and

thorny, and desolate, that, it may be, for a little moment, the heart of the persecutor faltered ere he tightened the girdle of his garment and sprang toward the goal! But it was only for a moment! Right out from the blue heavens, as they bent over the far heights of the course, flashed to his eye of faith the light from the towers of the City of Holiness, and down from their shining seats stole the voices, so soft, of that "great cloud of witnesses." And it was enough! As cords from the limbs of the roused Samson, the poor entanglements of earth fell from his spirit. Away! away he is bounding! Make way for him, ye weaker runners! A giant hath sprung to the race, and is pressing toward glory! And will he falter now on the course? Can the world tempt him to falter? Gold, pleasure, honor—can they hinder his swift feet? *Paul* pause! *Paul* falter! With Heaven opening on his full soul, and Death and Hell following hard after, and the cloud of witnesses surrounding, and the ground under his feet sounding hollow, and stupendous visions of eternal gloom and eternal glory breaking round him, will he pause for mortal toys?

Ah, no, no! As well tempt an angel from his throne with a babe's poor plaything. "*This one thing only he would do!*"

And methought I saw him at last, as the race was ended and the crown was won. Like the angel standing in the sun, he stood colossal in outline at the radiant goal! There was a halo round his head, and uncreated glories fell on him as a garment! Then there seemed a flash, as of gates of pearl moving to soft music, and the outburst of seraphic voices in joyous welcome! And, alas for me! I felt homesick for glory as I saw him no

more. His race for glory ended! *His one thing done!*

Now, of all this simple discourse, the one practical lesson is *to take Paul for our model*. We, too, have but one thing to do on this earth—to get ready for heaven. In every scene and sphere of the secular and social, “to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” And spite of all our fond notions, there is no easier or other way than Paul’s of progress in sanctification; and yet how little are we like him. Alas, my brethren, if we toiled as listlessly for this world as for heaven, the merchant would become bankrupt on exchange, and the artisan a beggar by the wayside. A child, weaving for himself a chaplet of flowers, toils in their gathering more earnestly than we in setting stars in our crown of rejoicing. And do you think that God, whose law of compensation is to make every good thing the meed of earnest toil and a steadfast purpose, so that the bee and the ant must starve if they work not,—do you think that God, who brought prophets and apostles to heaven through struggles and conflicts, and a great fight of afflictions, will lower down the standard in our behalf, and award us a crown of glory if we strain not toward the goal? Why, look ye!—Far away over the desert, up where the mountains are piercing the skies, shine the palaces of immortality! And if we attain to them in triumph at all, these deserts must be traversed, these stormy waters crossed, these mountains ascended! “This high calling of God in Christ Jesus” is not unto passive and indolent raptures, but unto earnest warfare and work. A Christian is a “*servant*,” and he must labor; a “*pilgrim*,” and he must journey; a “*soldier*,”

and he must do battle; a “*racer*” for glory, and he must press toward the goal. “*This one thing we must do.*”

And I call on you and on myself, as immortal spirits, girt about for the struggle, under whose feet the earth is hollow with sepulchres—around whom, filling all the sky, press unseen this great cloud of witnesses; in whose far perspective are magnificent things which would kindle, as a guerdon, all the energies of the archangel. Knowing, as I do, how heaven is attained only by struggling, and how, amid the different rewards of eternity, the loftiest are only unto the most earnest, and how God hath filled the human soul with these boundless and irrepressible desires, just that it might fix heart and eye on the loftiest of the thrones, the brightest of the diadems—ay, and knowing, too, how the season of the great life-work is growing short, the sands of the great hour-glass falling through, the shadows lengthening, the sun going down, the night—the night coming!—knowing this, I call on you and on myself to gird up the loins and tighten the sandal, “*and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God!*”

And unto you, oh, ye impenitent and ungodly men, what shall I say? Alas, this one thing which gathers into itself all the great interests of time and eternity—a thing too immense to be done well in a life-time—Paul’s grand “one thing”—ye have not yet begun to do. Ye will not even think about doing. Your language to your preacher is—“Oh, do not talk about this thing! Do not speak about Death, and the Judgment, and Eternity! By and by, when life hath lost all its

sparkle, and pleasure palls upon the senses, and the world fades away as a fair vision, then we mean to be Christians." Alas, foolish reasoners! Where is eternity? afar off? long years away in your history? Oh, no! Eternity is close to you—all around you—just behind this thin veil of things visible, already lifting, dissolving. Be a Christian by and by! Alas, foolish reasoner! What is it to be a Christian? Is it to weep a tear—experience a remorse—breathe a prayer on a death-bed? Oh, no, no! To be a Christian is to run a great race—to fight a mighty battle. And how can a man fight well when his right arm is palsied, and his eye dim in death? And who ever heard of an athlete coming forth from a dying chamber, and wrapt in a shroud, that he might strive for the mastery? Oh, no! It requires all the best strength of the bravest manhood to do well Paul's one thing! And so, as one that loves your souls, I plead that here and now ye begin this great life-work. Knowing how this one thing is a good thing, and a blessed, and a needful, how much fairer will seem even this mortal life, if you have God for your father. And how much, when the shadows are upon all its sunshine, every cloud will be haloed with heavenly light in the smile of the Comforter! and how even the cold waters of death will seem bright as the sea of glass mingled with fire, if the Divine Son come walking the billows! and how, beyond it, heaven will fling open its shining gate, and you enter "to that *glory*, that *weight of glory*, that *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*."

And that even then ye shall have but begun the higher life of the immortal; that when eternal ages have rolled on their great course, still "*things to come*"

will be yours—still new treasures of knowledge, and love, and joy, opening in your experience—new anthems to be sung—new heights to be soared—tower above tower—battlement above battlement—throne above throne—still stretching away upward under that glorious firmament, till lost in the immensities of the Godhead! Knowing all this, I plead with you, that for one passing hour you consider your immortality! for then I know that with this poor world seeming a vapor, and life a dream, and eternity a stupendous reality—you, too, will gird yourselves for this life-work, and press as a giant on a high path, with these apostolic and exalting words:—*This one thing I do!* THIS ONE THING I DO!

PREJUDICE.

"And Nathaniel said, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see."—JOHN, i. 46.

THE conversation here recorded occurred at the beginning of our Lord's ministry. Philip, a disciple of John the Baptist, having found the Christ, in the fullness of his joy would lead others unto him. And finding Nathaniel, an upright, though bigoted Israelite, thus earnestly addressed him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph." But in reply, the prejudice of the Hebrew was painfully manifest. "Of Nazareth do you say?"—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" It is difficult to determine the precise point of the question as here put by Nathaniel. The words "any good thing" may have here as elsewhere the force of "this good thing," meaning the promised Messiah, the "*summum bonum*" of the Jew. And if so, the implied objection of the question lay in this—that Bethlehem, and not Nazareth, was to be the birthplace of the Christ. And this was just the objection, afterward so popular among the Jews: "Shall the Christ come out of Galilee. Hath not the Scripture said that he cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem?" But as the text is here rendered, the objection lay in this—that Nazareth, a town of lower Galilee, had become pro-

verbial for the wickedness of its inhabitants, and that therefore no good man could be supposed to come out of it.

But, for the practical instruction of the text, it matters not which of these meanings be received. For they alike exhibit the evil influence of prejudice on our intellectual decisions.

If the first interpretation be taken, then the power of Nathaniel's prejudice showed itself in his logic. He heard Philip call Christ a Nazarene, and therefore rejected him, because the prophecy was that Christ should come out of Bethlehem. As if these two things were incompatible; both of which the simplest inquiry would have proved true: that Christ was born in Bethlehem, and dwelt afterward in Nazareth.

Or if the last interpretation be taken, then the power of the prejudice showed itself in his philosophy, by an unjust generalization, concluding that no Nazarene could be good because some Nazarenes were evil.

We say, then, this question of Nathaniel finely illustrates—*the direful power of prejudice!* And the immediate response of Philip as finely exhibits—*the real remedy for prejudice.*

What answer does he give to this bigot of Israel? Does he sit down to reason the matter, proving, by the terrible record of Herod's slaughter of the innocents, that, though resident in Nazareth, Christ was born in Bethlehem? Or that while some wicked men had their home in Nazareth, yet its very existence under Roman rule was proof that many good citizens dwelt there? Does he pause to reason with him at all? No, indeed! At once, with a truer love and finer logic, he leads him

directly to the presence of the prejudged Bethlehemite, saying—"Come and see."

Our text, then, teaches us most impressively—*The evil and remedy of prejudice.*

Now, had we the limits we would consider these in a general application.

There is nothing more common, and few things worse, than prejudice. By it we mean any opinion formed without sufficient examination of facts and arguments. And its effect upon the mind is like that of colored glass upon the eye, arraying objects in aspects unnatural and monstrous. Its injurious influence pervades all spheres of human life—social, civil, religious. Sometimes it judges a whole community from the character of a particular member, and sometimes the individual from the character of the community. The man is of a party whose principles we do not accept, and therefore we think him unworthy of confidence. Or he is of a religious sect which we deem widely erroneous, and therefore we regard him ignorant of true piety. Or some individual of the party has proved himself unprincipled, and therefore we pronounce the whole party dishonest. Or some member of a religious sect has been manifestly a hypocrite, and therefore the whole sect is included in iniquity.

Or sometimes, in regard of systems, or individuals, we judge the whole character from a single act, and thus think the evil good because there may be one good thing in it—and the good, evil, because it has one fault.

And surely all this is monstrous. In the present system of things, made up of good and evil, prejudgments are almost necessarily wrong judgments. Prejudice is a great injustice. And its cure is, as in the case of Na-

thaniel, a thorough examination of its object—to turn away from the partial logic, and “come and see”—come and look at the nation in all its great emporiums and refined homes, before, from one coarse and brutal tourist, you pronounce it half-civilized !

Come, study the whole platform, and all the measures of the party, ere, because of one unprincipled demagogue, you judge it all evil. Come look at the religious sect in all its broad charities, and earnest faith and love, ere, from one hypocritical member, you pronounce it a fanaticism. Come, examine the system in the whole reach and play of its complicate machinery, ere from a single disaster you condemn it altogether.

Come, look upon the erring and sinful man, in all the circumstances of his temptation—yea, come look on him after he has sinned,—follow him to his retirement. See how his eyes overflow, how his heart breaks, as he casts himself at Jehovah’s feet, asking for forgiveness. Come and see all this ere, from one sin committed under some terrible temptation, you turn away from him as a hypocrite.

Alas, this principle of prejudice is itself a most terrible iniquity. It would impel us to cut down a precious vine, because of one decayed cluster—to burn up the whole earth, because some wild beasts inhabit it—to annihilate all God’s universe in its goodness and glory, because there are comets amid its stars, and demons among its spirits. And its remedy is simple : Go examine all matters of prejudice carefully, ingenuously, holding opinion in abeyance until evidence is thoroughly sifted, and whatever may seem *a priori* plausible or presumptive—“*Come and see*”—“*Come and see.*”

But it is not with such generalities we are at present concerned. On this holy day and in this holy presence we can have only to do with *Prejudices against Christianity*. Such were Nathaniel's, and his case affords a fine illustration of the folly and wrong of all such prejudices. Consider it carefully.

I. If you suppose his objections to Christ arose from the fact that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem, while Philip says this man had come from Nazareth. Then alas for his logic! All Jewish prophecy pointed to that day as the time for Christ's coming; so that all men were expecting it. Yea, his predicted forerunner had already appeared and proclaimed his advent. And there, before the assembled multitudes that went out unto John's baptism, a great voice out of heaven, and a descending Theophany declared him to be the expected Messiah. Yea, mortal man had resorted unto him, and as they heard his blessed words, and saw his mighty works, cast themselves adoringly at his feet, and came forth to declare in confidence and rapture, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write." And what has this bigoted Hebrew to oppose to all this? Alas, nothing but a name taken from a temporary dwelling-place! "Ah! a Nazarene did you say. And do you think this great good can come out of Nazareth?" "Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Cometh he not from Bethlehem of David?"

And verily, I can not conceive of any finer parallel than this affords to the present popular arguments against Christianity.

The Bible comes to man with an amount of evidence as great as, in consistence with man's probationary state

Divine wisdom can give it, the evidence of prophecy, the evidence of miracles, the evidence of its own inherent divinity, and the evidence of its mighty beneficent influences.

Is the Bible an inspired book? Is Christianity a divine revelation? This is the question. And hark! how the universe lifts all voices in attestation. "Yes," cry all material things. For so wonderfully are nature and revelation in analogy, so manifestly counterparts in one great system, autographs of the same Divine hand, that a child's wisdom accords them the same common Author! "Yes," cries prophecy, pointing to manifold ever fulfilling and fulfilled predictions! "Yes," cries the yearning soul of man, "for its blessed truths just befit my wants, it instructs my ignorance, it reveals my immortality, it purifies my nature, it dries my tears, it woos me from the trifles of time, and wings me for the grandeurs of eternity!" "Yes," cry supernatural voices. And behold! stilled seas, and healed diseases, and the risen dead, and revealed angels appear as its witnesses. "Yes," cry the living nations of the earth, quickened by its divine power into life and liberty and joy, "advantaged every way by the possession of these oracles of God!" "Yes," cry all higher orders of immortal life—angel and archangel, principality and power, singing morning star and shouting Son of God! "Yes," cries God the Father, so guarding it by his Providence. "Yes," cries God the Son, so magnifying it by his miracles. "Yes," cries God the Holy Ghost, attending it ever in omnipotence from conquering to conquer, until verily there is no true voice in God's universe that gives not glad testimony in behalf of our faith!

And unto all this, what says the Infidel? Alas, like Nathaniel by the Jordan, he sets it all aside with a pitiful cavil! He gets him a glass and looks heavenward, and finding that the sun and stars do not actually revolve around the earth, looks wise, and says, "Aha, Moses does not say any thing about this law of gravitation, surely he was not an inspired man!" He explores the strata of the earth, and finding a fish's tail in the rock or a monster's vertebræ in sandstone, lays his hand solemnly on his heart, saying, "Moses speaks not of these old fossils. Really this is a tremendous fact against revelation."

He draws a line from ear to nostril on an Ethiop's face, or pulls a lock of hair from an Ethiop's skull, and, wise with all ethnologic gifts and grace, cries, "Ah, me, how many facts there are against revelation!" He runs the line of his reason into the sphere of immensity and eternity; or flings himself from the rock of faith into the infinite ocean of Godhead, and, finding himself slightly beyond his depth, struggles back, half-drowned but still buoyant in his self-conceit, and because the revelations of God are too large for his logic, would settle the question with portentous deliverance—"Verily I can not comprehend all this, and my arithmetic and logic are both against revelation!"

Now, before God, this is not caricature. It is a fair representation of infidel objections to Christianity. And I ask if Nathaniel's against Christ had a greater seeming of prejudice? "Can the Christ come out of Nazareth, cometh he not of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem?" Alas, foolish Israelite! Why, there is not a matronly mother in all the coasts of Beth-

lehem, that can not lead you to the grave of her slaughtered babe, and prove to you by death's dread testimony, that your objection is a poor cavil,—that this very Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem.

And we say as well: Alas, foolish sceptic! Why there is not one of your sophisms against Christianity which has not been answered so often that a Sunday-school child can meet you for our God, and shame you, if you have shame, of this pitiful dishonesty.

But you do not need argument. Your infidelity is *of the heart!* The poor creature of prejudice! You cavil at what you know not! What you want is an honest acquaintance with the Bible and Christianity! And our only answer to your cavils is that of Philip to Nathaniel, "*Come and see*"—" *Come and see.*"

Come as a creature of a glorious nature, feeling within you immortal wants, and immortal aspirations. And putting your shoes off, and bowing down your proud head and heart, stand reverently in the presence of this Book from eternity. Come and see, how God's providence guards it—how God's blessing attends it—how God's great thoughts fill it! Come ponder its stupendous truths, beyond the imagination of angels! Come adore its heavenly purity, and share its heavenly consolation! Come away from your poor school of unbelief into fellowship with its living actors! Come walk with Abraham as he walked with God! Come mount with Elijah in his chariot of fire! Come stand with Moses on the mount of God! Come sit with Isaiah while he sweeps his harp! Come stand with John in his desert isle!

Come enter it as a great temple of truth. See how it

seems a divine dwelling!—a house not made with hands. What a new world of softness, brightness, grandeur, bursts upon the soul. What glorious pillars and arches of truth! What pictures of heavenly beauty! What light of ever-burning lamps! What heavenly fragrance! What seraphic voices in the enchanted air! How man stands dwarfed, humbled. And all the seen, the present, the temporal, seems belittled, passed away, forgotten in the symbolic presence of eternity and God!

Come and see it in the glory of its influences,—in the power of its mission over a ruined world! How chains are broken, and tears dried, and wrongs redressed, and homes made beautiful, and hearts made pure, and intellect winged for its highest soarings, and the whole man lifted from degradation to his true dignity, to stand in the midst of a redeemed world, in the glorious freedom which the truth makes free—in the immortal manhood which the truth makes man! Oh, lay aside for an hour all these prejudices, and that you may understand the Bible as it is—and Christianity as it is—and feel your whole nature purified, and elevated, and blessed by a heavenly fellowship. “*Come and see!*”—“*Come and see!*”

II. But we have said, this question may have arisen, not from any false reasoning in regard to Christ’s birth, but from a popular notion of the wickedness of the Nazarenes.

Galilee, lying on the boundaries of Gentile nations, was partly inhabited by pagans. And Nazareth, situate in a secluded valley west of Mount Tabor, was the resort of the worthless characters of the province. And, hence, may have arisen this prejudice against Jesus.

If so, alas for Nathaniel's philosophy! Yielding without examination to the power of popular misrepresentation, observe the pitiful character of the objection. Predicted by prophecy, approved by miracle, announced by a heavenly harbinger—yea, even by the descending Theophany, and a divine voice from heaven positively declared to be the Messiah, Christ Jesus, abode by the Jordan, and yet, without even the pretense of an argument, Nathaniel would reject him with the pitiful sneer of the Jewish rabbi. "Ah! a Nazarene, do you say; and can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" And how exactly does this illustrate the treatment Christianity receives from the multitude.

We have seen the weakness of the argument of the speculative unbeliever. But in this case of the practical rejecter there is no pretense of argument. The whole thing rests upon an irrational prejudice.

Christianity comes to man as a momentous message from eternity, revealing overwhelming truths, involving everlasting interests. It tells him of immortality, of retribution, of a judgment to come, of a state of endless despair, and a world of divine glory. It proclaims salvation, by sacrifice, and opens to the believing soul the gates of the city and kingdom of God. It does all this with an authority as awful as Jehovah's. It comes with credentials, supernatural and overwhelming. It stands before men like a crowned creature of eternity, the eyes flashing, the robe radiant, the voice like an angel's. At its bidding, seas are stilled, diseases healed, the heavens darkened at midday, the graves are opened, and the dead arise. It appeals to the human spirit by motives of overwhelming power, urging, beseeching, command-

ing, the imperiled men to give instant heed to the great things of salvation, until verily the apostolic rhetoric is realized. "*An ambassador from God stands on this revolted world, as if God himself did beseech in Christ's stead, beseeching impenitent men to be reconciled to God!*"

But unto all this what says the thoughtless immortal? Alas, like Nathaniel, he rejects the truth with a pitiful cant of prejudice! He says, "*Oh! the Bible is so full of mysteries.*" As if there were nothing in it beautifully comprehensible! As if a revelation without mysteries were not a heaven without stars. As if a poor outcast would not accept the heirship of a kingdom, because he understood not the mysterious crystallization of its crown-gems!

Or, he says, "*Oh, there are so many different sects and denominations of Christians!*" As if the different flowers of the field were an argument against summer, or the many stars of heaven were inconsistent with the truths of astronomy; as if a famishing garrison in a besieged fortress would not accept deliverance at the hands of a conquering host, because divided into battalions and bearing various banners! Or he says, "*Oh, there are so many hypocrites in the Church!*" As if one erratic comet in the sky destroyed all the glories of the firmament. Or he says, "*Oh, religion is such a gloomy subject.*" As if it could be sorrowful to have heaven for a home, and God for a father! As if a poor captive in a deep dark dungeon, would recoil from the broad, bright, free world of summer and sunshine!

I need not pursue the thought. These, and such as these, are the pleas urged every day against the claims

of the Gospel. And I ask again, if Nathaniel's objection to Christ was more manifestly a mere prejudice?

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Alas, foolish Israelite, "Come and see! Come and see!" Come and see the descending dove! Come hear God's loud voice out of heaven! Come sit at Jesus' feet, and listen to his adorable and heavenly words!

Nay, rather, alas, foolish unbeliever! for your cavils are as unfounded and fouler. Prejudiced against Christ and his glorious Gospel! Then it is because you have not studied them, nor known them.

Prejudiced against the Christ, the Saviour of sinners, the Son of God! "Come and see." Come back into eternity, before the world was! Behold! there is no time, no material universe, no spiritual universe, no sun shining, no angel singing! But yet no infinite void; but an infinite fullness. Behold this Son of God there! "*For the Word was with God!*" Look again. The universe is to be created; sun and stars; thrones and dominion; angel and archangel. At an Omnific word they spring into being! And who created them? This Son of God again—for "*The Word was God.*" Behold again. There is apostasy in that universe. One poor planet breaks from its moral moorings, and sweeps outward-bound into darkness! It must be saved! How? Tell us, all ye angels! Ye can not! "Come and see." Upon the face of that imperiled world appears a Being from Eternity! "one traveling in the greatness of his strength, *mighty to save.*" This Son of God again. "*For the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*" Mighty to save! But

how? Oh, by sacrifice—by suffering—bearing our sins for us! “Come and see!” Behold a feeble babe in a manger! a man forlorn and tempted in the wilderness! And now in the gloomy garden his sweat as great drops of blood in that ineffable agony! And now on that cross—that dread mount of expiation! And all this that the world might be saved; that *you* might be saved! “Come and see!” Ah me! what love! Beyond thought, beyond degree! “Herein is love.” Any good thing out of Nazareth?—“*Come and see!*”—“*Come and see!*”

Or, if you are of those who pretend to admire the Christ, yet personally reject his Gospel, as a worthless thing, then come and look at Christianity as working out man’s happiness!

Surely, while he dwelt with men on the earth, Christ’s ministry was blessed! Come and see—That multitude fed in the wilderness! That stormy sea of Galilee calmed into stillness as his divine feet walked it! That funeral train at the gate of Nain! stopped by a glorious form; and the beloved son pressed again to the mother’s joyous heart. Surely, all this was blessed! And yet this but imperfectly emblemizes the goodness unto the believer of Christ’s spiritual consolations.

“Any thing good out of Nazareth?” “Come and see.”

Take me by the hand, and walk through the streets of your city. Come into this poor court—into this forlorn chamber! Behold this sick old man, lying on his hard pallet; by his side a crust of bread, a cup of cold water. Alas, he was comfortable once!—a wife who loved him, children who honored him! But they have

gone to the grave, and he seems forlorn and friendless! But what is he doing? Reading his Bible! And when I say, "My old friend, this is hard for you!" his response is, "Hard! oh, no; I do not suffer as my Saviour suffered. I was just reading it: '*The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*' Oh, Jesus suffered every thing for me; can not I suffer any thing for Jesus? Oh, I have this blessed Bible, and whenever I open it, it is as if a shining angel talked to me out of heaven. My poor chamber seems heaven's gate, and I am happy—so happy!" Yes, matchless comforting of the Redeemer. "Come and see"—"Come and see."

Behold, again, in yonder dwelling, a young mother sits watching by the coffin of her first-born child! See, her cheek is stained with tears! She has been pressing her lip to that cold forehead, and twining her fingers in that silken hair! Alas! who knoweth the power of a bereaved mother's sorrow? Her child will never smile on her again!—never say, "Mother," "mother," again. And who can comfort her? Who? Why, Christ *has* comforted her. Hark to her words: "Oh, he said it, my gracious Savionr said it—'*Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.*'" Yes, my babe has gone to heaven; my lamb is in the Shepherd's bosom! There, in the pastures so green, by the waters so tranquil." Oh, precious Gospel-comforting. "Come and see"—"Come and see."

Behold, again! A home of sorrowing love—a fair young girl passing away in agony, surrounded by all that can make life blessed; the idol of parents, and sisters, and adoring friends; like a bird pierced by the

archer's arrow, just as, with joyous wings and song, it was mounting to the morning sun. So in the freshness of life and love and joy, hath the destroyer's breath fallen on its beautiful victim. Alas, alas! She to die, in the gladness of her youth, in the glory of her promise! She to turn aside from the green earth, and laughing sky, and lie down with the winding-sheet and the worm in the dark, pitiless sepulchre! How can she bear it? How can she be comforted? How? "Come and see." See how her eye sparkles! Hark to her faith-inspired words! "Oh, sister, father, mother, do not weep for me. It is sad to part from you; but we shall meet again in heaven. And I am going to be with Christ, to see the divine glory, to walk the golden streets, to dwell in the many mansions. Oh, do you not see them, these shining ones? And there, those gates of glory! Oh, weep not. Rather sing—sing:—

"The world recedes, it disappears,
Heaven opens on my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring.
Lend, lend your wings, I mount, I fly—
O grave, where is thy victory!
O Death, where is thy sting!"

Oh, blessed comforting of Christ! any thing good out of Nazareth?—"Come and see"—"*Come and see.*"

Oh, away with your prejudices! This world, and heaven, and time, and eternity, are filled with living witnesses to the unspeakable goodness of "the truth as it is in Jesus." God hath not given to a poor worm, the power to speak fitly of such things, things unseen, unheard, unutterable, which are prepared in the Gospel for those that love God. But if I could do it—if I could

show you how like visiting angels this Gospel comes to comfort and gladden—how it dries every tear, and assuages every anguish, and hangs a heavenly lamp at the lowliest lintel—and hushes every storm on life's troubled waters, and brings angels to the death-bed, and makes radiant the grave! Yea, more! If I could tell you how it prepares man for immortality! How it meets the soul, as it casts off the burden of the flesh, and clothes it in heavenly robes, and induces it with heavenly faculties, and bears it to heavenly places—through the gates of pearl, along the streets of the golden city, through the opening ranks of cherubim and seraphim, to sit down in the midst of the Throne of God—a sharer in Christ's triumph, as a sharer in his suffering—a king and a priest unto God, amid all and over all the high things of immensity and eternity!

Oh, if I could do this, then never again would you turn away in scorn from him who dwelt in Nazareth!

But this I can not do. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels;" "we see through a glass darkly;" we can but point you to evidence, and tell you of experience. And this, alas, is not enough. You hate the heavenly light because your deeds are evil. Like dazed sea-birds in a stormy night, you dash yourselves to death against the very crystal through which streams the blessed light of the beacon! A thousand times as now have you sat in heavenly places—here in God's house, heaven's very gate—heard the joyous voices—seen the radiant visions, and yet, gone away despising them. Gone away as you will to-day, with the Jew's pitiful question—"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"—when God's whole universe utters the gracious invita-

tion; the sun and stars uttering it—the living and the dead uttering it—the mortal and immortal uttering it—angel and archangel uttering it—God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost uttering it—uttering it tenderly and terribly, gentle as the whisper of a seraph, and loud as the sound of many waters,—God's great call to his imperiled creature. "*Come and See*"—"COME AND SEE"

INSINCERE UNBELIEF.

“At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.”—MATTHEW, xiv. 1, 2.

THIS text is no part of revelation. It is only the record of an infidel falsehood; and inspiration is concerned with it only as guiding aright the pen of the historian, and giving us assurance that the unbelieving Herod certainly uttered these words. But as an infidel utterance it commends itself to all infidels, as worthy their serious regard and full of practical instruction.

They should learn here, at least, these three things:—

That practical unbelief distrusts itself, disavows itself, and punishes itself.

First. *All such unbelief, like Herod's, distrusts itself.*

Scepticism is never wholly satisfied with its own creed; never rests confidently on its own reasonings. So it was with Herod. As a Sadducee he rejected the doctrine of the Resurrection, whether of angel or spirit. And yet, suddenly startled from his self-possession by an alarm of conscience, he is seen in the text to affirm strongly the truth whose denial was

fundamental to his system! And herein is illustrated the usual, perhaps universal distrust of unbelief in its own tenets. Being at best a system of negations, it affords no ground of confidence. It does not even attempt to disprove the great truths of the Resurrection and Eternal Retribution,—and its denial evidently consists with an apprehension that these doctrines may be true. The simple fact that Infidelity, while silently tolerating all forms of heathenism, is ever attacking Christianity, is in proof that it fears its great truths. And the ever-recurring fact has passed into a proverb—that infidels are, of all men, most afraid of death, and most superstitious, indeed, generally. Sincere faith is serene, self-possessed, reliant. The traveler on the king's highway walks calmly and confidently, because he feels that his feet are on adamant; while he, in a marsh or a quicksand, is all restless and excited through his distrust of the road. This very vaporings of unbelief in behalf of its tenets is significant of insincerity. The man who says, "all men will be saved," shows by his eagerness for controversy that he feels not quite sure of it. Call it what you will, and account for it as you may, there is in every heart an instinct of retribution; and ever and anon it conjures from the unknown future shadowy forms before which the heart recoils and the knees smite together. And quite certain I am, that I address no unbeliever so thoroughly persuaded of his infidelity that he is never appalled by a misgiving.

The man may meet me with great swelling words about priestcraft and superstition, and may utter eloquent declamations that the Bible is a lie, and death is annihilation; yet, I know that he looks upon that Bible

with a fear, and passes that grave with misgivings; that in many an hour of solitude and silence voices of alarm are loud in his soul, and phantoms from eternity move fearfully before him! For all unbelief is of "the leaven of Herod," and he stands before us in the text a true type of his kind. Only yesterday the haughty Tetrarch—that he might quiet his conscience in his ways of iniquity, went forth as the chieftain of Sadducean infidelity, loudly denying the fact, yea, even the possibility of a Resurrection. And yet, to-day, we see him startled out of his pretentious confidence by a story of Christ's miracles—practically confessing the insincerity of his words with pale face and trembling limbs and quivering lip, proclaiming—"*It is John the Baptist. HE IS RISEN FROM THE DEAD!*"

Passing this, observe, secondly—That all unbelief, like Herod's, not only distrusts itself, but often, and in the end, almost always disavows itself!

It may clamor against the hard things of revelation, as opposed to its instincts and its reason; yet, will ever and anon make practical confession that they seem not unreasonable. This is strikingly exhibited in this history of Herod.

Confessedly among all the things in revelation, hard to understand, and hard to believe, this doctrine of the Resurrection, even by the teaching of Christ, stands first. It is certainly a doctrine not discoverable by reason. Nature has nothing to suggest, nothing, indeed, analogous to its marvels. The fair flower from the seed—the winged insect from the chrysalis—these common illustrations of the Resurrection fail in one and the essential point. *They were not dead*, though they

seemed so. And before they have any power in the argument, we must be shown some germ of vegetable or animal life, ground into powder, and scattered by the winds, unto which summer and sunshine return regathering the material, and recreating the life.

We have indeed no controversy with those who maintain the mystery; yea, the positive unnaturalness of this great doctrine. It is wisest to regard it as a pure doctrine of revelation. All we insist on, as illustrated by the case of Herod, is, that when once revealed it is reasonable to accept it. It is a marvelous truth, unquestionably, this truth of the Resurrection! For six thousand years there has gone on this destruction of our species. The babe, the mother, the gray-haired man, have gone down in countless millions to the great burial! Dust, human dust it is, and that once reddened in the lip and sparkled in the eye and bounded in the pulses, that to-day is blown about by the winds, and washed away by the waters, and trampled under foot of living men, until this fair world, rounded into beauty and hung amid the stars, as the blessed home of God's man-child, shows dark and appalling as his Golgotha and his grave! And yet over all this ruin of dead generations, there is to break a life-giving summons: and atom shall come to its fellow atom, and bone to its fellow bone, and bursting the long bondage of the grave, they shall come forth covering the sea, and covering the land, all the millions of earth's buried population.

It is a great and difficult conception in regard of the race, nor scarcely less difficult in regard of the individual. The beloved one may have died and been buried by

stranger-hands amid polar snows or tropic sands—or may have gone down into the depth of seas, or been burned in fierce fires, and the ashes scattered as the dust of a furnace! Nevertheless that dust shall live again! The hour comes when that eye again shall flash and that heart bound, and just as it stood before us, face to face, a mysterious creature—a spirit wedded to dead matter, will the spoiled and conquered grave give it back to the ministries of another and an endless life!

Now these, we grant you, are strange and difficult conceptions. Nevertheless they are not incredible. Nay, they are altogether philosophic and rational when we are once advised that such is God's great purpose in regard of our race. "Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead?" Is there after all any thing more wonderful in the Resurrection than in the creation of the race? I look around, and lo! ten thousand marvelous organisms are filling the landscape with exulting life! I lift my eye to the firmament, and behold! its immensity is crowded with stupenduous architecture! And whose are all these wonderful works? Who peopled all these fields of space? Who kindled these great fires of the firmament? Why, God—God! And can this God then be baffled and over-matched by this marvel of the Resurrection? Ah, no, no! In ascribing the Resurrection alone to Divine Wisdom and Power the Bible brings the "hard thing" within the conditions of the rational, the logical. It is only another marvel amid the great universe of marvels that surround us and press upon us. And the reason does not rightfully reject it, nor the instinct recoil from it.

And I say this fact is most strikingly exhibited in the text. As we see Herod, a man reared in unbelief, and hardened in all iniquity, yet, brought face to face with the divine workings in the person of the Divine Son, and forced out of his pretentious cavils against things hard to be understood—asserting, as something altogether philosophic and probable, “*This is John the Baptist—he is risen from the dead.*”

Yea, and the text’s illustration on this point goes much further. It shows, not only that the Resurrection is a reasonable doctrine, *but that all the Bible teaches as to the effects of that Resurrection upon its subjects is as well reasonable and philosophic.*

These teachings may be embraced in two particulars—the *positive identity*, and the *greatly enlarged powers and faculties* of the Risen Immortal.

1st. The Bible affirms this identity. The creature raised from the grave is to be the same creature who goes down into it. Death has no power to destroy or alter human nature. It can not annihilate a single faculty or function of the species. It can obliterate no memory. It can weaken no affection! Have I laid a beloved one into the grave—a brother, a sister, a friend, a child? Why then, sister, and brother, and child, and friend, must the grave give them back to me! So Revelation teaches. Said our Lord to the sisters of Bethany, “*Your brother shall rise again.*” Not a stranger-spirit, forgetful of the past, unsympathizing with the present, unassociated in all the future, but a man to walk all the great paths of immortality, bearing the same lineaments, the same affections, yea, the same endeared name; still “*a brother.*”

And whatever difficulties there may seem, *a priori*, in this perpetuity of these mortal affections, God is surely competent to their removal. And such perpetuity falls in with our philosophic expectations, as we see in the text. Herod heard of a being walking the world whom he believed to have risen from the dead—to have undergone all the mysterious processes of death and the Resurrection. And he says, “It is”—what? a spirit? a phantom? a creature unlike the mortal John whom he had beheaded? Oh, no. But as if the very man, with all his memories of sufferings and persecutions, with the same nature, yea, the same name, had returned as an avenger. He says, “*It is JOHN. It is John the Baptist. He is risen from the dead!*”

2d. The Bible teaches, *that along with this identity, the raised body shall possess powers and faculties very greatly enlarged.*

To the question, “*How are the dead raised, and with what body do they come?*”

It answers,—

“*It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.*” It shall have in it no principle of decay, but shall go forth as the soul itself, immutable and immortal.

“*It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.*”—No longer a degraded organism, to be kept under dust, crucified, but of all God’s visible works most beautiful and stately—that redeemed body as it mounts to the skies!

“*It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*”—No longer subject to infirmity or exhaustion, but sinewed to walk with the angels the great paths of immortality, and to bear unburdened even that “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body."—No longer a fetter and confinement of the indwelling spirit, but the body itself so etherealized out of mere natural conditions as to walk upon the waters, and career upon the winds, in the fashion and with the power of Christ's own glorious Body.

Thus speaks God's Word of the great marvel of the Resurrection; and surely in all this there is nothing unphilosophic. Natural analogies go far to illustrate it. We cast into the earth the unshapely seed, and it bursts forth a flower, radiantly beautiful. The worm dies in its winding-sheet, and, breaking its dark cerement, there springs forth, on rainbow-colored wings, a joyous wanderer through the heavens!

We expect, almost instinctively, that, if there be a resurrection, its subject will become vastly more powerful and glorious, when "this mortal shall have put on immortality."

Thus even did Herod, with all his pretentious unbelief. The living John did no miracle. His ministry on earth was in the manifestation of no extraordinary powers. And the Tetrarch looked scornfully upon his unpretending work, and slew him, without a fear, in his prison. But the moment he thinks of him as the subject of the Resurrection, he is startled, as at the coming of one supernaturally gifted. They tell him of a mysterious visitant, walking among men in the exercise of tremendous miraculous powers, and his philosophic solution of the marvel is—"These mighty works do show forth themselves in him." Why? Because he is John the Baptist? Surely not; for the living John neither healed diseases, nor cast out devils. But "these mighty works do show

themselves in him," because he is John the Baptist—
RISEN FROM THE DEAD!

We say, therefore, that herein is strikingly exhibited the not uncommon fact, that these men, ever clamoring against "the hard things of revelation, are ever making manifest their instinctive belief of them. Indeed, there is in human nature something instantly responding to the voices of revelation. The Bible does precisely what we should expect it to do, as an oracle of God. It appeals to a faculty of our nature (which has properly been termed "the spiritual, or faith-faculty), which accepts its truth, not logically, but as by instinctive apprehension.

And it is by reason of this, that unlearned and weak-minded Christians do maintain their faith so grandly against all the assaults of philosophic infidelity. They can not argue for the truth, but they can apprehend it. And this natural moral sense exists originally in all men. The Bible never came to a human spirit that did not at some time respond to its felt truthfulness. The man may, indeed, in his love of iniquity, harden himself against its truths, and set himself to disprove them; yea, lift up his voice loudly and confidently in their denunciation, as hard things, and unreasonable things, and positively absurd things, until the world regards him as a thoroughly confirmed and sincere unbeliever. Nevertheless, there are chords in that man's moral nature that, like an *Æolian's* to the winds of heaven, respond, ever and anon, to the influences of inspiration. And, often consciously to himself, and sometimes obviously to others, his unbelief, like the Tetrarch's, first distrusts, and then disavows itself. And, if I speak to such to-day—to men who have so given themselves up to infidel arguments, and so com-

mitted themselves to infidel companionships, as to be regarded as absolutely rooted and grounded in unbelief, and to have never a thought of God, or a care for eternity; yet, if they have ever read their Bibles at all, so that its despised truths rise sometimes in the mind, linked with the memory of the parent, or sister, or child, or friend, who died, calmly relying on God's inspired promises, then sure I am that, under all this outward hardness, as a living well-spring amid the tangled growths of a forest, faith yet keeps open a troubled fountain—that those wayward feet recoil at times from the terrible glooms, and would fain turn unto the transcendent glories of eternity; and that all these truths of God's Word which they ridicule as absurd things and foolish, do, in their better moments, seem altogether probable, and rational, and wise. For I know that all these men are of the type of this Tetrarch, whose rank was a very chieftain of practical and speculative unbelief, and yet whose earnest disavowal of his own unbelief—yea, whose unbribed testimony to the rationality of the very truths he denied, is recorded in his outcry in the text—“*This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead!*”

Passing this, observe, thirdly—That all such unbelief like Herod's *positively punishes itself*.

We have said that the Tetrarch rooted and grounded himself in the Sadduceeans' infidelity in order that he might quiet his conscience in ways of iniquity. And yet by that very violence done to his moral sense he was arming it as a terrible avenger. Having rid himself of all fear of God, and all principles of virtue, he gave himself without restraint to all evil and cruel pleasures, and when, commissioned of God, John broke in upon his

ungodliness with his stern presence and awful voice, Herod cast him into prison and slew him. And then turned again to his evil courses with an exulting confidence that no other voice would ever dare to raise itself in his path of selfish and guilty gladness. But alas he did not understand then, as at the last, God's great law of retribution.

Conscience! Conscience! It was itself a Resurrection-power within him!—There came at last a season of repose to his overwrought passions. Herod is feasting with his train in imperial pavilions. They discourse of the fame of Jesus. They tell him of a mysterious Man walking amid the cities and villages of the land, gifted, seemingly, with the powers of higher and immortal beings! Of stilled seas, and healed diseases, and the dead raised unto life!

And look at the Tetrarch now! His cheek pale, his lip quivering, his wild eye glaring upon vacancy! He starts from his couch! The wine cup drops from his hand! as he whispers with white lips—“*It is John the Baptist—he is risen from the dead!*”

Ah me! What aileth the Tetrarch there amid princes and nobles? John the Baptist sleeps still in his distant grave. But a *simple thought* long buried within his murderer's soul hath been unsepulchred! He thought to silence the living voice of God's prophet, but that voice in the dark chambers of his soul will wake echoes forever! He thought to dismiss from his presence that stern, reproachful face! But he only rendered it omnipresent and immortal! And it will come to him—it will come—that whisper of the dead—that shape of the departed! Let him go forth amid life's bustle and hurri-

cane. Let him surround himself with silken courtiers or mailed men of war. Let him retire into the secret places of his palace, and bar the door, and draw the thick curtain! Nevertheless, within his own spirit he carries the avenger! The tormentor of the guilty will be ever beside him! A cry as of a dying man will fill all the air! A dissevered head upon a charger will rise before him as if chiseled in adamant! A bloodless face and glazing eye will look upon him from curtain and canopy! And his own lip will quiver, and his knees smite together, and a voice like one of God's terrible oracles will be crying ever in his ear—"*It is John the Baptist—he is risen from the dead!*"

Here then we say is a striking illustration of the *power of a roused conscience, as God's avenger of sin*. And we commend it especially to that class of men who find their representative in Herod. Against this doctrine of Retribution the whole infidel and ungodly world has ever arrayed itself. Nor is this a marvel! "*These shall go away into everlasting punishment!*" Ah, these are terrible words. And at first view it does seem to the carnal heart a disproportioned penalty—eternal punishment for temporal transgression! But this is a false seeming. It is not endless suffering for an ended sin. The spirit *goes on sinning* into eternity, and so suffers forever because *it sins forever!*

I have no room nor necessity here for an argument for Retribution. I have only to do with this natural illustration. I am not prophesying what God will do, but only showing what man himself does! It is a favorite postulate, even of the infidel philosophy, that no impression once made on the thinking principle is ever

obliterated. And it has doubtless happened unto you all to observe, how some trifling thing—a remark in conversation—the view of a familiar landscape—a strain of some long forgotten harmony—yea, a thing so slight as the rustle of a falling leaf, or the breath of a flower's perfume—has awakened in the mind a long train of recollections;—thoughts long forgotten move again powerfully within us. We are borne away suddenly to other scenes, we live virtually in other times and other conditions. The magic of memory has summoned from the past, shadowy forms, faces, voices, it may be of the dead! They rise upon us, they move before us, as life's great realities, and for the time we are under their mysterious power, as our angels or avengers!

Now, whether or not conscience be but a modification of memory, certain we are it follows the same great law. Conscience, too, may be beguiled for a season of its avenging power. You may sear it with hot passion or drug it with ungodly indulgence. But this you can not do—you can not destroy it—you can not permanently dethrone it—you can not, in the end, weaken one of the tremendous blows it is armed to strike, nor hush one of the terrible oracles it is eloquent to utter! The hour and the scene of its sure vengeance is coming. There are conditions wherein your control over the conscience ceases forever!

In that hour when shackle and scale fall together from the immortalized-mortal, every imprisoned thought within shall partake of the enfranchisement, and then conscience, aroused from its slumber, with iron foot and lash of scorpions, shall stalk in wierd power through the

chambers of the soul, summoning back from the grave the shapes and spectres of the past.

And this is the thought we would force upon the consideration of these modern Herodians ! This is a sermon preached, not by an inspired apostle, but by a progressive infidel ! And if you will not listen to John the Baptist as he preaches of "*Repentance*," listen at least to Herod the Tetrarch as he preaches of the *Resurrection* !

You may be of those who laugh at the idea of a hell, and denounce as positively malignant all those inspired oracles which speak of "*the undying worm*," and "*the smoke of the torment*,"—yet you are not accustomed either to deny or ignore these laws of your own intellectual and moral nature—this strange power of conscience. You have sometimes felt its omnipotence ! It may have been slightly, and but for a moment ! In some movement of the dance, in some swell of the music, in some pouring of the wine, it may have startled you transiently, and then slept again ! But know you not what you felt ? A fitful thought ? a flitting emotion ? A voice like an Æolian's, born and dying with the wind ? Was that all ? Alas, no ! It was the germ of a terrible and immortal life and growth. It was the first touch of a fang that shall rend as a ravening lion's. It was the first tongue of a devouring fire that shall flame out intolerable forever !

Mark me—(for on such a point, standing face to face with the awful words in this Book of God, I will not be misunderstood on a point so momentous)—mark me, I do not say, that this conscience is *all* there is in retribution. Even in the case of Herod, while he abode among men, this was not all—for the awful record is—

thus even as he sat enthroned as a god in royal apparel, "*the angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.*" All this was in the flesh! And what his poor selfdestroyed spirit experienced as it sprang disembodied to eternity, no mortal may know.

As there are on earth dungeons of thick gloom, and nights of terrible darkness, so those things may have beyond the grave their great antitypes. There may be an extraneous ministry of torment in the dwellings of Heaven's outcasts! There may be walls of fiery adamant, and sackcloth of hair—and awful forms stalking through the glooms of the "outer darkness!" These denunciations of the wrath of God, which fill all those pages of inspiration may have a positive and an overwhelming significance. Of such things my text leads me not to speak. But of this we may be sure that if there were no room in God's fair universe for any of these terrible things, yet there is room in that universe for sin's fitting and fearful retribution!

For this is even the teaching of your own infidelity. It is not Moses, nor David, nor Paul, nor John; but it is Herod, the enthroned chieftain of your own mocking unbelief, who to-day tells you—that if God should sweep omnipotently away that great prison-house of despair, and quench its consuming fires, and hush its mighty thunders—nevertheless, you, by the iniquities of your daily lives, would rear again those walls, and light again the fires, and launch again the thunders!

Sin, *sin* it is, as an operative principle within you, that, by arming conscience with an eye of fire and whip of scorpions, gives to the "worm" its fang, and to the

“fires” their fierceness. Believe, if you will, that God is too merciful to make a hell. Yet you know, for you have seen, that every sinful man is making it. You have stood by the couch of the inebriate, when the wild madness was on him; or by the murderer, when he moved and moaned in his fearful dream! It may have been in some beautiful home of love, in some pleasant chamber filled with summer sunshine and the fragrance of bright flowers. But the man of violence was convulsed in his slumber, as if the pale face of his dead victim rose ever before him; and the drunkard sprang up with glaring eye, to wrestle with the monsters that pressed upon him to torture! And yet, all these tormentors were not creatures made by God, but the man’s own creations—the projections of his own evil thoughts into great outward realities!

This is the law of man’s moral nature, and under it you are all working out your own retribution. You are doing it always, each one for himself.

Ye lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God!—compelling your immortal affections downward from the bosom of Infinite Love to embrace the dead spectres of sinful delights—alas! you are drinking of the cup of a dreadful delirium. You are sharpening the tooth of the undying worm, and fanning the fires of the unquenchable burning! Ye men hastening to be rich in violation of God’s commandments, filling the chambers of the immortal soul with corruptible silver and gold, so that there is no room therein for the grander things of eternity,—alas! you are but filling your bosoms with a ponderous dust that shall sink you in drowning agony when your immortal bark founders!

Ye men of sinful ambition, weaving out of these earthly thorns chaplets that pierce the very brows made to wear heaven's shining diadems,—alas! ye are but rearing out of the ruin of your immortal hopes a fiery throne, whereon an infernal despot shall lift over you forever a sceptre of torment!

This, this my text tells you. Oh, take its truths home with you. If ye will not hear Moses and the prophets, listen at least to Herod, the great infidel!

Oh, thou imperial ruler in that oriental palace—Herod crowned and throned—who in that path of guilty gladness hast driven your proud chariot over the headless body of God's murdered servant, tell us! tell these careless, impenitent souls—these dear children that in wicked ways are crucifying parental love!—these exulting youth, that madly freight these poor bubbles of pleasure with their pearls of great price!—these men and women, who sport with life and soul and immortality, as babes with the baubles they break! Oh, tell us all, if it needs God's arbitrary and avenging omnipotence to give to the worm its sting, and to the fire its burning? Speak out fully, here and now, the secret of the text's strange utterance! Tell us if your dreams were fair and bright on that imperial couch of sin! Tell us if there came to your palace-halls no avenging phantom from yonder prison-cell! Tell us if it rose not ever up at your board and your banquet, that grim "head upon a charger!" Tell us if you heard not, amid all the music of your royal minstrels, that death-cry of the murdered John! Tell us if you saw it not ever in throne-room and banquet-hall, as if cut in eternal marble—that headless body of God's prophet!

Tell us if yours was an armed guard, or a marble wall,

or an iron portal, that could shut away from your inner chamber that spectral and unbidden guest! Tell us if you piled on the Baptist's lonely grave a weight of mountains that could keep the dead man down when the sorceress—conscience—waved her wand and muttered her enchantments!

Nay—you *have* told us. You do tell us this day—here in this simple yet most solemn story!

We see it—a palace opened for festival, flooded with light, music, fragrance—bright forms crossing its threshold, the gathering of prince and noble to joyous and kingly revel. And now, as the wine sparkles, and the music breathes, and the incense burns, we hear soft voices speaking wonderingly of the glorious deeds of a mighty stranger in Galilee—in words more enchanting than the idyls of the harpers—telling of demons conquered, and diseases healed, and the dead raised unto new life—of the advent of a Divine One to redeem a lost race, and restore the old Paradise. But while every other eye flashes, and every other heart bounds in wondering delight, behold the Tetrarch! What aileth him in that hour of triumph? That brow, pale under its chaplets—those joints loosed under the kingly purple—that eye strained, glaring as upon some terrible phantom—those arms outstretched, as if to repel some fiery shape from eternity!

And what means it? Alas! only this. What the unbeliever thought God could not do, he hath done for himself. He hath wrought out retribution! He hath achieved a Resurrection! The grave hath sent an unbidden guest to the murderer's banquet! "*It is John the Baptist—he is risen from the dead.*"

THE GOSPEL CALL.

"And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—REVELATION, xxii. 17.

THERE is unquestionably such a thing as too much exposition of the Sacred Scriptures. Addressed by Jehovah to a race unused in the main to critical and metaphysical investigations, the Bible is written in language so simple and familiar, that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err in its understanding. And very much of its beauty and force is weakened by every attempt to simplify and illustrate it.

This is true of our text. It is a scripture whereon learned exposition might ingeniously be bestowed; and yet the result of such exposition be but an injury. Read just as it stands in its connections, and the Sabbath-school child understands it to be—*Christ's Gospel call unto all men to come to him and be saved.*

The metaphor is Oriental, yet its meaning is apparent and most simple—Christ the Great Saviour is represented as a Fountain, opened in Life's wilderness, around which rise innumerable voices of invitation: the "*Spirit's*" (*i. e.* God's) voices, in the Bible, in Providence, in Divine influences: the "*Bride's*" (*i. e.* the Church's)

voices, from her ministers, her members, her ordinances; the voices, moreover, of all creatures who have seen the living water and the thirsting multitude—all these voices rise in one loud and loving invitation “*to take the water of life freely.*”

The text assumes two things, and teaches two things.

First, it assumes—*That man by nature is in a perishing condition.* He is represented here as a traveler in a desert, imperiled with deadly thirst. And in this it only reiterates a truth taught abundantly by man’s natural conscience and the whole Word of God. That man is by nature a lost sinner, is indeed involved in the very existence of the Bible—for what need of a revealed plan of salvation, if the object of the revelation be not utterly lost?

And to this Bible truth man’s natural conscience is universally responsive. We are always sure on this point, that we address no man who feels not at times conscious of his depravity, and of his need of pardon and salvation. No hardihood of infidelity is able to silence the whispers of this instinct of guilt. And never has the adventurous voyager over unknown seas lighted upon solitary and secluded islands, whose inhabitants were not found agonizing with this sense of sin—this fever thirst for the waters of salvation. All the false worship of the heathen world was, and is, only the soul’s practical expression of its earnest desire for a redemption from the stings of a guilty conscience, and the terrible agonies of eternal death. On this point reason and revelation are at one—*That all men by nature are condemned sinners; poor pilgrims in a desert, pining and perishing with an immortal thirst.*

Meanwhile, the text takes also for granted—*That in the Gospel of Christ, and in it alone, is there for sinful man a way of salvation.*

Christ Jesus is truly and only “*the water of life.*” He is the source and spring even of *physical and natural life*. All things *that are*, are parts of his mediatorial kingdom. The soul itself, which we term immortal, has no inherent and essential immortality, and would sink into non-existence but for his mediatorial upholding. And all created objects surrounding the soul, are kept in being only by Divine sustentation; so that should Jehovah-Jesus cease to be, the entire universe would sink at once into that nothingness whence at his creating fiat it at first emerged.

But in a sense special and peculiar is Christ Jesus the fountain of *spiritual life*. The great moral or spiritual want of man’s nature has a *threefold element*.

There is a want of *Knowledge*—a want of any thing but conjecture, alike as to the *fact* and the *fate* of immortality—so that living on this secluded isle of being, and about to loose from these mortal moorings, and stand out for eternity, man’s desire to know through what regions of sunshine or storm may lie his broad voyagings—to know what shall be his future—that agonizing desire may be well called *thirst*.

Then there is a want of *Power*. For though Heaven, in all its glory, should come out as a world visible to the senses in the firmament; still, unto the up-looking mortal, possessed of no organs whereby to mount from this lowly earth, and achieve entrance to its beatitudes, the longing for strong wings to ascend those far heights would be of a strength and intensity to be well called *thirst*.

Moreover, there is a want of *Preparation*. For if you were to bear a human spirit, unsanctified, up at once to that Paradise of Righteousness, and, with all its humbling sense of its own un-meetness, usher it amid the pomps and the purities of heaven, then verily, as a blind man amid radiant landscapes, or a deaf man amid ravishing harmonies, or a beggar in his rags amid the purple and gold of a monarch's pavilion, would it pine under a conscious want of preparation and adaptation. So that soul would be tortured with an agonizing longing for sanctification and holiness, which may well be called *thirst*.

And we say, this whole threefold want of man's nature is satisfied at once and forever in the redemption of Christ. *Knowledge* is given in the revelation of Immortality and Life brought to light in the Gospel—*Power* is given, to ascend the skies, and achieve entrance through a Mediator's merits into the City of Holiness. And *Preparation* is given—for washed in the blood of the Lamb, the robes which the ransomed spirit wears are lustrous and pure as the robes of the archangel. And supplying thus every want of the immortal nature, Christ may well be spoken of as the "*Fountain of the Water of Life*," quenching forever in the stricken spirit its immortal thirst.

Christ Jesus is to a sinful soul the alone ground of salvation. In him are all our sources and springs of blessedness. From him issue all the streams making glad the sin-sick—the stream of Cleansing Blood—the stream of Justifying Grace—the stream of Adopting Love—the stream of Sanctifying Power—the stream of Holy Peace—the stream of Gospel Ordinances—the

stream of Divine Fellowship—the stream of Heavenly Consolation. Yea, and in those high realms of glory, whereunto the ransomed soul ascends, all the raptures of the Blest have their springs in him. “*For the very river of the water of life proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*” So that whatever spiritual blessedness is vouchsafed to the child of God—the blessedness experienced in his earthly life, or the blessedness aspired to in the faith of a transepulchral immortality—all this blessedness, represented in the text by the figure of sweet water, has its springs and sources only in Christ.

The Gospel of Christ meets the soul of man as a poor, perishing wanderer in life’s wilderness, and leads him at once to the fountain of living waters. He drinks, and is refreshed. He drinks, and is comforted. He drinks, and is purified. He drinks, and is saved. And now, with his sins forgiven, and his heart renewed, he walks, even on earth, in Christ’s righteousness a conqueror, and more than a conqueror. He comes to the Jordan of death, and its dark flood rolls backward, and he passes over with songs of victory. Seraphs meet him on the heavenly shore. They clothe him in white raiment. The crown, the harp, the throne of immortality are his in the city and paradise of God. His are forever “*the things to come,*” immeasurable, unutterable—“*the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*” And doing all this for him, and much more, for which mortal man hath no thought, and no utterance, oh, how fittingly and how beautifully is this Gospel set forth, as unto pining and perishing humanity—“*The Water of Life.*”

These two things the text takes for granted—*That*

man is by nature athirst—and That Christ Jesus relieves him.

Then there are two other things that the text manifestly teaches :—

First. *The UNIVERSALITY of the Gospel offer.*

“*Let him that is athirst come.*” (*i. e.*) Let every one come who is sinful and perishing. And, that no man might limit the offer, by interpreting the word “thirst” to mean a supernatural and spiritual desire, excited in the soul by extraordinary grace, it is added—“*And whosoever WILL let him come.*” Yea, and as if to terrify any bigoted soul from daring to put any limit to the fullness of an offered salvation, it is added again, “*If any man shall take from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*”

And yet, alas ! in full face of this terrible anathema, mortal men have dared to rear bulwarks of bigotry round about this precious fountain of the living water. Some men build them out of the mysterious attributes and operations of *the Divine nature*. They tell us that God is a sovereign, with eternal and immutable purposes ; and that, therefore, the decree of election is a reason why some men will be lost. But they say all this falsely. To declare that God is a sovereign, with eternal and immutable purposes, is indeed only to affirm the bald truism, that God is a God. But, sovereign and immutable as he is, and must be, yet God himself everywhere declares that there is no hinderance to any man’s salvation, save the man’s own selfish and obstinate will.

When, theologically, we predicate *simplicity* of the Divine nature, it is implied that *God’s pleasure* and *God’s*

purpose are synonymous terms. And when God declares that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, he declares as well that he hath no purpose which involves the death of that sinner.

We question not in all its fullness the doctrine of God's sovereignty. We glory in that doctrine. We glory in the iron theology of John Calvin, because it was Christ's theology, and because it was Paul's; because, indeed, it is the only philosophic stand-point between Faith and blank Atheism. But then true Calvinism takes no greater guard of the Divine sovereignty than God himself takes of it. It leaves the great and mysterious truth of Divine decrees safe in the Divine and Omnipotent keeping. And finding it written in the record, as one of God's fixed and eternal purposes,—that without restriction or limitation, "*whosoever will may take the water of life freely,*"—no true Calvinist ever thinks to break in pieces the adamant of the Divine nature, that he may rear, out of its fragments, munitions of eternal rock round about the fountain of the life everlasting. God says those living waters flow freely unto all men. And the man who dares use any Divine attribute as an obstacle to any man's salvation, perverts God's own truth, and makes God a liar.

Meanwhile other men build these bulwarks round the "living waters" out of their own wisdom and philosophy. There is an exclusive and sectarian bigotry—not confined to any one Christian denomination, but in a measure, at least, common to them all—which talks rather of "the Church," than of Christ crucified; of sacraments, rather than of the Sacrifice; which practically regards the grace of God as flowing in the

channels of its own exclusive ordinances, and the healing power of the living water, as abiding rather in the earthen chalice than in the sparkling spring. To hear these men talk of ordinations, and confessions, and successions, and baptisms, one would think that this fountain of salvation were, like a mineral spring at a watering place, inclosed, and appropriated, and surrounded by liveried water-dippers, so that the soul that will not drink from these particular cups must needs perish in agony.

And the abomination of this last thing is worse than the first. Tell me that God's eternal decree shuts me away from salvation, and I could better be reconciled to it. The grandeur of the Eternal One, as with his majestic sceptre he waves me back from the fountain, would give dignity to destruction. But to be repulsed from the sweet waters by a poor mortal gesture; to lose the healing draught because a spider's web is spun by the well-side; to be driven backward upon God's uncovenanted mercies by some fair-lipped champion of successions and baptisms; to die of thirst in full view of the swelling fountain, because the cup wherewith I would draw and drink hath not the blazon of a shibboleth—oh, this is intolerable!

To be told that salvation is to be found only, or even especially, in the Presbyterian communion, or the Methodist communion, or the Episcopal communion, or the Baptist communion, or especially or only in any or all of them—this is intolerable blasphemy!

Why, what is the Church? The fountain of living water? No, sirs! An inclosure round about that fountain? No, sirs! The Church, all together, or in its

distinct denominations, is only a company of thirsty men, who have come to drink, each man for himself, of that blessed fountain, and whose only office is that of the "Bride," to say "*Come—come.*" Is Baptism salvation? No, sirs! Is the Lord's Supper salvation? No, sirs! Are Church ordinances salvation? No, sirs! *Christ crucified is salvation!* Let me meet a poor heathen in the wilderness, who never heard of a church or of a sacrament, and to whom in his circumstances a sacrament were impossible, and as I tell him the story of Christ crucified for sinners, I say, "Repent and believe, and thou shalt be saved forever."

Ah, ye troublers of men's consciences, about the poor mint and anise of rites and ceremonies, go up to Mount Calvary, and shut away if you can, if you dare, that dying malefactor, unto God's uncovenanted mercies, because he sat not at your board, and went not forth to your baptism, and the forgiving look of your glorious Redeemer will palsy the tongue that utters the blasphemy! Church ordinances may be indeed channels for the flowing of God's grace, but Christ crucified is the fountain, "*and whosoever will may take the water of life freely.*"

"*Whosoever will.*" No matter how unlovely; no matter how lost. Wherever, amid Gospel ordinances, or in lonely and heathen separation from all church privileges—wherever there is a human body wrapt round a human spirit—wherever there is a pulse to bound, and a lip to thirst, and an ear to hear the voice of the Spirit—limitless as the undying love of the Saviour that opened it, there flows the priceless fountain of salvation unto the thirst of the world. And woe, woe be unto him—who,

to magnify falsely a Divine attribute, or to glorify the bulwarks of a creed, or to guard with factitious sanctity the sepulchres of a Pharisaic church—woe be unto him; a woe written in the blood of souls, and breathed in dread anathema by heavenly voices; yea, the woe of having his part taken from the book of life, and of having added unto him the plagues written in the book of this prophecy—so terrible a woe be unto him who dares, with a human bigotry, to come between any sin-sick soul and a crucified Saviour, or to take any thing from the absolute fullness of the Gospel of Christ.

Having opened a living fountain for a thirsting world, the Spirit utters the cry, and the Bride echoes it, and every one that hears afar off the glad sound takes up the invitation, and extends it further. And it circles the round world, and is borne along the waters, and wafted by the winds, through the gates of great cities, and athwart wide continents, and into the hamlets of the hills, and the lone cabins of the wilderness—and it rings out in every chamber as an angel's voice, and startles every heart as an alarm-cry from eternity—that same blessed deliverance, everywhere and only, "*Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"

Meanwhile—secondly, the text teaches *the ABSOLUTE FREENESS of the Gospel offer.*

Free, we mean, as to its reception by the creature—not free in the sense of resulting from God's natural attribute of benevolence. Though it may not be for us to understand why God could not pardon sin without an atonement, yet this fact is a simple and explicit revelation—there is no salvation for a guilty soul but in Christ's

great sacrifice. God can not be to us in this sense freely benevolent as he is to unfallen angels. Love to man as a condemned sinner, flows only through the channels of an appointed Mediatorship. The covenant blessings for his Church are unto Christ, *not free favors*, but *a purchased possession*. By his sorrows we are comforted! By his stripes we are healed! The Rock whence the life-stream bursts, is a smitten and a shivered Rock! Our salvation cost Christ Jesus a heavenly crown and kingdom—a descent from an eternal enthronement—a humiliation unto death, even the death of the cross. But to man it is offered freely, “without money and without price.”

God asks no man to make an atonement for his own sins. That atonement is made already. God requires no austerities, no penances, no pilgrimages, to secure his favor. Salvation is brought to our very door, and offered free as the waters of earth and the air of heaven. The fountain hath been opened by a Divine hand, and the streams gush forth brightly, and fair forms stand by the well-side, and unto every poor wanderer in life’s hot desert sounds out the glad cry, “*Come, take the water of life freely.*”

Yes, and if taken at all, it *must* be taken freely. And here all false religions, and all human perversions of the true religion, are fearfully at fault. They send their disciples to the Divine fountain of grace, in one way or another, to purchase the living water. To the carnal heart, in its pride and vainglory, it is distasteful to receive as a free gift the soul’s salvation; and seeking to commingle its own merits with the righteousness of Christ, it perverts Christianity into “another gospel.”

There is a religion of forms, and there is a religion of faith—a religion of piety, and a religion of Pharisaism—a religion of penitence, and a religion of penances—a religion of ritualism, and a religion of righteousness—a religion of the crucifix, and a religion of the cross. And these are not one. And in this they differ—the one is a religion of *free gift and grace*; the other is a religion of *merit and purchase-money*.

All false worship is the offering of some poor human equivalent for the living water. The monster-mysteries of heathenism—the smoke of altars, the clouds of burnt incense, the blood of tortured victims; the pomps of the old Pharisaism—the phylacteries, and the tithes of cummin and anise, and the street-prayers; the masses and mummeries of cowed and cloistered priests, that make up the haggard superstition of the Tiber; the vaunting self-righteousness, that in the true Church of God thinks complacently of its own good works, as antecedents of justification—are each and all but the poor devices of the carnal heart to merit salvation; the false coin of a spiritual currency wherewith unhumbled man would buy of the great God the living water.

But away with them! away with them! God will have none of it. Jesus Christ will not allow human copartnership in the work of his sacrifice. My poor tears and blood can not commingle meritoriously with the blood and tears of the great Lamb of Eternity. If I come to drink of the living water, it must be with no price in my hand to purchase the blessing. Jehovah will be, to the end, a glorious SOVEREIGN in salvation.

What he giveth, he *giveth*! All thought of human merit dies at once and forever amid the shadows of

Calvary. To stay away from Christ till you have done something to secure his regards, and prepare yourself for salvation, is to reject Christ forever. You may *sell* your Lord for thirty pieces of silver! but *buy* him, oh, you can not with the treasures of a universe! "Who-soever is athirst may take, nay, *must* take the water of life freely."

These, then, are the simple and obvious lessons which the text teaches. Such, my hearers, is the Gospel call—universal in its offer—free in its conditions—glorious in its ineffable and everlasting blessedness. Here flows from the smitten Rock a fountain of peace, and joy, and salvation, and life everlasting. And who wonders, that, standing by its heavenly streams, and beholding the multitudes of a thirsting race perishing in the wilderness—who wonders that the Spirit lifts up the voice, and the Bride lifts up the voice, and he that heareth lifts up the voice, till the earth resounds with the enrapturing invitation—"Come, take the water of life freely!"

Now, in conclusion, let me press two points of personal application. The *first* is to the heart and conscience of the professing Christian. Hark! "*And let him that heareth say, come.*" Let him *say, come.* This text makes you all heralds of salvation. Ah! this work of calling sinners to repentance is not the work alone of an ordained ministry. Under the Gospel every saved soul becomes, by the great law of influences, a centre of salvation. Every light kindled by God must radiate light through the surrounding darkness. The simple fact, that you have drawn water in joy from the wells of salvation must constrain you, by a very law of your nature, to lead others in their thirst to the blessed fountain

It is so even in natural things. Behold that company of Israelites, thirsting in the Exodus. See, amid the burning sands of the desert the fainting thousands of the tribes! Note the glassy but fierce eye—the sunken cheek—the quivering limb! Hark to the sob—the moan—the wild cry—the gasping breath! But look again! The great Lawgiver hath smitten the rock—and forth in living streams foams and sparkles the cool, bright water! Ah now, how they spring from their agony, and rush to the stream-side!

See that mother! With the strength of a giant she cleaves her way to the fountain—she revives her fainting life with one full, deep draught, and then back, swifter than she came, to bear the life-cup to her dying child!

And there again, behold that Hebrew girl! Timid in her shrinking beauty in all the past marchings of the tribes—but now, rushing in the might of a mailed warrior to the sparkling spring, that she may bear back to her fainting mother's lip the life-giving draught of that bright, cool water!

Such is human nature—so unselfish and noble even in its sinful ruins. And shall that nature regenerate and redeemed, show itself more selfish in its joys of salvation? Can you, oh, can you, ye ransomed ones, can you taste the blessed water from the eternal Rock, and strive not, with all the might that is in you, to bring the imperiled and beloved to the fountain, that they may drink and live?

Ah me! you were dying of immortal thirst in life's great desert, when upon your ear fell a heavenly voice, telling of living water; and you rose from the death-spell, and struggled to the fountain, and drank, and live

And now to you comes the commandment—" *Let him that heareth say, Come.*" Oh, beloved members of this Church, awake to your high ministry! Tell me not that you can not speak to impenitent men about Christ and salvation. Methinks, if you are saved sinners you can not keep silence. Methinks your grateful heart will "sing to the well," exultingly and ever, as the freed bird sings to the air and sunshine. You have heard the glad sound, and believed it, and live in it—" *and let him that heareth say, Come, and take the water of life freely.*"

The other point of personal appeal is to the impenitent sinner.

This is to-day my commission. Hark! hark! I hear it! The Spirit's voice and the Bride's saying—" *Let him that heareth say, Come.*" And as one that heareth, I take up the loving eall, and cry—" *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*"

Oh, my message to you is a sweet message. We have to-day no terrors. We speak not of the wrath of God poured out without mixture into your cup of trembling. We speak only of bright water from a heavenly spring. " *Come, take the water of life freely.*"

Come! Come! What say you to this gracious call? Do you answer—"Oh no, I am not athirst. I do not need the living water. I have no unquenched desire; no agonizing yearning." Ah, but I know better. The very haste with which you rush to earth's unsatisfying things—as poor pilgrims to the mocking *mirage* of the desert—disproves all your boasting. You *are* athirst. In the depths of your own natures you are conscious of a mighty want. The world does not satisfy. The immortal spirit within pleads piteously for better things.

That is thirst. Your heart faints under earthly bereavements. You long for pleasures that do not fade—for riches that are incorruptible—for friendships that deceive not. That is thirst! You are afraid of death—of the judgment—of eternity. That is thirst! Alas, I know it, for I have stood in the green places, where life's water sparkled brightest to mortal lips, and found the cup dashed with wormwood, and longed the while for water from a purer spring. And I know—spite of all your songs and seemings of gladness—that you are parched and pining with an immortal thirst. Come, then, oh, come to the living water!

Or do you say—"Oh no, thirsty as I am, I do not believe Christ Jesus can satisfy me. Mount Calvary with its darkness, and its cross, and its expiring victim—ah, this does not look to me like a green spot in the desert, with palms and bright water!" But I answer—You do not know, for you have not tasted, that the Lord is gracious. Take testimony unto the preciousness of the Saviour. Ask the dying thief! Ask Stephen, amid his martyr-visions of glory! Ask John, amid the magnificent revelations of Patmos! Ask Paul, in the rapture of his exodus to the eternal! Nay, just *try it for yourselves!* Just come to the fountain! Stand here under the cross of my dying Lord, and drink one full, deep draught of the water of salvation; and then if it seem bitter to the soul, dash the heavenly cup to the dust, and go back to your sins again!

But do you say—"Well, give me the cup, then. I am ready to drink it. I am willing to be a Christian. I really wish I was a Christian. Bring me the living water!" But I answer, No. You must *come* to the

fountain. To come to Christ is to turn from your sins in penitence, and cast yourselves in faith on the merits of your Redeemer. And this you must do for yourselves. This no creature can do for you. God has opened the fountain, and issued the invitation; and you must rise up from the dust, and struggle to the water. Come, come to Christ Jesus!

But you say—"Must I not be born again, in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven?" And I answer—certainly you must. But regeneration is not your work. Faith is your work—regeneration is God's work. Believing is something to be done—the new birth is something to be experienced. Believing and repenting is coming to the water—but regeneration and sanctification are streams from the fountain; parts of God's free and glorious gift of the living water. Your part is to believe—God's part is to regenerate. Do your part, and you will find his is done already. Come, then, oh, come to the living water!

Oh, this blessed invitation! Why this shrinking from the Gospel call, as if it were a summons unto agony and conflict? It is only the offer, unto a thirsting spirit, of the cup of salvation—only a call to cast away the poor rags of self-righteousness, and be clothed in Christ's spotless and lustrous garments. Only to turn from the beggarly elements of this world, and receive, without money and without price, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Then come, oh, come, to the living water!

Hark how this invitation comes breathed in blessed voices—"The Spirit and the Bride say come." *The Spirit.* The God. The great and glorious One who

inhabiteth eternity. The gracious Father—the atoning Son—the applying Spirit. The mighty God speaks. Not in a voice of terror. Not words of wrathful doom and abandonment. But in that loving tone, that sweet and gentle word, wherewith a watchful mother calls her wearied, wayward child—“Come! Come! Come!”

“*And the Bride says, Come.*” Ah, *the Bride!* The Lamb’s wife. The Church triumphal and glorified. You find fault often with the earthly Church; and sometimes justly. Our ways are unequal, our garments are not white, our voices woo not mightily with their sad discords. But *the Bride* calls! The triumphant Church in glory—the redeemed who have put on their immortality. That sainted father—that ransomed mother—that blessed sister—that redeemed child! Those risen and raptured spirits call you. Oh, look up from these lowly graves, poor mourner! They are yonder in the green fields, by the stream of life in heaven. And as they go forth along the river-side, and drink of its living water, they are thinking of you—they are waiting for you. And their blessed voices come down lovingly on these earthly airs—“Come, come, come, take the water of life freely.”

Oh, what a call is this! The Spirit and the Bride call, and he that heareth calls. The voices of all God’s bright and blessed things take up the utterance. The dear ones in your earthly homes—mother, and sister, and brother, and child—whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, cry, “Come, come!” And the Church below, Christ’s witness unto the world, in all her ordinances and utterances, cries, “Come, come!” And the Church above, with the rustling of white robes,

and the sweeping of golden harps, cries, "Come, come!" And the angels of heaven, lo! rank above rank, the immortal Principalities, as they circle the eternal throne, they have caught up the sound, and cry, "Come, come!" And the Triune and Everlasting God—the Father, the elder Brother, the almighty Comforter—says, "Come, come!" And, behold, the battlements of the fair city are thronged with a great crowd of witnesses; and upon the ear of every fainting, dying soul in this earthly wilderness, breaks the glad call of the rejoicing universe, "Come, come, come!" "*And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely!*"

Would to God I could make this matter of the *fullness* and *freeness* of salvation clear to you! We often meet men, in these times of revival, who, agonizing under convictions of sin, ask the prayers of God's people in their behalf, while they persistently refuse to believe in Christ Jesus. And what is it they wish us to pray for? What is it they would have God do for them? Why, look! There is a gushing fountain in the wilderness. And close by the well-side kneels a poor, thirsting pilgrim, doing what? Drinking? No, indeed. But praying Almighty Grace to quench his death-thirst! "Oh," he says, "men and brethren, pray for me that God will take away my great anguish!" But what says his God? "Come, come, come, take the water of life freely."

And then other convicted sinners come to us saying—"Oh, sir, I can not understand these doctrines of the Atonement, of Faith, of Repentance. Explain them.

Explain them." As if a poor thirst-stricken man, by a sparkling spring should say, "Oh, tell me, tell me, what this water is made of, and how it came here in the hot wilderness, and why it is offered to me, and how can it quench my intolerable agony?" Alas, poor foolish questioner! let the philosophy of salvation alone. Come, drink—drink—drink of the living water.

"Come, take the water of life freely." Oh, what a precious and glorious call this! "*The water of life!*" Who can tell us all its meaning? "Water—water!" How sweet the sound to a fainting pilgrim! "Water—water!" How

"It cooleth the lip, it cooleth the brain,
It maketh the sick one well again."

A fountain of water! Not a poor reservoir, stagnant and hot—but a living fountain, with its green banks and bright palms. How sweet to the sun-struck wanderer, as it bursts in sparkling freshness in the midst of the desert!

A fountain of the water of *Life—Life*. Life physical, spiritual, immortal, eternal. Oh, that glorious vision of John!—"A pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. And on either side of the river, the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations!"

Oh, what means it?—"The Water of Life!" Tell us, ye bright ones! Ye risen spirits before the throne! Ye ransomed, out of every tongue, and tribe, and kindred, and people! Ye that walk the green pastures, beside

the still waters ! Tell us what it means—“*The Water of Life.*”

Dear, dying fellow-sinners, why stay ye from the fountain ? Why do you talk of future times, and convenient seasons ? How marvelous to procrastinate the thirst-quenching ! To say, “I am in love with my agony ; let me pant and pine a little longer !”

Oh no, no, no ! Come to-day—come this moment—come just as you are ! Oh, for an angel’s voice to utter the call fittingly ! You are poor prodigals in a far country—*come home ! come home !*

You are wanderers in a desert—athirst, imperiled, doomed, death-struck ! And here, behold !—the palms wave—the rock is smitten—the bright streams murmur and sparkle. Come, then, this moment, just as you are ! Come, come, come—“**COME TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY !**”

DEVELOPMENT AND DISCIPLINE.

"The Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart."—DEUTERONOMY, viii. 2.

YOU are already, I doubt not, quite prepared to regard the Israelites as a typical people; and the history of that nation as a figurative, or prophetic, record, sketching in parable much that does and will befall the Church in general, and its individual members in particular—and are thus prepared to consider the words of the text as having a practical application to ourselves. But in the use of all such scriptures we are to bear in mind these rules of symbolic interpretation—that frequently there is more in the type than in its antitype—and that in the study of parables and symbols, we are not to look for too minute an accommodation of their every part to the spiritual truth they inculcate. The Hebrew Exodus is undoubtedly an emblem of a Christian's condition in this world in progress toward heaven. And yet, if examined too curiously, a thousand incongruities will appear, which must not be insisted on. Here, as elsewhere, the figure is designed to illustrate some particular truth, and there are many things in the type which will not be

found in the antitype, and as well, many things in the antitype which are not set forth in the type.

Now the point of comparison brought to view in the text, is between God's treatment of the Israelites in the wilderness, and his treatment of his peculiar people—or if you please of all mankind—in this world of probation. And keeping in mind the principles of interpretation just adverted to, let us consider the record of the text as containing truth for our own personal and practical application.

It is confessedly a strange and unexpected narrative, which Moses gives of the wanderings of the Israelites. From the land of Goshen to the promised Canaan there was, through Kir, a direct way of journeying. But instead of pursuing it, they were commanded to turn and go through the wilderness of Paran. Nor this the whole wonder, for even following this circuitous route, it was not so protracted an Exodus from the Nile to the Jordan. Studying the journals of later Oriental tourists who have crossed the desert in the way of the Israelites, you find them leaving the Red Sea in the middle of March, and though traveling with scholarly leisure and research, yet in the middle of April—only a single month from their departure, they have set foot in the Garden of Gethsemane and the streets of Jerusalem. And yet you find these Israelites, under the Divine direction, instead of proceeding steadily, if slowly, toward Canaan, frequently retracing their steps, and revisiting the same places, and wandering about in the wilderness for full forty years. And it is a strange record; to be understood only on the supposition that on their departure from Egypt, the people were not prepared for the inhab-

itation of Canaan, and that therefore God kept them in the Exodus, as in a condition of pupilage and discipline, for the civil and ecclesiastical state to which he had destined them.

The Israelites, while in bondage in Egypt, were largely at least barbarian and idolatrous. And from the miraculous plagues by the Nile, to the miraculous passage of the Jordan, God was constantly teaching them those theological and moral truths, without which they could not have entered fittingly upon either the civil, or ecclesiastical, immunities of Canaan. And these wanderings in the wilderness were prolonged, not because Canaan was so distant, but only as a discipline preparatory to its citizenship. In the expressive language of the text, "*The Lord led them forty years in the wilderness to humble them, and prove them, and know what was in their heart.*"

Now in fine parallel to this, is God's treatment of all Christians, as the true Spiritual Israel. When called by omnipotent and renewing grace from the Egypt of sinful bondage, they have at once a sure promise of a glorious inheritance in the heavenly Canaan. But, instead of being translated at first to its beatitudes, they are left wanderers for long years in this earthly wilderness. And although this seems to us, at first, a strange dispensation; and we should, *a priori*, expect, that the justified one, having by reason of his union with Christ a perfect title to heaven, would, as soon as he is justified, be translated to blessedness and instantly glorified: yet here, as in the case of Israel, the arrangement is explained in the text. God keeps the soul in this wilderness-

state, "*to humble it, and to prove it, and to know what is in the heart.*"

This, then, is the simple thought with which we would engage your attention. There are, you perceive, two distinct moral processes indicated in the text. *A process of Discovery, and a process of Discipline.* Let us consider them in their order. *

First.—We have here, God's providential treatment of men in this world set forth, *as a process of Discovery.* "*God led them forty years in the wilderness to prove them, and to know what was in their heart.*"

And here the reference of the text is to all men in this state of probation. Of the Israelites, all were not God's true children, and millions were proved by the trial unworthy Canaan, and perished in the wilderness. And so now is it true of every man, whether Christian, or infidel, that God leads him in this wilderness-state "*to know what is in him.*" Not, indeed, that God himself has need of the manifestation. But that the development of the man's secret character, may either convince him of sin, and so lead him to repentance; or make manifest to a universe the justice of his final condemnation. To the eye of Omniscience, that latent and hidden principle of evil, which in the human heart lies back of all action, yea, back of all volition, is sin, most positive and deserving of punishment. But that this principle may appear unto finite comprehension in all its actual enormity; or in apostolic language, "*that sin by the law may become exceeding sinful,*"—the man is brought into circumstances, quickening the dormant principle into action, and making manifest its true nature.

Before trial, men do not suspect the evil that is in others, nay, do not suspect even the evil that is in themselves. Hazael uttered only the honest indignation of his heart, when to the man of God, foreseeing his future iniquity, he returned the question in sorrow and scorn,—“*Is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?*” The evil principle sleeps in the spirit, as the Egyptian monster in the placid waters of the Nile. And it is only the hot sun, or the sweep of the fierce tempest that can draw, or drive, it forth in its malignant manifestations to the eyes of creation. So it was with the Israelites. God tried them with mercies and tried them with afflictions. He led them to the bitter waters of Marah, and Jeshuran murmured. He made them to ride on the high places of the earth, and eat the increase of the fields, and drink the blood of Eschol’s grapes,—and Jeshuran waxed fat and kicked. And so it is ever. God is trying every human heart, that the world may know what forms of evil abide in its chambers. And the variety of trials is as great as the variety of our circumstances. He tries with blessings. The poor man, who by board and hearth in his lowly cottage, seems such a godly despiser of the pomps and vanities of this evil world; him, God raises suddenly into the possession of great riches: and lo! out of that dwelling of poverty, stalks, at the Divine summons, the biggest and most unblushing demon of pride and worldliness! He tries with affliction. He comes to the man rich and prosperous, and happy, and surrounded by a household which death has never entered, and whose heart seems full of grateful love to Jehovah, and with one breath of disastrous provi-

dence, drives the bark of earthly joy shattered and shipwrecked on the wild water,—and lo! forth from that heart where Angel Piety seemed to dwell, stalks now a mighty fiend of ingratitude and rebellion.

Under God's providential economy, earthly and practical life is but practical development. Man's business on this sublunary platform, is to work out his hidden character in the face of the universe,—to make manifest his secret thoughts even in forms of materialism. The fashion of the man's garments; the furniture of his dwelling; the pictures he hangs upon his walls; the volumes he places in his library; the places of his favorite recreation; the style of men with whom he delights to associate; yea, his very port and bearing as he mingles with men, and walks in the market-place,—are all but the development,—the visible expression, of the quality of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And this practical manifestation of character in life, is with a great Divine purpose. In the case of the Israelites, it was to show who, of the wanderers in the Exodus, were proper men to go over to Canaan. And in our case, it is to show, who of these dwellers upon earth, are becoming meet for the heavenly inheritance. Not that God needs to learn this, but that he would have his universe know, that he is just when he judges, and clear when he condemns.

And this, this is life! The development in actual forms of the hidden things of the spirit! This making known to a universe what there is in the heart! Oh, then, how awfully solemn a thing it is to live,—just to live! Why, sirs, what were you doing yesterday? "Busy with the

merchantmen in the market-place," you say. No, but you were exhibiting your principles of honor, or dishonesty, to a great cloud of witnesses, in preparation for the judgment! "Furnishing a house," you say. No, but you were filling your chambers and ornamenting your walls with outward expressions of your inner moral nature! "Chiseling the marble," or "coloring the canvas," you say. No, you were carving your own moral statue, and painting your own moral portrait, for exhibition at the judgment. "Adorning your person for some fashionable assembly," you say, or "sweeping sounds of rich music from the chords of an instrument." No, no, you were flaunting your immortal drapery on life's platform, a spectacle to angels—or sounding forth the harmonies or discords of your moral life, in the audience-room of Eternity.

Ah, life—earthly life is a thing fearfully solemn! What were these Israelites doing, in these long years of Exodus in the wilderness? Eating, and drinking, and marching backward and forward, and pitching the tent for rest, and the tabernacle for worship? Yes, indeed; but the while, doing all this for the great purpose of development! Working out, in manifest forms and expressions, those inner iniquities of the heart that unfitted them for Canaan. And, alas! alas! the million graves that marked the march of the Exodus, made manifest how fearfully all this development was unto condemnation: and to what multitudes God swore in his wrath that they should not enter in, because they believed not. Yes, that Exodus was a solemn journey. Nor is our life less solemn. Think of it! "*A spectacle to angels! Compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses!*" And so upon

earth, as a platform flung up in the midst of creation, man walks to exhibit himself in the eyes of the universe. And as each feature of his character is displayed, the pencil of the Eternal Limner transfers it to the immortal canvas, and clearer at every moment of life grows the expression, and stronger the resemblance; till finished at last, and perfect, as the portraiture of the hidden character, it receives the judgment of the universe, whether, in its resemblance to God and the angels, it deserves a place on the lustrous walls of the Eternal Temple—or, in its dark coloring, and distorted and demoniac expression, it beseeem rather the prison of despair, and should be shadowed with the blackness of darkness for ever and ever!

Now this is the first thought—*God's providential treatment of man in this world, a process of development and discovery.*—“*He leads them in the wilderness to prove them, and to know what is in the heart.*”

And it brings us to consider, *Secondly*—This other providential design—*A process of Discipline*—“*The Lord God led them forty years in the wilderness to humble them.*”

Here by a common scriptural figure, the great grace of humility, is put metonymically for all the distinguishing graces of Christian character. And the meaning is: that God led them about in the wilderness, as in a state of pupilage and preparation, for the civil and ecclesiastical immunities of Canaan. This was true, indeed, in regard to the very multitude that perished in the wilderness. The grand purpose even in that process of development, was to show each man's character *to himself*, that he might seek, by repentance, pardon and sanctification.

But it was especially true of them who, prepared by long wanderings, crossed at last the Jordan and entered the land of promise. And so in its spiritual reference, the application of this thought is specially to the case of the real believer, who by daily sanctification is becoming more and more meet for heaven.

As before observed, it seems, *a priori*, a strange dispensation, that the soul of the justified man is not taken at its repentance immediately, and directly to the celestial world. Nor is the mysteriousness of these earthly trials diminished by the answer—that the Christian must remain in this world for the sake of other men, as “the light,” and “the salt,” of lost and dying generations. If Israel must pass forty years in seclusion and pupilage for a citizenship in Canaan, still, we should so have ordered it, that, instead of repeatedly traversing those plains, with their burning sands and their fiery serpents, they should have pitched their tents for permanent encampment in some of those fertile valleys—green with pastures, and shadowy and sweet with palm groves and fountains,—which lay at not remote intervals between the Nile and the Jordan. And just so in the case of the believer. If the justified man in Christ must remain still in this world as a benefit to others; we should yet so have ordered it, that his life had been all peaceful and rapturous in the smiles of his God. But not thus Jehovah. God led Israel almost constantly amid the dry and desolate tracts of the wilderness. And God, in his analogous treatment of believers, subjects the justified soul to a constant vicissitude of temptation and affliction.

And the reason of this arrangement is set forth in the

text. He does it to work in the soul a meetness for the heavenly Canaan. And in illustrating this thought, we only ask you to observe,—*how earthly trials and affliction are the finest means of sanctification.* You perceive, at once, in the case of the Israelites, that if God had allowed them to pitch a permanent encampment, in some fair oasis of the desert, then, instead of becoming more humble, they would have waxed worse and worse in arrogance and carnality. And it needed the burning sun, and the hot sand, and the fiery serpents, and the constant assaults of the fierce men of Amalek and Moab, to humble them before God, and make them meet for a citizenship in the Theocracy of Canaan. And so of Christians on earth,—a moment's consideration will show you, how afflictions are after all the finest discipline of sanctification. For consider, in illustration, the influence of earthly trials on a few separate Christian graces.

Take, *first.* As a principle lying at the foundation of all Christian character,—*That filial faith, or implicit trust in God,*—which must become perfect in the soul before it enters heaven. And tell me how such a grace can thrive well in a condition of uninterrupted prosperity? Here is my rich brother, whose coffers are full of gold, and whose mansion is crowded with all luxuriant things; and can he trust strongly in God for food and raiment? Can he gather his children round his family altar, and utter sincerely and trustfully that filial prayer, “*Give us this day our daily bread?*” Ah, no, indeed! Bread is already his for a long life-time; and raiment, and shelter, and all things. He trusts to his stocks, and mortgages, and houses on

rent, and money on interest! But there lives a poor widow in yonder desolate chamber, rich only in faith and God's magnificent promises. Yesternight she gave her last poor morsel—and blanket, to her suffering child! and forgot her own hunger and cold over her worn and tear-blotted Bible; and when a visitor crossed her threshold, and dropped a coin into her trembling hand—as if an angel had been sent directly from God, to answer her prayer—she lifted her streaming eyes to heaven and cried, "Thanks, thanks, to my heavenly Father; he hath heard; he hath answered; oh, my child will not die now. My Father, my Father gives me daily bread!" Ah me! This beautiful trust in God grows not like the palm-tree, in green valleys, and by sweet waters. It needs, like God's cedars, the icy rocks of the mountain-top, and the fierce rush of the storm!

Or, take, *secondly*,—*That supreme love to God*,—which constitutes the very essence of holiness, and the very element of heaven. And observe, how it thrives best under a discipline of affliction. It would seem, indeed, *a priori*, that prosperity, and untroubled happiness, were the finest circumstances for this grace's development. And so they would be were man an un-fallen being. For then, love would have a direct tendency to beget love; and the more fair and unclouded our path, the more intense would be our affection to the beneficent Father, whose strong hand was guiding us. But, alas! man is not un-fallen. And amid the principles of his accursed nature, grow the rank tares of supreme selfishness. And, as a superinduced grace of miraculous implantation, supreme love of God—born of bright skies and balmy seasons—which

even the most selfish heart cherishes; for it is only self-love under heavenly disguises. We love ourselves, and so think we love all things that tend to our own happiness; and so long as God, with all his great attributes, seems busy only for our good, we perhaps think we love him. But do we though? Yonder sits a mother surrounded by her children. God has dealt with her most gently. Death has made no vacant place in her household, and her heart swells in maternal pride of her fair daughters, and her stately sons. And amid the sweet ministries of her home, maternal affection seems almost sanctified into religion; and with an exuberant thankfulness to that Almighty One, who hath so preserved her idols, she would repel you in anger, should you dare to question her true love to God. She would say—"I not love God! Oh, how can I do otherwise than love him? So good; so abundantly merciful he is to me and my beloved ones!" But does she love God though? Alas! go down to the last analysis of those affections, till you understand them in their true character; as they seem to the creatures of eternity, and what will you find there? Love to God? Ah, no! Nothing loftier or holier than the veriest idolatry. A lifting the creature into the place of the Creator. For just let the great God come as a sovereign into that glad household; let him breathe witheringly upon those beloved ones; let him bring the shadow upon that bright eye, and the palsy upon that bounding heart; and lay that child from her bosom to the dark and pitiless grave, and then, ah me! how soon that mother's love will rise up in rebellion. "Oh, unkind Providence!" she will cry—"Oh, ruthless, heartless, malignant monster, Death!" And in

all this she pours forth anathemas against the glorious Jehovah. Ah, no ; true love to God is of a different culture, and a different manifestation.

See that Christian mother by her dead child. She, too, has in all its depth and tenderness a mother's love. And that child's sweet voice and winning ways were all that made life blest in her lone and desolate dwelling. Alas, he to die ! That child, whose smile was as the smile of an angel on her path to eternity ! He to turn away from her clasping arms, and lie down in the cold, dark, un pitying sepulchre ! *But he hath died !* Alas, he will never smile on her again ! Never say, "Mother,"—"mother," again ! Yet see the mother now ! Weeping ? Yes, indeed—why should she not weep ? Her glorious and divine Saviour wept at the beloved grave ! But with all a mother's love, there is all a Christian's faith. With her tearful eyes lifted heavenward, hark to her trustful words !—"Oh, he said it—the blessed Master said it—'*Suffer little children to come unto me.*' Yes, my child has gone to heaven. My lamb is on the Shepherd's bosom—the Lord gave and the Lord taketh away—blessed, blessed, blessed be the name of the Lord !" And this is true love to God. A love swallowing up every earthly emotion, as the rivers are swallowed up by the sea. A heavenly plant of grace, that grows not well amid peaceful encampments, in valleys of sweet water : but needs for its highest culture, the barren plains of the desert, with sands and serpents—the wild sweep of the storm, and the fierce assault of armed enemies !

Or take, *thirdly*,—*That gracious deadness to the world, and patient longing for heaven*,—which, in apostolic experience, and indeed in all true Christian experience, is

the last and crowning meetness for the heavenly dwelling; and, observe, how it can scarcely be wrought at all in the soul, save by the discipline of affliction. In the case of the Israelites, at their first entrance upon the Exodus; and indeed afterward, and far on in their journeys, we find them looking back with strong desire to the carnal joys of Egypt. And had God allowed them to pitch permanent encampment in some bright valley of palm-trees, then, still more and more, had they shrunk from the dread swellings of the Jordan, and the unknown and undiscovered land beyond; and it was only at the close of forty years of pilgrim wanderings, amid the privations and dangers of that wild and howling wilderness, that the tried hearts of the people yearned with a mighty homesickness, for an establishment in the civil and ecclesiastical economy of a Canaan of rest. And so it is with the Christian. Faith, however vigorous its exercise in the heart of a believer, is yet not the positive reality, but only the philosophic evidence, of things unseen and but hoped for; and against it, things seen and temporal are arrayed in a sensible and present power, antagonistic and overwhelming. And God's method of strengthening the faith, till the unseen becomes more than an equipoise for the sensible—is not, by bringing out the things of eternity in positive and visible splendor in heaven; but by beclouding, and so weakening, the rival glories of time. Just as in the material universe, it is not by making the *heavenly* really more lustrous, but only by bringing night over the *earthly*, that God brings out the stars.

Here is a man—it may be truly a Christian—whose earthly life is full of gladness and glory: his dwelling is

a palace; his name is a power in the land's language; fair and fond children love him; honorable men honor him; no corroding sorrow tortures his heart; no insatiate ambition embitters his life-spring; a happy and a joyous man he is on the earth. Now, though this man may be truly a Christian, he is not ready to die. So rich and fair in its coloring, falls round him this massive curtain of things temporal, that even the revealed lustres of Eternity shine but faintly through; and if the fire-car, that came for Enoch, and Elijah, should descend visibly to his portal, oh! it would be almost with the recoil of a breaking heart, that he looked the last on his princely possessions, and said "farewell" to his beloved household; and flung the reins loose on the winged coursers; turning his face forever from the earthly, and rushing up to the skies.

But now, in the contrast, look yonder. In that cold and comfortless hovel lives a poor and friendless man. Poor and friendless through no fault of his own; for, to the eye of God's angels, that hoary head is a crown of glory. But from plenty and gladness God's mysterious Providence has stricken him as with a thunderbolt. His, too, were once a princely home, and stately children, that would have shed their heart's blood as water ere a father so honored should have been left thus in want. But, alas! they are now in the grave. And with no hand to guard, and no eye to watch, he is friendless and alone. But, come near and talk with him, if you would learn the mighty power of sorrow to sanctify. "Ah, my old friend, this is a hard lot of yours, is it not?" "Hard! hard! Oh, no, no!" he says. "It is enough for the disciple that he be as

his Master, and my blessed Redeemer had not where to lay his head. Yes, and it will be over soon. A little longer, and the desert will be crossed, and then the Canaan!" "And so you are thinking of heaven, and are willing to depart?" "Willing!" he says, "willing! willing to be with the beloved dead, and the more beloved Jesus! Willing! Why there is not a thing now between me and my Saviour! I am athirst for the living water! I am homesick for glory! Come, come, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Yes, yes, my brethren, it is thus God sanctifies—he takes away the earthly that the heart may rise to the heavenly. He tears the bark from its mortal moorings, that it may launch forth toward the eternal haven. He stirs up the nest of the slumberous eagle, that with exulting pinion, it may soar to the sun!

This, this is the gracious mystery of true heavenly-mindedness! It was when surrounded by enemies, thirsting for his blood, that Stephen saw heaven open! It was in the depth of the *Ægean* poverty and exile, that John beheld the glory of the sweeping trains along the golden streets of the City of Holiness! It was upon the red sands of the Roman arena, when weighed down with fetters, and faint from lonely imprisonment, and surrounded by infuriated heathen, and wild beasts of the amphitheatre, that the voice of Paul rang out, with the exultation of more than a conqueror—enraptured with the good fight he had fought, and the crown of glory thenceforth laid up for him.

Yes, my brethren—this desire to depart, and be with Christ, is a crowning grace, that grows not, like the palm-tree, in the green valleys, where rejoicing pilgrims

pitch tent in the wilderness, but rather like God's great cedars, it needs the sweep of the hurricane, and the icy rocks of Mount Lebanon. Like the rainbow round the head of the mighty angel, it comes not forth in its brightness along the heaven's pure azure, but needs for its more lustrous glory a background of cloud!

Now, this is the other thought of the text. *God's Providential treatment of men in this world, a process of Discipline.* "*He led them forty years in the wilderness to humble them.*" And how rich the lesson in its consolation to the real believer! Those Israelites understood it at last, when, as conquerors and more than conquerors, they went over Jordan—how much they had needed the stern pupilage of the Exodus, to prepare them for the civil and ecclesiastical beatitudes unto which God was leading them. And though at first it seemed strange that, instead of advancing by rapid and direct marches to the promised land, they should thus wander for long years amid the sands of the desert, yet, from the green fields and glorious cities of Canaan, they looked back with rapture and love, "*remembering all the way the Lord their God had led them.*"

And just so of the Christian. It seems strange indeed sometimes, that, at the first moment of repentance and pardon, the justified soul is not taken to glory. But we shall see it by and by, and we ought to see it presently—that, as spirits under discipline for the different allotments of heaven, more precious to us is this pilgrimage, with its poor serip and its worn sandal, than the instant fire-car of the prophet to translate us to the skies. There are distinctions in the conditions of the redeemed in eternity—harps of a more amazing power

—and sceptres of a wider sway—and stations nearer in honor to the throne of our God! And this wearisome pilgrimage on earth is but a continuance on that wrestling arena, where every successful struggle adds to the fair and goodly things that make up eternity. These tears wrung from the weeping eye, and these blossoms torn from the heart, are to be set as rare gems, and woven as rich flowers, in our heavenly crowns of rejoicing. And who wonders longer at the triumph of the great apostle in view of afflictions? From the midst of persecutions, and conflict, and agonies, such as had been borne by no other mortal, he had been caught away to stand for a moment amid the great realities of heaven—to hear the unspeakable words—to compass the amazing issues of present sufferings, in the ineffable glories of eternity! And borne back again to the scenes of his earthly trial; so very a trifle seemed it all, in contrast with the eternal triumph, that upon all these persecutions, and agonies, and deaths, he looked calmly down, saying, as if they were unworthy the reckoning—as if they were nothing—“*These light afflictions, which are but for a moment,*”—and then lifting his flashing eyes upward, cried in exulting gladness—“*The GLORY!*”—“*The WEIGHT of glory!*”—“*The EXCEEDING weight of glory!*”—“*The FAR MORE exceeding weight of glory!*”—“*The far more exceeding and ETERNAL weight of glory!*”—ay—ay—and those amazing triumphs, *the result* of these trials! In the beneficent process of God’s gracious economy, “*These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, WORKING OUT FOR US the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!*”

Oh, I understand it now—what the apostle meant

when, exultingly, "he counted all things as loss that he might attain unto the fellowship of Christ's sufferings,"—mark you!—not the fellowship of his triumph; but the fellowship of—*his sufferings*. And understanding this—in these few years of earthly preparation, I would not barter this framework, with its aching head and burdened heart, for the form of immortality and power that shall spring from the Resurrection. And I would not exchange my mortal right to share my Master's sorrows—to bear his heavy cross—to wear his piercing thorn crown—to drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism—not for all the pomps and powers of the archangel! Yes—yes—from those high hills of glory—whereon, with the palm and white robe, the earthly pilgrim rests from his labor—blessed, oh! how unspeakably blessed! it will be to look back along the path of the Exodus, "*and remember all the way that the Lord our God led us in the wilderness, to humble us, and to prove us, and to know what was in the heart.*"

And wonder not, then, my impenitent hearer, that, though our way lies through a wilderness, we should still urge you, with many tears, to take scrip and staff and go with us on pilgrimage! If this spiritual Exodus were as joyless and terrible as your sinful fears make it, still we tell you, that the bright lands of eternity lie across this desert, and can only be reached by him that girdeth strongly the loins, and goes forth on the pilgrimage. But then, as of the Hebrew Exodus, so of the spiritual—there is no wider mistake than to suppose that the wilderness is only a barren plain, covered with sand, and swarming with serpents—no, thanks be to God! thickly bestudding both, are fair and fertile spots in the desert, where the

grass is soft and green around sunny fountains, and the birds warble, and the palm-trees wave!—and alike in both, there rise along the pilgrim's pathway, landscapes of surpassing grandeur, where the flashing torrents wind through the passes, and the mountains pierce the heavens with their cloud-crowned summits. Yea, and in those tracts where the pathway is most wild—where the sands are hot, and the serpent hisses, and the sun pours his fierce beams on the weary pilgrim—even there, our march is not comfortless. For along the desert sand falls the heavenly manna—and fast by our side flows the living water—and steadfast in the van abides the Shechinah of glory—and then beyond!—ah, beyond! *Canaan!* Canaan, with its royal cities, and its thrones of power, and its diadems of glory! Canaan! Canaan as it burst upon the eye of Moses, making his dying hour a triumphal rapture from the heights of Pisgah! Canaan! Canaan!—that house of many mansions!—that home of the beloved dead!—that dwelling-place of Jesus!—that glorious kingdom of God! Oh, Canaan, Canaan! lies fair and bright before us—and this path through the desert is the only path that leads to its enrapturing inheritance. “*Come with us, then, come with us, and we will do you good!*”

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

"Know ye not your own selves."—II. CORINTHIANS, xiii. 5.

THIS question is exceedingly impressive as addressed to the Corinthians. They prided themselves in the Greek philosophy, and the very wisest of the precepts of that philosophy was—"KNOW THYSELF." Put to them, therefore, the question expressed both irony and astonishment—astonishment, in view of their real self-ignorance—irony, in view of their pretentious philosophic self-knowledge.

Put to ourselves, the question may have less of irony, for we have little of the Greek pretension, but is expressive of no less astonishment, for we have even more than Grecian self-ignorance. *We do not know our own selves!* A marvelous assertion, yet a true one. Physically, intellectually, morally, spiritually, most of men are to themselves profound strangers.

Physically, we are ignorant of ourselves. The human body is a living machine constructed for the use of a spiritual being. It is the most complex, and wonderful, and invaluable of all machines. And yet how little do most men know of it! How ignorant oft-times are they of the simplest functions of the animal economy! And in this ignorance it is not strange that they violate the

laws of health every day, and fall victims to self-induced disease, which is suicide. If men thoroughly understood, and perfectly obeyed those laws of physical life, probably most of the race would attain to the full threescore and ten, or the fourscore years.

How strange, then, nay, how sinful is this ignorance! If a man think to keep time-pieces in order, or musical instruments in tune, he must spend years in a careful study of their mechanism. But parents pretend to take care of children, knowing no more of the laws of food, digestion, respiration, exercise—no more, indeed, of the child's simplest animal functions, than the infant itself knows of the wheels of a watch, or the stops of an organ. And what marvel that so many children die in the first years of their being?

And so too of our maturer self-management, how sadly are we unprepared for a work so important. There is probably no man who hears me who would attempt the navigation of a steamship across the ocean. But the mechanism of that steamship is not half so wonderful, nor its management half so difficult, as of these human bodies floating on the seas of life.

And if a hundred of these youths should attempt, each the navigation of such a vessel, probably fewer would be shipwrecked than will perish prematurely through self-ignorance; and more would reach trans-atlantic shores than will attain to the fourscore of a vigorous and healthy old age.

True it is, we excuse our ignorance here by our well-grounded reliance on professional medical science. And the excuse would be good if we employed physicians *to keep us in health*, rather than to aid us in sickness. But,

alas, we run the noble vessel into wild currents, and amid rocks and quicksands; and then hoist signal-flag for the pilot, to work the poor imperiled bark into the open sea again! Verily this wide-spread ignorance of common physiological truth, as it has to do with the conditions and functions of bodily health, is both shameful and sinful.

Every being to whom God has kindly given a body, should know enough of the laws of food, exercise, respiration, digestion—enough, in a word, of the general principles of physiology—to preserve that body in its highest conditions of health and strength, till the machine is worn out in the fourscore years of a regulated and well-spent life.

Nor less common and lamentable is our *intellectual* self-ignorance. Many men practically ignore their intellectual faculties. While only a few propound it philosophically, very many act on the theory, that bones, nerves, muscles, blood-vessels, brains, all make up a thinking and feeling machine, working only on chemical or mechanical principles. And their only self-culture consists in taking care of the body. Like the rich fool in the parable they think only of the stomach, even when they address words to the soul.

Some men never *think* at all. All elaborate art, all abstruse and difficult science, all literature that exercises the higher faculties, yea, even the blessed Gospel, in its mission to the intellect, all seem to them burdensome. They live not amid thoughts, but amid feelings. Not only not cultivating mind, but almost unconscious of its possession.

And even among those who recognize their intellectual

nature, how strangely is it treated ! No two minds are alike, and therefore no two minds should receive the same treatment.

Here self-knowledge is essential to self-culture. We must discern the grand master-faculty of the soul, and give it adjustment as the central and controlling force in the system. As God designed every man to fill a particular sphere, and do a particular work, so hath he equipped him with forces and faculties for that work and sphere. In all the prodigality of his fullness God never wastes implements or energies. He gives not wings to fishes that swim in water, nor fins to birds that fly in air. Nor the more hath he vouchsafed a sensitive and soaring genius to a man designed to break stones on the road, nor a stolid and insensible patience to one formed for a great orator or poet. *

Every man has his special intellectual gift, which often he does not discover till too late to develop and employ to profit. And so he goes to the grave, instinctively dissatisfied with himself, as a mal-adjustment in the social system—not doing the great work God designed for him, because he has not perceived where his great strength lies, and is working altogether with his weaker and secondary faculties. And surely all this is shameful and sinful. Every man to whom God hath given an intellect, should have enough self-knowledge to understand thoroughly its peculiar powers, that, seeking intelligently those spheres and works for which God has equipped him, he may so live therein and labor, that mortal life shall not be a gloomy failure, but a glorious success.

Meanwhile, quite as common, and even more lamentable, is our *moral* self-ignorance. Our intellect may be

symmetrically developed, and in vigorous exercise, while we have little knowledge or feeling of our moral condition. And yet the desires, the affections, the will, the conscience—those principles which make up our moral constitution—should be, even more carefully than our bodily functions, objects of self-management. The evils of ignorance here are manifest both upon our *comfort* and our *character*.

Self-knowledge on this point tends greatly to increase even our *comfort*. Of the passions and emotions which belong to our moral nature, some are naturally painful, and some pleasurable in their exercise, and our earthly happiness depends upon quickening the play of those which give pleasure, and diminishing the power of those that give pain. Malice, envy, covetousness, injustice, cruelty, anger—these, and all that great class of feelings which we term the malevolent, are, in their very exercise, sources of wretchedness. Whereas, on the contrary, gentleness, forgiveness, charity, long-suffering, love—and that whole class of benevolent emotions to which they belong, do, by their very exercise, fill the spirit with gladness. And yet these simple cardinal facts of moral science how few men ever consider!

The soul of man has been compared to a dwelling of many apartments, and the man himself has been represented as occupying mostly the rooms corresponding with his most exercised emotions. Now, in such a house, love may be supposed to have a fair banqueting hall—anger a cell dark and prison-like;—faith and hope to have glorified chambers looking heavenward, and the lower passions to rage and raven like unblessed spirits in dungeons of gloom. And possessed of such a house,

how foolish were the man who should seldom enter, or positively and practically ignore those loftier and lovelier pavilions of gladness—deliberately choosing to abide in the cell of envy, or the dungeon of anger, or the dark chamber of impurity, rather than to sit at love's great banquet, or to recline in the pavilion where benevolence makes sweet music, or to ascend to the bright chamber of faith and hope, and look forth upon sun and star in heaven from their open casements. Surely, our happiness greatly depends upon understanding and rightly treating our moral nature.

Meantime, of course, our *character* depends upon it. And verily, it is marvelous how little most men know morally of themselves! Not that herein we have not adequate standards and powers to achieve a right judgment, for on these very points we judge other men correctly. Probably in most cases the moral reputation a man sustains in a community gives the truth in regard of his moral character. If the world unite in calling him a good man, he probably is good. If it call him a bad man, he probably is bad. Even a wide-spread suspicion of a man's dishonesty, or impurity, or untruthfulness, is in most cases a shadow of some positive salient angle in his character. The eagle-eyed world looks keenly through all the hypocrisies and disguises of pretense, and reads aright the real elements of character.

And yet, strange to say, few men understand rightly *their own*. And this, not because they can not, but because they will not. They do not look carefully after those favorite, or easily besetting sins which color, yea, constitute character. In their superficial self-examination they do not carry God's lamp into the haunts and fast-

nesses of their ruling propensities. The proud man looks after his covetousness—and the envious man looks after his dishonesty—and the impure man looks after his insincerity—each carefully perceiving, perhaps honestly confessing, some evil thing about him, which yet is not the controlling principle—the elementary evil of his character. And thus reading himself wrongly, he manages himself also wrongly. He is busy in destroying evil insects, while the serpent-sin grows strong—cutting down thistles, and brambles, and thorns, while the oaks and cedars of iniquity shoot deep their strong roots, and spread wide their mighty branches.

And surely all this is shameful and sinful. Every man, possessed of a moral nature, whose development must be into immense growths either of good or evil, should understand it thoroughly, that the flowers and fruits of its culture may be goodful and glorious.

But beyond all this, and that which our text refers to especially, there is among men a lamentable *spiritual self-ignorance*. And on this point we wish particularly to dwell. We have just come from the sacramental communion, and are therefore in circumstances demanding special self-examination. Doubtless some of us were at that table who had no right to be there, and some of us were not at that table for whom the gracious Saviour kept a place in love.

There are probably some here who think themselves Christians, but are not—and as probably there are others who are truly Christians, while they do not think themselves such. Let us consider these two classes separately.

First.—*There are persons who think themselves Christians, but are not.* Many men are really self-deceived.

Either encouraged and urged by injudicious friends, or relying on insufficient evidences, they have united with the people of God, although still unregenerate. Nevertheless such self-deception is altogether unnecessary. Surely if there be any thing made plain in the Bible, it is the evidence of true Christian character. On this point the apostles express themselves most confidently. "*I know*," says Paul, "in whom I have believed." "*We know*," says John, "that we have passed from death unto life." "*We know* that we are in the truth." "*We know* that we dwell in him." Surely we may know ourselves here as certainly as on any question of moral character. The evidences of regeneration are abundantly revealed, and so plainly that a child can understand and apply them.

A true Christian *loves God*—loves the moral character of God—loves the very holiness of God—loves the very justice of God which condemns his iniquity. This love of God is something more than a natural gratitude for God's many mercies. It is a changed emotion toward God—new, filial, delightful.

A true Christian *believes in Christ*—not merely with a speculative faith that he was a divine person, and died to save men; but with a sweet and loving trust, seeing in him a beauty and preciousness as *his* Saviour, and casting himself unreservedly for salvation upon his glorious grace.

A true Christian *sincerely repents of sin*. He enters into it not merely a selfish legal sorrow, caused by a fear of its punishment, but he hates sin, self-considered, on account of its own odious and evil nature.

A true Christian *loves the duties of religion*. He does

not indeed always enjoy them to the same degree. His Bible sometimes seems to him a sealed book, and prayer a barren ordinance. But that on the whole he finds pleasure in these things is as certain to himself as the gladness to his senses from the fair sights and sounds of the glorious creation.

A true Christian *loves his brethren*. He loves them not so much for what they are in their station or themselves, as because they are Christians. Because Christ loves them, and they love Christ. He delights in their company. He seeks to do them good. And he knows that he hath passed from death unto life because he loves the brethren.

Now these are some of the more obvious evidences of regeneration. They might be greatly multiplied, but these are sufficient. If a man be certain that he has one positive Christian grace, he may be certain that he is a Christian, for the graces are not separable. How strange, then, is it that men should be self-deceived! What marvel that Paul, in the text, treats this self-ignorance with solemn irony! Surely a man may know, indeed must know, whether he love his parents, his wife, his children. And why may he not know as assuredly whether he loves God! Yea—know more assuredly. For if he love God at all, it is a *new* love—a love taking the place of an old hatred—a love not natural but divinely implanted—a heavenly grace, as a fruit of the Spirit.

Here, then, there seems indeed scarcely need of any moral analysis. In the winter time, it may require careful scrutiny to decide as to the life of a tree in your garden. But go forth in the warm, genial summer, and

the veriest child beholding either its bare branches or its golden fruit can decide at once, and unhesitatingly. And so it is of Christian character. Are you bringing forth fruit meet for repentance—fruits unto godliness? If so, you need not go down to the buried roots of grace in the heart, for by these fruits you may know yourselves.

Surely on this point there need be no self-deception. If instead of ever feeling the spiritual pulse, to discern mayhap, some feeble, fitful heart-beat—we spent our days in a vigorous culture of that spiritual life, making it luxuriant and fragrant with the bloom and aroma of all Christian graces, then there could remain no ground of question, for the difference between the converted and unconverted man would be as marked and marvelous, as between the *living* and the *dead*! Then no man could journey to eternity in fearful self-ignorance. No man, in the inspiration of a false hope, could lie down on a death-bed dreaming of heaven, and wake up in eternity outcast and lost. No man could realize in his own experience this fearful picture of revelation—of a spirit approaching with a bounding foot and a joyous heart the heavenly banqueting-house,—knocking hopefully at its glorious portal, and crying as if denial were impossible, “*Lord, Lord, open unto us!*” and yet be driven away with the fearful denunciation, “*Depart! Depart! I never knew you!*”

Surely men may know themselves. Surely they should. And yet alas, alas! there are self-deceived professors in the Church of Christ. Dead corpses, wearing heavenly flowers and white raiment, at the board in the guest-chamber! neither giving, nor having any true

evidences of piety, though they may think themselves Christians.

Meanwhile, *secondly*, there are doubtless some in the world, not members of the Church, nor thinking themselves Christians, who are yet truly regenerate, and real children of God. The occasions and causes of this strange self-distrust are manifold.

Sometimes it arises from *a temperament constitutionally gloomy*. The man looks habitually on the dark side of every thing. Of course he may be expected to look on the dark side of his own religious character. Even in regard of mortal and earthly conditions, he turns away from sunshine to dwell in shadows, and of course his *soul's* tabernacle is ever pitched, not on the sunny hill-side, but in valleys of gloom.

Then, sometimes this self-distrust is but a temporary result of *bodily infirmity*. A shattered nervous system, imperfect digestion, secretion, circulation—these things, and such as these, perform the functions, and assume the very character of an accusing conscience. And what the man wants to make him a hopeful and joyous Christian, is bodily regimen and exercise, and not theological casuistry. You might as well exercise your logic upon dyspepsia, or rheumatism, or the toothache, as to reason such a spirit out of its religious despondency. The gloom results from physical condition; and to physical condition, and not conscience, must the remedy be applied.

Sometimes, again, this self-distrust arises from *an over-estimate of the particular manner, or circumstances of conversion*. Having heard or read of some men's peculiar exercises in regeneration, wherein deep distress was

followed by instantaneous and extravagant rapture, they will rest satisfied with nothing but just such an experience. So they go heavily burdened and without hope. They can not tell the day nor the hour of a demonstrative regeneration. They can not even tell of any sermon, or text of Scripture, or special providence of God, which the Holy Ghost employed to arouse their attention to spiritual things. They can indeed perceive a decided, yea, a radical change in their own feelings and conduct. Things they once loved they now hate. Things they once did, they now shrink from. Herein "old things have passed away, and behold all things have become new." But the manner and manifestation of the change does not satisfy their conscience. As if it mattered how a blind man's eyes were opened, if he perfectly see! or with what instrumentality of rope or life-boat the drowning man was saved, when he stands safe upon the shore!

Then, again, men sometimes are led into this self-distrust *by assuming false tests and standards of Christian character*. They entertain extravagant notions of the effects even of regeneration. They have read the religious biographies of distinguished Christians—perhaps their own journals and diaries written in secret, but yet written *to be published*—pitiful skeleton-abridgments of the man's real history—minced and meagre epitomes of his veritable experience—wherein mention is often made of frames of deep humility, and strong faith, and ardent love—of exercises of repentance, and consolation, and rapture—of days of fasting and nights of prayer, as if life were uninterrupted in its wrapt communion with God. But wherein there is no mention at all of experiences as real and positive, of sinful thoughts and carnal

desires, and perhaps even of deeds flagrantly evil. And thus the humble man, finding in his own personal experience so much of remaining corruption, and in this recorded experience of others, so little of any thing but high frames of godliness, turns away in despair, beguiled of all comforting hope by these men's pretentious dishonesty in concealing their own manifold short-comings. I say their *dishonesty*—for while they may not have exaggerated their frames of piety, they have carefully suppressed all record of their carnal frames—giving only half a truth, which in effect and reality is a whole falsehood, leading men to believe that regeneration makes a man at once and positively an angel, and therefore to be satisfied with no evidences of piety short of an angel's flaming heart and up-soaring pinion!

Now, these are but specimens (and we have no limits for others) of the causes or occasions of self-distrust, whereby men genuinely converted to God are kept in despondency, and hindered from professing Christ before men. These, and all such causes, are included in one general one—not a want of sufficient evidence, but a wrong standard of judgment. The man does not go directly to the Bible to learn what, as exhibited either in its positive precepts, or its sainted biographies, are the true evidences of conversion. He takes counsel, rather, sometimes of his own morbidly sensitive conscience, and sometimes of men who live mainly in emotions. And he will often urge as reasons why he can not believe himself a Christian, those very feelings and frames of mind which the Bible sets forth as the "fruits of the Spirit."

These, then, are the two classes which the text con-

templates, as men who "*know not their own selves*;"—men self-deceived, who are not Christians—men self-distrustful, who are.

And now, interrupting for the present this train of thought, let me close with some words of personal exhortation.

First.—*To the self-deceived*, how earnestly does the text appeal! Beloved hearers, to be in the Church without piety is perhaps of all conditions on earth the most dreadful. Not because false professors are more sinful than other men—though even this may be true, for the common human conscience will regard the sin of Judas as greater than that of Pilate—but because there is less hope of their conviction of sin, and, consequently, of their conversion, than if they had not found rest for a guilty conscience in a fair, though false, refuge.

Let us, then, be willing "*to know our own selves*!"—to know the very worst of our character and condition! Surely we may be undeceived. The man who consciously delights even in secret iniquities—who feels in his heart that he is a dishonest man, or an untruthful man, or an impure man—who hath no delight in God's service and ordinances—who exhibits in his daily life none of the gracious fruits of the Spirit—that man may surely know that, however excited at times may be his emotions, "he is yet in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

The whole Bible represents the visible Church as embracing many members who will finally be lost. We may really think ourselves Christians, and yet not be Christians. And here, as elsewhere, honesty of

opinion neither excuses its falseness, nor averts its fatal issues. Mistaken and misguided sincerity can not control the mighty workings of God's government that are bearing him to destruction. If a man drink a poison-cup, thinking the draught living-water, still the hemlock will destroy him. If a man, really believing he can fly, fling himself from a precipice, he will yet none the less be dashed in pieces. A mistake as to the reality of personal religion is absolutely fatal. It is the immortal spirit that drinks the deadly drug, and springs a suicide from the precipice. O God! give us the wisdom that is willing to know the worst, so that if this day we are counted with the foolish virgins, we may at once flee unto the Redeemer for regenerating grace, and have oil for our lamps, ere the self-deceived soul be startled from dreams of heaven into everlasting despair by the midnight cry that heralds the Bridegroom.

Secondly.—The text speaks as earnestly to the *self-distrustful*—those who have been truly converted, and have neither the confidence nor the comfort of the children of God,—those who really hate sin and love the Saviour, and yet, because they find a remaining carnality, a law of sin, in the members, warring with holiness; or because they can not tell when or how they were converted, or do not experience the peculiar raptures which they have heard or read of in the lives of professing Christians, will see in themselves no evidence of conversion. These men the text exhorts unto hopeful self-knowledge. It sets forth faith, and not feeling, as the evidence of piety.

Dear friends, your trust for salvation is not in what you are, but what Christ is. If, with a penitent, and

believing, and loving heart, you cast yourselves upon the Redeemer, then *you know you are Christians!* For he says you shall “in no wise be cast out,” and “shall never perish!” And thus “knowing your own selves,” your place should be in Christ’s visible Church. He commands you to enter it. His words to you are personal and explicit—“*Do this in remembrance of me.*” And as these sacramental seasons go by, and you turn even sadly away from them—ah, me! how you slight and grieve your gracious Redeemer! You say practically—and heaven, and earth, and hell give heed to the utterance,—you say, “*I will not remember thee! Those tears—those blood-drops—those wounded hands, and head, and heart—those mighty dying agonies—oh, let their record perish! Oh, let them be blotted forever from my memory!*”

And treating Jesus thus—though it be in honest self-distrust, yet a distrust that dishonors his loving-kindness—what marvel that he hides his face from you—that your hearts do not rise into rapture with the full hope of salvation!

Thirdly.—The text speaks most earnestly *to the openly impenitent; men neither professing nor possessing Christianity.* In one sense, indeed, these men do “know their own selves.” They know that they are unconverted; that they have neither part nor lot in the great salvation. They are not hypocrites, for they do not make *false* professions. *Nevertheless, they do make public and most fearful professions!* They profess to be the *enemies of God!* They stand boldly in the ranks of rebellion against Jehovah. Alas, beloved and misguided hearers, in this great matter there is no neutrality! He

that is not with Christ is against him. You turn away from, you renounce, you scorn *our* sacraments. But you have *your own*! You are baptized unto death. Your communion is with hell!

Pause, then, this day in your dark and dreadful iniquity! Take account of your doings! "Know ye not your own selves?"—that you are not beasts that perish, but creatures instinct with immortality! Two eternal worlds watch you and strive for you.

"Hell moves beneath to work your death,
Heaven stoops to give you life."

And are you willing to be lost? To be lost for these poor phantasms of time, that recede as you pursue, and vanish as you touch them? Oh! pause in your mad career! Pause ere it be too late! ere the blood be all gone from the cross! Oh, come to Christ Jesus for life—for life!

Fourthly, and finally.—The text speaks earnestly to *the Church*. There is, as we have already said, a terrible irony in its question. It intimates that between the professing people of God and the world there is so little visible difference that it is difficult to distinguish them. That in the husbandry of God there is so little fruit of the Spirit, that it is a hard matter to find out even what trees are good. Now, although this is not true in all cases, yet alas! in many cases it is. So little do some professing Christians live like the children of God, that only on sacramental sabbaths,—*only four times a year*,—*do they even look like Christians!* On all other days of the week, sacred or secular, they are in no respect a peculiar people.

Surely, then, O beloved children of God, it is time for us to rise into higher frames and spheres of religious life.

We have come from the communion. We are therefore re-consecrate! And we feel to-day that such re-consecration was due unto our Saviour. Oh, "he was bruised for our iniquity!" We saw it. We felt it! That "*body*"—the body of the Incarnate God,—was "*broken*" for our iniquity. That "*blood*," that mysterious blood of an Incarnate God, was "*shed*" for our iniquity! Here, here, were unto us the memorials of a divine consecration! All the works of God, all the riches of God, all the attributes of God, all the persons of God, *consecrated unto us!* "All things present"—this universal range and power of the economy of Providence; "all things to come"—all that higher economy of the eternal world—thrones, crowns, white robes, heavenly mansions—all—all consecrate to us! God having given them to be ours, and using them henceforth for our good and glory.

And surely, then, *our* consecration should be perfect! Such was our profession. We did bring them all—talents, possessions, influence, time, all we have, all we are,—we brought them all and laid them on God's altar in holy consecration, taking them into our hands again as things of a stewardship, to be used for God's glory! Let us then respect the consecration. Let us live as becomes us; live as if a Christian was separate from the world; as if the children of God were "a peculiar people." Let us so live that all men must perceive and acknowledge our piety.

Let us so grow in grace that hereafter we shall not

need to self-examine ourselves with the sensitive finger carefully on the pulse to detect, haply, a fitful beating of life. But, as wisely "knowing our own selves," we shall be joyously confident that we are strong men in Christ Jesus, because our eyes flash, and our hearts beat, and our feet bound in the high courses of a heavenly and obedient life!

CHRISTIAN INFLUENCE.

"Now the man, out of whom the devils were departed, besought him that he might be with him : but Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee."—LUKE, viii, 38, 39.

IN our study of tneology, whether natural or revealed, we should never lose sight of the great truth—that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are God's ways our ways. Our chief difficulties in pondering God's providential and gracious economies, arise from our foolish endeavors to lift human reason from its true place of scholarship to its false place of criticism, in forgetfulness of the truth, that as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's thoughts higher than our thoughts, and his ways than our ways. We do not say that man should not reason about Divine truth, whether natural or revealed. On the contrary, we know that reason is the only faculty whereby truth can be apprehended ; and so, every presentation of truth is a Divine appeal unto reason—and he that can not reason *is* an idiot, and he that dare not reason *is* a slave. And yet, in approaching truth as it has to do with Divine things, sound reason would lead us to expect much that is mysterious and incomprehensible, and to be received simply on Divine authority—*faith*, and not science being the law of our scholarship.

Quite manifest it is that, alike in nature and revelation, God neither thinks nor acts according to man's standard of wisdom. God did not make the world as a wise man would have made it; God does not govern the world as a wise man would govern it; God has not written the Bible as a wise man would have written it. To this truth we must all come at last; and the sooner the better, for our profit and consolation—for we shall increase in the true knowledge of God only when, and precisely as, our finite and imperfect reason sinks from its false place of criticism of God's doings, into its true place of scholarship at God's feet.

God's ways are not our ways—God does not do things as we would do them. This is the first thing we must thoroughly understand as students of theology. Of this important truth we have an illustration in the text. It is part of the record of Christ's miracle in the country of the Gadarenes. Having stilled the storm on Tiberias, he went forth from the ship with his disciples, and “there met him out of the city a certain man, which had devils long time, and ware no clothes, neither abode in *any* house, but in the tombs.” A man so fearfully possessed, that he brake in pieces the fetters and chains wherewith he was bound, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness, a torture unto himself, and a terror unto all men. Out of this poor demoniac, Christ commanded the unclean spirit to depart; and he sat clothed and in his right mind, trustful and loving at his Saviour's feet. And then and there he uttered the prayer recorded in the text—“*He besought Jesus that he might be with him.*”

Now we say, had God's thoughts been as man's

thoughts, this prayer would have been answered. We can hardly imagine a more acceptable prayer than this. Whatever may have been the motive that inspired it—whether love for the Saviour's person, or gratitude for his deliverance, or consecration to his service, it must seem to us commendable. Meanwhile, we can perceive great benefits likely to result from his following Jesus, which, according to man's wisdom, would have secured the prayer's answer.

How good, seemingly, it would have been for the man himself, to be ever with the Saviour, listening to his gracious instructions, and living in the sanctifying power of his presence! How good, as well, for others! Oh, what a witness for Christ he might have been, in the midst of the multitudes that followed his footsteps! What sermons he could have preached of Christ's power and grace before Scribe and Pharisee in the streets of Jerusalem! Surely, had man been the arbiter, this earnest prayer of the restored man to be with his Lord would have been graciously answered. But man's thoughts are not God's thoughts. The prayer was not answered. "*Jesus sent him away!*"

Now, from this record we may learn some simple lessons of practical instruction. As we have often shown you, these miracles of Christ are to be regarded as practical parables, beautifully illustrating the working of Divine grace in salvation, and imparting important instruction as to spiritual duties. And regarding Christ's treatment of this restored man, as in entire analogy with his treatment of true Christians, let us learn

First—*A lesson in regard to God's answering of prayer.*

As we have said, here was a prayer which was seemingly proper, and right, and good, and yet seemingly unanswered. And how are we to explain this? Does not God positively promise to hear and answer prayers, that are proper and good? And are God's promises conditional? Are they not all "yea and amen in Christ Jesus?" Is it, after all, amid uncertainties and contingencies, pressed down with doubts and sadly distrustful, that we are to approach the mercy-seat? If our prayers are proper and right, both in their spirit and their objects, may we not come to the throne of grace assured that they will be answered? To which I answer, *first*—That according to the principle just insisted on, that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, no man is competent to decide positively whether the prayer he offers is in the right spirit. The petition of this Gadarene may have originated in a selfish desire to be happy in Christ's presence, rather than useful in his service. And if so, it was self-considered, an improper prayer, and not to be answered. And so of other prayers. We must be more than finite; we must rise actually into the infinite, so that God's thoughts become our thoughts, before we can sufficiently analyze our motives, and frames, and feelings in prayer, to decide, in any given case, that it is proper and acceptable.

But we remark, *secondly*—That, even were we certain that the prayer is such as God promises to answer, there remains still a more important point to be considered, viz., *the best way of answering it*. If the Gadarene prayed properly, desiring only his own greatest good and God's greatest glory, then Christ may have seen that he would grow more rapidly in grace, and bring

more honor to his Saviour, by remaining among his own countrymen; and thus really answered his petition by sending him away. And so it is always. God will assuredly answer all prayers that are proper and good; but then he answers them in his own way, and according to his own higher wisdom. We can indeed cast ourselves, in entire confidence, upon God's faithful promises, relying on his absolute omnipotence as pledged to the prayer-answering. But, meanwhile, we must equally cast ourselves upon his absolute omniscience, as to the time, and form, and manner of the specific answer. Here, again, God's ways are not our ways. The Christian prays to be sanctified; and this is a good prayer, and if offered in a right spirit is sure to be answered. But how? Ah, not according to the man's thoughts! God lays his strong hand upon the man's idols. He takes away his property; he takes away his health; he takes away his comforts; he lays the beloved of his home and heart into the un pitying grave—thus weakening his affections for the earthly and the carnal. "Ah," but says the Christian, "this is not what I meant!" Be it so; yet if you prayed sincerely to be sanctified, this is precisely what you asked for—for this is sanctification! The nestling eaglet looks up to the majestic flight of the soaring eagle through heaven, and says, "Oh, that I could soar as bravely! teach me, teach me to fly!" And, as if in answer to the wish, the parent-bird descends, and tears the soft nest in pieces, forcing the restful brood forth to the sweeping winds. And though to the young bird it may seem almost cruel, yet it is just what it longed for—this is teaching it to fly! And so is it always in God's treatment of his children. He an-

swers their prayers, but in his own way—for his thoughts are not our thoughts.

But passing now from this great lesson of prayer, and considering the text as containing important parabolic instruction, we learn here several lessons as to *practical Christian influence*.

We learn, *first, the importance* of such Christian influence.

The text most impressively teaches us that the law of Christian life is not spiritual enjoyment, but usefulness. Had Christ regarded the mere comfort of the restored Gadarene, he would have granted his request, and taken him with him to Galilee. But he sends him away, to be a blessing to his countrymen. And so it is with the Christian. If the end of his conversion were his own spiritual enjoyment, then, as soon as he is converted, he would be translated to Christ's presence in glory. The moment a man believes, that moment he is justified; and, as a justified man, has a clear and sure title to the heavenly inheritance. And, although we can perceive much in this earthly life that renders it a fine economy of spiritual discipline, so that the longer we struggle in the flesh the better we shall be fitted for heaven; yet, inasmuch as sanctification is always perfected at death, it must seem to us, on the whole, as to Paul, better to depart and be with Jesus. Sure we are, a year spent in celestial glory is better for a soul than a year spent in terrestrial grace. And so we may be certain, that, were a man's own enjoyment the grand end of his conversion, then the great change of regeneration would be followed instantly by his translation to Paradise. But this is not the grand end, and therefore he is not thus translated.

If you can separate in your thought things that belong philosophically together, and are therefore inseparable, we might declare, that a man is not converted that he may be happy, but rather that he may be useful—“*that others may see his good works, and glorify his Father who is in heaven.*”

There is nothing falser and fouler, than that low, narrow, selfish idea of conversion which regards it only as the condition whereby the man escapes from hell and gets into heaven. If such conversion makes a man good, it is a goodness out of harmony with all other good things. God's great law of goodness is not *absorption*, but *diffusion*. All God's glorious things, from a flower of the field to a star in the firmament, are not *receptacles*, but *fountains*. No man ever thought of one of God's angels as sitting selfishly on a heavenly throne, contemplating in indolent rapture the sceptre he is wielding, and the diadem he wears. And if one of those professing Christians, who think that all God requires of them is just to get themselves to glory, is a true child of God, then he lacks at least one evidence of sonship—he does not resemble his great Father. He is begotten in the very image of the infidel's God—that abstract and indolent omnipotence, that reposes in contemplative majesty behind the elements of Nature, that do all his work for him—and has no likeness unto Jehovah, that immense and omni-operative Spirit, pervading all space with an active and beneficent energy.

Of one thing are we certain, that every converted soul is designed by Jehovah to be “*the light of the world.*” And its use, like other light, is not to keep itself safe and warm under a bushel, but to burn itself

out on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Alas, how fearful the exclamation of our Lord in regard of all selfish and inefficient piety—*"If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"* There is no image more terrible than this—an eclipsed luminary! A star in the night, or a sun at noonday, ceasing suddenly to shine! Nay, an orb that should be radiating light, absolutely *radiating darkness!*

Oh, careless and inactive and slumbering professor of religion, regarding your Christian hope as a fragment of the mortal wreck whereon you are to be floated to glory, and not a buoyant life-boat, with which you are to save your fellow-castaways from the raging water, would I could bring this truth home fittingly to your heart and mind! *"Ye are the light of the world!"* and a light is kindled to shine. See that keeper of the beacon, on a rocky promontory in a stormy midnight! We look forth upon the raging sea, and lo, by the flashes of lightning, we behold laboring barks driving fiercely before the tempest. We look upward to the watch-tower, and the beacon shines not. In wild alarm for the imperiled seamen, we hurry to the keeper's chamber. We find him sitting at his ease, by a loaded board and a blazing hearth. We cry out, "What are you doing?" And he answers, "Oh, I am taking care of myself; there is a wild night outside, and I have sheltered me from the storm, and am making myself comfortable." And your cry in indignant response is, *"But who sent you here to be comfortable?"* Why, this very watch-tower, these very walls, these very fagots and oil, have been gathered round you, not for your own comfort, but for your business of light-keeping! Up from your pleasure! away

from your board and hearth! kindle the beacon! let the light shine!"

And think you the Divine cry is less indignant unto a professing Christian at ease in Zion? The law of all holy life is, not enjoyment, but usefulness. An angel in heaven, who should choose rather to repose in his glorious palace than to rush abroad at the Divine commandment, even through the outer darkness of the universe, would be cast down from his throne as a rebellious spirit. And if Jesus Christ should descend again to the earth, dwelling as of old time with mortals, and one of these very happy and indolent Christians should come to him, saying, "O Lord Jesus, precious Saviour, let me ever sit at thy feet in love, and rapture, and worship!" then, sure I am Christ would frown on him as a slumbering and selfish disciple, and, like the restored man of Gadara, "*would send him away.*"

Passing this, we learn from the text, *secondly*, The *secret*, or *element*, of all true Christian influence.

Our Lord sent this restored man away, that he might bear witness for God unto his kinsfolk and countrymen. But how was he to bear witness? *Why, simply by making it manifest that the devil had gone out of him.* Had he returned, seemingly, in disposition and character, an unchanged man to his kinsfolk, then, though he had talked as eloquently as an angel about Christ, the Wonder-worker, they had laughed him to scorn. He did indeed talk of Christ, for his tongue could not keep silent. But the power of his witness was not in his lips, but his *life*. They *saw* that he was a changed man. He, that in times past had walked in lone places in the wilderness, a terror to his race; whom fetters could not

bind, nor dungeons restrain; whose dwelling was in the tombs, and whose life was self-torture; he, now clothed and in his right mind, came a gentle, peaceful, loving man of God, to the streets of the city, and the home of his children. And men saw it, and marveled. Here was a miracle! Something too merciful to be believed, save on the evidence of their own senses. A hundred men might have come from Galilee, telling these Gadarenes of Christ, the Worker of Miracles, and yet all their arguments and eloquence would have been as nothing, to one hour's converse with this restored man—yesterday known to all as a raging demoniac, to-day a gentle and loving companion, in his right mind. His power of testimony for Jesus was *the power of his life*.

And in this lies the secret of all true Christian influence. It is the easiest thing in the world *to talk* about religion. But mere talk about religion is the poorest thing in the world. Every true Christian will indeed talk about his Saviour. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And if the voice does not speak for Christ, sure you may be the soul is not filled with Christ. Nevertheless, here as elsewhere, the utterance of the lips is as nothing to the influence of the life. In the Divine economy all grand forces are comparatively gentle and silent. The shallow rill, that is dry on the mountain-side half the year, brawls more noisily at times than yon mighty river. The boy's sparkling rocket makes a louder demonstration in the night air than all God's starry constellations. And yet, in the silence of their sublime manifestations, how eloquently do these great forces of the universe bear wit-

ness for God! And so it is of moral forces. The gentle movement of this restored man, amid his wondering countrymen, did more to convince them of Christ's saving power, than a thousand noisy utterances. And so is it with the convincing power of a Christian life. The converted man is left in this world a witness for Jesus—a living illustration of the power and blessedness of a religious life. He is to the theologic truth of the Bible what practical experiments are to scientific truths in Nature. As the chemist talks technically of elements in analysis and synthesis, and exhibits in illustration, free gases and ponderous compounds; and as the botanist discourses scientifically of the structure of plants, and the functions of their parts, and shows you his meaning by producing the petals of a lily, or a spike of lavender—so is it with spiritual science, in the hands of the Great Teacher. The Bible explains, and Christian life illustrates, (*e. g.*)

Faith, by definition, is "the substance of things hoped for." But, in order to make men understand it, I must be able to point to some man who, under its power, lives, as did Abraham, ever looking for a city whose maker is God. *Trust in God* is, by definition, an unswerving resting of the mind on Divine veracity and benevolence. But, to make a man comprehend it, it must be in my power to point to men who, under its influence, sit calmly, like Daniel, in the lion's den; or go resolutely, like the young Hebrews, into a fiery furnace.

And so of all graces. In the Bible they are described, as in a written epistle—in Christian life they are illustrated, as in a "living epistle." And in this sense are we, mainly, witnesses for Christ. As the Gadarenes saw

that the demoniac was restored, so must the world see that the sinner is converted. He must speak for Christ, as the flower and the star speak for God, in the beauty and glory of their physical manifestations. Without this abiding savor of a holy life, all else will prove but a mockery.

When the blind man came from Christ, saying, "Jesus of Nazareth restored me to sight," men trusted not to his words—they examined *his eyes*. When the lame man cried, "Oh, Jesus has healed me," men did not inquire whether he was eloquent—but only whether *he could walk!* And so is it of salvation. A man may talk eloquently as an apostle about the purity and peace of a regenerated nature, but if, in the intervals of his religious orations, men find him slandering his neighbors; or defrauding his customers; or manifesting a rash and imprudent temperament; or walking the streets of the city a proud, self-conceited, pleasure-loving, worldly-minded man, not letting his spiritual light shine at all, or letting it so shine that men shall see it and glorify not his Heavenly Father, but *himself*—then, alas, all his testimony for Christ will seem a poor trumpet sounded in the street. The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's; the tongue is of Paul, but the heart is a Pharisee's.

The power of the savor of a holy life. This is the power of a converted man to bring others to Jesus. Not so much to *tell* what Christ has done for us, as to *show* what he has done for us—so to walk before men that they shall see, and seeing, believe, that religion makes its subjects alike happy and holy. To take these grand truths of the Bible, which, as they lie embodied in creeds

and confessions, are as inoperative upon the popular conscience as mammoth fossils in rock, or dead insects in amber, and so exhibit them in the power of a daily life, that they seem creatures of mighty strength, shaking the earth—creatures of joyous heart, singing in the sunshine. To walk before the men of the world, in the exhibition of such superinduced graces of godliness—so humble, so gentle, so loving, so merciful, so manifestly subjects of a Divine change into light out of darkness, from death unto life—that no man can confound the true piety with a mock pharisaism; but, as in the case of the restored Gadarene, beholding one that, from a tortured demoniac, hath become a gentle follower of Jesus, all men shall be constrained to acknowledge that there is a reality in religion—that he that is in Christ Jesus is a new creature. This, I say, is the *true secret, or element*, of all Christian influence.

Meanwhile, the text teaches us, *thirdly*—*The true sphere* of this Christian influence.

This is most strikingly set forth in Christ's words to the restored man. Filled with a love of Jesus, he prayed that he might go with him, as a witness, giving testimony unto his gracious power, through the villages of Galilee, and to the city of Jerusalem. But the command of the Saviour is, "*Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee.*"

We may not be able to understand all the reasons of this command. It is, however, quite evident, *first*, that his home would be the field of his *most powerful* influence—since those who had best known him in his demoniacal state, would be the most thoroughly convinced of Christ's power of miraculous restoration. And, *secondly*,

that his home would be the *most appropriate* field of his influence, since his kinsfolk had the first claim upon his sympathy and labors. And, were there no reasons but these, this direction of Christ teaches us this important lesson in regard of Christian influence—*that its truest field, and its mightiest power, are alike always AT HOME.*

Its *mightiest power* is at home, because the members of a man's own household, and the familiar friends of his own social circle, are the best judges of the genuineness of his conversion. It is very easy to put on seemings of godliness that shall deceive strangers; but that must be a true piety, which, amid the daily vexations of life, and the unrestrained intercourse of the home-circle, bears the image of Jesus. The testimony of a man's parents, or wife, or children, or servants, or customers, or employers, to his sincere piety, is worth all the certificates of church courts and sessions the world ever saw. As the kinsfolk of the Gadarene were the best judges of his restoration, so are kinsfolk always the best judges of conversion. And it is, at once, a finer proof, and a higher manifestation of vital godliness, to live every day in the family-circle, in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, than to sing songs, like Paul in the dungeon of Philippi, or see visions, like John on the lone rock of Patmos.

Meanwhile, a man's home is the *fittest field* for the exercise of his Christian influence. Religion, like charity, should begin at home. Here, emphatically, "he that provides not for his own, denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel." It is right to have an expansive benevolence; a Christian love that takes in a race and a world. Nevertheless, all true expansion presupposes a

fixed and vigorous central power. Expansion is not locomotion, but enlargement; a growth, and not a journey. And that Christian benevolence, which neglects religion at home for the sake of carrying it abroad, is at best but a locomotive, and not an enlarged benevolence.

Many men, when first converted, feel, like this Gadarene, an earnest desire to go forth into new fields, bearing witness for Jesus. But, though this may be the dictate and desire of true piety, Divine wisdom directs otherwise. Go first to the field where God hath cast your lot—to your family, to your social circle, to the companions of your own sinful life. Here, at least, is your first work. See that your own field is well tilled, ere you go abroad to other fields. Your own heart first; then your own family; then your own church; then your own country; and then the whole world. This is God's great law of influence. The heart must be in strong health, if the circulation be vigorous and healthful in the extremities. The roots and trunk of a tree must thrive, if it would fling forth new branches.

No matter, indeed, how largely a man expands—the larger his benevolence the better—if he expand harmoniously, from a healthy and permanent centre. Let him not mistake diffusion for expansion, nor a change of scene for an enlargement of influence. Let him go forth, like the apostles, over all the world; only, like the same apostles, let his ministry for Christ begin at Jerusalem.

Would that all Christians, and all Christian churches, would learn this simple lesson, which Christ taught to the restored man of Gadara. One fixed and steadfast

sun, standing earnestly in its appointed place, and diffusing constant light and life over the small circle of worlds God has committed to its keeping, is worth more than a hundred erratic comets, flaming out in the heavens, and casting a fiery and locomotive glare on a thousand constellations. "Let me go," said the restored man, "let me go with thee, Master. Let me walk through broad Galilee, and stand up as a living witness for God before Greek and Jew; before ruler and Pharisee." And though this request falls in with the dictate of human reason, yet, oh, deeper wisdom of the blessed Saviour! Christ sent him unto his own kinsfolk, saying, "*Go home! Go home!*"

Moreover, the text teaches us, *finally*, the *motives* of this Christian influence. "Return to thine own house," said the Saviour. And though the command was not according to his prayers, the man obeyed it instantly. And the reasons of his obedience are obvious. Doubtless, there was in his heart a natural desire to visit again, in his restored state, his own household. The text tells us he had "a home;" and faithful hearts, long agonized in his behalf, were to be comforted and blessed by his presence. And though, for his own sake, he preferred to be with Jesus, yet, for the sake of beloved kindred, he was willing to depart. Here was one motive, and a strong one.

But the text gives us a stronger. *The Divine commandment*—"Christ sent him away." He may not have had the intellect to understand why Christ thus ordered it; but he surely had the heart, that, in its supreme love to his great Deliverer, rejoiced above all things to do his bidding. And though that command bade him away

from his Master's presence, into those very scenes where the terrible demon had aforetime found him, yet he obeyed it at once, unquestioning and joyful.

And here are the types of Christian motives, in labors for the Saviour. Here is, *first, philanthropy*—the love of our human kindred; a desire to save the sons and daughters of our one great Father. The man feels what it is to be saved himself; and instinctively and earnestly desires to save others. As a mariner, taken from the fragments of a wreck, will spring into the stormy sea to save imperiled shipmates—as a mother, borne forth from a burning house, will rush again into the flames, to bring forth her perishing children—so a saved soul longs and labors to save other men. Like the Gadarene, he can depart even from the Saviour's presence, for the sake of his beloved ones. Like Paul, he "*could wish that himself were accursed from Christ for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.*" And every strong motive, whose spring is in the better and gracious impulses of a generous nature, urges him resistlessly onward to bring sinful men to Christ.

But yet, strong as this motive is, it is as nothing to that *second* and mightier one—the *command of his Master*. Christ, his great and gracious Saviour, hath commanded him, as the grand end of his earthly being, to labor to bring impenitent men under the power of the Gospel. And this motive is omnipotent. "The love of Christ constraineth him." Other motives might fail—philanthropy, benevolence, love for kind or for kindred—these might appeal to him in vain. He might think of the dark places of the earth, full of the habitations of cruelty; of the Indian's babe on a heathen altar; of a Hindoo

widow on the terrible death-pyre—he might think of the home of his familiar friend, made desolate and despairing by reason of unbelief and iniquity—yea, perhaps he might think even of an immortal soul as abiding under the curse of a violated law; and so, exposed every moment to a death that is eternal—he might think of all these things, I say, and yet, under the dread power of his remaining carnality, remain comparatively indolent and at ease in Zion. But, meanwhile, there is one motive that will not, can not fail—his intense love for Jesus. He knows that the salvation of men is the desire lying nearest to the heart that was pierced on Calvary—a desire with which that heart is burdened—a desire with which it travails. And before that one thought every selfish consideration of ease, or honor, or pleasure, passes away, as sere leaves before a tempest. “Oh,” he says, “I can do my Lord’s bidding! I can gladden my Saviour’s heart! I can add jewels of immense price to Emmanuel’s many crowns! And what care I now for the world’s prizes? Why shrink I now from the world’s frown? Oh, for a thousand hearts to love Jesus! Oh, for a thousand tongues to praise Jesus! Oh, for a thousand lives to spend and be spent in the service of Jesus! The love of my kindred might fail—but the love of Christ constraineth me!”

The text then sets forth the *importance*, the *elements*, the *sphere*, and the *motives of true Christian influence*. Let us study the record, and take home its lessons. How it speaks to *professing Christians*! Alas, for our feeble faith, and feeble obedience! How this poor man of Gadara shames our fitful and hesitating testimonies for Jesus! Behold him there in the streets of Decapolis,

among the friends and companions of his early years of iniquity and anguish ! See how his eyes flash—how his heart bounds ! Hark, how in simple, yet earnest eloquence he tells them of that gracious Redeemer, who met him in his wretched wanderings, and succored and saved him.

Brethren and sisters, let us do likewise. Ah, we have a more touching story to tell than this man of Gadara, for we were bowed with a more terrible curse, and have been redeemed with a more wonderful salvation. Lost—*lost*—LOST, we were ! hopelessly lost ! eternally lost ! And as we wandered in darkness unto death, Jesus met us in mercy. He looked on us tenderly ; he approached us ; he saved us—saved us from eternal death ; put our feet upon a rock, and a new song into our mouth ; filled our hearts with the joys of salvation ; lifted us to the raptures of everlasting life ! And now, raised—ransomed—redeemed, around us a world of spiritual death, before us a world of eternal life, what have we to do but to proclaim Christ's great grace ? To tell the story of redeeming power—to sing the song of redeeming love ? *"To return to our homes, and show how great things God hath done unto us ?"*

But the text speaks, as well, *to the impenitent*. These miracles of our Lord were designed to illustrate the greater and gracious miracle of regeneration. This case of the demoniac is God's own chosen emblem of the unregenerate spirit. If not precisely in the old Hebrew sense, yet in a sense most mysteriously and fearfully true—every impenitent man is possessed of devils. Of him, revelation declares that the god of this world blindeth the eye and ruleth in the heart. Were

it not for this, insensibility to eternal things would be impossible. To the eye of sane wisdom, these pleasures of sin seem terrible. They are like the rainbows that flit along the death-curve of a cataract. Like crystals that sometimes sparkle down in the hot crater of a rocking volcano.

The glorious idols of a sinful life are, at best, but phantoms—there is nothing real in them. And they seem substantial, and beautiful, and good, only because the great Sorcerer hath waved his wand and muttered his incantation. Alas, impenitent men, *ye are demonized!* Seeming to yourselves clothed in fair robes, and surrounded by joyous companions, and living in palaces, ye are yet, in the sight of God's loyal universe, poor outcasts from all holy fellowship—self-torturing, self-destroying—cutting yourselves with stones, and dwelling in sepulchres.

Study, then, carefully this record, and learn *the unspeakable blessedness of that change which makes man a Christian*. Behold this man of Gadara, as he comes to Jesus. A raging demoniac, escaped from dungeons. His eyes wild with fiendish passion—his limbs loaded with links of broken fetters—his flesh scarred with self-torture—a fierce, raging, despairing demoniac! So he comes. But the gracious Saviour hath compassion. He speaks, and the torturing demons flee—the fiendish spell is broken! See! Clothéd and in his right mind,—gentle, loving, blessed—his heart bounding with a higher and holy life—his eyes soft with the light of a heavenly and unutterable rapture—he sits at Christ's feet, and hears his words!

And now, go a little on in his history. He hath obeyed

the voice of his Master, and departed to his home. Imagine that return—that approach to his household—that crossing the threshold—that welcome of the beloved ones—those bounding feet—those clasping arms—those sobbing utterances of overwhelming rapture, too deep for words! See! Yesterday, he dwelt in sepulchres—the decay of the grave-cavern; the scent of corruption; the solitude; the silence; the chill damps; the appalling shadows; the phosphorescence of death—these, and such as these, were with him and around him!

Now, he is with the living, in his own fair dwelling—the fragrance of dewy flowers—the light of the land's glad summer—the ministries of gentle hands—the brightness of loving eyes—the music of loving voices—all the peace, the triumph, the rapture of holy and exultant life—within him and around him! Oh, change! Oh, wondrous change! Yesterday with the dead, in the cold, unpitying tomb—to-day with the living, in a fair and blessed home! And yet, only faintly an emblem of that change in regeneration, whereby an immortal spirit is freed from its tormentors, and a soul dead in sins is made alive in Christ Jesus!

GRACE AND WORKS.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do.”—PHILIPPIANS, ii. 12, 13.

ONE of the most important attainments of speculative wisdom is—to *know when to stop*. One of the finest exhibitions of practical wisdom is—to stop at the right time, and in the right place. Unto man, in his finitude, there are set bounds that he can not pass. There are physical regions, into which he can not carry one of his senses. There are intellectual regions, into which he can not carry one of his perceptions. As a creature, finite in faculties and powers, he is hemmed in by barriers, whereon, unto all his yearning and headlong progress, God has written the ordinance—“*thus far shalt thou go, and no farther.*” And to attempt to force these barriers is foolishness. To stop, when we can go no farther safely, is true wisdom. A wise child might ascend a mountain top, to get clearer views of the starry heavens; but if, while standing there, enamored of some fair planet, he should spring from the dizzy height, with a wild hope of being drawn within its sphere, and thus learning more of its mysterious loveliness—this were midsummer madness.

And just as self-destructive is the folly of a man,

who, in regard of the great mysteries of revelation, attempts to be wise above what is written. To the very loftiest heights of revealed doctrine he may advance with a firm footstep, knowing that he walks on the everlasting rock of Divine truth; but to adventure beyond this, is to fling himself from an adamantine platform, into the tremendous depths of error that yawn around him.

God tells us all that it is necessary to know; and with this we must be satisfied. But, alas, with it, too often, we are not satisfied! God gives the facts—we want their explanation. And so, much of our speculative theology is like the fluttering

“Of the adventurous bird, that hath outflown
Its strength upon the sea—ambition-wrecked—
A thing the thrush might pity, as she sits
Brooding in quiet on her lowly nest.”

And in nothing is this more manifest, than in regard of the truth brought to view in the text—*the union of Divine and human agencies in the work of salvation*. You are all of you aware how much of controversial theology there is on this point; how the Church of Christ has, in all time, been divided on the great truths of *God's sovereignty* and *man's free agency*. No man can read the Bible with a teachable spirit, and not perceive how both these truths are abundantly and explicitly set forth in its revelations. God is a sovereign. God does foreordain whatsoever comes to pass. There is a decree of election. The names of the elect are from eternity in the Lamb's book of life. But, meanwhile, man is a free agent—as verily free to choose sal-

vation—as honestly invited to find justification in Christ, and final glory in heaven—as if there were no decree of election, and God were not a sovereign in salvation. These are both great truths, on which we can stand, as on everlasting mountains. But, then, how to reconcile them is man's difficulty. Not satisfied with receiving them both, as distinct oracles of God, we must philosophize about their practical consistency and harmony. And here arise our antagonistic schools of theology; all alike, either stretching or mutilating, with Procrustean logic, some Divine member, till the whole glorious body of truth lies in tortured adjustment unto their own favorite system—the one, abating the fullness of God's sovereignty; the other, abating the fullness of man's free-agency—the one, wresting God's sceptre from his hand, lest man should seem a slave; the other, binding man with an iron fetter, lest God should not seem a sovereign.

Now, in attempting to *reconcile* these truths, we fling ourselves from the adamantine paths of revelation, sheer over the fearful precipices of unhallowed conjecture. We know, indeed, that they are reconcilable, because they are both truths; and all truth is, and must be, beautifully consistent. But *man* can not reconcile them. Nay, with his present imperfect faculties, man can not understand their reconciliation; and so God gives him no explanation of their consistency. But God does most distinctly affirm, not only that they are both truths, but that they are truths beautifully and harmoniously coexistent in his great plan of salvation.

This is precisely what the apostle does in the text. Here, in the fewest and simplest words possible, he

affirms God's sovereignty in salvation, and man's free-agency in salvation; and meanwhile, asserts their philosophic connection—not reasoning, as we reason, that, because God is a sovereign, man has nothing to do nor, that because man has something to do, God is not a sovereign—but, on the contrary, that man is a free agent, just because God is a sovereign; calling upon the Philippians, with the earnestness of the broadest Arminianism, “*to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*”—and urging, as a motive this staunchest Calvinism, “*that God worketh in them both to will and to do his own good pleasure.*”

Now, this is our text. And, in its consideration, let us follow exactly the lead of the apostolic thought; not attempting to explain the connection of these two truths, but assuming their consistency, and receiving them both, in their order and fullness, without cavil or questioning.

The apostle then asserts in the text—*First, the absolute sovereignty of God in human salvation.* “*It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.*”

And here the reference is, manifestly, not to Christ's work in purchasing salvation, but to the Spirit's work in applying salvation—not God working *for* us, but God working *in* us. There is indeed a great work which God must do, and so has done *for* man. Sinners as we are against the Divine law, that law must be satisfied, or salvation is impossible. And so, “*God did give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish.*” All this God does *for* man. But, over and above all this, there is a work to be done upon the sinful heart—a regenerating and sanctifying work—as abso-

lutely essential to salvation as Christ's great sacrifice. And this is what is referred to in the text, as "God's working *in us*." And this Divine work in the soul is here accurately defined.

"*God worketh in you both to will and to do*"—*first*, God worketh in man "TO WILL." The word here is well rendered. It means just this in the original—"to wish"—"to desire"—"to choose." These are its synonyms. And however philosophers may be allowed to differ in their metaphysical speculations, yet that theologians, who go to God's word for truth, can, after this assertion, maintain their theories of a *self-determining power in the will*, is verily a marvel.

Call this "*will*" what you please—a distinct faculty of the soul, or only one of its exercises or actions—yet of it the text expressly asserts, that in the choice of salvation its volitions are absolutely determined by the influences of God's Spirit—not merely that God assists all who are willing to be saved—but that *this very willingness to be saved* must itself be wrought in the soul by God.

- It may, indeed, be urged, that it is inconceivable that a man should be free, and yet Divinely determined to certain courses. But to this we answer, *first*, that liberty consists in doing what we do with knowledge, and from choice. And the Divine influence upon our will, mysterious as it is, is so entirely accordant with our mental constitution, that it leaves all untouched this liberty—God makes us willing, and that very willingness is our free choice. To say that a man must, of himself, consent to co-operate with the Holy Spirit, before—either in the order of nature or of time—the Holy Ghost sovereignly

operates, is, therefore, simply to say that an effect precedes its cause. And this whole vaunted proposition, of *the freedom of the will*—*i. e.*, the will's sovereign, self-moving, or self-determining power—means simply and absurdly just this, That a man must be willing that the Holy Ghost should work in him to will, *i. e.*, *that a man must be willing, before he can be willing.*

But to this we answer, *secondly*, That whether or not it be beyond our comprehension, how a man can be free and yet graciously determined to certain courses, yet, here in the text and elsewhere, it is expressly asserted, that a man's will is thus graciously determined, and yet that he is free. And he is here urged to work out earnestly his own salvation, just because it is God that worketh in him, not only "to do" but "*to will.*"

Nor does the Divine influence end here. "*God worketh in us both to will and to do*"—*i. e.*, not only does the man will (*i. e.*, choose, or resolve, or determine to do what God requires of him), under the Divine influences, but this influence causes him, as well, to perform or accomplish his resolves and purposes.

If this language means any thing, it must mean that *a man's ability to comply with the conditions of salvation is absolutely and entirely a Divine gift*—a Divine gift in the *will* to do; a Divine gift in the *power* to do. It asserts, what is everywhere else asserted in the Scriptures, that salvation, from beginning to end, is altogether of grace—that Christ Jesus came into the world, not merely to render men salvable, *i. e.*, to place them in circumstances where they can save themselves, but positively *to save them.*

Paul, certainly, never shrinks from this assertion. He

never softens down this great truth of God's sovereignty in salvation, to square with any philosophic notion of a partial self-righteousness. He, at least, ascribes the whole work, from foundation to top-stone, to God's omnipotent grace—grace, not manifested merely in the purchase of salvation by the Son's sacrifice, but manifested, as well, in the application of salvation by the Spirit's influences. Paul's theology was out-and-out and aboveboard as to man's inability to do any good thing. His account of the carnal heart is, not that it is somewhat, indeed, set toward evil, and yet capable, somehow, of self-transformation to good—but, on the contrary, that it is absolutely "*enmity toward God, not subject to his law, neither indeed can be.*" And his theory of the Spirit's influence in salvation is, not that of a mere presentation of persuasive motives, but, the rather, that of an omnipotent energy upon the soul, "working in it both to will and to do of God's own good pleasure."

This, then, is Paul's theology, as it has to do with God's work in salvation. He asserts here, as distinctly as is possible for human language, that the whole gracious experience in the soul, from the first choice or volition—that state of the will that lies back of all moral action—on through all the successive acts, inward or outward, of practical obedience, is alike and altogether the work of Divine grace in the heart. But then, having asserted this great truth in all its absolute fullness, he goes on to assert as unqualifiedly, and unhesitatingly, and absolutely,

Secondly, The entire free-agency of man in this work of salvation.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trem-

bling." Here, right in the seeming face of this doctrine of Divine sovereignty, he calls upon men to exert themselves for the salvation of the soul, precisely as in regard of any other great interest, confessedly dependent upon human choice and activity.

And herein is Paul's wisdom. He attempts not to harmonize these truths to human comprehension; he does better, he *assumes* their entire harmony. He takes that very sovereignty of God, which the Arminian tells us infringes man's free-agency, and sets it forth as the very foundation of such free-agency. He urges men to seek salvation, not because they have any power to save themselves, but, positively, because they can do nothing without God. Mark the force of the word "*for*" here. "*Work out your own salvation, FOR God worketh in you.*" Seemingly a false logic, you say. Be it so. It is Paul's logic; or, rather, the logic of the Holy Ghost, that inspired Paul's deliverances. Let it therefore be ours. Whether we can understand it or not, the sovereignty of Divine grace is the only encouragement to human efforts for salvation. Let us take the truth at God's hand, and believe it, and rely on it. Let us stand on the eternal adamant of God's word, and not fling ourselves over the awful precipices of philosophic conjecture.

One thing is certain. Every man that is saved must work out his own salvation. There is nothing in God's sovereignty which weakens this necessity. Nay, rather is that immutable sovereignty the very ground of the necessity. We may not be idle because God is busy. On the contrary, we must work, just because God works.

So it is, even in the analogies of nature. The fact,

that throughout all visible materialism God's operations are manifestations of absolute and inflexible sovereignty; that the known laws of his universe allow no infringements; that its properties are immutably inherent, and its processes perpetual and everlasting—this sublime fact is man's strongest encouragement to effort. Because God's winds blow, man spreads his adventurous canvas. Because God's planets revolve in undeviating constancy, man sows in spring-time and reaps in autumn. In all his manifold activities man proceeds in faith of the undeviating uniformity of visible nature. And to fling a doubt on that uniformity—to awaken a suspicion in the human mind, that, in his grand physical economy, God works without the steadfastness of an everlasting purpose—this were to destroy at a blow man's last motive to energy, and leave him a despairing idler amid the wild chances of the universe.

So it is in nature. Man is encouraged to work, because, in his resistless sovereignty, God works within and around him. And so, according to apostolic logic, is it in the economy of grace. God's sovereignty is the very ground of man's free-agency—the very encouragement to human effort. “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.*”

Now, with this simple setting-forth of the apostolic argument, let us pass to consider the apostolic exhortation.

“*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*”

The nature of this “working-out” is explained in the other clause of the text—it is the very “willing and doing” to which God excites us.

First—We must “WILL.” The word means much more than a simple wish, or desire. It denotes that act of the mind, or state of the mind, in which, after the understanding has compared different things, and the judgment has decided which is preferable, then it determines, or is determined, to pursue the favorite one.

Without this, all other emotions or exercises are useless. I may believe there is a heaven; I may understand something of its glories; I may even desire earnestly its beatitudes; but without this will—this fixed and steadfast resolution to break away from my sins and take heaven by violence—all else will be unavailing.

Meanwhile, you will observe, this act of will has respect to the *present moment*. The instant a man wills to do a thing, that instant he sets about it. To resolve to do a thing to-morrow, is not “to will” to do it; but is, rather, to will *not* to do it at present. The act of “willing” is simultaneous with, or at least followed instantly by, the act of “doing.” “To will,” then, in the sense of the text, is, *at once and without delay, resolutely and earnestly, to set about the great work of salvation.*

But the text goes further. “*We must will and must do.*” *To will* has regard to the instant beginning; *to do* has regard to the persevering accomplishment. Those acts of repentance and faith, which God commands, and unto which the Spirit strengthens us, are at once to become, and constantly continue, the grand business of life. A life of prayer, of self-denial, of watchfulness, of active and persevering well-doing in all the divine ordinances—such a life is to be instantly chosen, and earnestly pursued, under the influences of the strengthening and sanctifying Spirit—taking Christ to be our Saviour,

and the word of God to be our rule of life, we are henceforth, in the active and entire consecration of all our powers and faculties, "to will and to do of God's good pleasure." And thus, in the sense of the text, "*we work out our salvation.*"

This is the *matter* of the commandment; but, for the sake of practical instruction, let us consider more carefully the *manner* of its obedience.

"*Work out your own salvation.*" Paul does not command these Philippians *to save themselves*. There was no thought in his mind of any meritorious self-righteousness. Man can, by no work of his own, either procure salvation or merit salvation. As the Philippian jailer did not ask, "What shall I do to save myself?" but, "What shall I do *to be saved?*" so, in the text, the whole efficiency and ground of salvation are ascribed absolutely to the omnipotent working of God. God worketh the salvation *within* the soul—man only worketh that salvation *out* in the Christian life. To break off from known sin; to renounce all self-righteousness; to cast ourselves in loving faith on the merits of Christ crucified; to commence at once a life of self-denial, of prayer, of obedience; to turn from all that God forbids, resolutely and earnestly unto all that God requires—this is what the text implies. But then this is not salvation. Oh, no! Salvation is of God—of grace—of free grace. From the germ to the fruit, from foundation to top-stone—of grace, free grace, altogether and only. The sacrifice of the Son, the sanctification of the Spirit—all this is a Divine work, in which God will allow no copartnership of man's poor merits, man's miserable self-righteousness.

But though *not salvation*, it is the "*working out of*

salvation”—it is *man's part* in the work of salvation. And this he must do, or perish. This is his own work. God will not repent for the man; nor believe for the man; nor lead a holy life for the man. God worketh inwardly—man worketh outwardly. And this outward human work is as necessary as the inward Divine work.

“Work out your own salvation.” There is a strong emphasis here, on the words “*your own*.” Here is something to be done, which no one can do for you. No beloved friend can save you—no teaching minister; no praying Christian; no visiting or guardian angel; not even God himself, save as you fall in with his gracious operations, working out your own salvation as he worketh in you. Here is something for you to do, without which, as God lives and your soul lives, that poor soul will perish. This is “*your own*” work. Not something you are to pray God to do for you, but to do for yourselves. And if you wait for God to do it, you will wait forever.

Alas, for the madness of the soul, that, living under Gospel ordinances, sits quietly down in its sins, waiting for God to convert it! As if a husbandman should sit idly in his dwelling, expecting God to fill his garner with golden harvests! As if a sailor should lie at anchor by the shore, expecting God to tear his bark from its moorings, and drive him, a compelled voyager, to the blessed isles of ocean!

God's time hath already come. God's work is done already. God's only Son hath died. God's only Spirit hath descended. And what more are you looking for? Ah! it is himself—God's own gracious and glorious self—that cries, “*What more could I do for my vineyard*”

that I have not done?" "As I live, I—I—have no pleasure in the death of the sinner!" Turn YE—turn YE—*why will YE die?* What remains, then, is *your work*—to be done by yourselves, if it is ever done. Work out your own salvation—for it is *your own—your own!*

Yea, more—"Work out your own salvation WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING."

If you examine the original, you will perceive that several distinct thoughts are involved in these words. They express *deep humility and self-distrust*, as well as *profound concern and anxiety*.

First—They express *humility and self-distrust*. They are precisely the words Paul uses when he speaks of himself, among the Corinthians, as being "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." And in this sense the thought is—that while we work out our own salvation, it is to be with no thought of self-righteousness—feeling that, after all our working, salvation is wholly of that Divine grace that worketh in us. This gives a good sense, and an important sense. Alas, this is what, seemingly, the Church greatly wants just now—this "*fear and trembling*;" this deep and unfeigned humility in the work of salvation. Alas, for our glorying!—this sacrificing unto our own drag and net, in our lauding of means and measures! If there is any thing that will grieve God's Spirit to depart, it is this proud self-sufficiency. God is a jealous God. His own glory he will not see given to another. Means of grace become hinderances, become curses, the moment we substitute them for grace itself—as the brazen serpent, whereby Israel had been healed, became Israel's curse, when they burned incense unto it as an idol. The power that

brings sinners to the Saviour is altogether of God; and our work, as his fellow-laborers, must be in the deep humility and self-abasement of unprofitable servants.

This is, moreover, what the individual soul wants. The man who boldly and confidently, as if he were doing some brave and noble thing for Christ, resolves to be a Christian, lacks the first evidence of genuine conversion. The truly regenerate heart trusts solely and forever in a Saviour's merits. He makes no mention of what he has done, or can do; but talks ever and only of what his Lord hath done. He works, not with a proud self-righteousness, as if the work were *his* work, but "with fear and trembling, *for it is God that worketh in him.*"

Meanwhile, these words express, as well, *profound concern and anxiety*. That anxiety and concern with which a work of such awful importance is ever performed. This anxiety arises from several considerations.

First—From the thought, *that this work of salvation is the work to which God has set us.*

This direction of the apostle is *a divine commandment*. Alas, for our common mistake—that these Gospel offers are simple *invitations*. They are, as well, the solemn utterances of a Divine law, which the man is bound to obey as instantly and unhesitatingly as any commandment thundered on Sinai. Think, then, of the attitude of one who delays the work of salvation, on the pitiful plea that he is willing, and waiting for God to convert him—he is *refusing obedience to a Divine commandment*. He is acting precisely as Noah would have done, if, when directed by God to build an ark, he had waited idly from year to year in his house, saying, "When the Almighty builds the ark, I am ready to go

into it." Verily, fearfulness becomes such a man. He is not merely slighting an invitation—he *is trampling on a law!* And "it is a *fearful* thing to fall into the hands of the living God." We are to work out, in our salvation, a Divine commandment; therefore, we should give ourselves to that work "*with fear and trembling.*"

Meanwhile, *secondly*—This anxiety arises from the thought *of the immense importance of the work, self-considered.*

It is a working out—what? Our comfort? Our prosperity? Our happiness? Yes, indeed, but more, oh, how much more! It is the working out our *salvation!* The salvation of the *soul!* In one sense the impenitent man is lost already; and it is a fearful problem whether he will be saved. In every sense he is in dreadful peril, and there is unspeakable danger that he will finally be lost! This work, to which we are called, is to escape from impending and everlasting destruction. And such a work, of self-preservation, though it may be done with the earnest self-possession of true courage, is always done, must always be done, "*with fear and trembling.*"

See that man in a burning house! Roused at midnight by the alarm-cry, he rushes from his chamber to find all avenues of escape cut off by the advancing flames. See, now, how the whole man is instinct with self-preserving energy! He ascends to the roof—he cries aloud for help—he fastens a rope to the tottering wall, and lets himself down through smoke and flame in the very strength of despair! Now, you may admire his stanch courage; but the man will tell you that his work for life was "*with fear and trembling.*"

See that bark upon the waters, on a lee-shore, in a night of storm, as the fierce hurricane drives it upon breakers! Behold the imperiled mariner! How he rouses himself in mighty energies, with rudder and sail, and anchor, to escape for his life! Fearlessly resolute he may seem to you; but to his own heart, at least, he is working with "fear and trembling."

And so is it always when great interests are at stake. It is no time for sentimental or philosophic thought, when a precipice is crumbling at our feet, or an earthquake is rocking the dwellings around us. Then, at least, it is time for those tremendous efforts which men put forth when the grave yawns in our path and death overshadows us.

How, then, ought a man to labor, "*when he works out his salvation!*" When his immortal soul is in jeopardy! When the fearful problem he is working out in the face of the universe is—*whether he shall be saved, or lost, forever!* When the heaven of blessedness is receding, as he gazes, farther and farther away, with its eternal weight of glory! When the hell of despair is opening at his feet, and he seems tottering on its awful brink, and going down into it! Verily, it becomes a man to work "*with fear and trembling*" when he "*works out his salvation.*" It becomes a man to be anxious, to be alarmed, to be all in earnest, to be waking affrighted from his sinful dreams, when the flames that encircle his pillow are—*eternal burnings!* To be putting forth the strength and the skill of his seamanship, when the tempest of God's wrath is dark on the waters, and to be shipwrecked in the storm is to be—"a castaway forever!"

Moreover, *thirdly*—This anxiety arises from the thought, *that this work of salvation is a work of great difficulty.*

To measure energies by exigencies, is the great law of life. The man who walks calm and tranquil on a plain, becomes powerfully excited when he climbs a precipice. Now, we say, it is a mighty and difficult work to be saved. I am aware that, in asserting this, I am probably contradicting a popular impression. We hear so much, in modern times, about *the ease of salvation*, that one is almost persuaded that “the offense of the cross” hath ceased; and that a man goes to glory now, not walking as a pilgrim, but carried softly as a passenger. “To be saved is only to repent and believe,” say these men. And they say truly—it *is* only to repent and believe. But, then, where have they learned that this “repentance” and “faith” are such easy exercises?

Repentance is breaking off from sin, with a resolute set of the affections heavenward—and is this easy? For the proud man to become humble; the licentious man to become pure; the worldly-minded man to become heavenly; the man covetous, cruel, faithless, godless, to become faithful, and gentle, and holy, a follower of Jesus, a worshiper of the true God, in spirit and in truth—is this easy? To conquer those passions that since the world began have defied all the reasonings of philosophy, all the rewards and punishments of human tribunals—is this easy? To cut off a right hand; to pluck out a right eye; to crucify the whole body of a carnal nature, as a mortified and dying thing, on the cross—is this easy? Did Paul find it easy, when, as

one almost overborne in the wild tides of battle, he cried out, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Or is *Faith* easy? "Faith" is trust for salvation in an unseen Christ. Is this easy? To feel ourselves to be nothing; to sink from all our self-righteousness; to see what is invisible; to hear what is inaudible; to turn from all surrounding and sensible glories, and long for, and love only, the far away and eternal—is this easy? No, alas, oh, no! It may seem so, indeed, to speculating and inexperienced philosophy. The prophet said unto Naaman, "Go wash seven times in the Jordan, and thou shalt be healed." "Oh, how easy," say these men. But we say, No! This was the very hardest thing in the world for that proud heart to do. He could have fought a hundred battles, and carried by storm a hundred walled cities, with less of struggle than it cost him to humble his haughty nature, to do the prophet's bidding. He could have conquered ten thousand mailed Israelites, with less of agonizing conflict than it cost him to conquer—*himself!*

And so it is of *salvation*. It is an easy thing to feel a sentimental sadness over past errors; it is easy to join a church; it is easy to imagine we feel very happy; it is easy to utter eloquent prayers, and sing exulting hallelujahs. But to become a humble, penitent, faithful, devoted, holy child of God, this is a hard thing. It is a race—a battle—a crucifixion of the flesh—a taking heaven by violence!

But, then, methinks I hear you say, "Though all this be hard, nay, impossible, without Divine assistance, yet, through the strengthening grace of God, it becomes alto-

gether easy." But what says my text? How stands the argument in the apostolic thought? "*God worketh in you to will and to do.*" This the grand fact as to God's gracious assistance—but what the apostolic inference? Therefore, be unconcerned? be at ease in Zion? leave the whole earnest work of salvation to God, and only sing hallelujahs? Does Paul reason thus? Listen! "*God worketh in you, therefore work out your salvation WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING!*"

Oh, be instructed, ye wise men! Paul's free grace had no tendency to licentiousness. The fact that salvation is all of grace—a work so immense that we can not take a step heavenward, save in the strength of Jehovah—this is the very reason why we should set about it, and continue in it, with mighty earnestness. This almighty agency within and around us, is a tremendous excitement to exertion. See the roused Lot fleeing from Sodom to Zoar! Does he reason that, because the angels are drawing him by the hand, he need not exert himself? Ah, no, just the opposite. He says, "It must surely be an immense necessity that brings this heavenly ministry around me; therefore, with all the power that is in me will I flee to the mountains!"

And thus is it in salvation. If God worketh in me, then I see and know *that all heaven is concerned for me*. If God bend from his own throne to strengthen me, then it must be a fearful battle my poor arm is fighting—a tremendous tempest my frail bark is weathering! And I must bestir myself. I must rouse myself to the uttermost. I must fling away the scabbard, as I spring to the conflict. I must gird myself in my mightiest seamanship, to bring my imperiled bark to the everlasting har-

bor. This is the true argument. This is Paul's argument. Not finding, in the aid of Divine grace, an encouragement to idleness, but the rather an incitement to more earnest and anxious struggles—"working out my salvation with fear and trembling—FOR—FOR—it is God that worketh in me both to will and to do."

This, then, is the matter and the manner of the apostolic exhortation. Let us close with its shortest and simplest application.

First—It is an exhortation to Christians. The text was addressed, originally, to believers in Philippi; and to professing Christians, in all time, it most solemnly appeals. A firm believer, as Paul was, in the great doctrine of "the saints' perseverance," yet in his mind it had no tendency to lull into security. Though he could say, "*I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him,*" nevertheless, to the very end of his life we find him, with all his intensest energies, stemming the flood, and fighting the battle, under the abiding and awful thought that, after all, *he himself might be a castaway.*

And if Paul was thus anxious, who of mortal men should be over-confident, and at ease in Zion. This very argument, wherewith we sometimes rock ourselves to slumber—"We have an almighty Saviour, and the Holy Ghost dwells in us,"—this is just Paul's argument for mightier exertion. "*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, FOR God worketh in you.*"

Yes, my brethren, it is yet an unsolved problem—whether any of us will be saved! To us, with all its terrible meaning, comes this Divine commandment—"Work out your own salvation." Perhaps we have been greatly

concerned about other men. Let us begin to be as greatly concerned for *ourselves*. Let us see that we are not, like Moses, leading others to a Canaan we ourselves shall only die in sight of, and never, never enter. Alas, how many professing Christians have made shipwreck of the faith! And from the fragments of ten thousand immortal argosies, that bestrew the whole shore of time, the awful warning rises—" *Work out, oh, work out, YOUR OWN salvation!*"

Yes, "*work out your own salvation, WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING*"—earnestly— anxiously! Christian life is a voyage across an ocean arched by dark skies and swept by fierce storms. And oftentimes we behold, by the flashes of lightning, the tempest-tossed bark laboring fearfully with the rolling seas, and the roaring hurricane. And never, till across the raging flood, and within shelter of the everlasting hills, it hath cast anchor for eternity, do we feel certain, in any given case, that the soul hath escaped shipwreck. Oh, then, professing Christians, rouse yourselves from this false and fatal security! Fight—struggle—agonize! Be anxious for *yourselves*!

"Oh, watch, and fight, and pray,
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day,
And help Divine implore.

"Ne'er think the victory won,
Nor once at ease sit down;
Thy arduous work will not be done,
Till thou hast got thy crown."

"*While God worketh in you to will and to do, of his own good pleasure, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*"

Meanwhile, *secondly*—*The text appeals to impenitent sinners.* And how fearful the point of the *a fortiori* application—“*If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*”

Alas for the madness of the infatuation that, regarding salvation as a very easy work, puts it off, with all its tremendous interests, and infinite issues, to a sick-bed and a dying hour! Alas, for the soul-destroying logic—that because the Son of God saves us, and the Spirit of God sanctifies us, therefore man has nothing to do but to wait for salvation! Oh, no, no! Salvation is a *work*—a mighty work—*your own* mighty work! And because “God worketh in you,” therefore it is to be wrought out by yourselves the more instantly and earnestly, “*with fear and trembling.*”

“*Faith in Christ*” is not an idle sentiment. “*Repentance*” is not a passing spasm of sorrow, nor a poor, paltry, superficial reformation. Salvation is a work, so big, so overwhelming, that, even while God works in the soul, that soul must work it out with fear and trembling. It is high time, then, you should be alarmed. Your immortal soul is in jeopardy! Your feet are on slippery places! You sleep and dream of heaven on a yawning precipice!

Oh, the folly, the unutterable madness of a soul that is not working out its salvation! That casts all the great interests of eternity upon the fearful chance of a future repentance! That can bear to look upward, and behold yonder blessed home of heaven, with all its far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, fading, slowly and surely, away forever! That can venture to gaze downward, into that estate of wrath, and tribulation, and anguish—drawing nearer, nearer—rising closer to the un-

steady feet, with all its wild realities—moving beneath to meet its fearful coming—and yet sport on the brink, as if enamored of damnation!

Oh, what mean you! Men, men, immortal men, awake from your slumbers! This very day—this very hour—this very moment—ere the spirit that moves even now upon your hearts, grieved by your resistance, leaves you forever! Now—now—just as you are—begin for your lives this great work of salvation!

Oh, we warn you, we beseech you, we entreat you—with all the strength God gives us—by all the motives God presses on your conscience—by the shortness and uncertainty of life—by the near approach of death—by the tremendous realities that make up eternity—all the shadows that make up its glooms—all the splendors that make up its glories—by all the vast interests that are at stake—your soul—your immortal self, tossed like a breaking bubble on a sea of storms—by all the mighty influences that are at work for your salvation—that father, that mother, that sister, that wife, that child, these praying, weeping Christians—yea, these shining angels, that all unseen hover over you—yea, the eternal God that worketh within you—the Father, with his love—the Son, with his precious blood—the Spirit, with his gentle influences—by the stupendous realities of all God's universe, which hem you in, and move around you, as if working only to save you—oh, by all these things, we pray you, we plead with you, we beseech you, that, *“while God worketh in you to will and to do, YOU WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.”*

“THE DIVISION OF SPOIL.”

“*And divideth his spoils.*”—LUKE xi. 22.

I SEPARATE these words from their connections, as containing a complete thought sufficient for present meditation. They occur in the winding up of our Lord’s parable of “The strong man armed.” That parable contains three great divisions; and, as you read it, three distinct scenes seem passing before you.

First—There is a noble palace, or stronghold, indisputably in possession of its armed master; and this represents the sad condition of that man over whose moral nature Satan maintains unweakened ascendancy.

Secondly—There is the approach of a great conqueror to this stronghold, lifting his challenge at the portal—yea, storming it, and carrying it by assault, and taking captive its owner. And this represents the triumph of Christ over Satan, either in a regenerated spirit or a redeemed world.

Thirdly—There is a despoiling the conquered strong man of his armor, and a public distribution of all the stores and treasures taken in the fortress—as it is termed in the text, “*A division of the spoil.*”

Now, leaving for the present the first two pictures,

we will consider this last and least pondered part of the record—"He divideth his spoil."

These words at first surprise us. We are expressly told that the design of Christ's mission was "to *destroy* the works of the devil;" and, regarding this parable as illustrating this conflict, we should expect the record to be, that, having conquered a satanic fastness, Christ at once *destroyed* all its accumulated treasures. But not so. The Divine conqueror is here represented as not *destroying*, but "*dividing* the spoil," *i. e.*, employing for his own cause and glory every thing that, before the conquest, Satan had been using for his own evil purposes. Just as in natural warfare, when military stores are taken, the conqueror makes use of them for his own further success.

Now, this is the overlooked and apparently unimportant point in the parable we wish practically to consider as setting forth this simple proposition—*That Christ Jesus, in the victories of his grace, whether individual or universal, turns to his own advantage, and employs for his own glory all those physical powers and intellectual endowments—that whole array of influence and engine which previously the great adversary had perverted and made powerful for evil.*

And for this thought we claim a twofold application, according to the view we take of the individual or universal sense of the parable.

First—We begin with the *individual*, as certainly the most obvious reference of the lesson—the case of a sinful soul conquered by Christ in the process of regeneration.

And thus it serves to rectify some wrong conceptions often entertained of the nature of regeneration. Setting

out with the Bible representation, of man by nature as totally depraved, and the new birth as making him a new creature, and ignoring the while the whole analogy of faith, wherein many of his natural virtues are commended in God's Word, we make often such representations of the unregenerate man as he himself knows to be false and unscriptural.

He knows that he daily experiences many feelings and performs many acts that are both approved by an enlightened conscience and enjoined in God's word. He provides for his household—he honors his parents—he hallows the Sabbath-day—he gives bread to the hungry—he feels within him great impulses of patriotism and philanthropy, and proves himself, by the facts of a well-tried life, a man of unsullied and uncompromising integrity. And if you tell such a man that, self-considered (apart from the fact that his morality is not godliness), all these virtues are sinful, he will laugh you to scorn as a slanderer of your species, and a falsifier of the very principles and precepts of God's revealed law. And all this justly. When the Bible speaks of men as dead in sin and totally depraved, it refers to his entire alienation from God—to his absolute want of supreme love to his Maker.

We are not concerned here with the argument, but only with our text's illustration of its truth. Here the representation of the great change wrought in the regenerated soul, is only a change in the sovereignty that overrules it. A change not in the house's furniture and appointments, but in their uses and ownership. The stronger man has not come to destroy what was in the fortress, but to rescue it all from the hands of the

strong man, and turn it to his own purposes. Those very endowments of reason, imagination, wit, wealth, power—acquirements which before were exercised sinfully, because, without godliness, Christ would now employ for man's good and God's glory—not destroying, but only “*dividing* the spoil.” And this is the very idea we would have you entertain, because, the very idea the Bible gives you of regeneration. It does not make the man *another* creature, but only a *new* creature. And not even a new creature, in the sense of possessing new natural faculties, but only in the sense of their consecration unto a new service. The Gospel invitation is, that men come just as they are, with all their strong impulses and emotions within them, if they be only amove for God's glory and consecrate to Christ. We do not want the covetous man to abate in one tittle his desire for accumulation; but rather to give a wider range and mightier power to that prostituted faculty, as, sanctified from its sinfulness, it impels, “to lay up treasure in heaven,” and “become rich toward God.” We do not expect the man seeking pleasure to annihilate the principle implanted by God for great uses; but, rather, to fill his soul with intenser longings, as he aspires unto those everlasting pleasures that are at God's right hand. We do not want the ambitious man to bow down his aspiring spirit to the low ends and aims of the multitude; but would rather bid his soul God-speed in its bravest marchings—out-weeping Cæsar for new worlds to conquer for Jesus; and reaching forth a sanctified hand to grasp the sceptre over the whole ten cities in the kingdom of God.

We want the man of genius to repress no immortal

pulse now bounding within him, but rather give them all nobler play; coming with all the fire in his eye and all the fervors of his spirit—first, casting them at Christ's feet in living consecration; and then out-soaring the wing of all earthly inspiration in flight through the skies!

We want, in short, the very adornments of unsanctified life, wherewith Satan has beautified even his iron despotism, only changed by regenerating grace from glory to glory, to furnish forth even loftier adornments for the blessed reign of Christ.

We would not apply fagot or torch to a solitary one of the hoarded treasures of the "strong man;" but rather, when the "stronger man" has carried the fortress, would have them all consecrated to the display of his own great glory, as a victorious conqueror, "*dividing his spoil.*"

Ah, God does not demand merely the *heart's* love, but as well that of the mind, and the soul, and the strength! God wants not merely the offerings of the tender affections; he claims as fully all the loftiest intellectual gifts and attainments—science with its profoundest discoveries; eloquence with its grandest utterances; poetry with its most glorious visions; ambition with its kindling eye; and genius with divinest power—all earnestly busy in Jehovah's service—all flashing in adornment of the doctrines of Christ. For, surely, there is no faculty natural to man, which at creation God did not set as a brilliant in Humanity's diadem. And though, alas! by a sorrowful perversion, they have become servants unto uncleanness; yet, if only once the strong man be mastered by the stronger, then as treasures consecrated

unto his own high purposes, they shall be borne aloft in his final triumph, as the trophies of a returning conqueror, "*dividing his spoils.*"

Such, according to the theology of God's own book, is Gospel regeneration. And, here, ere we pass to the text's larger application, let me press this thought upon your conscience as a motive unto repentance.

What is it to repent and believe, and thus to become Christians? Surely it is not, as on the one hand the bigot, and on the other the blasphemer, would teach, to yield to the power of a poor driveling fanaticism, in the self-sacrifice and denial of all grand human impulses!

To be a Christian, is simply and truly to be the highest style of man! To have all the faculties and impulses of your nature lifted from the perishing things of earth, and accelerated in their movement toward the immense realities of eternity. In the very figure of the text, Christ represents himself as standing at the door of your closed hearts—*i. e.*, at the barred portal of the strong man's palace. And his purpose in demanding admission is, not that he may work destruction and desolation amid the familiar things that adorn its chambers. Oh, no; he would enter only to conquer and bind the despot that enslaves you—to unshutter the darkened windows, and let in heavenly airs, and odors, and sunshine; and, reviving in all their original beauty, and replacing in all their original glory, its magnificent adornments, transform it from the haunt of a demon to the home of a God!

But now let us pass from the individual to consider—

Secondly—The text's wider and universal application. This satanic despotism over the human heart is in exact analogy with his despotism over the earth as man's

dwelling-place. The Bible everywhere represents this fallen spirit as practically "the god of this world." And this revelation, observation everywhere proves true. So far as the practical life of the race is concerned—so far as regards any universal sense of his infinite presence—so far as manifest in any popular acknowledgment of his right to rule over the world, Jehovah might as well have yielded his throne to his great adversary, and retired, as a deposed sovereign, to some unrevolted realm of his immense empire. And, therefore, the text-figure fitly represents this world as a grand fortress, or strongly guarded palace, wherein Satan, as a strong man, keeps his treasures at peace!

But if there be truth in other Bible revelations, all this is to cease. Presently there shall rise at the portal a heavenly challenge, and "the strong man" shall be mastered by "one stronger than he." This earth is not always to be garrisoned by Infernals! God did not round it into beauty, and hang it amid the stars, and lavish such cost and skill in its architecture and adornments, that it should forever be at peace under a despotism of demons! No! the time of change cometh—a deliverance draweth nigh! "*Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.*" The kingdoms and dominions under the whole heavens are to become Immanuel's, and this world become manifestly again the abode of a universally acknowledged Jehovah. All this we are assured of. All this we believe. But then, we do not believe that, as a result of this, earth is suddenly to be transfigured, as into another planet. Here, in the universal as in the individual, we look for this great law of

conquest—that, having bound the strong man and taken away his armor, our glorious Redeemer will not destroy the spoil, but will only “*divide the spoil.*”

We judge that the world, under Messiah’s reign, will be the world as it is, only redeemed from sin and re-established in, and filled with, all righteousness.

Physically it will be the same world, but instead of working disobedience to the precepts of the Divine law, all natural agents and processes shall be consecrated to Christ; and holiness to the Lord “shall be written on the bells of the horses.”

Intellectually it will be the same world, and all sciences and arts flourish, and poetry see visions, and eloquence utter prophecies; but literature shall embalm with sweet spices the name of the Crucified, and science shall go forth along all its broad journeyings, only searching for God.

Socially and politically, it will be the same; and though all despotisms shall cease, and every oppressor’s rod be broken, yet, as under the old Hebrew theocracy different civil polities successively obtained, so then there may be all present forms of government. But, high above finite *magistracy* shall rise one omnipotent enthronement, and monarchs, and princes, and presidents, and mighty men, shall be mighty men, and presidents, and kings *unto God.*

Perhaps, ecclesiastically it will be the same. All systems of false worship and corrupt faith will, of course, pass away; because, even as represented in this parable, they are not so much the enemy’s *spoil*, to be divided, as his *armor* to be destroyed. And, therefore, we will not be misunderstood as hoping that any such false system

(as, for example, the papacy) can be so regenerated as to become part of Christ's true Church. For, disguised, and modified, and humanized as it may be, in its very claim to infallibility it gives assurance that it will to the end remain the same monster that in centuries agoe warmed its wan hands by the fires of martyrdom, and reeled frantic and drunken with the blood of God's murdered saints! There are in it elements utterly incompatible with the true faith in Christ; and notwithstanding all disguises, all crosses on battlements, and blazon of Divine names on lintel and threshold, it is yet a true fortress of the adversary. And as the great Captain of Salvation makes no compromises with the strong man, so surely will he carry his fortress by storm, and bind the adversary, and break in pieces his armor.

And yet, even in respect of a system so false, we are not sure that there may not be *spoil to be divided*, as well as armor to be destroyed! The very things which have made popery so mighty in old times—the zeal, and perseverance, and self-sacrificing devotion, and indomitable daring, and grand old Roman world-grasping ambition—in a word, that whole matchless machinery, so wonderful in its contrivances, so mighty in its work, which belongs to it, beyond all Protestant rivalry, as aggressively missionary, may remain to bless the true Church when its own doom is sealed.

And this is what in that regard, as of all false systems, reconciles us to their progress. They are like the monstrous flora and fauna of the old geologic eras—parts of a progress toward intellectual life. They are all gathering treasures as a spoil for the Redeemer; and while, sometimes, the heart is sad as we see them laying deep

and broad foundations even in this Western world, yet we remember our parable and are comforted. And we say, "Go build great cathedrals, and strengthen mighty systems. You yet work and build for the Church of Christ. For there cometh presently a conqueror who *'divideth the spoil.'*"

But all this by the way. Speaking now of the redeemed world as to remain ecclesiastically like the present, we mean that the true Church of Christ will probably continue formally very much what it is. We have no belief, indeed no desire, that the millennial Church shall take the form of one mighty denomination. Even John's glorious vision of that Church was not of one immense gate through which all the tribes passed into the Celestial City; but of twelve separate gates, each inscribed with its own name, and kept by its own angel. Talk as we will of organic church unions, these denominational differences are the Church's elements of strength; and a wise man would no more do away with them, if he could, than he would consolidate all the companies of one army into one band, uniform in equipment and armor.

Even in the millennial Church, there may be all the distinct creeds and ceremonies the Church knows to-day. The Baptist may still go down to "many waters," and the Churchman delight in his beautiful liturgy, and the Arminian look fondly on man's free-will in salvation, and the Calvinist magnify God's glorious sovereignty; itineracy may marshal the Church's light troops in waste places, and Church establishments stand as grand fortresses in great cities and kingdoms. All such things may be—probably will be.

But then, blessed be God! all creeds and ceremonies

shall be consecrate to Christ—the strong man shall be bound!—there will be no devil in them! There may be Christian sects. There will be no unchristian sectarianism. And the only strife between the fellow-soldiers of Christ, will be the generous rivalry in the old crusades, between the Lions of England and the Lilies of France, as to which should be placed first and highest on the sepulchre of Jesus!

We may not enlarge—enough has been said to illustrate this universal application of the text. That the Gospel conquest of the world is to consist simply, in subduing its evil—that a *division of the spoil*, and not *the destruction of the spoil*, will be the law of the victory.

And this is what fills us with joy, even amid its seeming strengthening of unbelief. Of this marvelous human progress, Satan does indeed seem, sometimes, the very leader of the hosts. And the march seems only away from Christ and from God. All the energies of science and literature and philosophy are united in an effort to disprove the Bible. And the earth to-day, from its geologic foundation up to its astronomic arches, looks like the brave “palace of the strong man whose goods are at peace.” To the eye of sense all this progress is toward infidelity. But blessed be God—the eye of faith, reading this parable as a prophecy, sees how all this gathered treasure of the “strong man,” is only for “the spoil of the stronger.” And therefore, unto all these despisers of God—unto mocking scribe and scornful philosopher—every infidel explorer of the strata of earth, and every atheistic observer of the stars of heaven, do we say boldly, exultingly—while the inspiration is evil all your work is unto good! You are only casting

up in the desert a highway for Immanuel! You are only gathering, from the stones beneath, and the stars above, gems of great price for the crown of the Redeemer! You are only accumulating in "the strong man's palace," "goods"—paintings, statuary, treasure; sumptuous furniture and adornment—all good and glorious things for his triumphal coming who "*divideth the spoil!*"

"*Divideth the spoil!*" What a precious truth it is! Precious in reference to the things seen, which are temporal; immeasurably precious in reference to things as yet unseen and eternal.

There is evident allusion here to the winding-up of the present system of things at Christ's second coming. The language is metaphorical of the public triumphs accorded to old conquerors when returning from battle. It is prophetic of that coming day, when, all gracious purposes being accomplished, God's elect ones all gathered, God's enemies all subdued—the earth full of the goods of the strong man, shall appear rich in "spoils" for the triumph of its conqueror. And surely, then, when ascending from a burning world with the countless millions of the risen dead, and death and hell dragged after him as mighty captives, the Son of Man shall sit on his throne of judgment, and pronounce every doom, and distribute every trophy, then I say, will the text be fulfilled in all its blessed meaning, "*He bindeth the strong man, and divideth his spoils!*"

"THE SPOILS!" *i. e.*, the trophies taken in battle, to be publicly displayed in the face of the universe! Just as in the old Roman "triumphs," following the golden chariot of the conqueror, came the kings and

princes, and the long train of noble captives, taken in battle; and, borne in display, came the "spoils" of cities and kingdoms—gold and jewels and costly array; old banners; brave chariots; thrones of power and diadems of glory: so in that day of Christ's manifestation, "*he having spoiled principalities and powers, shall make a show of them, triumphing openly over them.*" And then when, as loyal subjects recaptured from stern bondage, shall come the great company of the redeemed, and as the spoil of spiritual cities and kingdoms, shall be seen, all the old satanic treasure and armor, reconsecrate unto godliness, and when in the awful imagery of revelation, "Death and hell as bound captives shall be themselves cast into hell," then verily unto Christ, shall there be "made a show of them"—a triumph with trophies!—a display of the spoils!

But not a display only.—"He DIVIDETH *his spoils!*"

We can not tell what it means—that distribution of all the trophies of redeeming power and grace, when "having put all enemies under his feet," Christ "shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." Imagination trembles as it lifts wing to the thought of some such distribution, even among the persons of the adorable God-head, of the glories of a consummated Gospel!

But a simpler thought to us is—that all who have shared in Gospel toil shall share as well in its triumphs. Unto the angels sent to minister unto the heirs of salvation shall be glorious recompense. And richer and nobler the reward as unto risen spirits sitting on thrones—to all "who have followed the Son of Man in the regeneration."

And though we can not understand these scriptural intimations now,—yet we shall understand it all at last. And when, in our high places before the throne, we perceive how even the eternal Persons of the Godhead were all glorified by the Gospel, and how all unfallen angels as they shared in the ministry shall share in the manifestation—and how every child of God, according to his work, shall reign over the “one city,” or the “ten cities” of God’s kingdom—then will the redeemed and risen man feel all the blessed meaning of the announcement “*He divideth his spoil,*” “*He divideth his spoil.*”

Meanwhile, one present practical lesson has the text to us all to-day, and although of all its truths the smallest and simplest, it is to us, individually, the most solemn.

In one sense *all mankind may be regarded as thus the spoil of this great Conqueror*. Even now as spirits unto whom salvation is offered on the ground of Christ’s victory—and more strictly in the end, as all alike delivered by the general resurrection from the destroyer’s stronghold, all are, in a sense, trophies of Christ’s mediatorial triumph.

And think of it, then! oh, ye immortal creatures of God, that will not have Christ to reign over you! think of this awful oracle, “*HE DIVIDETH the spoil.*”

As in the public triumph of the old Roman conqueror, the long train of captives following his chariot, marched to widely different destinies—and some were doomed to death—and some were admitted to noble Roman citizenship when the pageant was ended.

So the Bible declares it shall be in Christ’s great

day of manifestation. And oh, in that solemn hour, when that multitude of the redeemed ascend, with palm and white robe and exulting hallelujah, with the Lord unto the kingdom of God, even the Father; and alas! alas! they whose names were not written in the Lamb's book of life, part from that glorious throng forever; passing mournfully away unto their destiny of darkness—then shall we understand another and an awful meaning in the words, “*He divideth his spoils.*” “*He* DIVIDETH *his spoils.*”

REDEMPTION.

"To redeem them that were under the law."—GALATIANS, iv. 5.

THESE words in their connections, set forth both the design and result of our Saviour's incarnation and sacrifice. Separate from the context they exhibit in a striking aspect the great truth of human redemption. The word "redeem" had, in apostolic times, a most impressive meaning. It denoted the buying back from captivity a bondman or slave. And, therefore, in apostolic rhetoric, man by nature is here represented as a being confined in a strong dungeon. God's law is spoken of as a fetter or chain, binding a condemned spirit unto sure and speedy punishment. And Christ Jesus is set forth as a gracious Saviour, coming with both price and power to ransom and deliver. These two parts of the figure should be considered in order.

First—Here is the Divine law as a bondage or imprisonment. A principle, or power, hemming the sinful soul in and insuring its destruction. And this simple, but startling thought underlies, as a foundation, all apostolic theology. Of the immaculate holiness of that Divine law, and the necessity of its triumphant vindication, they were ever thinking. Of this we think too little, or think only practically to deny it. Why, we ask, should an immortal creature perish for violating a

Divine precept? Is not God infinitely good, infinitely glorious; and can a thought, word, deed, of a poor finite creature either injure or incense him? Surely these Divine threatenings will never be executed! This law is no more than a cloud-belt round about the creature, appealing to his fears, as a present restraint, but presently to dissolve, leaving the forgiven spirit all bathed in the glorious brightness of the loving kindness of God! But alas for our misconception! Law—that substantial and sublime thing. Law, a cloud, presently to vanish! Ah me! it is any thing else! The very word “*law*” means something fixed, established, immutable. And as everywhere seen in the Divine government, the thing “*law*” is the most permanent and immutable of all things.

We observe this in regard even of the lowest physical laws of the universe. Take the law of germination—the transmission of vegetable life through the earthly flora—that Divine ordinance at creation: “That grass and herb and tree should yield seed after their kind, whose seed is in itself after its kind;” and observe with what immutable power it reigns over its broad domain. All the physical changes since creation have not abated jot or tittle of its meaning. The oak and the cedar are now in form, in development, yea, in the color and fibre of spray and leaf, precisely the oak and the cedar of the primal Eden-woodlands. And the odors we breathe in spring-time are from the same flowers that made fair and fragrant the garden when the first man walked with his Maker. And upon our thousand hills the cattle feed upon the self-same grasses that fattened the living creatures to which Adam gave

names. Around every seed as it came from the creative hand was bound as an iron fetter that thing we call "law." And if we find a solitary one that has, since the time of the Pharaohs, lain still and sere in a mummy's shroud, we know that, if placed in conditions of growth, it will yield to the resistless ordinance and burst into exactly the leaf and flower that made the old Nile beautiful four thousand years ago. All the men of the world, with all their power and skill of chemistry and magic, can not produce a rose from a lily seed, nor a pomegranate from a fig-tree. Nor is this natural law without a mighty and merciful meaning. On its steadfastness rests the hope of creation. Let the principle of specific life, shut up in the husk of a grass-seed, escape out of its adamantine prison-house, and no more by Divine compulsion produce after its kind—and the husbandman stands aghast and despairing in his labor, for he may find to-morrow his corn ripening into tares, and the fruit of his pleasant orchards bitter and deadly as the clusters of Sodom. And so the iron law that closes round that vegetable life is a monition of Divine love rising between our race and despair and annihilation !

Or take the law of gravitation—that mysterious principle by which all matter attracts and is attracted directly as the mass, and inversely as the square of the distance—and observe with how absolute and immutable a power it reigns over the universe. Brooding over the old chaos, the Divine Spirit imparted the power, or rather promulgated the law, to remain to the end of time, inviolable and universal ; and, yielding to its influence, that old chaos was radiantly transfigured.

The nebular fire-mist consolidated and rounded into stars and systems and clusters, and, the while, every separate world grew shapely and beautiful. The mountains rose up in their majesty, and the waters sparkled and murmured, and, instead of the old waste, emptiness, confusion, there appeared fair bright homes for living and joyous creatures, and over all as a glorious universe, "the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy." Nor have all subsequent ages weakened in one jot or tittle that great primal ordinance. To-day yonder mountains stand on their foundations, and the old sea tosses itself, and all the stars of heaven traverse their great paths under the resistless rule of this mysterious gravitation. Every particle of matter as it came from the Creator's hand was bound by it as with an iron fetter. And there is no power, nor wisdom, nor device of man that can for a solitary moment free the smallest material atom from that grand physical law. Some dew-drop that sparkled in some flower's fair bell in the old Paradise, may have been changed into a thousand shapes, and passed into a thousand combinations. It fell perhaps into the earth, and was taken up by vegetable absorbents, and became part of a mighty tree. Then, as with long centuries, the living organism moldered, it may have been liberated, and gone up as vapor to the clouds, and been driven away by winds, and dashed about the stormy oceans, and for a thousand years, perhaps, been frozen in the heart of some ice-field, in the great polar night. Nevertheless, if you bring that water-drop again into its primal conditions, it will round itself and poise itself and sparkle precisely as in the first hour when it bedewed the fair flower of Paradise. And

so of all matter that makes up the universe. Never has the minutest atom failed of obedience to the law of its being. And though we may never have considered the beneficence of this unwavering loyalty, yet upon it manifestly depend all the order and beauty and life of the universe. For, let it be seen and understood that the tiniest mote in the sunbeam has broken that fetter and escaped out of that prison-house; let the wind shake a single dew-drop from a flower, and that drop not fall to the earth, but float away in thin air unsupported; and what then? Alas, then, a palpable suspension, or destruction, of the great law of gravitation! And then the rivers will cease to murmur, and the mountains will shake on their deep foundations, and the roused ocean burst its chain and its prison-house, and rush in a devouring flood over earth's islands and continents, and the stars of heaven will dash wildly from their courses, and all the lights of the universe go out in great darkness, and all created life perish forever!

And so again that iron law, that binds this dead matter as an omnipotent fetter, rises as an adamantine bulwark between a living universe and the awful gulf of despair and annihilation. So that, however unimportant it may at first seem, whether a rain-drop falls to the earth, or floats unsupported in air; yet, upon reflection, the issues involved seem momentous, and you lift heart and voice in thanksgiving, that even all the material things God hath created are inexorably under law!

And from this principle in the natural, how plain the *a fortiori* argument for the supremacy and vindication of those laws which make up God's moral administration. A sin committed and not punished would be, in that

regard, just what the imponderous rain-drop or the growth of tares from seed-corn would be in a natural world—a demonstration of the mutable and unrighteous character, both of the universal laws and their Omnipotent Lawgiver. One evil act, or word, or thought, permitted unpunished; and then all such iniquities would have Divine license and sanction. Sin, the great destroyer, would spread as a deadly pestilence throughout all worlds. The mighty spirits of evil would cast off every chain and escape all imprisonment, free to work their abominations amid all those bright worlds which constitute the many mansions in the House of our Great Father—and those white robes would be exchanged for sackcloth, and those hallelujahs for blasphemies. Wild anarchy would take the place of God's beneficent sovereignty, and every bright angel become a devil, and every fair world a hell!

Yes, my hearers, law is no insignificant thing, to be broken with impunity. It is an immutable, adamant, omnipotent ordinance, set to guard all great and universal interests—lifting itself as an impassable barrier between the domains of sin and holiness, disloyalty and love. And therefore, so long as Jehovah reigns, is never to be relaxed in one tittle of its righteous requirements, or defrauded of its full and triumphant vindication.

All things made by God, from the atom in the air to the glorious archangel, were placed, at the first, and will remain to the end, inexorably "*under law*." And therefore the apostle, in the strong metaphor of the text, represents the condition of an ungodly man, as one around whom this immutable and everlasting law is bound as an iron fetter, and built as an adamant

prison-house, from which he can not escape, unless by some Divine and Omnipotent deliverance.

“*Under law!*” “*under law!*” Verily language hath no more startling image than this! For “law” is seen here to be only a manifestation; only another form of that Omnipotence that holds the universe in equipoise. And if in one jot or tittle its requirements have been violated, then all that Omnipotence is pledged, yea, is already at work in its vindication. And the heart recoils at the thought of a finite violater thus “*under the law.*”

And this brings us to consider the other part of this apostolic figure, wherein unto the soul thus hopelessly imprisoned, Christ Jesus is represented as a deliverer, coming both with price and power to work out salvation—“*to redeem!—to redeem them that were under the law.*”

And the figure illustrates strikingly the meaning of redemption. It is something more than deliverance. Our Saviour is not represented as coming in arbitrary omnipotence to open the prison-door and preach liberty to the captive. For this were an abrogation of law, and not its vindication. But he comes to redeem men. The word is “redemption”—*i. e.*, a buying back—not a wresting by power, but a release by purchase. It is not the advent of an armed champion to lift up his challenge at the prison-door, and carry the stronghold by assault; but the advent of a Mediator, to satisfy every claim, and fulfill every condition of the law which is violated, extenuating nothing of the captive’s guilt—disputing none of the law’s demands—prepared to meet those demands in every jot and tittle, so that if it were possible to dis-

tinguish between the Divine attributes, it would be rather the justice of God than his mercy, which loosens the fetter and unbars the dungeon.

“Redemption!” “*Redemption!*” This is the word! Such a vindication of the law in the face of the universe as strengthens the universal faith in its steadfastness! Mediation! Substitution! This is the mighty truth! Not a breaking of the law, but a fulfilling it in behalf of us! Making manifest its tremendous power even in the very act of deliverance—as in a beneficent rescue from some great natural law. Take the law of gravitation. Imagine a child, abroad on a holiday in some Alpine valley, joyously watching summer-birds, or gathering wild flowers; when suddenly, far above, some elemental agency loosens the avalanche, and downward in awful momentum, it rushes toward the imperiled child! Now, suppose that infant could stand up in the path of that destroyer, and, putting forth its feeble hand, stop it, and roll it backward! Then, though the fond mother would exult in the deliverance, yet all human faith would be shaken in the steadfastness of the great law, and this world, and all worlds, be flung back into chaos. But instead of this, suppose, at the first sound of that descending destruction, the father, thoughtful of his child, had sprung to the rescue—bounding from rock to rock, reckless of precipices and chasms—reaching the imperiled not a moment too soon, snatching it from the very jaws of death, and springing backward, bleeding, breathless, into the shelter of some adamantine cavern, had come forth when the mighty terror had gone by, bearing the beloved and saved one—then the cry of gladness filling all that stormy air, would be no more in praise of

human love than of the might and majesty of that glorious thing—*law!*

And thus is it in salvation. The claim of God's holy law is in no sense set aside or weakened! Christ Jesus, for us, bears all its penalty—fulfills all its requirements. And the universe beholds the amazing fact of substitution, assured that the righteousness of God is absolute and immutable, and exults that, even in the deliverance of the sinner, the law is magnified in the punishment of sin.

"Redemption!" "REDEMPTION!" This is the overwhelming thought! We were "under the law"—"sold under sin"—conquered and carried away captive! Bound in iron fetters! Cast into adamantine dungeons! Around us, as bulwarks which no finite power could shake or scale, rose the infinite attributes of God, hemming us in unto destruction. And when the Infinite Deliverer came, it was not with almighty power to rock the dungeon into ruins, but it was in omnipotent and self-sacrificing love, to ransom us, as a monarch might ransom a beloved child, with the full price of his kingdom.

"He was wounded for our transgressions." *"He was bruised for our iniquities."* *"He bore the sins of many."* *"The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all."* *"We are redeemed! redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."* And looking on the immensity of that Divine offering, Infinite Justice said "It is enough." And the iron fetters were loosed, and the gates opened, and we walked forth redeemed ones; and that tremendous thing—Law—stood, not defrauded, not dishonored, but vindicated! And the universe exulted not more that man

was saved, than that God was glorified in his salvation. And there was a new song heard in heaven, more transporting in its splendor and power than all its old choral symphonies—a song of praise “*unto him that was slain, that he might redeem with his blood;*” and on earth, instead of the anguish of despair, there was the rapture of deliverance, when in the fullness of time God sent forth his Son, not to destroy the law, but, by fulfilling it, gloriously “*to redeem them that were under the law.*”

These, then, are the two truths which the text’s metaphor illustrates: *The law an imprisonment! Christ Jesus a Redeemer!*

Yet each should receive at our hands its just personal application: 1. If we are impenitent and unpardoned men, let us at least consider seriously our true estate of dark and unsheltered condemnation. “You are under the law!” and as the most necessary and certain of all things, that law must be vindicated. If you will not accept of redemption as offered in Christ, yours is no part in salvation. For if God should conform to the popular theology, saving sinful man otherwise, it would be not according to law, but against law! Now law is the very life, yea, the very substance of the universe. Remitted or relaxed, it goes back to chaos. And so it stands as an adamant bulwark around all spheres and forms and processes of life! And never since creation has an iota of its requirements been remitted; and there is not a mote floating in the sunshine, nor a dew-drop sparkling in a flower’s cup, that hath not, through all earth’s long years, carefully as if all creation’s interests hinged on its obedience, been omnipotently, divinely hemmed in—“under law.”

And surely, then, that moral law which condemns the

ungodly, guarding as it does all the spiritual interests of all creatures, shall not fail in one jot or tittle, till all be fulfilled! And so we warn you of your terrible condition!

Law—*Law*. What a fearful thing it is in its aspects toward transgression! Even human law, weak, uncertain, mutable, imperfect—yet how its violator recoils, if it hem him in to destruction! See yonder! through the dark night hurries a trembling fugitive! That man's hands are stained with blood. In silence and solitude, with no human eye to see, he struck the fatal blow, and now on swift foot turns from the face of the dead man! But, alas for him, the avenger of blood is on his track! *Law! Law!* that inexorable power of retribution—with an eye that gathers evidence from a footprint in earth, or a stain in water, or a whisper in air—is following his footsteps, and will find him and lay a mighty hand on him, and bind him in iron fetters which no power can break, and consign him to dungeons whence no skill can deliver.

And if human law is terrible, what think ye of Divine law? God's natural laws are fearful! You see a fair child gathering flowers on the brink of a precipice; singing its glad songs and weaving its dewy garlands, it approaches the dizzy verge! Far out, in a cleft of a rock, grows a tempting violet; the child sees it, longs for it—reaches for it—reaches too far! See, its little feet slip! and you shudder, recoil, cry out with terror! Why? Is not God merciful? Are not God's providences gracious? Yes, indeed; but even God's merciful providences are according to immutable ordinances. *That child is under law*. The law, that holds the universe together, and is as inexorable as its Maker, hems it in, and presses on it,

and will dash it to destruction. And do you think God's moral laws are narrower in their play, or weaker in their pressure? O, ungodly man! be alarmed for yourself! You are pursuing your chosen courses under law—"under law!" You are gathering flowers of sin upon precipices, and below are unfathomed depths of indignation and anguish; and the moral law that binds into one rejoicing universe all sinless ranks of life, is over you, and around you, and pressing you down to destruction, and at the next footstep your feet may slide, and there be none to deliver! Oh, the overwhelming thought! Beings passing to immortality under law—"under law."

2. Meantime, unto the believing and penitent soul the text is full of consolation. *We were under the law, but Christ hath redeemed us!* Redeemed! Redeemed! Oh, what a word it is! Saved! Saved! How the very thought thrills us! A child saved from a burning house! From foundation to roof swept the red surges hemming him in unto destruction! But right through the encircling fire rushed a strong deliverer, reckless of danger, to restore it in joyous life to the mother's loving heart! Saved! Saved! A man overboard, in a night of storm, lifting one despairing cry upon the rushing wind, and sinking, in despairing anguish, in the devouring sea! But, behold! a life-boat lowered, manned, darting like a sea-bird through the blinding spray, and strong arms outstretched to snatch the victim from the very jaws of death! Saved! *saved!* SAVED! Oh, what a word it is! And yet thus, O children of God, are you saved from the unfathomed ocean and the unquenchable fire! Saved, saved forever! Oh, what gratitude be-

comes us! What consecration! What deep, adoring love! We lay in that awful dungeon! there was no brightening ray; no whispering voice in the thick darkness; the cankering iron ate into the shrinking flesh; the adamantine bulwarks shut us in unto despairing anguish. Law—Law! God's great, righteous, inexorable, condemning law overshadowed us, closed round us, pressed upon us. "*We were under the law.*"

But we are saved! "Redeemed!" Bought back! A glorious light flashed through the prison-house! The heavy chains fell off! The awful portals opened! And wherefore? Whence the marvel of this great deliverance? Behold! Behold! A glorious Form stands without! In his hands a precious ransom—all the riches, all the raptures, all the glories that were his with the Father, before the world was, lavished on our redemption. "*He that was so rich, now so poor, that through his poverty we might be rich.*" See! where the eternal diadem glittered, there is a crown of thorns! See, the hand that made the world and wielded heaven's sceptre, bleeds with the piercing nail! He—he—hath redeemed us by his blood—his own precious blood! Oh, this picture, this overwhelming picture! *An eternal dungeon and a Divine Redeemer!* Oh, weep, these eyes of mine! Break, break this cold heart! Send heavenward your exulting hallelujahs, O dumb lips! Rise, expand, exult, soar, triumph, O ransomed spirit! "*For Christ hath redeemed them that were under the law!*"

THE CHILD-TEACHER.

"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."—MATTHEW, xviii. 1, 2, 3.

THIS passage illustrates the beautiful simplicity of our Saviour's teaching. It could have occurred in no history but his own. No prophet, no apostle, no inspired man, no uninspired preacher, would so have answered the great question propounded by the disciples.

Whatever be our notion of what is here meant by "the kingdom of heaven," whether Christ's temporal reign on the earth, or the Gospel dispensation, or the true glories of the eternal world, had the question been put to another, the answer would have involved the metaphysics of a regenerated nature. A modern preacher certainly would have sought out what seemed to him the loftier excellencies of apostles and apostolic men—Peter's boldness, and John's love, and Paul's ardor—the confessor's steadfastness, and the martyr's daring—saying, these are the elements of true Christian greatness. He would have summoned, in imagination, from eternity

the spirits of just men made perfect; and as in vision they moved before the eye—Abraham and Moses, and Elijah and Daniel—he would have pointed to the glorious procession, and cried: “Behold! such are the great ones in the kingdom of God.”

But not so Jesus. The disciples asked him the question, and instead, as we should have expected, of recalling to their minds Moses and Elias, who, in the Mount of Transfiguration, had just passed before them as great chieftains of Immortality, he looked around upon his audience, and seeing a little child, lifted it gently in his arms, and said to the amazed disciples: “Behold! such are the great ones in the kingdom of heaven.”

Now, it is this simple act of the great Teacher we would at present consider. We would let a little child teach you about the kingdom of God. Of course, we would not be misunderstood to intimate that a little child, if unregenerated, is in any sense fitted for that kingdom. We do indeed believe that all who die in infancy are at once translated to heaven. And yet this we are assured is a result of Divine grace through the Son’s sacrifice and the Spirit’s sanctification; because the great Shepherd came traveling in the greatness of his strength to bear the tender lambs in his arms from life’s wilderness into green pastures and beside still waters.

Though there be unquestionably a religious training for children, so that, instead of being left to grow up in wickedness, with the hope that by and by God will regenerate them, children ought from their birth to be brought up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;” nevertheless, train them as you will, without the miracle

of converting grace, just because they are born with a sinful nature, they will always and inevitably grow up sinners.

Therefore, in what may be said hereafter, we shall not be understood as intimating that a child unconverted is either a great or a little one in the kingdom of heaven. We are only using such a child after the example of our Divine Master, as illustrating, in its natural exercises and emotions, the graces of such as are literally "great in the kingdom of God." Let us then select a few prominent Christian excellencies and illustrate their nature and power by the analogical emotions so manifest in childhood.

First. Let us begin with FAITH—the grand foundation of all Christian character. And whether you regard saving or speculative faith, let a little child illustrate the true nature and excellence of the principle.

1st. Begin with *speculative* or intellectual faith, and what is it as manifested in a child? Why, simply, *a firm reliance on parental testimony*. Let a father tell a child that there is a God, and spite of a thousand learned infidels, he will believe it. Let a mother declare that there is a heaven, and the child never questions it. Let a father teach that the earth is round, and the child believes, though he can not comprehend it. Let the mother say that the sun only seems to move, while it really stands still, and the child accepts the truth, though it contradict his senses. Feeling assured of parental knowledge and veracity, and conscious of his own ignorance, he holds his judgment in abeyance to that higher wisdom. This, we say, is speculative, or doctrinal, faith in a child—*Believing what a father says just because he*

says it. And such, as a Christian grace, is that doctrinal faith which makes a man great in the kingdom of heaven.

A Christian is God's little child, and the Bible is the word of his heavenly Father. And if he have great faith, he believes to the full all it reveals to him. He must indeed assure himself that it is a revelation. God asks no man—yea, allows no man—to accept as a revelation any thing without evidence. He commands us even “to try the spirits.” And if a seeming archangel should bring me a letter, apparently from heaven, still, before I receive it, I must demand proof that it is a true angel and a veritable revelation.

But once satisfied that the Bible is God's Word, a Christian has nothing more to do than to understand and believe it. He may not be able to comprehend its truths, either separate or in combination, yet he will believe them all unhesitatingly on the Divine assurance; just as a child believes, on his father's word, that the earth is a globe, though, for his life, he can not understand why the men and the cities do not fall off at the antipodes.

Such is the essence and exhibition of a child's speculative faith. Let us learn the great lesson! Let this little child preach to all men about the kingdom of heaven! Would that we could gather together all the proud and philosophic champions of the Church's theologic antagonisms—men that set up their own judgments as the measure of their faith, determined to believe no truth in itself and no system of truth in its connections which they can not understand; doubtful of the doctrine of the Trinity, and the Incarnation, and the Resurrection, because they can not comprehend them; or going about to modify Scripture antagonisms; the doctrine of Divine sover-

eighty, on the one hand, lest it should infringe man's free agency ; or, on the other, the doctrine of free agency, lest it should limit Divine sovereignty ; magnifying justification by faith, on the one hand, till there be no room for good works ; or, on the other, good works, till simple faith without works seem a fanaticism. Men, in short, thus virtually putting God's glorious Word to the torture, that its utterances may be forced to square with their carnal philosophies ; whose theological position is rather that of Rabbis teaching Christ, than of disciples sitting at his feet and receiving his words trustfully. Would, I say, I could gather all such men into one great assembly and let this little child preach to them about this true Christian faith ! Ah ! how that young lip would be curled in holy scorn, and that hand be clinched in holy wrath, as he cried : " Shame, shame upon you, you grown-up children of the Omniscient Jehovah, thus wanting implicit faith in the Divine oracles ! Why, I believe my mortal father, whether I understand all his words or not, yet I fully believe him, and can not you believe your great and glorious and eternal Father ? " Such is a child's faith. And just this unquestioning, rejoicing belief in our heavenly Father's oracles is the faith that makes a man a chief in the kingdom of heaven.

2d. Or take *saving faith*—that gracious exercise in which the soul rests solely and entirely on Christ for salvation ; and let a little child illustrate it.

Now, you are all aware how many sermons have been preached and volumes written on this subject of justifying faith. How much learned disputation has gone on in the Church about *the philosophy of the Atonement*, whereon such faith rests, and what ponderous tomes of

metaphysics have been written concerning the various mental exercises which make up this grand composite of faith. And yet, so truly has all this proved only a darkening of counsel by words without knowledge, that when the awakened soul, conscious of its need of a great Saviour, comes to these Rabbis of theology, asking earnestly: "What it is to believe unto salvation?" It receives responses so Delphian in ambitious metaphysics, that it turns away in despair of apprehending the simple nature of faith.

But come away, O desponding soul! to the child-preacher. Behold, a fire has broken out in a street of your city! A house is enveloped in flames; and see, a little boy, forgotten for a moment in the confusion of escape, stands at the lofty casement imploring aid. And now, through the excited crowd rushes the tender father, he cries:—"My child, do not be afraid! I have come to save you; let yourself down from the casement, and then drop without fear into my arms."

And now what does this boy do? Does he pause with idle questionings about the nature of fire in general, or the origin of this fire in particular, or the reason why his father would save him in this way, or indeed with any foolish questions at all? Oh, no; the boy does one thing only. He obeys simply his father. He drops into those outstretched arms, and the next moment is safe on the paternal bosom. This is saving faith in a child; and like it, is the faith that justifies the believer. To the wrath-environed soul, around which the eternal flames are already kindling, comes the gracious Redeemer, and he cries: "O, helpless immortal! I have come to save you, to satisfy Divine justice, to cleanse you from sin, to

bear you safely to glory; but from all your struggling self-righteousness you must cast yourself at once and entirely upon me for salvation. Drop from all other dependence into my outstretched arms." And with this direction, so simple that a child comprehends it, the poor soul goes about with its anxious questionings, about the metaphysics of belief and the philosophy of the atonement—analyzing the water of life, when it ought to be drinking it; speculating about the make of the manna, when it ought to be eating it!

Alas, poor foolish soul! what can you know about the atonement more than this—that by it, in some way, God is reconciled to the sinner? What need you more than God's simple assurance, that by it he is satisfied? Oh, away from these metaphysical masters in Israel, to the feet of the child-preacher! Hark! he cries: "Ye perishing immortals, drop into your Saviour's loving and almighty arms, and be saved as I was saved by my weaker father!" Such is a child's saving faith—and such is the justifying belief that makes a Christian great in the kingdom of God.

Secondly. Take REPENTANCE, as the next Christian grace, for a like illustration. And here, as before, you all know what volumes have been written and uttered about the true godly sorrow which God demands of the sinner. "Repent, repent!" says the preacher; "repent, or you will all surely perish!" "But tell me, oh, tell me," responds the convicted soul, "what true repentance is! Practically and simply, what can I do?—what must I do?" And in answer, we hear so much about various elements and exercises—apprehensions of the righteousness of the law that condemns, and approvals

of the Divine justice that destroys—so much, in short, about the metaphysical simples that make up the spiritual composite of repentance, that the poor, trembling, self-condemned soul, instead of looking trustfully upward into the face of the loving and forgiving Father, is ever looking, in doubt and despondency, inward, upon its subjective frames and feelings, to ascertain if haply it have enough of some mysterious emotions to justify it in taking God at his word, at once and rejoicingly—till, indeed, the very word “*Repent*”—so simple in its significance, that a child understands it—seems rather a Delphian enigma for our logic, than a Divine entreaty for our love.

But come away to this child-teacher, O troubled spirit! See that little girl! She has disobeyed her mother, and expects to be punished, and feels that she deserves it. But it is not the chastisement that troubles her. She is thinking of that mother’s sorrowful heart and tearful eye! That kind, gentle, loving mother—she has grieved her, and her own heart breaks at the thought! But now what does she? Does she wait till she has made herself better—till she feels more deeply her wickedness—till by some earnest obedience she softens parental indignation? Oh, no! She comes just as she is, to her mother’s feet; she casts herself into those outstretched arms; she lays her aching head on that loving bosom, and looks up through raining tears into that beloved face, and cries: “Oh, mother, I have been very wicked!—I am very sorry! Dear mother, forgive me; forgive me, and I will do so no more!”

And just this is repentance, O troubled soul! to come just as you are—waiting for nothing, inquiring about

nothing—from your sins and your shortcomings to your heavenly Father; looking up tearfully into his face, and crying: “Father, I have sinned—I am heartbroken; punish me if it please thee, but forgive—oh, forgive!” This is repentance in the heart of a little child—and the repentance as well which makes the Christian a great one in the kingdom of God.

Thirdly. Take the grace of LOVE for the child’s illustration—a grace which, in its full development, is the well-rounded composite of all Christian excellencies—and let a little child exhibit its essence and exercise.

1st. Take love *to God*, as the great law of life. And here as before, you all know how ambitiously men have sought out and classified the various evidences of such love in a believer’s experience. And as we have come to our spiritual teachers for assistance on this great point of self-examination, we have heard so much about the distinctions between the selfish and the unselfish affections—so much about the spirituality of the Divine nature, and the necessity of sinking all thought of self-interest in an overpowering concern for the Divine glory—so much, in a word, about the elements of crystallization making up this crown-gem of a Christian character—that we have retired from the pulpit, or risen from the book, more than ever in doubt, whether or not we really did exercise any genuine love to our heavenly Father.

But in regard of filial love, how teaches the young child? See that little boy, sitting wearied at eventide by the cottage lintel! The day has been long and hot; toys and flowers are scattered at his feet neglected and forgotten—his head droops—his eyes are closing!

But hark, now! There is a quick, strong step on the gravel-walk, and a clear, cheery voice in the outer air! And see the child now! How his bowed head lifts itself! How his dull eyes flash again! How he springs from his half-sleep! He cries: "Father is coming!—father is coming!" and with bounding step hastens to welcome him. And do you need further proof that the boy loves his father?

And a Christian should learn of this child what are love's evidences and experiences! There are hours and occasions when our heavenly Father comes home to his children. God comes to the closet, the family altar, the social prayer-meeting, the sanctuary; God speaks to us by his word; God communes with us in his Spirit; and if these occasions of intercourse are precious to us, and like the child from its tasks and toys, we turn joyously from all life's work or play to the Divine Presence, crying: "Oh, my Father, my heavenly Father comes to meet his children," then we do not need an angel's eye to analyze our emotions; for this is the love of a little child for its father, and this is the love that makes us great ones in the kingdom of heaven.

2d. Or take love in its other aspect—love to *our brethren*—and let a little child illustrate it. Oh, how beautiful, how unselfish, how heavenly is the love of a little child for its brother, or sister, or playmate! It does not ask about the child's antecedents or surroundings—whether he lives in a cottage or a palace—whether he respond with a liturgy or was sprinkled in baptism—ere he share with him his toys or help bear on his burden!

Thanks be unto God, in these days of strife, and

selfishness, and sectarianism; turning God's one golden city, with its twelve gates of pearl, into twelve frowning fortresses, each with its iron portal—thanks unto God for the illustration put upon true brotherly love by the unselfish and joyous affection of a little child for his fellows! And may God teach us all the sweet lesson, that this unselfish love is the true Christian affection; that a brotherly love that is bounded by a particular creed or communion; that does not love the image of Christ always and everywhere, is a love that, burn highly as it may, burns only as a beacon—it will never endure the tremendous trial of a judgment; for it lacks the grand element of a child's love for his fellows, and such is the only love that makes great in the kingdom of heaven!

Fourthly. Take filial TRUST or CONFIDENCE, for a child's illustration—that sweet submission to the Divine will, and calm reliance on Divine love, which make life a land of Beulah, and seem almost the fullness of sanctification.

And on this point most of all does a little child seem eloquent. Oh, happy, happy heart of gentle, trustful childhood! With a flower, or a bright shell, or the song of a wild bird in the sunshine, and a father's hand to feed, and a mother's eye to watch, it asks no more to make earth a paradise!

And such surely should be a Christian's trust in his heavenly Father. Oh, ye faithless and disquieted children of God! full of fears and forebodings about the things of the morrow, when the whole future is ordered for you in God's covenant love; always striving to cross rivers before you come to them, and to climb the dark mountains that seem to rise in your path before you reach

them, when, in all likelihood, you will find in your way neither river nor mountain; forgetting that God's dispensation of grace and love is: that as your day, so shall your strength be. Oh, ye trustless children of God, let a little child preach to you! "What did you do?" said a mother to her young boy, who had wandered away from her Western home and spent a whole night in the wilderness—"What did you do, my child, when the twilight deepened, and the woods grew dark with the coming night?" "Oh," said the child, "I gathered some berries and nuts, and drank of a little brook, and then found a bank where the grass was soft and green, and then I said my prayer that God would take care of you and little sister, and then I went to sleep." Such is the trustful faith of childhood—and such the trust that makes great in the kingdom of heaven.

Now, these are only particulars of a great general principle. Had we limits, we might use the same illustration in regard of all the graces which make up the character of one who is pre-eminent in the kingdom of heaven! Indeed, we might go much further, and show how the same principle applies as well to the purely intellectual, as to the emotional. We think that the opinions and judgments little children entertain of theological truths are better than their teachers.

I go to one of these Rabbis of theology and ask: "*What is God?*" and am answered, "God is the Great First Cause of things—an Eternal and Infinite Spirit." But alas, for me, I can not compass it—that mysterious word "spirit!" I marvel not that the disciples on the Sea of Tiberias trembled in the wild night when a phantom-form walked the waters, and "they thought it was a spirit."

And when I look forth upon the immensity of the universe, and behold, as it were, the outline of an infinite and absolute Spirit, and am told that it is God, I startle and recoil, as the mighty seas roar around me, as from some awful phantom of a dream!

Then I turn from the school of the Rabbi, that I may find a little child happy and trustful in its heavenly instincts, and I say: "My child, tell me, what is God?" And he answers: "God is my heavenly Father!" Ah, that is it! I know it all now! *God is my heavenly Father!*

I go to the theologian and say: "Sir, what is heaven?" And he discourses learnedly about "spheres," and "eliminations," and "developments," and "adaptations,"—about physical, and intellectual, and moral theories of the higher life—until the heaven to which I so fondly looked as some enrapturing reality, seems to me, in its ethereal refinements and unexperienced modes of life, such a region of cold and unsubstantial spirituality, that I recoil from those very gates of pearl which open only to such shadowy though sublime phantasms.

And again I turn to my child-teacher, and ask: "What is heaven?" And the child answers: "Heaven is my Father's house of many mansions! Heaven is my home! Mother died and went to heaven, and little sister died and went to heaven; and when I die I shall go to heaven, and be at home again, with mother and sister, and Jesus, and God!"

Such are a child's answers. *God is my Father! Heaven is my eternal home!* And I know it all now! The simple instinct of childhood has taught me what no ambitious thought could have reached.

And so in all things and always, whether in its thoughts or its emotions, the happy, joyous, trustful, believing intellect of a little child is, in this fallen world, the most beautiful and fitting type of the spiritual life that peoples immortality. And marvelous alike in its wisdom and its love, was the act of the great Master when the disciples questioned him about true Christian greatness. He might have answered them differently. As in their ambition, they thought about the princes and nobles in Christ's earthly kingdom, and longed for temporal sceptres, and diadems, and thrones, and came selfishly questioning him about the qualities and exploits entitling to distinctions in the heavenly kingdom, he might have summoned again, as just before on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias, from the celestial spheres. And as, lustrous with white robe and diadem, those crowned creatures of eternity floated above them in a sea of glory, he might have pointed to the gorgeous apparition, and cried, with overwhelming impressiveness: Behold! Such are the great ones in the kingdom of heaven. But with a deeper manifestation of wisdom and love, he took a little child and set him in the midst of them; and as they gazed upon that childish humility, and gentleness, and faith, he said: "*Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye can not see the kingdom of God!*"

And so, doubtless, would he do again were he to descend and walk in the midst of the churches; and, ah me! how we should all be startled, more than at the advent of a preaching angel, as, led by the Saviour's hand, that little child came, in humble, simple, loving faith, into our Sabbath assemblies! We should all be terrified:--

that ambitious theologian, searching with unholy eye the deep mysteries of God's hidden counsels, determined to believe nothing whose philosophy is beyond him—that bigot sectary quarreling with Christians of every other name about forms and dogmas, as if to contend earnestly for the faith were to pick a quarrel with Christ's friends just for the sake of a battle—that self-seeking Diotraphes ever struggling for pre-eminence, as if the race for glory were an envious strife for Olympian laurels—that proud Pharisee making long prayers for a pretense, while devouring widows' houses; wearing broad phylacteries in the chief seats in the synagogues, as if God could not but be honored by such aristocracy of discipleship—that gloomy and sorrowful believer, walking tearfully to glory, as if he were completing Christ's sacrifice in his own self-righteous agonies; as if it were a sad thing to have heaven for a home and God for a father—how, in short, we should all be startled and appalled, as, lifting that fair child before us, in all its humility, and gentleness, and faith, the glorious Master should utter again, with his earnest voice, the text's solemn truth: “*Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye can not see the kingdom of God.*”

Let us take to our hearts and our homes the solemn lesson: 1st. Let God's professing children consider it carefully. Alas for the solemn question, “*Lord, are there few that be saved?*” “*When the Son of Man cometh, will he find faith on earth?*” as if the glory of the second advent would fall on a world and a Church all graceless and abandoned, whence faith had been swept away in the flood-tides of Pharisaism!

For where, tell me, where are the little children of God

in the churches? We have great men and women enough, beyond question—disciples who can speculate about mysterious doctrines, as if God's awful oracles were curious enigmas for the exercise of our logic—who vapor in the championship of sect or school, as if "the good fight of faith" were an everlasting battle "with wild beasts at Ephesus"—who can flash and roar for Christ in public places and on great occasions, as if the savor of Christian life were not the soft, sweet light, but the terrible lightning. Surely, we have great men enough in the Church, until, one would think, that every mother of Israel had wedded a Manoah and brought forth a Samson! But the children, the little children, humble, trustful, docile, obedient, full of faith and good works, forgetful of self in their toil for man's good and God's glory. Oh! I see not the little children in the kingdom of heaven!

God bring the great truth home to us: "*We must be converted and become as little children.*" A religion that makes a man proud, and self-righteous, and pretentious, and sectarian, is not Christ's religion. A piety that does not make him humble, affectionate, loving, happy, is a false principle altogether. For Christ himself being the teacher, a little child is the pattern of true greatness in the kingdom of heaven.

2d. Meanwhile let the impenitent as well receive the great lesson. You see here what it is to become a true Christian. Alas, what strange notions the world forms of the effect upon life of practical religion! But, as set forth in the Saviour's illustration, what is it to be a Christian? Is it to give up all that is bright and joyous in the present world, and become melancholy and martyr-like, and walk to the grave with wrinkled brow and

wounded spirit? Is this practical piety? Ah, no! As set forth by our Saviour, to be a Christian is not to be a sorrowful specimen of monstrous manhood, but simply and only to become *a little child*! To turn away from the cares and controversies of the grown-up world, and to become a fair, young, laughing child again, with a pure, trustful, loving, happy heart. It is to become the subject of the miracle for which the genius of the elder world yearned in its wrapt dreams—to be bathed in the mystic fountains of immortal youth! To be made young again! To be born again! To become little children again! To go back, as it were, from the stern battle and bivouac of manhood to the peacefulness and gladness of life's bright morning—to the serene pastoral holiday of the child, with the unclouded brow and the happy heart!

Yes, and more: to be God's little child again! and so to have the infinite Jehovah for a father, and heaven for a home, and all bright spirits the sisters of the household! To be God's little child, and so, in filial love and trust, to sit at his mighty feet, and look up into his glorious face, and though the coals burn and the lightnings play, and the very pillars of the universe rock as with an earthquake, still to cry, in joyous trust: "My Father, my Father!" To take hold of the almighty hand that moves the constellations, walking joyously the appointed path, knowing that through the cloud, and the storm, and the starless midnight a loving Father is leading us to a blessed home in heaven.

This is it, simply and only, to be a Christian on earth, and what it shall be to be a Christian in heaven, no mortal can tell. Oh, that mysterious and paradoxical mingling of imagery in the revelation of eternity! To

be a little child, and yet a crowned immortal—a king and a priest unto God for ever and ever. Heaven, God's mighty throne—God's glorious mansion—yet my familiar home! God, the infinite and everlasting Jehovah, yet my heavenly Father! Ah, we know not what it means! Yet, be the meaning what it may, this is what you are called to in this Gospel invitation.

We stand here to-day, not urging you to give up any good thing for Christ, nor to take up any load or burden for Christ. But as unto prodigals in a far country, who have wandered from their father's house, and wasted their substance, and are sad-hearted and squalid, and overborne in vile labor, our cry is ever and only: "Oh, your home is open, and your Father with welcome and white robes await you. Poor prodigal children—come home! COME HOME!" And what a home it is, and what a blessed home-going! Joyous is it ever to turn from the cold and wearying world to the loving household. The child, lost in the woods and found at last, and borne by strong arms from the roaring forest and the wild night to the mother's gentle arms, and the father's board and hearth, was unutterably blessed. But happier, far happier, the heavenward return of the redeemed spirit. In the golden evening of time—from all the storms and darkness of this troublous world—along yonder highways of sapphires, through all the glowing lustres of the firmament, to the uncreated glories and enrapturing welcomes of heaven—*going home!* GOING HOME!

COMMUNION.

"My beloved has gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the garden, and to gather lilies. I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."—SOLOMON'S SONG, vi. 2, 3.

THE exquisite pastoral from which our text is taken is peculiarly fitted for sacramental meditation—because its design is to set forth the mutual love of Christ and his disciples ; and because his disciples in approaching the sacrament should be in frames of mind fitted to appreciate its exquisite imagery. It is a book which no profane hand should ever be permitted to open, and which no profane hand should be permitted to close. To the carnal heart it may afford ground of cavil. To a heart knowing experimentally Christ's loveliness and the believer's love, it is full of precious truth and consolation. We may say of it, as has been said of "Pilgrim's Progress," that it is like "a painting meant to be exhibited by fire-light. The common reader, seeing it only by day, regards it only as a sensuous picture. While to the loving child of God it is a glorious transparency, and the light which shines through, giving to its incidents such life, to its colors such depth, to its whole scenery such surpassing beauty, is light from eternity—the meaning of heaven."

Opening the book in frames which befit the sacrament our text needs no exposition. It exhibits the mutual love of Christ and his people. The pleasure Christ has in communing with the believer, and the believer's pleasure in communing with Christ.

The picture is of an Oriental garden, wherein walk two loving spirits, joyously conversing, while they partake of its delicious fruits; and it sets forth, as applicable to the sacramental communion, two things:—

I. *Christian Duty.*

II. *Christian Privilege—i. e.* What at this sacrament Christ expects of his people. And what at this sacrament his people may expect of Christ.

We have here first—Christian duty. Regarding Christ as the subject, it represents him as greatly rejoicing in the graces of his people. The Church is here represented as Christ's garden into which he then descends to delight himself with the gracious fruits of the believer's spiritual life. And our lesson of duty is that at the sacrament we should experience and exhibit such spiritual affections as seem unto Christ precious—fruits to be eaten—lilies to be gathered! Consider these graces:—1. Faith—That saving grace whereby we receive and rest on him alone for salvation. This is the foundation of all religious life. In its implantation a purely divine work—in its development the efflorescence and fruitage of an earnest Christian life;—and so depending for its vigor on our own diligence in well doing. Now this grace Christ delights in, for it greatly honors and glorifies him. In its ascription of salvation to him alone it virtually places the mediatorial crown upon his head.

And so he is everywhere represented as greatly rejoicing in the strong *faith* of his disciples.

Behold him at Nazareth. Having begun his miraculous work elsewhere, we imagine him returning to the village wherein he had so long dwelt, earnestly desiring to heal the diseases and relieve the distresses of his own familiar friends. And yet we find him hindered in that work of mercy, offended, amazed, grieved,—*not able to do miracles there because of their unbelief!*

See him at Bethany! Having returned in love to the bereaved sisters, about to give back the beloved brother to their home and heart,—yet, in that very hour of seeming rapture, pausing, troubled, groaning in spirit, weeping because of their unbelief. See him after his own resurrection, on the very eve of his ascension to glory, in the act of sending forth his disciples to evangelize all nations,—yet pausing sadly, reproachfully, to upbraid them for their unbelief. And so always. Oh, how he delighted in the strong faith of his disciples! How he ever grieved at their unbelief! For unbelief seemed to him the foundation of other sins, and so the greatest of all sins. And so in regard of ourselves. He wants us to trust in him fully for all things—in his love to devise, in his power to perform. Our distrust dishonors and grieves him, just as a child's distrust grieves and dishonors a parent. We may be in circumstances of distress, of temptation, of deep and sore trial; but what, then? Oh, let us cast our whole burden on Christ! He delights to bear it; he is honored in bearing it. Faith—strong, unfaltering, triumphant faith—is that glorious fruit of the Spirit with which he is so well pleased. He delights in it—especially when his people sit at his table. Then he

comes into his garden to rejoice in its gracious growth; he searches the beds of spices for the bright flower of faith; he stands under the growing trees, looking for the ripe fruit of faith: and, alas, if he find only a poor withered flower, or unripened fruit, when he should find the banks all a-bloom, and the branches all bending for the refreshment of his soul! Away with all unbelief from Christ's table to-day! O troubled soul! trust on your Saviour, exult in your Saviour! Let faith as a flower fill all the air of the garden; let faith as a fruit of the Spirit cover all the grace-tree, for "Behold my Beloved hath come to his beds of spices to feed in his garden and to gather lilies."

And as of this foundation-grace, so of all graces. Consider, 2d. Love,—which is the soul's crowning grace, or, a grand composite of all graces. For, in strict speech, they are all modifications of love—penitence is love grieving—faith is love resting—obedience is love working—hope is love waiting. So that love toward man and toward God is at once the law fulfilled, and holiness perfected.

And in this Christ delights. He looks here for strong brotherly love. This is a communion of saints—the return of brothers and sisters, from the ruder world without, to the home-board and banquet. And, alas, if he find animosity, or alienation, among those sitting at his side—resting on his bosom! He looks for love toward himself. It is marvelous that he should desire it. For behold all the heavenly orders—thrones and dominions and principalities and powers—are bowed in adoration before the Lamb that was slain! And why should he desire our poor offerings of affection? But he does

desire them. This love, as embracing all other graces, is the essence of all holiness—that very condition of salvation which sets the believing soul as a priceless gem in the Saviour's crown. Without love, Christ's travailing soul could not be satisfied. And he comes looking for it to-day; and here he should find it. Love, penitential love, trusting love, consecrating love, exulting love, should be the ruling emotion as we sit here with the Master. Surely he deserves it! The mighty Shepherd who, rushing to my rescue, tore my bleeding soul from the ravening monster's fang—the Omnipotent Champion who stormed the stronghold of death, and with bleeding hand opened the prison-door, loosed the iron fetter, and on his bleeding bosom bore me forth to the living world to be his disciple here, and his joint heir forever of heaven's crown and kingdom—surely he deserves our love! And he delights in it. As the heart of a father is grieved at the want of love in a child, so Christ grieves over our lifeless affections. And now, as represented in the text, he has come into his garden to refresh himself with this grace. He bends down over the beds of spices to gather love's blossoms—he looks up into the trees of the garden to gather the fruits of love—and alas! alas! if he finds only the fruits unripened and the flowers dead!

Such is the text's simple figure. The lesson of duty is, that in approaching the communion we should not only desire refreshment ourselves, but afford it to our Redeemer! Here to cast at his feet the flower and fruit of grace, as we shall cast at his feet in heaven our crowns of glory! The Church is Christ's garden—a field which he hath redeemed from wilderness, and inclosed and

planted with germs of a heavenly growth; whose spiritual fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith. And now in the time of fruit—when the whole garden should be as paradise, its banks soft and green, its airs fragrant with precious odors, its flowers in their full splendor, its trees and vines bending with richest fruit—now the adored one descends to delight himself with our graces, and woe, woe! if he find the air without fragrance, and the flower-beds without beauty, and the trees without fruit. Oh, touching picture! God impress it on our hearts that we may come aright to thy table. *“Behold the beloved hath gone down into his garden to the beds of spices, to feed in the garden and to gather lilies.”*

This is the text's first thought. But it has another one. It represents not only the pleasure Christ takes in his people, but the pleasure they take in Christ. *“I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.”* We have here secondly—*The Christian's privilege.* Regarding the believer as the subject, it represents his soul as greatly rejoicing in the sacrament, gathering in Christ's garden the heavenly fruit. These fruits are the gracious gifts imparted by the Saviour. Consider a few of them. Take them as they are presented in Christ's discourse in that guest-chamber. 1st. PEACE.—Peace! What a sweet word it is! Its sound is like the cadence of an angel's voice from heaven. *“Peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you.”* Oh, enrapturing gift! And as a grace springing from reconciliation to God, and maintained by faith in Christ, felt in its fullest power at this precious sacrament. *“Peace! Peace, not as the world giveth.”* Truly hath God said, “There is

no peace for the wicked." "They are like the troubled sea." Sometimes for a moment tranquil; but alas, how treacherous! The more terrible in its tranquillity, as the harbinger of the tempest, that will open a thousand yawning gulfs around the poor laboring, staggering bark! Not such the Christian's peace. "*That shall be as a river.*" The bright, full, joyous, ever widening, deepening stream, that under sheltering banks rolls its silver tide by his cottage-door! Peace! Heavenly peace! What a blessed thought! Quiet, tranquillity, spiritual, and immortal rest! And for this we come to Christ in the sacrament. Elsewhere even the believer's soul may be troubled, like the same bride in the context, forlorn in life's broad ways, seeking the Beloved. Perplexed, tempted, tribulated, overweighted in the race, overmatched in the battle. But not here. Behold a garden walled up to heaven! And through its open portal the soul passes, leaning on the beloved, to bathe heart and spirit in the everlasting fullness of God's glorious peace! O child of God! away with all doubt, all fear, all despondency! What should trouble you now? Here is assurance of salvation! Look on these emblems! Here is a divine work begun, and God leaves no work unfinished. Here is a divine price paid down, and God's purchase is always with assured title. Look at these emblems! Why, if here lay—brought by angels out of heaven—the white robe, the sceptre, the diadem, that are reserved for you in glory; and you could approach and look upon them, and lift them up,—all this were less, as assurance of your heavenly Father's love, than these precious memorials. Cast away, then, all anxious care as you

walk with your loving Redeemer through these bowers of heavenly peace !

But more than this, Christ in this sacrament promises,

2dly. Joy.—“*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain with you, and that your joy might be full.*” And what glorious, joy-imparting words they were ! About the love of the Father, the grace of the Comforter, the place prepared in the many mansions, the coming again to take the redeemed one home. No marvel that they gave joy, a joy that sent them out even into the wild night and Gethsemane and Calvary, filling all the cold air with the glad song of the Pass-over ! And what wonderful joy it was. *My Joy !* Christ’s own joy. The same sacred bliss that thrills the heart of the ascended Saviour as he rests this hour on the bosom of Infinite Love ! As if one of those Divine pulses were beating rapturously in the believer’s life and soul ! And this is better than peace ; for that is but a passive rest, this is a reigning rapture ! We enter God’s garden to-day for more than shelter ; we look for more than this wall of adamant that resists the tempest. We seek here the rarest flowers and the richest fruits of a king’s garden of spices ! From the cold, troublous, torturing world we turn to this gracious inclosure. We pass the portal—and behold what a new and fairer world is above and around us ! What banks of living green ! What bright clear waters ! How sweet the air with sunbeams and song of birds ! What resplendent blossoms ! What glorious fruits ! Oh, what adorable and enrapturing truths flame out as in letters of light from these sacred emblems ! Justification—adoption—sanctification—immutability—

eternal life! Christ, my Divine Shepherd! God, my heavenly Father! Here, a Providence working omnipotently all things together for my good. Yonder a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! And standing here what shall trouble me! O garden of God! pour round us all thy treasures! O child of God! do not tell me of troubles. Have God's providences seemed disquieting? Hath God disappointed your hopes; taken away your possessions? But hearken to the Saviour's words, "*Every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.*" That is what trial is—the husbandman's pruning-knife used in love of his growing things.

Have you lost beloved ones? O mother of dead children! are faith's wings heavy amid the cypresses? Hark to the Bride's sweet words, "*My beloved hath gone down into his garden to gather lilies.*" Oh, that is what death is! The gathering, by the Divine hand, flowers from the earthly garden, to pour forth their fragrance and beauty in the heavenly palace! Even our trials seem blessed as we sit at Christ's table! And for the rest it is all rapture! What heart can be troubled, walking side by side with Immanuel! Who can forbear the triumph, or repress the rapture! Here! shut in from life's storms, how like a very paradise seems the Christian Church. Oh, these glorious attributes of God, how like adamant bulwarks they rise between us and life's storms! Oh, this peace of God! how it bathes my panting heart as in the stormless atmosphere of heaven! Oh, this faith in Christ! how it illumines all these skies as with sparklings of the things hoped for, the palaces and pinnacles of the city of God! Oh, this

love of the Father! how it fills the whole garden as with the odor of deathless flowers and the music of singing creatures from eternity! Oh, this joy in the Holy Ghost! how it bends to my thirsty lip the very clusters of the fruit from the living trees of heaven! O troubled heart! enter into thy rest, exult in thy rapture! O garden of God! refresh us with thy living waters, breathe round us thy sweet odors, strengthen us with thy blessed fruits. O thou Incarnate One! our King, our Shepherd, our Saviour, who hast set us as a seal upon thy right arm and upon thy heart, make haste, like a hart upon the mountain of spices, that we may walk in thy garden and feast in thy banqueting-house, thy heavenly voice filling all the soul, and thy banner over us Love—Love!

THE MORTAL IMMORTALIZED.

"*This mortal must put on immortality.*"—I. CORINTHIANS, xv. 53.

ON other occasions we have considered the great apostolic argument of the context. At present, we propose no more than by a single implied truth of the text, to correct some false impressions of man's condition after death. Among the few who take thought at all for immortality, there are two distinct and antagonistic schools, which we may term characteristically *the Sensuous* and *the Spiritual*.

The one, on the presumption that death affects not personal identity, nor, indeed, any of the true elements of character, and that immortal scenes and conditions must be adjusted to that character, picture to themselves a heaven of physical blessedness, differing from earth only in the absence of all that can annoy, and the fullness and fruition of all that can enrapture. To them, heaven is only a glorified earth—immortality only the state of the well-developed mortal!

While the other class, magnifying above what is written, the effects of death and the Resurrection, regard heaven as a state utterly unlike all that the mortal has seen and experienced—where the soul, in conditions altogether etherealized, shall exist in the transcendental

majesty of a risen spirit, rather than as a redeemed and yet veritable man in Christ Jesus.

Now of both these classes of expectants of immortality are the notions alike unphilosophic and unscriptural. Heaven and its higher life are more than this earthly, purified and perfected, and yet the redeemed creatures that are to people heaven will be in all constitutional faculties as truly men as these earthly races. And all this our text plainly teaches.

“*This mortal must put on immortality.*”

This language implies, not transubstantiation, but transfiguration—a change not of an essence but only of aspects. It is the self-same nature we have here—these very attributes and energies which constitute our humanity—that is to emerge uneffected from the dark flood, and wear on the far shore the splendors of immortality.

The text gives us twofold data for solving the problem of the after state. It predicts the man’s *sameness* and yet the while the man’s *transfiguration*. It speaks of the “*mortal*” that shall not be injured by death, and yet of the “*immortality*” that shall be put on it as a glorious garment.

Treating these two thoughts in their order, we are concerned:—First, *With the affirmed identity of the immortal creature with the mortal.*

Though at death we are unquestionably to lose whatever can be shown to belong only to this *rudimental* life—as the chrysalis drops the exuviae in developing the wings—yet all faculties and functions *essentially* human are to be ours forever. Even in regard of the *body* is this strictly the truth. Whatever may be the bliss of the state into which the redeemed soul passes at its separa-

tion from the flesh—yet reason and revelation alike declare it to be unnatural, and so imperfect. Speculate as we will, death, self-considered, can not be made to appear a benefit. It is not a step in a progress—it is an interruption—a judicial infliction—God’s curse upon sin—and, but for the sin, a cruelty. Indeed, how the soul can act in the future world, when divested of this body, we can not understand. But even if, as Paul seems to intimate, it is immediately furnished with a suitable abode or organism—not altogether “*unclothed, but clothed upon,*” still we know that in the intermediate state between death and the Resurrection, it enjoys but part of “the eternal weight of glory” which shall rest upon the perfect man in the Resurrection body. And therefore we do not marvel that from the dust of the sepulchre is, at last, as a trophy of the mediatorship, to be reconstructed a new body like Christ’s, to ascend with the triumphing Immanuel, and go forth as part of the redeemed man along the bright paths of immortality.

But if this identity seem necessarily true in regard of the *body*, how more manifestly true is it in regard to the *mind*. I mean the attributes and activities of our purely intellectual nature. Even as a philosophic inquiry there appears no reason why death should work any change in our rational nature. Accepting as a simple matter of faith, the truth of the soul’s immortality, we should, *a priori*, expect that, as the last enemy rocked its dwelling into dust, it would emerge from the ruins to enter the paths of the higher life with all its peculiar habits of thought, and at precisely its attained point of progress—no more truly *a man* amid these earthly scenes, than amid the glorious scholarship and fellowship of eternity.

And if you accept the popular distinction between the *rational* and *emotional* in our nature, still the text's thought must be true of it. There is surely no stranger mistake than that which regards these strong natural affections as the specialties of the present life—moral exuviae cast off when the spirit wings its way to eternity.

What we are wont to term "the heart"—that system of sympathies and affections—whereby in all narrower or broader senses, "God setteth the solitary in families"—is among the most indestructible elements of our being. And it is widely to mistake the truth and greatly to degrade our conceptions of immortality to speak of the risen spirit, as soaring out of the sphere of these earthly and mortal loves in its ascent to the fellowship with God and his angels. Pure intellect, unsoftened by affection, is simply monstrous. Entering heaven with our logic intensified and our love gone, our sympathies would be fiendish. Affection is, even metaphysically considered, man's noblest attribute. And the more you equip him for the higher spheres of pure intellect, the more fearful and phantom-like you make him, if his ascent is to be out of the power and memory of these beautiful affections of the earthly home and heart.

In this respect emphatically the mortal falls not away as the dead shroud of the chrysalis—but "the mortal does put on immortality." Said our Saviour (when asserting his right to the Divine titles, "the Resurrection and the Life," standing by the beloved dead with the sisters of Bethany), "He shall rise again."—But how? Changed, transfigured, glorified in an elevation above

all earthly ties and mortal affections? No! Blessed be God, No. "*Your BROTHER shall rise again.*" Notwithstanding all the mysterious processes of death and the Resurrection, in the fullness of his beautiful and earnest love, he shall rise again truly "*your brother*" still. And so is it ever! Death annihilates no pure affection wherein a Christian heart rejoices. The waves of the dark river obliterate no dear name from the memory. "The water of life" is no Lethe of forgetfulness. The very *names* God's children bear on earth are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and shall be theirs as well in "the many mansions" forever. And all the influences of that higher life, strengthening the soul for a fellowship with the crowned creatures of eternity, shall only deepen within its chambers of imagery these earthly and mortal pictures of the heart.

This, then, in short, in its application to the whole complex human nature, is the text's first truth—Death does not destroy nor mutilate the mortal. The creature, emerging from the death-ruin, and at last perfected in the Resurrection, will enter heaven, no new creation, no stranger-spirit—but the self-same being with whom on earth and in-time we took sweet counsel. *Man* with a human body; *man* with a human intellect; *man* with a human heart.

But the text has another lesson, and if its first truth contradict the spiritual notion which regards the risen man as not merely a new creature, but positively another creature, its second truth as plainly contradicts that sensuous notion which regards the heavenly state as no more than the earthly state perfected and glorified.

This mortal must not merely become perfect after its kind, but, positively, "*this mortal must put on immortality.*"

And, if these words do beyond question teach the entire identity of the nature, they do as surely set forth the marvelous and all-glorious transfiguration of that nature.

The word "immortality," in the original as in the translation, is a simple negative. Though the inspired penman had in his celestial rapture gazed upon the realities of the eternal world—yet, he had no power to *describe* them. He says they were "*unspeakable.*" They were things for which in this earthly life human thought can have no image—human language no name. The risen man, though essentially the same, yet is to be marvelously strengthened in all the old capacities and faculties, and miraculously gifted with new. Of such things we can here form no conception.

We have in the mortal five bodily senses. We know that God might have given us a hundred. But of a new sense we can have no idea; as a man born blind can not even conceive of the power of vision. And so is it of the new faculties which come with immortality. And while we remain mortal, inspiration can only describe the future in negatives.

Immortality—Oh, the glorious word! The same, yet how changed! The *body*. It shall be the same body with the eye to see, and the tongue to speak, but as the sere and shapeless seed we cast into the earth is transfigured into the queenly flower, so great shall the change be. With what new senses and new organs it may be furnished God hath not told us. In this very

chapter Paul seems struggling under the burden of the magnificent description :—" *It is sown in corruption—it is raised in incorruption.*" And what notion can we form of incorruptible matter,—of an organism positively immaculate ; no more liable to disease or decay—immutable, as if pervaded with the Divine Essence.

" *It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.*" The body which we here were taught to regard as a house of leprosy, and all its senses instruments of temptation, to be reconstructed into a palace of the higher life—positively fashioned like Christ's glorious body ! " *It is sown in weakness it is raised in power.*" This poor, imperfect instrument of the intellect, requiring constant care lest it be injured by the using, itself changed into a mighty and imperishable engine wherewith to work out unwearied the grand ministries of eternity ! Yea—and as of Paul, gave in a single word the explanation of the whole marvel—he adds—" *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*" Its material elements so etherealized and refined that it passes out of mere physical conditions—no longer controlled by material inertia and impenetrability and attraction, but (like Christ's raised body, which could pass closed doors and float up to the firmament) itself the very equipment of the soul when it would explore the mysteries of creation and traverse immensity in adoring contemplation. Thus marvelous the transfiguration even of our *physical* nature. This poor mortal body clothed upon with immortality !

And, when we ascend to the higher human functions, how feeble seem all present conceptions of the reality. If the dwelling-place be thus glorified, what a transfiguration must await the spirit-inhabitant. This intellect

of man, how it sometimes towers and triumphs even as mortal. What discoveries it hath made! What obstacles it hath overcome! Along what great paths it has traveled! What wonderful works it hath done! Milton's song! Why, it seemed almost an angelic harp he swept! Newton's march through the universe—it did seem like the old prophet's in a chariot of fire. Yet all this was the mortal. The doings of the cradled child with its playthings. And who shall tell us, then, of the child's manhood—of that coming transfiguration when “the mortal *mind* shall put on immortality;” of the great thoughts we shall think, and the raptures we shall feel, and wondrous works we shall perform, when, with faculties for knowledge and capacities for happiness immensely surpassing any thing of which we can now conceive, we shall ascend into that brighter and eternal life? Verily, it is a transcendent and enrapturing thought—that this mortal MIND shall put on immortality.

But beyond it, and even more precious and glorious, is the truth in its application to our *emotional nature*. For herein, after all, consists man's true grandeur. And unto his *heart* rather than to his *head* shall be accorded the loftiest prizes of eternity! And to think of the human *heart* (while unchanged in all its gentle, blessed, earthly affections) putting on immortality, is the highest conception we can form of man's kingship and priesthood in the city of God.

And yet this last great bliss shall be ours! While it is a gross error to think of the affections as left behind us at death, and love's memories as lost in an impersonal and purely spiritual being—and while we are not to suppose that in heaven even the supreme love to God is so

to absorb all our affections that other relationships will be ignored; yet it is a grosser error to suppose that aught of the imperfect or carnal goes with the human heart to its immortal sphere. Our love even for each other will not be what it is here. Very much of the present form and fashion of social life will fall off—as the exuviae of insects rising from the dust to purer and brighter fellowship on wings and in sunshine.

We shall not be selfish nor sensuous in heaven. We shall not distrust nor deceive one another in heaven. We shall not think unkindly nor speak slanderously of each other in heaven! and those will be social circles gloriously transformed, where a love pure as the angel's and unselfish as God's shall bind heart to heart with ties which death can not breathe upon. And it will be a rapturous experience that baptism of the human *heart* with the living water—that induement of these mortal loves with the pomp of immortality.

But the text teaches more than this. There is intimation here of the soul's introduction to higher companionship. We shall understand then how God's great universe, with all its systems and constellations and clusters, is indeed only one great family mansion; and all orders of the higher life, only one blessed social circle; and all eternal realities only spheres and scenes for the purified affections; and heaven itself only the palace and throne-room *for the mortal LOVE that hath put on immortality!*

And this is our highest conception of the true heavenly blessedness. For fair as will be the risen body when fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; and wondrous as may be the attributes of the risen spirit en-

throned amid the high things of immensity and eternity, yet better than all is this thought of these *earthly affections lifted unto the heavenly!*—the pomp and power of immortality round the human HEART!

For such an experience we are looking. We are “mortal” now; we shall “put on the immortality!” and how grand and solemn things earth and time should seem to us—and how, as through dissolving vapor, should flash ever on faith’s eye the great prizes of the after-life!

We stand this hour on the border line of these tremendous transformations! The wings are already stirring under the film of the chrysalis!

The imprisoned bird is waxing strong to rend the wires and soar to the sunshine!

The great earthquake is rolling back the stone and loosing the seal from the grave of the redeemed mortal. And presently shall the things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived—be around us and upon us, as a rapturous life and experience. “*This corruption shall have put on incorruption*”—“*this mortal shall have put on immortality.*”

A SPECTACLE TO ANGELS.

"*We are a spectacle to angels.*"—I. CORINTHIANS, iv. 9.

WE separate these words from their connection, as teaching an independent and important truth. Although referring specially to apostolic life, they imply that all human life is watched by the angels. Our version gives us hardly the full force of the passage. In the original it is *θεατρον*—rendered rightly in the margin—"a Theatre." The reference being to the ancient amphitheatre—the floor of which, called the arena, was surrounded by circular seats capable of containing many thousands of spectators. Here the trained athlete contended for the prize in the ancient games. On such an arena Paul represents himself as acting, while the angelic host look down from their seats as "a great cloud of witnesses." In its widest reference the text teaches, that in this sense, *our world is a theatre* or arena, whereon men act their various parts, as in a drama, "a spectacle to angels." And this thought is at one with all Bible testimony. It teaches that from the first our planet has been an object of absorbing interest to all spiritual beings. It was so, perhaps, *before the creation of man*. The fancy of the scientist may involve a great truth. He supposed that, when there had been revolt in

heaven, in the old geologic eras, this world, in a half-chaotic state, received Lucifer and his angels as a prison-house—that here they were witnesses to its slow progress into a human dwelling-place, watching with malignant hate man's first happiness, achieving with malignant joy his apostasy, and overwhelmed at last with malignant anguish by his triumphant redemption.

There seems intimation of something like this in the first prophecy of the Bible, where, in the curse pronounced upon the old serpent,—“Dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life,”—it would seem that Satan was no longer permitted to wander through the universe, but was restrained to the poor planet he had attempted to ruin, compelled to witness the progress of redemption, and to undergo final defeat—his head utterly bruised under the heel of the seed of the *woman*. There is surely nothing improbable in the thought that the holy angels watched the evolution of Divine Wisdom in creation—matter wedded to life, and life rising into intellect, until over the glorious consummation “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”

But imagination apart, it is a matter of revelation, that since the creation of man earth has been, in the full meaning of the text, “*a spectacle to angels*.” And a spectacle every way worthy their consideration. God seems to have intended this planet as an arena for exhibiting *moral character* in all its varieties. The drama of human life has been cast in three great moral acts.

1. A race unfallen and sinless.
2. A race apostate and accursed.
3. A race redeemed and regenerate—and in transition to glory.

And as displaying the Divine attributes, the angels are represented as bending down to study all of them. The *first* scene was one of *blissful and holy human life*. And endowed, as the first man was, with every power of perseverance in holiness, and plied with every motive to retain it, and radiant as the earth was with all material loveliness, and the positive glory of the revealed and communing Godhead; that first blessed act in the drama of human life was fittingly "*a spectacle to angels.*"

But the drama changed—the *second* scene is a *world apostate and accursed*. An exhibition is now to be made of the terrible nature of sin, as seen alike in the malice of the tempter, and the misery of the tempted. And behold! over a world blasted and blackened, and beneath skies gathered as a thick curtain over the face of Divine Love, man walked a sinner on a befitting stage. And when you consider the whole plot and progress of the drama—all the exhibitions of moral character under this fearful inspiration of sin—man with no light but nature's—man with the uncertain light of tradition—man amid the abominations of false worship—man under the clouded glories of the dispensations of patriarch and Levite—man amid the full Gospel light of the risen sun of righteousness—the whole wondrous development of redemption, from the first promise at the gate of a lost paradise, down through those ages of antediluvian depravity, down through all those slowly evolving ritualisms to the tragic scene of Calvary, down through all the Gospel's subsequent triumphs—when, I say, you consider all this progress and development of redemption—justification by the Divine Son—sanctification by the Divine Spirit—man, a willing captive to the great destroyer—man, a struggler

in the armor of God against all the powers of darkness—then this second act in the drama of human life seems not unworthily “*a spectacle to angels.*” But even upon this scene of sinfulness and suffering is the curtain to fall. And when it rises again, it will be upon an arena and an act even worthier angelic regard. Earth is not always to remain a theatre of *conflict with evil*. Even now the creature groans for deliverance from this unwilling bondage. And it shall be delivered. Out of the wreck and ruin of the present system of things, as a platform fitted for the manifestation of *triumphant holiness*, shall come forth the “new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” And then shall the MORAL be even fairer than the material—for the race, re-established in holiness, shall walk the earth in the development and exhibition of excellencies hitherto undreamed of; and then, at least, the ever-varying scenes of a drama wherein a *redeemed race* act *upon a redeemed world* will seem worthily “*a spectacle to angels.*”

Now this is the general truth which the text sets forth. But it is with its special and practical application to ourselves as individuals we are at present concerned. Not more true was it of the apostle than of every one of us, that in all the acts of mortal life we are moving on this earth “*a spectacle to angels.*” It is a plain truth of revelation, that these glorious beings are ever around us. They are represented not only as “ministering unto the heirs of salvation,” but as watchful of even their seemingly most trivial interests, “bearing them up, lest they dash their foot against a stone.” So they walk with us by the way; they sit with us in the dwelling they overshadow us with their wings in the busy day, and keep

watch over us in the still chamber, through the solemn night. And assuming this truth as no poetic fancy, but as plainly revealed in God's Word, let us consider its practical application. And

First—*For encouragement and consolation amid the trials of life.* This is the application Paul gives it in the context. Terribly ironical as the description is, it has yet evidently the meaning of a contrast between his own condition and that of the Corinthians. While they were “strong” and “honorable,” “and reigned as kings,” he was appointed of God, for wise purposes, to “hunger” and “thirst,” and “nakedness,” and “trials,” and “persecutions,” to end only in death. And it is as enduring all these sufferings, he here speaks of himself as a spectacle to angels! And while this is not his chief thought, it is surely implied here that by the faith, and patience, and fortitude wherewith he was enduring “his great fight of affliction,” he was “adorning the Gospel” in the sight of men and angels—And a most consoling thought it is. To comparatively few does God afford opportunity of actively doing great things for Christ, but unto all come abundant occasions of exhibiting the power of grace *in suffering*; And, as set forth in the text, in its tendency to honor God, the quiet virtue seems to have the advantage over the splendid achievement. For it is not in any of his own heroic acts, of oratory or miracle working, that Paul represents himself as especially observed by the angels, but in those hours of meekness and lowliness, when he was persecuted, and defamed, and made the offscouring of all things, and appointed unto death. And so it is always.

The especial blessing of our Lord in his sermon on the

Mount was upon the gentler, and not the grander virtues. The meek, the merciful, the poor in spirit, the patient under persecution—upon these, rather than kings and conquerors, and mighty men, fell those beatitudes. And even in his own life, more truly Divine does he seem in his hours of humiliation, enduring the Cross, despising the shame, than in those kingly acts, when purifying the Temple and transfigured on Tabor! And so we can all do as much for God and the Gospel by patient suffering as by active obedience. To the man laid aside from public Christian duty—the rich man sunk into poverty—the eloquent man struck into silence—to the sick-bed of the poor, forgotten Christian—to the retreat of the forsaken and persecuted believer, come in their invisible glory these heavenly spirits; and if there they behold a human heart abiding in patient faith the chastisement of the Father—a human soul, submissively as the Master, enduring the Cross, despising the shame; then, as exhibiting the power of the Gospel, greater good may be done unto men, and greater glory come unto God, than by the most splendid achievement. And a precious truth it is. In a life wherein so few occasions are ours to do great things for God, and whose great law is suffering, it is blessed to think that it is especially when in sorrow, and agony, and death, we are “*a spectacle to angels.*” They come on their bright wings to our desolate homes, our darkened chambers, our sick-beds, and death-beds, and every whisper of submissive Christian love sounds out as a grand hallelujah to the Infinite Glory, and every gentle tear in the eye of faith flashes as a gem of immense price in the diadem of their God.

Passing this, consider this truth. Secondly—*As a*

ground of exhortation. As herein represented, we are all awalking earth as a theatre—actors in a drama—“a spectacle to angels.” And *how* are we acting? You may be this day an impenitent man; and, if so, the part you are acting is one solemn beyond all description or conception—*the part of an imperiled man with an immortal soul to save!* For just such acting is this life-stage fitted. A dark and disquieting world it is at the best. And though beautiful forms of temptation have come forth to beguile you, yet, the while, things to terrify from evil have been with and around you, even nature alarms you—thunders utter their voices, and the earth quakes, and graves open at your feet—And then revelation adds to these terrors. Oh, what solemn scenery it arranges around you. Here Sinai with its fire, and there Calvary with its Cross, and beyond, as seen in solemn perspective, a death-bed—a resurrection—a judgment-seat—eternity, now dark with nameless gloom, now bright with wondrous glory! And on a stage like this, with all heaven gazing earnestly and ever, are you thinking, speaking, acting for eternity! And now tell me, you that live as if this earth were to remain forever your abiding-place, and put away fear, and restrain prayer as verily as if there were no God, and no judgment, and no immortality—sporting with life and soul and salvation as a child with the baubles it breaks—and tell me if you are acting well your part before this great cloud of witnesses! Have you won the applauses of that glorious audience? Hath it not been rather with gestures of disapproval—with whispers of astonishment and indignation, they have watched you as acting the part of a man with an imperiled soul to save, you have walked this darkened world “*a specta-*

cle to angels." Or you may be to-day a true child of God; and then the part you are acting, if less terrible, is scarcely less solemn: *for it is that of a redeemed man in the service of the Redeemer.* In reference to this very thought, the writer of the text repeatedly speaks of the believer as having "*put on Christ*," i. e., in language figurative of the drama—assumed his character—as a tragedian assumes that of the hero he personates. Thus, to "*put on*" or *personate* the Lord Jesus is the part you are to act on this theatre of life, as "*a spectacle to angels.*"

And for such acting, also, is the world-stage fitted. For it is the self-same world wherein he personally acted. The same earth lies at your feet, and the same skies bend over you. The same sinful and suffering humanity is ever around you. The same realities of eternity rise in transparencies beyond you; and the same audience of angels who watched him in the garden, and on the cross, are always observing you. And tell me, if you seem unto yourselves, acting your magnificent part well? As you remember your past life, and think of your slothfulness and sin, and your conformity to the world, and how few words you have spoken, and how few works you have done for the salvation of lost men; and how little you have sacrificed and suffered for your Master; how, in short, the seeming law of your daily life has been a search and a struggle for the wealth and pleasure and honor of this perishing world! And then, in the contrast, think of the daily life of your great pattern—how it was all a service of God and man, living ever as if earth were a stranger-land, and heaven the eternal home. —how meek he was, how forgiving, how humble, how

gentle; how he counted not his life dear unto him that he might do the will of him that sent him, but bowed himself uncomplainingly to the betrayal and the bruising, and the crown of thorns, and the cross; yea, to the hiding of his loving Father's face, and the death of mysterious and immeasurable anguish, for the salvation of sinners and the redemption of a world—as you think thus of the whole style of his earthly life, tell me if these same angels, watching you as they watched him, have fixed on you admiring eyes, and lifted up applauding voices, saying in regard to every act of this great life-drama, “*Well done good and faithful,—that is just like Christ.*”

Ah, my hearers, whether penitent or impenitent—infidel or believer, your past lives have been parts of a great drama, thus witnessed by all the crowned creatures of eternity. And have you acted it well, as a “*spectacle to angels?*” Surely our lives should henceforth be better representations of the solemn parts set before us.

Meanwhile, there is another aspect in which the text is exhortatory. As thus a spectacle to angels, it may be said, in one sense, we can choose the parts we are to act in their presence. All unknown as, in the main, is the future history of us all, and kindly hidden as are the scenes wherein, even on the morrow, we shall individually appear in this drama of life, yet there are some things common and certain to us all, and in regard of them we can choose at least our own *style* of acting. And it becomes us to consider them well ere the curtain rise, and we stand in their midst. Take them in their order:—

1. *A death-scene!*—A darkened chamber. A couch shaken convulsively. A company of heart-broken rela-

tives keeping watch by the beloved and departing one. Such the scene. And for an actor—behold! A poor lover of pleasure, who put his eternity carefully away from him, living only for this world. Now witness his acting as it seems unto angels. Behold! That wan face; that wild and faded eye; that convulsed framework; those feeble hands, lifted as to repel some shape of terror. Listen! That sob; that cry of anguish: “Oh, do not let me die!” “I can not die!” “I rejected the Saviour!” “I am lost, lost, lost!”

2. *The next is a judgment-scene!*—The heavens and the earth have passed away from the awful face of God. The great white throne is set. The books are opened; and the risen dead, small and great, stand before God; and around, in solemn witness, are gathered all spiritual creatures. And again this poor worldling appears upon the stage, “a spectacle to angels.” And see it, that look of hopeless anguish; that convulsion; that glance above, before, around, as if for some avenue of escape, as there falls on the shrinking sense the appalling sentence—“*Depart!—depart!*”

3. *The last scene is in eternity!*—Go ponder it as pictured in God’s solemn book. I know not what it means—“the smoke of the torment, the blackness of darkness for ever and ever.” Thanks unto God that the curtain lifts not yet from the immortality of ungodliness! But to one standing close to that curtain, as the light of revelation shines through as a transparency, there are seen strange and shadowy things, there are heard strange and startling sounds, giving assurance to us at least, that the drama darkens in that last eternal act, and becomes terribly tragic as “*a spectacle to angels.*”

This is one style of acting. Consider, in contrast, the other! The same stage—the same scenery—but all else different!

1. *Again the death-scene!*—The same darkened chamber. The same group of weeping friends. But how changed the action! True, the poor body is wasted and wan in the sore conflict. And yet, as if the pinnacles of the celestial city were bursting on the sight! See the radiant fire in the eye! the rapturous smile on the lip! Hear those words, feeble, yet joyous in faith and love: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me!” Behold that fixed look heavenward, as the ransomed spirit spreads wing for its place in the many mansions!

2. *The same scene of judgment!*—The same great white throne—with the open books—the assembled universe—the glorified Immanuel! And again a man walking that sublime stage, “a spectacle to angels.” But the action different! See how joyously that lifted eye drinks in the glory of the Redeemer’s face. Note that look of triumph, that cry of rapture, at the approving sentence: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, enter into the joy of thy Lord!”

3. *Again, a scene laid in eternity.*—But here, stage, scenery, acting, all different. We have no thought to depict them. Even inspired imagination could only labor, overborne, when speaking of the shapes of surpassing loveliness, and the sounds of surpassing harmony, the thrones of power, the diadems of glory, the palaces and temples and triumphs of heaven! The curtain lifts not yet from the platform whereon the redeemed and risen man walks in the presence of God. But to one

approaching that concealing veil there will flash a lustre as of uncreated glory, and sound cadences as of seraphic voices in rapturous hallelujah to fill the dearest soul with aspiration to have part in so sublime a drama.

Such, shortly, are the two styles of human action on the great theatre of life. And for each of us, just behind this massive curtain, are stage and scenery being prepared! And we are here to choose, each for himself, the style of his performance. And now, tell me how you will act your solemn part—O immortal man! as—“*a spectacle to angels.*”

Oh, that God would give power to this picture of the text—“*a theatre unto the angels.*” Oh, that some spirit, with a pencil dipped in heaven’s own light, would work the scene fittingly on the canvas,—a fire-doomed earth, canopied by a darkened heaven, and as on a great stage—the mortal-immortal man acting his solemn part—a spectacle to angels; and we could hang that picture up in our places of business and pleasure, in counting-room, and workshop, and social circle, and sanctuary; and through it should ever blaze eternal light with a meaning of heaven; and all things visible and earthly be colored by the solemn illumination; then we should all go forth to act our parts differently. While here in the flesh we should seem scarcely of the world, and presently when the mortal act is ended, and this gay drapery of life falls off, and the world stands revealed a cold skeleton, then ascending to the higher and trans-sepulchral life, to act nobler parts in the service of the Master, with the palms we here gathered for his mediatorial triumph, and the stars we have set in our crowns of rejoicing, standing in our places near the eternal throne, we shall look up adoringly

into his beloved face, and lay trophy and diadem at his burning feet, in glory and rapture and love, "*a spectacle unto angels!*"

THANKFULNESS.

“*Be thankful.*”—PSALM c. 4.

WE have just read in your hearing the proclamation of the executive, enjoining upon this commonwealth the observance of its accustomed day of annual thanksgiving. But, much as we like the custom, we are yet disposed to doubt, whether the mere appointment of the day, with all its ancestral prestige and executive sanction, will render it to us individually, a truly religious festival; unless by solemn meditation we are prepared for its observance. It is rather an easy thing to omit for half a day our ordinary business; to assemble in God's house for rather a long service; and then retire to the enjoyment of rather an elaborate dinner. But this, we think, is not performing precisely the religious duty of thankfulness and thanksgiving. And, as preparatory to that service, we propose, at present, some very plain and practical observations on the duty in general.

The exhortation in our text—“*to be thankful*”—includes, of course, both the *inner emotion* and its *outward expression*,—

A Subjective Thankfulness, and

An Objective Thanksgiving.

Now, I need hardly define the word “*Thankfulness.*”

It is already in its last analysis. It denotes a composite emotion, whose elements are, *joy for a gift*, and *love for the giver*. Differing from gratitude, not essentially, but only in form. The one being necessarily, a feeling only; the other that feeling both existent and expressed.

Passing then at once to its practical and personal consideration. What we have to say may be embraced, if not very logically, yet we trust somewhat profitably, under these three divisions:—

The Hinderances.

The Helps, and

The Reasons of Thankfulness.

Beginning with the *Hinderances*, which practically interfere with this great moral and Christian duty, we are struck with surprise that there should be any such hinderances. This experience and expression of gratitude for Divine favors, has its foundation, as a duty, in the very nature of things. For, as we can by no equivalent recompense God for his mercies, it seems positively unnatural, not to cherish a lively sense of his goodness, and give utterance to the feeling on appropriate occasions. Nevertheless, in this as in many another good thing, we are manifestly hindered. And setting ourselves to understand this strange thing, *unthankfulness*, we find, to our surprise, that the vice, like its opposite virtue, has its foundation in a very principle of our nature.

The old Saxon word, "*Grymetan*," whence comes our Anglo-Saxon, "*to grumble*," expresses only an original law of the human constitution. For analyzed carefully, and hope, or expectation of future good, will be found the grand element of the exercise. A happy feeling, indeed, in an unfallen spirit. But in a fallen, resulting

in dissatisfaction with the present—and thus in *grumbling*. And so we find that this dissatisfaction began even in Eden. Eve fretting, fault-finding, grumbling, about the forbidden tree in the midst of the garden. And thence as a true lineal exercise it has been manifest in all her descendants. The infant in its mother's arms—the school-boy on his way to school—the husbandman at the weather—the doctor at the night-call—the merchant about the markets—the lawyer about retaining-fees—the parson about his salary. Indeed the whole human race imitate their first mother, and complainingly grumble. It is a law of our nature, and like other laws has its uses. It will be found, upon careful examination, that even the bodily exercises of *crying and groaning*, are grand operations whereby nature mitigates and allays anguish. A physician will tell you, that a patient who gives free course to these natural feelings, will recover sooner from accidents and operations, than another, who, thinking it unmanly to cry and groan, represses resolutely all such manifestations. He will relate cases, where violent cryings and roarings have greatly reduced excited pulses, and soothed the nervous system, thus preventing or allaying fever, and insuring in many diseases a favorable termination. And so he rather encourages these tears and groanings in patients while undergoing violent surgical operations. And, in regard of restless and hypochondriacal subjects, who will always be under medical treatment, he knows that they can do nothing better for themselves, than groan all the day, and cry all the night.

In this point of view grumbling is medicinal;—an operation whereby nature relieves sorrow. And as we

do not find fault with tears, no more should we find fault with querulous words, spoken shortly and seasonably. They are escape-valves of anguish, they relieve sensibilities, and so do good as a medicine. Indeed, he that has nothing to grumble about can not be comfortable, because he has nothing to complain of, and therefore nothing to desire, and having nothing to anticipate, can never be happy.

But then this genial, good-natured, medicinal, and so beneficial grumbling, degenerates almost universally into downright, malignant, everlasting fault-finding; and then—like all medicine taken as a daily aliment—it becomes positively hurtful. It impairs the freshness and healthfulness of the mind; induces morbid, rheumatic, neuralgic moods of thought; makes the man a torture to himself, and a curse to the neighborhood; weakens his influence; destroys his character; renders him a wretch here, and tends inevitably to render him wretched forever. And so, although we find this root of thanklessness in a primal law of our nature, yet its manifestations result from various things which we have termed obstacles to thankfulness. Of these I mention—

First—The habit of looking too much at other people, and too little at ourselves. Quite manifest is it, that very much of our discontent arises from a consideration of our neighbors. Others are richer, or more honorable, or beautiful, or successful than ourselves—others treat us with neglect, or injustice—others are guilty of manifest short-comings or overt iniquities; and so, our poor life-bark, overladen with other men's wares, labors painfully on the seas, signals of distress flying from its every mast, and the sound of its minute-guns making night a

burden. Whereas, if the poor man would go into his own heart, and fling overboard all but his own peculiar cares and troubles, and sit down to feast on the rich viands God has gathered as his sea-stores, then his lightened and relieved bark would float buoyantly on the waters, and answer readily her helm, and with glad songs and bright skies go on her way rejoicing. But, then, this looking too much at the things of others is not our only difficulty, and we remark, therefore,

Secondly—That in looking to ourselves *we are accustomed to let the mind dwell too much on the dark side of our experience.* Rather upon *what we have not*, than upon *what we have.* Rather upon the *Divine chastisement* than the *Divine benefaction.* It is the *spots* upon the sun that the astronomer talks of. It is when under an eclipse, that the moon and stars are most carefully observed. It is the one river with the cataract, and not the thousand rivers with their unbroken water-courses that tourists throng to.

In contemplating the history of a year, it is impossible in a probationary life, that it should have brought only uninterrupted gladness; and so, the thought fastens on the fairer things that might have been, rather than the fair things that have been. The ten thousand daily blessings wherewith God has been rounding our lives, are lost sight of in the occasional clouds of difficulty that may have checkered our pathway. We think more of the one thousand dollars lost, than of the twenty thousand left us. More of the one month of sickness, than the eleven months of health. More of the one beloved friend dead, than of the many beloved yet living. More of the mournful silence in the one sepulchre, than of all

the sweet voices of our happy households. Whereas, if just reversing this process, we would look more at the bright side of things—at the stars that are not eclipsed; at the bright streams that are not broken by cataracts; at the profits of our business, and not at its losses; at the seats filled at the board and hearth, and not at the seats vacant; then these earthly homes, which we are filling with mourning, and over whose portals we have written in black capitals, “*Rooms to let to the Sorrows,*” would flash again with festal lustres, and resound with festal songs; and seem to all who go by, the sweet and fair homes of God’s happy, thankful children. Nor is this indeed the whole of it, for observe—

Thirdly—That even while considering our mercies, there is a habit of thought which hinders our thankfulness. I mean that—*of regarding the first gift of a good thing as alone demanding gratitude, and its subsequent preservation as a natural sequence.* Now nature is not a power but a process. *Preservation is positively a constant creation.* And so, as truly as if it were done sensibly and immediately, God gives us a new sun every morning, and hangs new stars every night in the firmament; and gives us, by an Almighty act, put forth every moment, each process of a new life, and each adaptation and blessedness of a new home and world. In other words, we think only of *the added*, and not of the *preserved* mercy—looking upon the continued possession of old blessings as resulting from the stability of the sequences of nature, and only upon the new and superadded blessing, as the positive and direct gift of God. And what we want, is that true philosophic faith which sees God putting forth creative power in every

hour's preservation; so that when we go into life's tabernacle, and see how carefully it has been builded, and how exquisitely furnished, till it looks like the dwelling in the wilderness of a heavenly monarch's children,—it shall seem to us an immediate gift of God, as if just at the present moment, with all its goodful and joyous things, it had—like the Apocalyptic vision of the New Jerusalem—descended, by a great miracle, out of heaven.

Now, although I have but just entered upon a consideration of these obstacles of thankfulness, yet the remainder of our subject compels me to leave other things unsaid, and go on to consider—

Secondly—The Helps to Thankfulness. Of course, the first thing is to get rid of these obstacles. But having considered this already in passing, let us advance to some practical and general rules for strengthening our thankfulness. And—

First—We must entertain just and philosophic views of life's nature and mission. We are here in this world only as in a pupilage—or transition state—for states higher and better, and must learn to judge things and value them only for their uses. A man, crossing an ocean on shipboard, is not discontented because he can not carry with him his sumptuous furniture and equipage; and grumbles not that his state-room hath not the breadth and brilliancy of his palatial pavilions. His very gladness is, that he is in a structure so modeled and circumscribed, that it can have speed upon the waters. And just so it is with a man in progress to immortality. What he wants is rather a tent, that can be pitched and struck at pleasure; and provisions of a

style and kind that can be carried in journeys; than a splendid palace, and ponderous luxuries, incapable of transportation. And so a true appreciation of the real uses of things, will go far to render us thankful for the peculiar size and shape of the blessings God gives us. Then, as before intimated,

Secondly—We must dwell much in thought upon these Divine mercies, present and actual. We are too much given to day-dreams and reveries amid things possible and future. We lift the glass of imagination to the far hills, that, mellowed by distance and haloed with the purple and gold of the setting sun, look like lands of fairy, and grow impatient and dissatisfied with the present and possessed. And yet, there is no one in whose present experience there is not mingled very much—enough at least for constant thankfulness—of comfort and blessedness. And what we want, is a disposition to sit down and count and acknowledge our mercies.

Perhaps you do not all know the origin on this continent of these annual thanksgiving days. It was on this wise, and on the point under review is altogether instructive. When the New England colonies were first planted, the settlers endured many privations and difficulties. Being piously disposed they laid their distresses before God in frequent days of fasting and prayer. Constant meditation on such topics kept their minds gloomy and discontented, and made them disposed even to return to their father-land, with all its persecutions. At length when it was again proposed to appoint a day of fasting and prayer, a plain, common-sense old colonist rose in the meeting, and remarked, that he thought they had brooded long enough over

their misfortunes; and that it seemed high time they should consider some of their mercies. That the colony was growing strong—the fields increasing in harvests—the rivers full of fish, and the woods of game—the air sweet—the climate salubrious—their wives obedient—and their children dutiful. Above all that they possessed, what they came for, full civil and religious liberty. And therefore, on the whole, he would amend their resolution for a Fast, and propose, in its stead, a day of Thanksgiving. His advice was taken, and from that day to this, whatever may have been the disastrous experience of New England, the old stock of the Puritans have ever found enough of good in their cup to warrant them in appointing this great annual festival. Passing this we observe,

Thirdly—That in order to be thankful, we must make the best of our misfortunes. What the Germans tell us as a parable, we have, all of us—who have gone afield with nature in observant moods—witnessed not unfrequently. Standing by some autumnal, and over-matured flower, we have seen the laborious bee come hurrying and humming, and plunging into the flower's cup, where there was not a particle of honey. But what does the bee do? Why, after sucking, and sucking, and finding no nectar, does it come up from the flower's heart with a disappointed air, as if departing to some other field of labor? Ah no! If there be no sweets at the flower's red core, yet its stamens are full of golden farina, and out of the farina the bee builds its cells; and so it rolls its little legs against these stamens, till they look large and loaded as golden hose, and thanking the flower as sweetly as if it had been full of honey, gladly

humming it flies home with its wax. Yes, and herein lies God's moral—*If our flowers have no honey, let us be glad of the wax!*

And this reminds me of another incident connected with the appointment of thanksgiving days. When our national independence had been triumphantly achieved, the Colonies, of Course, held great general jubilee. And good King George, who had been sadly worsted in the conflict, thinking himself quite as pious as his disloyal subjects—and not to be outdone in godliness by such rebels against the Divine right—appointed also a day of thanksgiving for the restoration of peace to his long disturbed empire. In the vicinity of the monarch's residence, then Windsor Castle, dwelt a most estimable minister of the Church, who shared his sovereign's intimacy, and conversed with him freely. On this occasion the worthy divine ventured to say:—

“Your majesty has sent out a proclamation for a day of thanksgiving. For what are we to give thanks? Is it because your majesty has lost thirteen of the fairest jewels from your crown?”

“No, no,” replied the monarch, “not for that!”

“Well, then, shall we give thanks because so many millions of treasure have been spent in this war, and so many millions added to the public debt?”

“No, no,” again replied the king, “not for that!”

“Shall we, then, give thanks that so many thousands of our fellow-men have poured out their life-blood in this unhappy and unnatural struggle, between those of the same race and religion?”

“No, no,” exclaimed George, for the third time; “not that!”

"For what, then, may it please your majesty, *are* we to give thanks?" asked again the pious divine.

"THANK GOD!" cried the king most energetically ;
"THANK GOD THAT IT IS NOT ANY WORSE!"

Yes, and here is a reason for thankfulness in all circumstances, since it is never so bad with us as it might be. And even if God be pouring out the vials of his anger, yet blessed be his name ! He never empties them to the uttermost.

But then this making the best of trials and disappointments involves much more than simply enduring them, in view of their accompanying mercies.—And we observe,

Fourthly—That we must, meanwhile, learn to look upon these very evils as God's disguised blessings. To every true Christian they are so, positively, and beyond controversy. As part of the special Providence of a wise and loving Father, they can not be otherwise. It is God that determines the bounds of our habitation ; the stations we are to fill ; the comforts we are to enjoy ; and the trials we are to suffer. And if we have not much of the present world, it is not because our heavenly Father is not able to give us more. It is all to be resolved into the wisdom and kindness of the Divine administration—God's wisdom discerning how much is best for us—and his love determining to allow us no more. As a truth alike of experience and revelation, these present afflictions are salutary. They produce in the soul, by a most philosophic process, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And as grace is the measure, and very element, of glory ; so, by enlarging heavenly exercises in the soul, "*do these light afflictions which are*

for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." They are but the storms on the water driving the bark toward the haven! but the darkness of the midnight making glorious heaven's stars! And therefore as real, though disguised, mercies, are afflictions to be regarded as they relate to God's true children. And this leads us, as a direction including all others, to remark,

Fifthly—That to become truly thankful, we must become Christians—and Christians growing in grace and advancing in knowledge. We have no limits for an enlarged consideration of the philosophic tendency of earnest piety to produce gratitude and gladness—but must confine ourselves to a few points of its illustration.

Religion makes a man humble—and humility, as a grace, lies at the foundation of contentment. If the Christian's lot be low, he thinks more meanly of himself than others can think of him, and is in no way disquieted at other men's opinions. If his daily mercies seem small, he feels, that, being unworthy of anything, by every elevation of his condition above death and hell, he fares better than he deserves, and gives thanks for that elevation, with true love and rejoicing. And, contrasting his condition at its worst with that of his Saviour, feels that a universe would cry, "Shame!" if he should not be thankful, while faring better than the Master, he has "a place to lay his head!"

Meanwhile, *religion gives him just views of present things, and of the true relation he sustains to them, in this earthly economy.* They never seem to him *ends*, but only *means unto ends*. He understands how his present life is a sojourn; an exodus. And as a true-hearted

traveler, he expects not home-comforts on a journey; but is content with rude fare and humble hostelries, and can thank God even for rough roads and foul weather, if they hinder not his progress.

Moreover, *religion, as it is essentially a principle of self-denial, moderates a man's wishes, and so creates happiness.* Diogenes was happier in his tub, than Alexander on the throne of his empire. And for a good reason—because the tub held the wishes of the philosopher; but the world was too small for those of the conqueror. The real necessities of our nature are few and simple and easily satisfied. And all beyond this is the tyranny of fancy. The water drunk by the beggar, from the wayside spring, is as sweet as when lifted to a king's lip in a golden chalice. The true want is relieved by the draught, but the fancied want not even by the goblet. And so the grand secret of contentment is found, not in increasing our supplies,—but in diminishing our necessities. Not in revealing new worlds to satisfy Alexander; but in transforming Alexander into Diogenes satisfied with his tub.

Meanwhile, *religion produces trustfulness, and so brings contentment.* After all, the great secret of discontent, is born of anticipation. These reveries and day-dreams are full of tormenting phantoms. Even if we are hoping for better things in the future, this very expectation begets dissatisfaction with the present. It places the heart in attitudes as unfavorable to present enjoyment, as that of a racer for observing the beautiful landscapes he is crossing. The butterfly we pursue is grasped at last, all bruised and shattered, just because we pursued it,—whereas, to him that sits

contentedly down, there comes one flitting to his very hand, in all its wonderful and unmarred beauty.

But, then, the staple of our anticipations is fear and foreboding; we are always conjuring evil for the morrow. In the present, things may be well enough. But not satisfied to enjoy the present, we are always, and at awful rates of interest, borrowing trouble from the future. Climbing mountains that are yet in the distance! Crossing bridges before we come to them. And so this whole habit of living in the future is fatal to all thankfulness, both for the past and the present; and this, religion overcomes by making the man trustful. It makes him trustful for *the present*. With his sins forgiven, and his conscience at peace, he carries the celestial elements within his own bosom. And with wings of love and faith is ever soaring, eagle-like, in the sunshine of God's smile; and abiding far above the serpents of discontent, that sting the dwellers in the dust, and the clouds of despair, that fling shadows on the tents of the ungodly. But, more than all, religion makes the man *trustful of the future*. Even the earthly and mortal future he trusts gladly in God's hand. There may come to him trials, but he is sure of heavenly strength and consolation. With every cloud in the sky, God's rainbows to span it! With every storm on the sea, the Divine Redeemer to still it! And the more steep and rugged the pathway, only the straighter and nearer it lies toward his home!

Meanwhile, in regard to the immortal and heavenly future, does religion make the man trustful and thankful? His faith is the veritable substance of things unseen and hoped for; and he is mounting ever on its

strong wings above all these poor clouds of the mortal, until he can catch through the lustrous gates of the Eternal City, its songs of gladness—its shapes of glory. He stands with John in his blessed exile; he beholds those radiant trains go by—from their palms, their plumes, their robes, their diadems, flinging light that bathes the poor Patmos in a sea of heavenly splendor. He mounts with Paul in his strange rapture, higher and higher, till this poor world fades away in the distance, and those loftier firmaments are ablaze with the ineffable lustres of the city of God! Yea, he enters in!—he stands in the golden street!—he walks by the river of life!—he numbers “the hundred and forty-and-four thousand!”—he takes in that overwhelming perspective, rising tower above tower! pinnaele above pinnaele! throne above throne! higher! higher! higher! “*Things to come!*” “*Things to come!*” He catches glimpses of those transcendent and unrevealed realities with whose unutterable magnificence Paul labored vainly when he cried, “*The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!*” And though the immensity of the beatitude overwhelms him, as he thinks of his own insignificance and unworthiness—and it seems too much to believe that such things can lie along the future of his experience—yet, he remembers the faith-strengthening argument, that “*He who hath given his Son, will with him freely give us all things.*” And in wondering and adoring love, grasps the great promise of “*All things!*” Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, and the world, and life, and death, and things present, and things to come.” “ALL THINGS!”—absolutely, “ALL THINGS!” And a wise

and sensible man, as he is, he says—"This is enough for me,—surely this is enough for me." And so, contented with the present, and trustful for the future, he becomes, as he ought, a happy man, and a thankful.

And now, leaving this point, as the first, most imperfectly illustrated, let us pass to consider—

Thirdly—The Reasons of Thankfulness, or why we ought to be thankful?

Of course, the first reason is, *that our circumstances demand it.* We have positively, every one of us, very much to be thankful for. Methinks it were enough to shame any man out of his miserable mood of grumbling, just to sit honestly down for an hour, and count over his blessings. Just contrast your own condition this day, with that of the exulting pilgrims, when they kept their first thanksgiving festival. See them, amid the solitudes of that great wilderness—the cry of the wild beast, and the roar of the strong wind rising around them—the loved homes of their childhood, and the precious temples of their fathers, far away over the waters—a barren soil beneath their feet; and above, the cold and cheerless azure of a stranger-heaven! And yet singing triumphantly unto God their Thanksgiving Anthem!—

"The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods, against a stormy sky,
Their giant branches tossed;

"And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.

"The ocean-eagle soared
From his nest by the white wave's foam,
And the rocking pines of the forest roared—
This was their welcome home!

"There were men with hoary hair,
Amidst that pilgrim-band—
Who had come as exiles to wither there
Away from their childhood's land!

"There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

"Yet not as the sorrowing come,
In silence and in fear—
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom,
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

"Amidst the storms they sang,
And the stars heard, and the sea!
And the sounding aisles of the dim wood rang
To the anthem of the free!"

Thus—thus, did our forefathers make manifest their thankfulness to God for his mercies! And shall we be less thankful? Why, you will keep this festival in homes, and amid luxuries such as old monarchs never dreamed of! Upon your boards will be viands and spicery from all earth's islands and continents. In your wardrobes, the wools of Saxony, the linens of Ireland, the silks of Italy, and the furs of the frozen zones. And crowding your chambers, furniture and bijoutry, wrought of woods from the forests of Ceylon and Domingo; and of metals from the mines of Potosi and the Ural; and of gems

from Brazilian caverns and Indian streams ; and of costly stuffs from the looms of Manchester and Lyons ; and of plumes from the groves of Araby the blest ; and of the magnificent marbles of Egypt and Italy. And if, in such homes, you can not be thankful, it must be as the sated Sybarite, pained with his displaced rose-leaf. Meanwhile, in your homes, are better things than these. Those beloved forms that sit by its board. Those gentle voices, sweeter to your soul than the voices of angels, that make blessed its chambers. Yes, and more. That precious Bible that shines there as a heavenly lamp. That family altar, at whose side there lifts a new ladder, from Bethel to the skies, with its descending seraphim. And then, all those unnumbered social and civil and national and religious beatitudes which surround that mortal tabernacle, as shekinah-lustres round the tents of the Exodus. All these means of grace ! All these hopes of glory !

Living here in America—in this nineteenth century—free men—free Christians—so that your lot seems the veritable realization of the golden dreams of the old Hebrew prophets—those gleaming and distant millennial glories, that colored the page of Isaiah, and made lustrous the clouds of the Apocalypse ! Verily, you have cause for gratitude. Verily, in view of what God has done for you, you ought to be thankful ! But passing this, I remark,

Secondly—That for your own sake, for the sake of your own souls, you ought to be thankful. We tell you again, and again, that this exercise of fault-finding and grumbling is altogether unprofitable. If some great affliction befalls you—why, give it one grand outburst of relieving tears, and have done with it. Bury the bless-

ing God takes from you with befitting rites of lamentation, but do not embalm the dead thing as a memorial-mummy, and keep it, as an everlasting spectre of misery, in the midst of your dwelling. This habit of mournful sadness destroys, alike, happiness and influence, and usefulness and character. I am disposed to believe—though naturalists will differ from me—that the owls were, originally, as clear-sighted and joyous creatures as the eagles. But, getting into a bad habit of living in caves, and going abroad only to mourn over the night-side of nature, they, by the great law of adaptations, have degenerated into the wretched and blind of God's winged and plumed creation. And the habit works as disastrously in human experience. It blinds the eye, and dwarfs the pinions of the soul; renders the heart a nervous and neuralgic thing; eats out a man's piety; weakens every Christian grace; and makes the creature a torture to himself, and a curse to his neighborhood. And this leads me to remark,

Thirdly—That, as Christians, we ought, for the sake of others, to manifest this abiding spirit of joy and thanksgiving. I speak now to professing Christians. And, as exemplified in the lives of such, this religion of Christ ought to appear the loveliest and most attractive of all things. But how does it appear as exhibited in the life of a sad-faced and sad-hearted professor? The man walks abroad with his sighs, like the wind in a cedar-bush; his step, as the grinding of a hearse over unbroken gravel-stones; and the impenitent man looks on with a recoil, and says, "Well, if that man is walking to glory, it must be a hard road to travel!" "If that is religion, it is a poor thing, make the best of it!" Sup-

pose an angel should come down from the skies, and walk up and down among men, with his brow wrinkled with sadness and his eyes dim with tears! Why, then, even if God's fire-car, with its flaming coursers, stood all lustrous at your threshold—where is the man among you that would mount it gladly, and with a loosened rein and a bounding heart, spring exultingly toward a heaven, whose very angels seem wretched? And therefore we remark—

Finally—That for your heavenly Father's sake, you ought to cherish and display this spirit of thanksgiving. I do not mean merely that he deserves your praises—this I have already insisted on. Nor do I mean merely that he commands you to be thankful. Although coming, as my text does, as the precept of a Divine law, I might say that the man ever grumbling does as expressly disobey God as the man ever uttering falsehood or blasphemy. But I do mean, in this connection, that by this exhibition of sorrowful unthankfulness, *you positively and powerfully dishonor Jehovah!* A monarch, whose subjects are always complaining of their lot, is set down by the world as a hard and selfish tyrant. A father, whose children walk abroad ever in sadness and tears, is anathematized by all people as a heartless and cruel parent. And so the world judges of your eternal Sovereign, and your heavenly Father, when you, his professed subjects and children, go murmuring and complaining about the earth, as if Christian life

“Were but a cloud

Brooding in nameless sorrow on the soul.

A sadness—a sick-heartedness—a tear!”

No—no—no. Shame on us, if, surrounded by such blessings, and hastening onward to such revelations of glory, we go ever with the bowed head, and the mournful footsteps, saying to the world by our pitiful complainings—“See how the eternal God is maltreating his loyal subjects!” “See how our heavenly Father is torturing his children!”

And now, if you gather into one, all these reasons for cherished and expressed gratitude, you will perceive the wisdom and excellence of the text’s great law, “**BE THANKFUL!**”—“**BE THANKFUL!**”

And, therefore, as individuals, and as a people, let us see if we can not keep this great national festival in the true spirit of the requirement. If we will not obey the governor, let us at least obey God; and, leaving all our dead sorrows in the grave, and all our complainings at home, come up with bright eyes and happy hearts to God’s temple, and with voices of praise, wherein is blent no undertone of sadness, sing to our heavenly Father some such anthems as this:—

“Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise;
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above,
Praise the Mount—Oh, fix me on it,
Mount of God’s unchanging love.

‘Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by thy help I’m come;
And I hope, by thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home.

Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed with precious blood.

“Oh, to grace how great a debtor
Daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it for thy courts above.”

THE FEAST OF HARVEST.

"The feast of harvest."—EXODUS, xxiii. 16.

WE have assembled again in God's house upon, what may be called, the great religious festival of the American year. These "*Thanksgivings*" of the separate States are taking more and more the character of a grand national jubilee. Originally puritanical institutions, they have become a part of our common and ceremonial law, until all the families of the land look for and enjoy them.

We have selected for this occasion a text, which, to the executive proclamation calling us together, adds the solemnity of a Divine sanction. It is historic of festivals not dissimilar among God's ancient covenant people. Perhaps we have been accustomed to regard the Hebrew religion as especially wanting in the joyous element; doubting almost the possibility of religious gladness, amid its sternly sacrificial rites, and its august doctrinal Theism. But, if so, we have erred widely. Under every dispensation alike has religion, as set forth by God, been essentially joyous. "*The ways of wisdom*," whether trodden by the old patriarchs pitching tents; or by the Levites bearing the Tabernacle; or by the tribes established in Canaan and going up to the worship of Zion;

or by Christians under the fuller light of the Gospel ascending to glory; have been always and altogether "*ways of pleasantness.*"

The pervading spirit of the Hebrew economy was jubilant. Its ritual solemnity was hopeful and triumphant. The later Pharisaism, with its face disfigured, was a monstrous degeneration from the exulting faith of those earlier and palmier days of old Israel, when the harp and the viol, the tabret and cymbal, stringed instruments and organs, were their accessories of worship. Over and above the solemn joy of the daily temple service, there were several great occasions every year, when the whole Jewish people kept religious festival by Divine appointment.

The design of these anniversaries is apparent. They served as perpetual memorials of grand historic events in their national experience; they counteracted the unsocial tendencies of their tribal divisions, and, by bringing the males of the people periodically together in their great central city, repressed local and sectional jealousies, and consolidated different tribes into one composite nation; they moreover afforded the whole people stated seasons of recreation, so necessary to the development of man's physical and moral nature.

With such evident purposes of good did God appoint them, and the old Jews kept them fittingly. Probably the world has never witnessed the parallel of these Hebrew anniversaries. At their approach, the whole nation woke to holiday: every heart bounded, every eye flashed. From valley to mountain-top, the land broke forth into singing; and cottage, and palace, and hamlet, and city, with harp and song and festal procession, were joyous

before God. Jerusalem, then the glory of the whole earth, the city of the great King, was thronged with exulting thousands. Not only the chiefs and nobles of the tribes, but the mighty men of the whole earth, philosophers, and sages, and conquerors, and kings—proselytes from farthest lands—came up in their pomp and power, to keep exulting festival before God in the grand central city of their faith.

Now, of one of these national holidays we have record in the text—"THE FEAST OF HARVEST." This was their Pentecost; so called from a Greek word signifying "*fifty*"—because it occurred on the fiftieth day from the feast of unleavened bread. It was, properly, a harvest festival, in which the Jew offered thanksgiving unto God for the ripened fruits of the earth.

To understand the peculiar interest the Jew took in this holiday, you must remember that the Israelites, after their establishment in Canaan, were almost entirely a nation of farmers. The peasant and the noble, in their respective spheres, were alike husbandmen. While a small portion of the tribes on the eastern side of Jordan led a purely pastoral life, the great body of the people were engaged mainly in the cultivation of the soil. And they were encouraged in agriculture, as no other people have ever been, by their peculiar civil economy. By Divine direction, not only did every tribe have the ownership of its particular province, but each family in the tribe had as well its specified inheritance, which could never be wholly alienated. No great landholding aristocracy could arise among them. The poorest Jew was by law a full proprietor of the soil. His homestead was a freehold by irrevocable title. If for a time alienated

by debt or misfortune, it returned to him again unencumbered at the year of Jubilee. Every husbandman felt, therefore, that all improvements in his freehold were for the benefit of himself, and his children. And, under this encouragement to labor, the whole land of Israel was in the highest state of cultivation. Probably, in this respect, no country on earth ever equaled it. Naturally a land of rare productiveness, it was well described as "*a good land of brooks, of water, of fountains, and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive and honey; wherein they should eat bread without scarceness, and should not lack any good thing*"—a land, in a word, altogether unrivaled in its exuberant productiveness. And possessed of such a freehold, encouraged to its culture and improvement by such immunities, it is not wonderful that the Land of Promise becomes the garden of the world.

The peculiar productions of all zones were native to its widely diversified soil and climate. Grains of all species grew richly on the plains; plantations of olives covered its sandy hills; its low clay soils nourished groves of stately palms; its sharp mountain sides were hung with vineyards. Even the rocks, in precipitous places, were made fertile by artificial embankments; so that, in the autumn time, corn-fields, and vineyards, and orange groves, and orchards, and forests, rose in ascending circles from valley to hill-top, covering the whole landscape with lavish beauty, till the old Canaan seemed fittingly a very emblem of heaven.

Now, we say, that unto such a people, inhabiting such a country, this Feast of Harvest was necessarily a grand

festival. Its annual return could not but wake the nation to gladness. Fair and befitting were the exulting rites of that old holiday, when from every hamlet and home, from glens of the vine and olive, and from valleys golden with corn, the thousands of Israel went up to appear before God in Zion, filling the land, as they passed, with those old choral harmonies: "Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He hath not dealt so with any nation. Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise him with the timbrel and dance. Kings of the earth, and all people: princes and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens, old men and children. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

Such was the Harvest-feast of God's covenant people. And herein have we warrant for such feasts among ourselves. Without pressing again the analogy between this American people and the old Hebrew nation, we find in our circumstances this day, precisely the things which rendered these festivals personally, and politically, and religiously, a necessity in their history.

We, too, want great national and religious holidays, *to keep in mind great national providences*. Our history as a people has been as manifestly distinguished as theirs by Divine interposals of mercy; and we, too, should have great annual gatherings, to make grateful acknowledgment of God's wonderful deliverances; thus setting up

in the hearts even of children's children, memorial-pillars—our Ebenezers of Divine help unto all generations.

We need them, moreover, as verily as the Jews, *for their conservative political influence*—to counteract the sectional and unsocial tendencies of our great tribal divisions. As the old memories of Moses and Joshua, and the triumph at the Red Sea, and the mighty victories of the Exodus—revived and perpetuated by their yearly festivals—bound the several tribes together in loving brotherhood; so would it be with us. And if we could have, like them, a grand national Pentecost—something like our Fourth of July, as it lay in the thought of old John Adams and George Washington—as it ought to be, and would be, without its gas and gunpowder—a sublime national tribe-gathering!—reviving strongly in the American heart the memories of Plymouth Rock, and Jamestown, and Bunker Hill, and Mount Vernon—memories of our old deliverances and triumphs—deepening, as with the chisel of an Old Mortality, the inscriptions which the lapse of time and the ruthless storms of party and fanaticism are so sadly defacing on our old monuments of a common and glorious Past—hanging new garlands, woven by loving hands, and fragrant with the dew of old memories, upon the tombs of men, that, like Israel's champions, led us in our Exodus, and established us in our Canaan. I say, if we could come up nationally to such Pentecosts, then no living man would ever again dare breathe of *discord* and *disunion*—for chords, tender as our loves and stronger than our lives, woven of religion and holy with old memories, as the memorial festivals uniting Judah and Ephraim, would bind us together and bind us to God!

Meanwhile we need such pentecostal holidays for those *personal* advantages which they brought to the Hebrews. They furnish that harmless relaxation so constitutionally necessary to our highest well-being. Real pleasure, as well physical as moral, is always the true law of life. Even "at God's right hand," "fullness of joy" is the proposed end of our being. Not, indeed, lawless and frivolous gratifications, but pleasures of that serene and celestial quality, which invigorates the body and ennobles the soul. And such pleasures demand for their exercise seasonable relaxations.

Now if there is any thing the American people need it is *recreation*. Perhaps we have enough of an enervating dissipation. But true pleasure *re-creates*, and we need re-creating. We want great, noble, national holidays, such as God appointed to the Jews in their annual festivals.

Our *physical* nature needs them. We do not live out half our days, because the bow is ever bent—the sinew ever strained—the brain ever scheming. Men that ought to be young at sixty, are superannuate at thirty. Boyhood is bald-headed, and middle age hobbles on crutches. Our life-chords are broken by over-tension: there is no brake upon the ear, no escape-valve for the vapor, and the physical man is shattered by the very speed of its flight.

Our *moral* nature needs them. Human virtues are like flowers that thrive best in the sunshine. Plato, the philosophic moralist, encouraged in his disciples moods of exuberant gayety, checking their joyous impulses only at the approach of some grave formalist; saying: "Silence now, my friends, let us be wise—*there is a fool coming!*" Stupid gravity is not virtue, else the ass and the

owl, the most portentously grave of all animals, were our models of manhood. True virtue is genial, and joyous; walking earth in bright raiment, and with bounding footsteps. And the nervous, restless, unrepousing, devouring intensity of purpose wherewith our men follow their business, is as disastrous to the nobler moral bloom and aroma of the heart, as a roaring hurricane to a garden of roses.

Above all, our *religious* nature needs them. The true joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength. Cheerfulness is a very element of godliness. Religion is not the stern heroism of the soul clothed in sackcloth and marching to martyrdom. It is rather the perfect harmony of all the soul's faculties moving together in that music of joy and love in which the whole man marches heavenward. To come to Christ, is not to abide in tombs, cutting ourselves with stones, and terrifying with our self-torturing cries every passing traveler—but it is rather to come abroad from these Gadarene graves, having the sorrowful devil cast out of us, that we may return to our loving homes, jubilant and exulting. Piety is not a poisonous mushroom, growing best in the night, but a fragrant rose of Sharon, needing the sunshine. True religion asks, and will have, recreations; if denied the pure, it will seek the perverted. The old Puritans strove hard to render religion a torment, and, in their dread of recreations, having abandoned all true amusement to Satan, were forced to seek satanic amusement, hunting Quakers as wild beasts, and making bonfires of witches.

The old Jews did this thing better with their joyous holidays, when with harp and viol they went up to

Zion. Jehovah was not mistaken in the religious regimen of his children. He knew, and provided for, a great want of their natures, when he appointed their festivals. The American church sorely needs a like baptism of gladness, that shall send her to her Zion with bounding feet and shining garments, making manifest to the world that the service of God is not a sore bondage, but that the ways of pleasantness are her pathways to glory.

It is right, therefore, on all these grounds, and on others; it is right, it is fitting, it becoms our higher frames and moods of true piety, that, on occasions like the present, we should dismiss from our minds all sorrowful emotions, and "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."

This is our Pentecost—our feast of harvest. And even in its lowest aspect, *as a grateful acknowledgment of God's goodness, in preserving for our use the kindly fruits of the earth*, it is a fitting occasion of thankfulness.

We have come to the close of a year of great plenty; our fields have yielded their increase, and our garners groan with supplies for the famine of a world. And for this we should keep joyous festival before God.

We, indeed, who live in great cities, oftentimes overlook this. In considering the evidences of our national prosperity, we ignore the agricultural. Arts, manufactures, commerce—in those we rejoice. Is the stock-market buoyant? Do the banks discount freely? Are our emporiums crowded with stuffs and merchantmen? Is the hum of industry loud in our workshops? Is the canvas of commerce white on our waters? These are the questions wherewith we seek evidences of our national prosperity. But herein we forget the greater interest whereon these things hinge—the interests of agriculture—the sim-

pler thrift, and surer, if slower, gains of the husbandman. True it is, the princely manufacturer or merchant sometimes casts a kindly eye over the cheering records of the corn-trade, and says, "Well, breadstuffs are cheaper, and the poor man should be thankful." As if the fruits of the earth were to the poor man, more than the rich, God's noble benefaction. Alas, foolish reasoner! Let the labor of the husbandman fail—let God shut up the heavens, that they rain not, and parch the plow-ground into barrenness, and what becomes of the rich man? Can he grind his gold with millstones? or leaven his bank-stock into bread? With all his hoarded wealth, will he not starve side by side with the beggar in the midst of the famine? Ah, these ears of ripened corn are the true germs of life for the great human household!

The wheels of our workshops, the sails of our commerce, the implements of science, the pen of genius, the pencil and chisel of artists, the eloquent tongue of the orator, the scheming brain of the statesman, the equipages of wealth, the banquetings of pleasure, all—all that render earth, in its tides of life, any thing but a great sepulchre—move, and have being and power, only because the fields yield their fruits to the patient toil of the husbandman. We might manage to live without merchants, without manufacturers, without mariners, without orators, without politicians, without poets—perhaps we might possibly survive the loss of demagogues and opera-singers, and prize-fighters and congressmen. To read some of the newspapers, one would think we might live without a President; but *sure I am we could not live without plowmen!*

Suspend for a single twelvemonth the world's practical

agriculture, and death's shadow is over it. Our harvests are our sustenance; and in their prodigal abundance should be gathered joyfully. *Life* for you, and for me, and for all of us,—life, with all its energies and aims and ambitions, its love and hope and joy,—life in the heart, the household, the home; that grand and glorious thing, LIFE, hath ripened for us in these golden sheaves, and gone unto the garner. And our feast of harvest should be kept like the Jews, as a grand religious holiday.

It is scarcely possible to overestimate the importance of agriculture. It surpasses commerce and manufacture, as a cause is superior to its effects—as an inner life is of more moment than its various outward functions. We talk of the immense commerce of England—when, in fact, she pays more annually for fertilizers of her lands than the entire gains of her commerce; and the total value of her year's crop, animal and vegetable, was some-time ago reported to Parliament to be three thousand millions of dollars.

Meanwhile, the *reflex* influences of industrial agriculture on our physical and social well-being are as well incalculable. After all, the finest products of our farm-lands are found *in our farm-houses*. Things better than corn and cabbages are grown on plow-ground—bone, muscle, sinew, nerve, brain, heart; these all thrive and strengthen by agriculture. The specimens of strong, hale, common-sense MANHOOD seen at our annual fairs are a finer show than all the fat cattle and sheep and noble horses, and the brave array of farm-fruits and implements. Agriculture purifies morals, chastens taste, deepens the religious element, develops the individual man.

And it were a giant's stride in human progress if the whole multitude of non-producing drones that swarm in our market-places (politicians, speculators, fast men, rich idlers), were driven into the rural districts, to cultivate at the same time cabbages and *themselves*.

Then, too, the genius of American agriculture is politically democratic. It allows no aristocratic monopoly of the soil. The one-man power, or the few-men power, gives place here of necessity to the every-man power in the proprietorship of small freeholds.

Most easy were it to show, had we time, how incalculable are the benefits of agriculture to all classes; and to make manifest the dependence of our modern civilization, social and political, upon the agricultural interest.

No wonder, then, that the Jew kept his Pentecost! No wonder that in brave old Scotland men went afield with sickle and bagpipe, reaping the ripened corn to the sounds of sweet music! No wonder that the fairest of festivals was the sweet old "Harvest home" of merry England! No wonder that, in view of what God has done for us, as Lord of the harvest, we, looking forth upon the wealth of fruitful fields outside our pent-up cities—that grander world, beyond the narrow world of trade, the shallow world of fashion, that world of dew, and sunshine, and bursting buds, and bending fruits, where every hill breathes a benison, and every valley is odorous with blessing—at the close of a year whose wealth of golden spoil might spread luxuriously the boards of famishing nations; no marvel, I say, that we, a blessed people in all our borders, should gather in these temples where our fathers worshiped, with our offering of first-fruits to the God of the harvest.

This, then, is the first and lowest aspect of our annual Thanksgiving—a *time of praise to God for the ripened fruits of the earth*. But then it has higher aspects. It had even to the Jews. When first brought forth from Egyptian servitude, they knew little truly of God; they thought of him as of the dead idols of the Nile; and these feasts of harvest taught them to recognize the Divine agency in life's common blessings. But, as they advanced in intellectual theology, these festivals took a wider and loftier range and meaning. The feast of the Passover, at first commemorative of the deliverance from Egypt, came to be regarded as prophetic of Christ's coming sacrifice. And the feast of Pentecost, originally a simple expression of thankfulness for harvests, became successively a memorial: *First*, of the giving of the Law at Sinai, and *Secondly*, of the descent of the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem. So that, in their later history, this feast of harvest was an occasion of thanksgiving, not merely for annual physical blessings, but for all their distinguishing mercies, both civil and religious.

And so should it be with us. Our thanksgiving is partly in view of the ripened fruits of the earth; but mainly in view of other and higher blessings. And in this regard, as well, it is properly—a *feast of harvest*. In respect of all things,—not merely the natural fruits of the earth, but all great human interests, political, intellectual, religious,—we may be said to live *in the world's great harvest-time*. We have reaped, and are reaping, the ripened and ripening fruits of all earth's past generations. Consider this a little.

First: This is true—*politically*. Philosophically considered, the grand end and aim of all civil progress is

human freedom—the highest development and culture of the individual and free manhood. Monarchy the one-man-power, oligarchy the few-men-power, are but the successive stages of the growing life, up to the ripened product of the true democracy—the all-men-power. To this end hath tendered all political progress; and beyond this there is no progress. This is the harvest of earth's long political husbandry; and *we* are reaping it. Till the great American development, the world had known no true democracy. The old republicans, falsely so called, were not forms of self-government, but things rudimental and embryonic; the mind's abortive and premature struggles to bring forth freedom. And our American nationality is the "first fruits" of true liberty. It is, indeed, but the *first* fruits. In one respect this nationality is only a *germ*—the first sowing of a true seed for a great harvest of republics, which we know not of as yet—a handful of corn on the mountains, that, in its diffusion of enlightened liberty and universal self-government, shall yet wave like Lebanon in the grand harvest of the world. "The world will be either Cossack or Republican," said Napoleon, and we say, not Cossack, for the world in God's husbandry, not for tares but for wheat.

Ours is but the first fruits, but then they are *ripe* fruits! The great human aloe hath shot forth one glorious spike, and brought forth one blossom! For centuries the race made its slow progress from the gnarled roots of the elder despotisms. On the transatlantic continents, empires rose, and flourished, and fell; Rome, Greece, Persia, Assyria, Egypt,—in each human nature struggled into great forms and developments of life.

There were buds, and green leaves, and early blossoms amid the mighty branches; but, alas, the unripened fruit was shaken by convulsions, and fell as the fig-tree casteth her untimely figs! But at last, in this western world, the fruits of true liberty seem ripening in the sunshine. No man can read our past history, and not cry out in faith, "this is God's husbandry!" The careful keeping of this virgin soil for a new product—the winnowing, amid wild convulsions, as with fire and flame, of the old humanity, for a new seed to scatter on this glorious plow-ground—the germination, the strong rooting, the slow growth, amid seething rains and whistling storms of our struggling colonial life. These are the manifestations of a grand Divine husbandry!

Who questions it longer? Verily, it is a story of marvels! That feeble folk, like seed by the wayside, on Plymouth Rock, and the peninsula of Jamestown—that struggle for existence, as of untimely buds for life, amid the chill blasts and rank growths of the wilderness—but, as the germs rooted and shot upward, that miraculous progress, as the green vine of Nineveh—hamlet after hamlet, city after city, State after State,—the stupendous growth of a virgin world—rising up in their strength; shooting downward strong roots, and upward great branches; and yet, not according to the old vegetable law—each the germ of a separate and independent life—but rather like the mighty Indian tree, the lengthening branch bending downward to the ground, forming for itself new roots, and becoming a new trunk, till the whole land is covered with the growth of *a single tree*, with the seeming of a forest—so, all these sovereign States, covering a continent, and yet all bound by the

common law and life of freedom, into one grand composite nation! Verily here is Divine working!

Look at America as she stands before you this day. Her agriculture, her arts, her commerce, her happy homes, her great cities, her matchless civil franchises, her institutions of knowledge and charity, her broad boundaries, her vast resources, her magic progress in the inspiration of her youthful and exulting life, her present beatitude, her boundless and magnificent future, as she stands the living embodiment of civil and religious freedom—the shooting of the civil life of all generations into one grand century-flower of humanity! Look at all this, I say, and then tell me if this seems not a harvest-field in man's golden autumn? And whether your thought be of the struggles of old nations to bring forth freedom: or of our own historic struggles for colonial life; tell me, if the *ripened grain* waves not in the fields around us, and our thanksgiving this day for civil and national blessings be not unto our God—*a great feast of harvests?*

Then passing from the *political*, the same thought is true in regard of the *intellectual*. It is a thought well worthy our pondering, on an occasion like this—*that we live in the harvest-time of mind and thought!* Carefully considered, the development of the “mental,” follows the law of material development. “First, the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” Genius is first poetical; then practical. First, the flaunting blossom; then the substantial fruit. From the beginning, man's law of intellectual progress has been, from the abstract to the practical—from ideas to facts. The practical, being the fruit of the imaginative, as the ripened corn is the fruit of the plant's inner life. And as the plant-germ

must experience its successive vegetable transformations before it ripens into fruit, so it would seem necessary for every great thought to pass through a series of embryonic changes, before it can attain to a perfect and practical development. And in this respect we seem to live in man's intellectual harvest-time. The generations ago have been times of preparation—the seasons of thought-germ, and thought-blossom, rather than of thought-fruit.

We can not enlarge here, but must content ourselves with a few illustrations of the truth—that in our time the old speculative and sentimental “Ideas” have become great practical “Facts.”

The old *Astrology*, which, looking upon the stars as prophetic hieroglyphics, and reading therein the fate of men and empires, burst into radiant but poisonous blossoms of superstition on the plains of Assyria and beneath the blue Egyptian heavens, hath ripened into a grand practical science, till our *Astronomy* elevated the race into the regions of most useful philosophy and loftiest knowledge of God.

The splendid yet disastrous dreams of the old *Alchemy*, have showered their false blooms and ripened into a grand science, until the wild visions of the philosopher's stone, the universal solvent, the universal medicine, are more than realized in the immeasurable benefits unto agriculture and manufactures and the arts of true practical *Chemistry*.

The old *Magnetism*, whose highest aim was to furnish playthings for children, was the toy-blossom which has ripened now into substantial fruit; and, in the *mariner's compass*, furnished a key to the gates of ocean, and a

guide through the mighty paths of the sea, and given unto man the islands and continents of a world.

The idle fancy of the old Hollander, *carving rude letters in beech bark*, for sport, was the thought-germ, whose perfected fruit is the *Printing Press*—that gigantic power on the earth, before which, the old despotisms and superstitions of the world are passing away as mists from a sunburst—whose earthly results are all the wonders of progressive civilization, and whose heavenly utterances are the leaves of the Tree of Life for the healing of the nations.

Steam—that fantastic shape that played aerial and useless before the eyes of old dreamers—hath assumed a personality of glory and power. And the thought-germ, that seemed a vanishing vapor, is to-day the mightiest reality of life—man's Titanic servant everywhere; chained in the dark caverns of the earth; fettered to the wheels of great machinery; harnessed on the thoroughfares of traffic; rushing through the valleys; leaping on the mountains; marching on the seas—God's own winged wind unto man's chariot, bearing him over all the brute forces and forms of nature, in imperial dominion conquering and to conquer!

Then, latest and most wonderful of all—the *Telegraph*!—thought's most glorious harvest! The electric element on which it depends had slept latent for centuries in all material forms, too minute for detection, too subtile for analysis. Then, all unsubstantial and shapeless, it knocked for admission into man's palaces of fancy, and the old Philistines of philosophy made sport with the Samson—Muschenbroek's Leyden-jar—Franklin's wandering kite—those were the thought-germs of a

glorious harvest. The power that at the close of the last century, by means of a pith-ball electrometer, carried signals for amusement to an adjoining room, now flashes in the real business of life, through more than a hundred thousand miles of Electric Telegraph. Verily the embryonic germ hath ripened into fruit !

And the past year has witnessed its most marvelous development. We are indeed told that the Atlantic Telegraph is a failure ; that our rejoicings over it were childish ; that all this clamorous congratulation was the cock-crowing before morning, that the less we say about that cable the better,—till it speaks for itself. But we answer—*It has spoken for itself!* It has demonstrated the grand *possibility*. And to Anglo-Saxon thought a great possibility is a great *certainty*. And now the splendid dream that seemed fancy, hath become a great fact. Henceforth, we reckon as verities, all possible results of this matchless achievement. I have no limits to enumerate them—they have perhaps been already sufficiently glorified in the American pulpit. The effects upon the breadth of commerce, and the steadfastness of trade ; upon the uniformity of stock markets, and prices current, at the Bourse, on the Royal Exchange, in Third Street, and Wall Street ; upon the perfecting of an international police, upon politics, and literature, and news, and the fashions ; in a word—upon all the great physical interests of life, have been eloquently expounded. But, great as these are, they are not the greatest. They are indeed only the radiant petals of a seed-infolding flower, whose ripened fruit is in the *moral*.

A great transformation in the conditions of national life—a breaking down of the barriers of national preju-

dice—a virtual union of all races by the ties of amity and common interest—these, and such as these, are to be the nobler results of this achievement! These magic wires, stretching over all lands, through all waters, are *earth's strong hearth-cords!*—making the dead planet a living creature, sensitive, through every fibre of its gigantic frame, to a rude touch anywhere—along whose quivering nerves and throbbing pulses, the great human HEART shall beat, and the great human MIND think! And were our congratulations, over an event like this, ill-timed and extravagant? What though the lamps of illumination have burnt out; and the huckstered stock is at a discount; and the “time and space” which our orators and poets so eloquently “annihilated,” yet stubbornly remain; and the ocean, which for a short hour seemed man's great whispering gallery, rolls again sullenly voiceless above its hidden secrets—nevertheless we say, it did become the world to exult over this new and magnificent development—*this ripening into fruit of one of God's great thought-flowers!*—this progress from a weak germ into waving harvest, of one of those stupendous purposes whereby God, “dividing the water courses for a way for his lightnings,” is lifting the race from the ancient thralldom into his own glorious liberty, and setting up, on the ruins of old empires, the throne of his Son in triumph and forever!

Now we might multiply our illustrations indefinitely, but our limits forbid. The thought is—That, in the historic progress of the race, every great philosophic discovery passes slowly, like the germination and growth of a plant, from the embryonic of speculative or sentimental thought, to the practical and useful of life's great

realities. And that in this regard, it is our high privilege to live in the *harvest-time*. In past generations, intellect has been busy in a rudimental husbandry—felling the great forests; draining the low marshes; subduing the rugged soil; scattering the seed; and watching and waiting for the increase. The old philosophy; the old civilization; the old politics, civil and ecclesiastical; the old chivalry; the old poetry—these were the thought-germs, the thought-leaves, the thought-blossoms, which have ripened, and are ripening around us into God's glorious fruit!

We live in earth's prodigal and luxuriant autumn—in times when marvelous things are the rule, and mean things the exception—in an economy of prodigies, each one a seeming miracle to men's earlier comprehension, and yet all, only the ripened development of their own thought-germs. And if the law of all husbandry be "to sow in tears and reap in joy"—then our thanksgiving, that we live in these eventful times, should be unto God, this day, *a great feast of harvest!*

Passing this, we observe once more and *finally*—That this same law of development, we have been tracing through the *Political* and *Intellectual*, will be found to rule in THE SPIRITUAL—and in this regard should we mainly rejoice that we live in life's harvest-time.

From the first rude altar at the gate of Paradise to the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, the religious development under the old dispensation was—like vegetable life—from the shooting germ to the splendid blossom. But even then it was but a blossom! That Levitical economy, even in its perfection, was only pre-

paratory to the evangelical,—a eumbrons scaffolding to an inner spiritual building!—types and shadows, that found antitype and substance in Christ the Redeemer! Nor even with the coming of Christ did the religious progress end. Hope, rather than fruition, was the law even of apostolic service. From the hour of Christ's ascension to heaven, *the future*—the magnificent future; the unimagined, mysterious, transcendant, latter-day glory—was that for which faithful men waited and labored and prayed. These men lived in the *Gospel's great seed time*.

True, indeed, there was even from the first a perpetual gathering of scattered bundles on the earth for the heavenly garner. But the great harvest of the race delayed its coming. And yet that harvest must come, yea, alike from prophecy and the signs of the times, we judge that even now it is ripening around us.

No thoughtful man can have failed to perceive, as a peculiarity of this generation, a grand awakening of the human mind unto what we may call *the Spiritual*. True, indeed, the set thitherward of the popular thought seems oftentimes in false directions. Our spiritualized philosophy is aeronautical, losing itself in the clouds,—borne heavenward by unsavory and inflammable gases. Our poetry, under the spiritual afflatus, has become mystically spasmodic—uttering transcendental nothings, very wild and *very watery*. Even our popular Spiritualism, as a *religion*, sits at the feet of tipping, rapping, trans-speaking, psychologized imposture; its man-prophets clairvoyant and celestial, with a very weak and unwholesome inspiration,—its woman-prophets strong-minded and seraphic, as witches in Endor.

And yet, all these things, ludicrous and lamentable as they are, self-considered, nevertheless, as indications of the movement of the popular mind, are, to a thoughtful man, full of moment. They are like refuse-wood on the waters, indicating the great tide-currents of thought toward a higher spirituality,—like sere leaves, falling in a forest, signifying with their sad voices that the autumn-time is near, with its grand gathering of harvest.

Nor are these signs false. For, in the midst of these manifestations, *the true Church of God hath been wonderfully roused to a new life of spirituality!* Let us look as suspiciously as we will upon the great revival of the present year; and make what abatements we may, in view of false elements and accessories. Nevertheless, no man can fail to perceive a movement, unique and universal in the Church, of a power that seems like a new advent of the Comforter. Nor will the true student of history be likely to question its *permanency*.

Since Christ came, there have been but three revival seasons comparable with the present; the old Pentecost, in the first century, the Reformation in the sixteenth, and the great Awakening in the eighteenth; and each of these was an epoch of change in the Church, not only general, but permanent. Each lifted the Church to, and left her in, a higher spiritual condition.

Now, if this be the law of the present, then we seem to be drawing nigh to the great millennial day-spring. Hitherto we have enjoyed partial and periodic revivals; but to-day the movement seems world-wide. The old religious forces have been Divinely quickened. Through the old channels Divine grace is flowing

as a spring-time flood, till the banks are overflowed with the waters of salvation; and sectarianism, that went forth of old to dig separate rills for its own feeble vine, sits now exulting in the great wave of salvation that waters into strength the whole glorious vineyard.

A new law of Christian progress has come. The silent power of this revival, its signal permanency, its seemingly universality; the desire, the hope, the fixed purpose, under God, that it shall remain permanent and universal; all these give it the seeming of the dawn of the world's great harvest.

Let a man walk through the husbandry of a land, and find, here and there, a small field, wherein are a few ripened and scattered ears, and he regards them as the premature fruits of a shallow soil, or an untempered sun, and reads therein no sure sign of the golden autumn. But if, on the contrary, as he walks abroad, he finds the whole land roused by a common impulse—if every hamlet is noisy with men who sharpen the sickle and drive the wain afield—if all the sunny mountain slopes are vocal with the song of the grape-gatherers, and the mower's scythe gleams in every valley, and reapers bind the yellow sheaves in all the great corn-fields—then he feels sure that no inconsiderable and untimely growth is being gathered, but that truly the latter rains have fallen, and autumnal suns have warmed the broad earth, and that this song of girded men is the great hymn of harvest.*

And just so do the signs of the present times—this

* Preached in 1858.

universal expectancy—this universal preparation—this universal labor—this unwonted activity of earnest men, in every village and hamlet in the land to gather fruit unto salvation—this mingling together in the toil, of all Christian sects in harmonious brotherhood—this opening of new fields of labor; new channels of labor; new agencies of labor—this expectation, in all hearts; sometimes indeed faint; sometimes strong and exultant; yet felt everywhere, that this Revival-state is to become the permanent condition of the Church's life—these arguments, and purposes, and prayers, and humble, yet God-relying and steadfast determinations, that Christianity shall not sink again from this quickened vitality to the old frames of formal and dead Pharisaism—all these things, I say, seem, must seem, the results of no local and accidental causes, but the direct inspiration of the Divine Spirit, pouring a new life through the old ecclesiastical being—quickening the steady, onward, majestic march of God's redeemed people, to gather into one great garner the harvests of the world!

In respects, then, like these, political, intellectual, religious, we live in times of unexampled blessedness. We have come up to Zion from hills purple with vintage, and valleys golden with corn, *in the rapturous harvest-home of the mortal!* And it becomes us to keep festival before God as the old Jew kept his Pentecost. As men, as patriots, as philanthropists, as Christians, our cup of joy mantles brightly. What more could God have done for us that he hath not done? What people can be happy before God, if we are not happy? The spirit of *unthankfulness*, that, in an hour like this, presents itself

before the Lord, must have come from wandering up and down in the earth, like Job's Satan. It is the monstrous demon of discontent that drove the poor Gadarene from the fair face of nature, and the loving voices of his home, to cut his flesh with stones, and abide in the tombs; and it ought to be cast out into the wandering swine and the roaring waters.

Oh, how happy we ought to be before the Lord to-day! The man who complains now, must be that very Goliath of unrest, whose discontent feeds upon God's mercies—whose eyes are like the owls', pained only by life's brightness—and who grumbles the most grandly, just and only because *he hath nothing to grumble at!*

We do not say that there may not be troubled hearts here. Oh, no indeed! For we know too well how life's roses have thorns, and life's music its undertones! We know how some of you have come up to God's house from homes made sad by bereavements. Your stream in the desert hath been embittered like Marah! Your garden of life darkened like Gethsemane! And yet we know as well, that even unto you, God hath not forgotten to be gracious. There was a sweetening branch by the desert spring; and a strengthening angel in the garden's shadow! And the pulses of your stricken hearts bound in grateful love unto your sustaining and comforting Redeemer!

Sure I am, there should be no thankless hearts to-day in the assembly of God's people. Unto no creatures out of heaven, hath there ever been accorded a lot like our lot. Living here, in this nineteenth century, free men, free Christians—we seem to stand on the very mount of God, flung up in the waste of ages, for the enthronement

of his great MAN-CHILD ! We look *backward*, and lo ! all the past has been working together for our national and individual beatitude.

Patriarchs, prophets, bards, sages, mighty men, conquerors, have all been our servants. Generation after generation, that have lived and died—great empires, that have risen and flourished, and trod imperial paths, and passed away forever, seem to rise from their old death-dust, and march in vision before us, laying down all their accumulated thoughts, and arts, and honors—all the trophies of their mighty triumphs in homage at our feet ! We look *forward*, and the eye is dazzled with the vision of the glory about to be accorded to God's kingly creature, MAN ! when standing upon this redeemed world, he shall assert his birthright—*a child of God here ! an heir of God forever !*

Verily, we have cause for thanksgiving. "*The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.*"

Let us give, then, free course to our grateful emotions ! Thankful for the present, trustful for the future ; let us rejoice before God "with the joy of harvest." As the old Hebrew husbandman came with his offering of first-fruits, forgetting, in his present moods of joy, all past disquietudes—the weary toil of the seed-time, and watching time—the wild storm ; the seething rain ; the chilling blight ; the devouring insect—forgetting these, or remembering them only to deepen his sense of that Divine goodness which, in spite of them all, had brought the full corn to the earing. So let us, forgetful of all past trials and disquietudes—all shadows that darkened our sunshine—all storms that troubled our waters—all financial reverses—all political and partisan jealousies

—all ecclesiastical and sectarian strife—forgetting all these, or remembering them only as new reasons for present thankfulness—turning from all shadows of old griefs; from all valleys of sadness, if thitherward have wandered our pilgrim feet; and coming up, this morning, to the serene mountain-top, where the sun shines, and the dews of heaven lie fair and sweet; only mindful of, and thankful for, the present hours of joy! Like the mariner, that, with his bark anchored for a brief day, goes ashore to his children's cottage on the hills! Like the warrior, that, released for an hour from the stern bivouac and battle, unbraces his cumbrous mail and pitches his tent with the husbandman!—thus standing together on earth's high places, let us be strong and rejoice in the loving kindness of God! And when here in our chosen sanctuary, as the Jew on Mount Zion, we have paid our solemn vows, and rendered our first fruits of love to God in a living consecration—then, as that same Jew returned to his distant heritage, filling the soft airs of Palestine with glad songs, and waking the echoes of its landscapes with bounding feet; so let us get us again to *our* homes—these earthly dwellings as truly God's gift as those possessions in Canaan—these homes hallowed by Divine goodness; by the voices, the ministries, the gentle looks of love; by memorials, tenderly sad it may be, but cherished and heavenly, of the beloved dead—to these firesides where children play; these boards where kinsfolk gather; driving out every reptile of discontent, every bird of evil omen from our bowers of peace; hanging the heavenly lamp of Hope from our lowly lintel—our hearts, like the lark that, having first soared to the sky to warble its praise around the portals of the temple of heaven,

sinks again, softly and gladly, to its nest of love in the dewy grass! So let us go down from our Zion, as the Jew from the mount of God to his own humbler dwelling, in glens of vine and olive, or valleys golden with corn—peaceful, joyous, thankful for the *present*; and for the *future*, full of faith, of hope; looking forward to that hour—to some of us so near—when, in the great Autumn of Time, gathered by angel-reapers, borne by God's flaming chariot to such a harvest-home as no husbandman ever knew! we shall take our joyous way up through these lustrous heavens, along yon starry paths, through those gates of pearl, through those golden streets, through those portals of the many mansions—that there—in that Eternal Temple; in those blissful homes where this mortal love puts on immortality—there, with the beloved dead; with the countless multitude bearing palms and white robes; with angel and archangel before the throne; we may keep unto God—

A GREAT FEAST OF HARVEST.

THE YOUNG MAN'S MISSION.

"Run, speak to this young man."—ZECHARIAH, ii. 4.

ZECHARIAH is, of all the prophets, most remarkable for the simple, practical purpose with which he employs the grandest prophetic symbols. The supernatural machinery of his book is magnificent, but its movement is all for manifest earthly uses. The red horses, the four chariots, the four horns, the stone with seven eyes, the flying roll, the mighty angels among the myrtle-trees; all these marvelous things, as directly as the four carpenters with their implements of homely toil, have a work to do for man on the earth; and thus the grandeur of his imagery gives impressiveness to the prophet's simplest language.

Thus it is with the text. It is the speech of one angel to another angel in regard of a young man who, in symbolic action significant of Israel's redemption and enlargement, was going forth with a measuring line to take the length and breadth of Jerusalem. With its original application we are not at present concerned. We refer to its connections only to give impressiveness to the exhortation.

It was an angel that uttered it—probably the Jehovah-angel. Certainly it was a heavenly voice, in all solemn,

loving, earnest exhortation, that cried unto another angel, "*Run, speak to this young man.*"

Using this text as simply an accommodation, it may have a twofold direction:—

First, to myself, as preaching to young men.

Secondly, to you, as young men and Christians.

FIRST: As addressed to myself, *it is an earnest exhortation unto the Christian minister to labor especially with young men.*

On this point I shall not enlarge. Of the vast importance of the conversion of young men, there is no possible overestimate. It is important every way.

1st. *Because, in most cases, if not converted while they are young, they will never be converted.* Divine grace, in its very sovereignty, operates according to the laws of our moral and intellectual nature. And as, philosophically considered, religion demands in its reception an open heart, a believing mind, a tender conscience and glowing affection—and as these are the prerogatives of youth—so the whole history of the Church proves that youth is the most favorable period for religious impression; and that, following the law of the dispensation of the Spirit, our most earnest efforts should be for the conversion of the young.

Meanwhile this is important—

2dly. *Because of the peculiar power of young men to accomplish great things for God and their generation.*

Young men are hopeful; young men are brave; young men are fertile in invention: and thus young men are strong in all qualities that secure earthly success. Hannibal at the age of twenty-five led to victory the great

armies of Carthage. Alexander had conquered the world and died at the age of thirty-eight. Charlemagne at the age of thirty had made himself master of the whole French and German empires. Napoleon led his brilliant Italian campaign at twenty-seven, and at thirty-three was emperor of France. William Pitt at twenty-two was Chancellor of the Exchequer. Edmund Burke at twenty-five was First Lord of the Treasury. Byron at twenty-three was the first poet of the time and the idol of all England.

And, with occasional exceptions, such is the great law. Certainly the foundations of all true greatness must be laid in early life. The energy of youth is the world's mightiest influence; and that influence is especially needful in the Church. Early religion renders the Christian character alike beautiful and powerful; quickening all spiritual affections, and rendering permanent all gracious habits. And therefore has God ever been pleased to pour his Spirit upon the young, and to assign to young men, in all dispensations of the Church, most responsible stations and important ministries.

For these reasons, the text's first application may be to myself.

"Run, speak to these young men." The exhortation is to directness and earnestness. Do not waste this precious Sabbath evening in philosophic discourse and idle declamation. Speak as if sent by this Jehovah-angel—solemnly, as if for eternity and in the presence of God. And so I would speak to you. You are associated for the grandest of all possible objects. Laboring for the moral and religious well-being of young men, you are at once laying the foundations of your State

in the immovable principles of virtue, and advancing the Gospel to its consummation in the conquest of the world.

A glorious work is before you; there fore do it gloriously. Let all your powers, in the noblest sense of the solemn word, be *devoted, consecrated* unto God. Aim religiously as high as the world's young men aim carnally. Oh, if Napoleon and Byron had been young Christians, with their intensely earnest life consecrated to Jehovah, and their ambition sanctified into zeal for Christ Jesus; then what harmonies like the song of angels had been heard on the earth; and what conquests of kingdoms and continents for Immanuel had been recorded in heaven! And such should be your aim and ambition. Let the blazon on your banner be, "*Excelsior*"—"Excelsior"—*higher, higher!* No matter how high; even if its flashing folds hide the stars. To save immortal souls; to bless a ruined world; to glorify Jehovah: such is your glorious work. And therefore, as unto a ministry nobler than a king's or a conqueror's, it was fittingly a solemn voice out of heaven—the voice of one angel crying unto another angel—which the prophet heard and which the preacher would obey: "*Run! run, speak to these young men!*"

But I have already intimated that this application of the text is only introductory to another we would now more at length attempt.

Let us then consider it—

SECONDLY: *As an exhortation addressed directly to you, as a Young Men's Christian Association, and indicating one of your most important duties—"Run, speak to this young man!"*

These words set forth: *The means, objects, and manner of a great Christian duty.*

1st. *You have here the means.* “*Speak to the young man.*” Use that grand power of articulate utterance. It is assumed here that you will do good in other ways and in all ways—nevertheless your most efficient power over the young men with whom you labor will be this power of *speech*. Perhaps you have not considered this point sufficiently. Articulate utterance is almost man’s finest gift. Justly has it been termed “that which pre-eminently distinguishes man from all other creatures; the instincts of lower animals have a closer resemblance to human reason than their inarticulate sounds have to human language.” Language is that without which reason were but a dead power. It is not the mind but the tongue that persuades most directly unto good or evil. Language is reason, not shut up in secret chambers, but walking forth with tremendous energy amid the vital interests of the race.

Consider for a moment the wonderful title of the Divine Son—“THE WORD!” And so the relation between the absolute and revealed Godhead is just that between thought in the mind and the word that expresses it. And as “no man knoweth the Father save he to whom the Son shall reveal him,” so no man can know the reason save by the revelation of speech. Verily speech is a glorious gift. It makes dead thoughts quick and powerful; they rise up; they come forth as from a sepulchre; they look upon us with earnest eyes; they breathe over us their weird and wondrous magnetism; they rouse us as visiting angels in glory and strength! The man you address becomes for the time, as it were, a

part of you; your spirit is wedded to his spirit; your thoughts abide in his immortal chambers of imagery, pervading, controlling, either for good or for evil, his very being.

And therefore it is that God has given his Gospel to be proclaimed, not so much by written as by spoken language; and thus your noblest efforts as a Christian association must be made by speech. "Run, *speak* to this young man." This is your first and most important work. Your very title implies this—"An Association"—an organization depending on and calling into play the finest social qualities of your nature. Its design is to bring all the young men you meet under that mightiest of all moral influences, the power of direct religious conversation. You have hardly begun your Christian work when you have considered their wants and opened reading-rooms and lecture-rooms, and felt for them, and prayed for them; *you must speak to them.*

As we shall see more fully presently, your especial mission is unto the beloved and imperiled youth in the midst of us. Many young men come yearly to our great cities with pure morals and fair prospects; yet released from their accustomed social restraints; surrounded by no domestic influences; compelled in their various spheres of business into companionship with all classes of men; perhaps in room or at board, brought into companionship with evil men, they thus, by a very law of their nature, become benumbed in their moral sensibilities, degraded in their tastes, deadened in all their religious sentiments and affections. At first, it may be, they appear in some honored sanctuary on the Sabbath, but no one speaks to them; they appear in another, and still no

one speaks to them. They remember the kind greetings and social Christian life of the church they left at home; and then sick at heart and discouraged, desert the house of God. Their Sabbath-days become profitless or worse. The infidel lecture, the spiritual circle, the gambling house, the theatre, allure them. Presently you find them in all places of evil concourse, and then in a prison cell, or in a drunkard's grave.

Now to preserve or rescue such young men from the perils of this destructive social intercourse is a great, indeed, the greatest work of this Christian Association, and it is to be done thoroughly and efficiently only by this power of association and conversation. "*By running and speaking to them.*" This is your means—speech; human speech; the immeasurable grace and power of appropriate language. These young men are with you, before you, all around you. "*Run, speak to them; speak to them.*"

And this leads me more carefully and at length to consider—

2dly. *The objects of your labor.*

As we have already said, they are young men in general. But the language of the text, you will observe, is exceedingly particular. "*Run, speak to THIS young man.*" And enlarging on this thought, let me direct your attention to some distinct classes of young men with whom you, as an Association, are called earnestly to labor.

1. And partly repeating what I have just said, let me mention in general *that whole class of young men who have just come among you.* The simple fact that they are *strangers* recommends them to your warmest sympa-

thies. In most cases fresh from the shelter of a father's house and the watch of a mother's love, with their hearts, like a bursting flower, open to all surrounding influences, they are peculiarly exposed to the arts of the destroyer. And with such young men you should begin instantly to labor. Gather around them at once a strong Christian influence. No longer does a father's prayer strengthen them in the morning to brave the day's temptations; no longer do mother and sister watch to welcome them from their labor as day declines; and God has called you to fling a brother's shield of proof between those open hearts and the fiery arrows of the enemy—to speak to these young men, gently, earnestly, lovingly. Become acquainted with them. Invite them to your Association; its reading-room; its lectures; its evening assemblies. Take them with you to some circle of refined social life. And above all, lead them to your place of prayer in the sanctuary. Do it earnestly; do it instantly. "*Run! Run, speak to them!*"

Do not wait for a future time and a more convenient season. Already the tempter is laying snares for his victims. The wine-cup, the card-table, the theatre; these things and worse are around them. Alas! alas, for the power wherewith sin allures the unwary. At first the young heart shrinks from sin as from degradation and defilement. To break deliberately a great law of God seems as terrible as to rush into destruction amid the awful forces of nature—to brave a volcano or a cataract! But alike in the moral and the physical, familiarity with the danger weakens the dread.

Years ago a young civil engineer surveying a great national road, came upon the Niagara River some miles

below the cataract. Carefully he approached the precipitous bank and looked over; and as he saw, hundreds of feet below, the wild torrent, rushing and roaring through the mighty chasm, dashing its breakers twenty feet high against its adamantine barriers, he recoiled disheartened, affrighted. Here seemed a physical ordinance of Heaven, that he could not—dare not pass. But as he considered he grew bolder. He might cross it; he would cross it. Presently you find him pledging himself to the company concerned in the road that, on certain conditions, he would at the expiration of a twelve-month drive a harnessed horse right over the abyss. The conditions were agreed to. Then he approached the precipice. With a child's kite he bore a small cord to the far side; with that a stronger cord was carried over; then a rope; then a great cable; and then granite piers were raised, supporting iron cables, whereon to lay timbers.

The twelvemonth passed; and though the work was unfinished, yet the man's fears were gone. He was bound to keep his promise. A single row of planks lay along the half appointed wires, without guard or balustrade. He appeared with his harnessed horse on the brink, and though the creature trembled in every limb, and the planks shook at the tread, and the frail roadway swayed in the strong wind, yet with an iron will and hand the fearless driver forced it on, and over that terrible path. And to-day, behold! how the immense commerce of two nations, and the wealth and fashion of all lands, rush thoughtlessly, fearlessly over that grand barrier of nature, filling all the air with the hum of industry, and the joyous songs of pleasure.

And not unlike this is the moral experience of the young in the progress of evil. To-day, fresh from the influences of a Christian home, yonder youth recoils from an open violation of a Divine law as from certain destruction. Sabbath-breaking, intemperance, gambling, profaneness, impurity; these forms of evil lie at his feet, as deep, broad caverns, through which the flood of God's consuming indignation rolls terribly. But alas! familiarity with a danger beguiles it of its terrors. To-night that youth may be gazing with strange fascination on the wild torrent. To-morrow a silken thread of desire may span the abyss; and then with the whole noisy and profane crowd he may be lashing his passions over it in mad career! And surely with one so fearfully imperiled you have no time to waste. Be instant, therefore, with every young stranger who appears among you. Obey the text literally. "*Run! run! RUN! speak to these young men!*"

Here your work should begin. Yet it should not end here. You are associated not only that you may preserve the virtuous, but that you may reclaim the vicious. Descending therefore more particularly to the objects of your labor, I mention—

2. *The young man beginning to associate with evil companions.*

The town is full of such. No sooner does a youth appear among you than he is like an inexperienced insect moving amid the invisible meshes of a destroyer. The friendships that chance, or promiscuous boarding-houses, or even business circles, throw in his way, are oftenest evil. There is the pitiful *idler*, who would allure him from diligent labor. The *fashionable young man*, teach-

ing him to waste money on finery. The *spendthrift*, encouraging him to live beyond his means—thus compelling him to resort to false entries and robbery. The *dishonest employer*, constraining him to violate his conscience in the miserable tricks of worldly competition. The *openly profane and impure man*, leading him to darker dens of intemperance and infamy. There, in short, is the whole fearful legion of “*corrupters of youth*,” whose delight is, by the infernal magnetism of ruin, to draw the young heart into vice. Alas! alas! how thickly cluster these fiends around the paths of the unwary! How soon the infection takes, and virtue melts in the chemistries of iniquity! And with young men beginning to yield to the evil, is your especial ministry. Go, speak to them. Tell them the history of iniquity in these cities. Point them to the wrecks of character which whiten all the shores of this mighty stream of life. Tell them of a father’s prayer; a mother’s love. “Speak to them.” *Run*, speak to them! Instantly, earnestly. Now, *now* is your opportunity. The white-winged bird is already settling into the fowler’s snare. To-morrow the lustrous plumes will be soiled—the strong wing broken—the glorious immortality corrupted and lost!

Passing this, I mention—

3. *The skeptical young man.*

Perhaps you yourselves are hardly aware of the powerful temptations to infidelity that surround the youth of this generation. This trashy literature, with its senseless sensations; this pretentious science, with its premature inductions—reek with the infection. Even the popular theology, desiring only to be popular, and so,

ignoring God's grandest and most solemn truths, that it may commend itself to carnal instincts, is destroying the young heart and conscience. This very custom of separating young men from their families to attend courses of Sabbath lectures, has at least this evil: it induces habits of wandering, which lead oftentimes into places where the truth is not taught; where, perhaps, cavils against the Bible are urged, and infidel doubts insinuated.

And thus, in one form or another, breathing for the whole seven days of the week the sickening malaria, many a young man's religious nature deteriorates. Presently you miss him from God's sanctuary; he substitutes for his mother's Bible these vile Sunday newspapers. Then you hear him insinuating his own infidel theories; uttering his own unbelief.

Now with such young men you should earnestly labor. If you find them troubled with honest doubts on religious questions which you can not remove, then lead them to the thousand men around you, who, having made these cavils their study, and perhaps come up themselves from the terrible darkness of unbelief into the clear and ever-brightening light that shines in the face of a revealed God, can show them that even the profoundest scientific infidelity is a thing of false inductions, and that all this noisy and arrogant infidelity, paraded in popular literature and infidel *séances*, has been answered so fully and so often that to advance its objections again is only to parade a man's ignorance or stupidity.

Or, if you find them, like the great multitude of infidels, swayed only by low, mean, carnal instincts, and struggling in face of their own convictions to grow

strong in unbelief, that they may walk fearlessly in evil ways, still do not give these men up. Plead with them. Pray with them. Lead them back to the holy sanctuary; to their mother's Bible; to their father's God! As if you saw them lifting a poison-cup—rushing upon a precipice! *Speak to them! “Run! RUN, and speak to them!”*

Leaving these, consider—

4. *Those young men whose lives are already practically immoral.*

I have no limits for details here. In every style and strength of iniquity such characters abound here. And although our language in regard of them often is, “*Let such young men alone, you can do them no good,*” yet it is very foolish—yea, very sinful language. You, as Christian young men, have no right to let any sinful man alone, whose probation God hath not ended. Unto such young men is your especial ministry. In this, Christ himself is your pattern: “*Not sent to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*” Whatever be the man's dangerous or even sinful habit, “*Run, speak to him.*”

He is a profane man. Then speak to him kindly, gently, earnestly. Ask him if he has considered who that great and glorious God is whose awful name he is blaspheming.

He is a Sabbath-breaker—losing all the inestimable moral and intellectual benefits which God has connected with a right observance of his hallowed day, under the plea of “*needful recreation,*”—as if a rest from bodily labor were all the refreshment a man needs! As if a true Sabbath had not its highest mission to his moral

nature! As if God made a mistake at the first in not creating him either a beast or a butterfly!

He is a dishonest man—overreaching in his business; unscrupulous in his statements; unreliable in his engagements; and rapidly losing among men all reputation for integrity.

He is an impure man. He curls his lip when men talk of goodness and virtue, and all life's social and domestic affections.

Or, if he be not thus or otherwise openly and notoriously evil, he is yet manifestly entering those courses which are likely to make him so.

He may be becoming *intemperate*. Perhaps he thinks himself in no danger. "Oh," he says, "I am not such a fool as to become an inebriate; I have too much self-respect, too true a pride of personal character." Nevertheless the fell symptoms are upon him. He loves that gilded saloon. He rejoices in pretexts for temperate drinking. He seeks occasions of social conviviality. Insensibly, it may be, to himself, but quite obviously to you, he is yielding to the insidious power of that terrible habit; he is on the outer circle of the dread whirlpool. Unwarned now, and in all likelihood he will perish. Some men, indeed, do not. Said an honored man to his friend, "I have drunk wine freely every day for fifty years, and am to-day both temperate and healthy." "But," said his friend, "where are your companions?" "Oh," replied he, "that is another thing; I have outlived two generations of them!" I am not here delivering a temperance lecture. There is a vast amount of cant—of declamation worse than wasted, about the wickedness of wine-drinking, and the prevention of grape-culture.

That our blessed Saviour made wine for a marriage feast, should settle that controversy. But I am speaking of young men seeking the perilous excitement of strong drink. And I say there is danger. Already is the immortal bark yielding to the power of the terrible vortex! And unto them you have a mission. Speak to them gently, lovingly. Tell them of their need in business of a healthy body and a clear intellect. Explain to them the law of growth in any unnatural pleasure. Or, if need be, lift up your voice like a trumpet. Cry: "Awake! awake! Spread the sail! Ply the oar! Escape for your life!" "Run, speak to them. Run, speak to them."

Or, perhaps the young man is beginning to spend his leisure hours at such places of amusement as the theatre, the circus, the race-course, the card-table. Now, I am not here either puritanically to denounce such things, or philosophically to oppose them. Unquestionably many good men go to them—unquestionably many foolish things are uttered against them. I am only speaking now of their tendency to lead young men into evil; a tendency compensated by no possible good. It is said, indeed, that "the race-course improves the breed of horses"—and so the bull-fight improves the breed of neat-cattle; but neither tends very powerfully to improve the character of their patrons. Even granting, what is at least questionable, that simple speed adds to the usefulness of the horse, yet the grand objection yet remains, that the race-course, so powerful in making fast horses, is, alas! quite as powerful in making *fast men*.

But even more is popularly said in favor of *the theatre*; and yet every such argument is a simple sophistry.

"*The drama cultivates the taste,*" says one. Yes, but what kind of taste? A taste for rant, extravagance, affectation. A relish for worthless, sensational, impure literature; for unnatural, monstrous, execrable elocution; for a style of words and speech never tolerated in real life, except occasionally in a Fourth of July oration, a sensation sermon, and an academic exhibition where a boy "speaks a piece." Let a lawyer address judge and jury; let a physician prescribe for a patient; let a merchant salute his customers; let a husband speak to his wife, or a father to his children—let any man, in short, in common life, speak or read in this stately, artificial, theatrical style—in these exquisitely modulated and prolonged tones, with these carefully studied and imitative gestures, which constitute what theatre-goers and teachers of elocution pronounce "fine speaking," and the world would laugh at them as lunatics or fools. Among all sensible men the whole thing died out with the dandyism of the last generation. Certainly no employer of young men desires either *petit maitre* or stage player in his counting-room or workshop. Indeed, I know of few things more distressing than to see one of these innocent young men with poetry on the brain and ridden of rhetorical nightmare, striving to get the better of the honest voice God gave him amid the pauses and inflections of this excruciating elocution.

"But," says another, "at the theatre, and, indeed, in all these places of amusement, *we can study human nature.*"

Yes, and so you might on a slaver's deck or in a robber's den; just as we might study botany in a lion-haunted jungle and chemistry in the smoking crater of a volcano.

But I have no room for the argument. Enough for my purpose now that all such amusements waste time and money, and unfit for life's honest and every-day business. Let it be known that a young man spends his evenings at the theatre and his afternoons at the race-course, and all avenues of business success will be closed against him. The lawyer will not have him in his office, nor the merchant in his counting-room; the banker will not trust him with his gold, nor the druggist with his medicines. I do not say he will inevitably be ruined. Dr. Kane survived an Arctic winter, and Pliny a volcanic eruption; yea, Noah escaped the flood, and Lot the fire-storm—and some very good men are patrons and champions of all these popular amusements. But this I do know, that where one young man escapes unharmed, twenty are injured, ten are destroyed. Surely such young men are in peril. They recline amid flowers where the serpent glides; they breathe an air loaded with pestilence. And as unto a youth floating above Niagara—standing on Vesuvius when the crater cracks and glows—*Run, speak to them. Run, speak to them.*

But I may not enlarge. These are only a few of many classes of young men with whom it is your high calling to labor. In general to be ranked under two great divisions: 1st. Virtuous young men, whom you are called to guard. 2d. Vicious young men, whom you are called to reclaim. Alike all of them, immortal barks for which you are to watch; some stanch and well manned yet outside the Heads and needing the pilot boat; some driven already from their courses—tempest tossed amid breakers and needing the life-boat. All alike having heaven's high claim on your Christian sympathies; and

in regard of all alike the angel's cry comes to you this night—Run, speak to them. *Run, speak to them.*

Now I have limits only very briefly to consider—

THIRDLY: *The MANNER of this labor*, as set forth in the text—“*Run! speak to this young man; Run! RUN, speak to him.*” The very language implies haste and earnestness; but the connection of the language implies much more. Who was it that was thus earnestly to address this youth? It was *an angel!* And you can not imagine an angel speaking even earnest warning words save in gentleness and love. And surely your work with young men should be ever with the profoundest wisdom and in the most Christian spirit. The extent of your influence over others will depend not so much upon your talents as your discretion. There is a way of speaking, even about good, which is altogether evil. It is not every word spoken, but “*the word spoken fitly,*” which inspiration magnifies. Earnest consideration, exquisite delicacy, are especially necessary in doing good with the tongue. So wide are the differences, moral, æsthetical, passionate, intellectual, among men, that to approach them all alike is to do more evil than good. To a man asleep in a burning house we cry, “*Awake, awake! the flames are around you!*” To a somnambulist walking in a dream along a house-top, we draw nigh with a silent, stealthy step, not daring even to whisper till we have drawn him back from destruction. So the apostle Jude puts this very duty—“*Of some have compassion, making a difference; and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.*”

A great orator was addressing a great crowd, when, in the midst of an impassioned sentence, he suddenly

paused. He pressed his hand upon his forehead, as if faint. He said very quietly, "I must pause for a moment—this air is too close; indeed the crowd is so great that we will adjourn to the open air; I will sit down and rest, while, as quietly as possible, you withdraw—and, to prevent confusion and at the same time give me more air, let the audience first remove from the right-hand gallery." What did the man mean? In the midst of his speech he saw that the pillars under that gallery were yielding to the crushing weight, and that a multitude were about to be swallowed up in death! But his thoughtful gentleness saved them. An alarming outcry would have been destruction.

Verily, in this whole matter of speech "wisdom is profitable to direct." There are young men, and, alas! as well old ones, thinking themselves called of God to be great moral reformers, who go forth like old knights-errant in iron armor, to pick quarrel and break lance with every evil they may meet in the highways of the land—bent on making a vast fuss generally, and caring little whether it be in a battle with a giant or a wind-mill! Of course I am not advocating such work when I urge you to speak to men. To take your stand amid the noisy crowd in the street, and tell every drunkard he is going to destruction, and every Sabbath-breaker that he will surely be damned, will be more likely to cause you a broken head than another a broken heart. Christ calls a man striving to win souls "*a fisher of men*," but it is only a poor inferior kind of fish that will bite at a hook baited with a scorpion, or lie still in the bright sunshine to be transfixed with a spear. A rod colorless and pliant as a reed—a line exquisitely taper-

ing to an invisible hair—a fly imitating life and falling like thistle-down—a reel playing like finest clock-work—an arm like a steel spring—a foot noiseless as a fairy's, and an eye like the eagle's—all these are needful to one emulous in angling; and surely no less skill and care should be his who would fulfill his mission as “*a fisher of men*.” Enough on this point just to remember that the model presented you in the text is the exquisite and loving speech of an angel.

But then it was an angel thoroughly in earnest, and as we have said, the language implies anxious haste—“Run, *run*, speak to them”—go forth to your self-denying and glorious work with all the power God has given you. Be instantly, thoroughly in earnest—

1st. Because these young men are in imminent and deadly peril.

That young stranger sitting at your side to-night may before another sunrise be tempted to destruction. There is no earthly thing of so rapid growth as the principle of evil in the heart of youth. With terrible rhetoric did the apostle write: “*Lust conceiving bringeth forth Sin, and Sin finished bringeth forth Death.*” Here the word “lust” denotes any natural desire inordinately excited. And only three short, sharp steps in the progress: Desire—Sin—Death. This moral passage from a grand but perverted impulse to destruction, like the passage of a fated bark on Niagara—first the smooth bright stream sweetly glassing heaven’s magnificent azure; then the rushing, roaring rapids; then the tremendous plunge into the yawning abyss. Desire—Delirium—Death! So rapid the progress. To-night that immortal bark floats at your side—to-morrow it may be ship-

wrecked forever; therefore be in earnest—"Run, run, speak to him."

2d. Be in earnest because the work itself is all-important.

There is no possible overestimate of the value, in a community like this, of such a Christian Association. Go forth to-night into your great city and look around you. Alas! what multitudes of young men—ay, and of mature men and little children—as verily without the Gospel as the millions of the heathen; and no ordinary means of grace will ever reach them. Build a hundred free churches and they will never enter them. There is not here, as in the older States, a pervading Christian influence constraining to the sanctuary; and, apart from the few thousand regular or irregular church-goers, scarcely an individual of all this earnest and intelligent multitude ever hear a Gospel-sermon.

We are losing all hope of saving this city and this State from irreligion and infidelity, unless the Christian young men of these different churches go forth together to carry the Gospel to these masses, like the primitive disciples, "going everywhere preaching (*i. e.* speaking) the Word."

And for such work God has formed you and furnished you. Yours is the open heart, the glowing affection, the sanguine spirit, the boundless aspiration, the indomitable courage, and soldiership, and hope—the very energies, in short wherewith Hannibal and Alexander and Napoleon conquered mighty armies—the heroism and strength of exulting youth! Mingling daily with this excited multitude, in the resistless gentleness of a Christian influence—in the matchless eloquence of simple Christian speech,

you, and you alone, can leaven the mass with godliness. What all Christian ministers are utterly powerless to do—what these older Christians have no heart to do—our religious young men, if united in loving labor, could do—roll back this fearful tide of unbelief and ungodliness, and save our city and our State to humanity and God.

I have no words to express my sense of the importance of your ministry. Surely, it is a work second to none under heaven. Oh, truthful vision of the text—one angel crying to another angel! and this the burden of the heavenly eloquence: "*Run, speak to this young man.*"

Would that the angel were here to utter again the angelic exhortation; how earnest would be the heavenly words in behalf of our churches, our city, our world. We want you all thoroughly aroused to your high calling, as Christ's own chosen co-laborers in seeking the wandering and saving the lost. Moderation is good in its place, and patience and conservatism are beautiful in their season; but the times in which we live have too much of a miserable counterfeit conservatism, made up of timidity and selfishness. Our popular Christianity has too many anchors and brakes. We want more wind in the sails, more steam at the engine. Apostolic moderation was a flaming ministry unto men that drove the inspired man forth through shipwrecks and imprisonments and deaths, seemingly beside himself under the constraining love of Jesus; and our age calls for that old apostolic life, that old fiery baptism. The angel bids us speak to you in behalf of this great city, which, according as you labor for it, may become beautiful as Zion, beloved of angels, or terrible as Edom, the city of Death.

In behalf of this marvelous land, goodly as the old land of promise, yet beneath which lie powers that, if roused by Divine indignation, may open for it another Asphal-tites; in behalf of a great nation; in behalf of a ruined world—the angel bids us speak to you of a coming judgment, of a glorious eternity, where every soul saved by your work for Christ shall be as a gem of immense price in your crowns of rejoicing—of that Saviour who for you left his own eternal Throne and the bosom of his Father and all heaven's ineffable raptures, and just that you might be saved, shrunk from no load, no sacrifice, no suffering; and our cry is, *“Rise, go forth, work for your God and your generation.”*

Look around you on the Christian Church this day, against which even now rises the wildest, mightiest array of unbelief and ungodliness the world ever saw; and yet in behalf of dying men doing what? Alas! reposing with folded hands and a placid brow, soothed by sweet music, dreaming about the glorious millennium—the second coming of Christ.

How the Church of God must look in the midst of a lost world—“a spectacle to angels.”

You have all read the fairy tale: A great Eastern city, beleaguered by fierce foemen, was arming in resistless strength, to issue from her gates and sweep away, as a driving tempest the chaff, the insolent invader. But from the camp of the foe came forth a mighty magician, and with the breath of his sorcery changed the whole city into stone. Every thing wherein life had been became a cold, dead statue. There stood the pawing war-horse, with nostril distended, caparisoned for battle. There stood the mailed champion, ready to spring to his seat

and lay lance in rest for the onset. But, alas! the strong arm was cold stone on the neck of the petrified charger. There stood the serried infantry, with armor, and plumes, and uqfloating banners, but each man cold, breathless, lifeless. The eye had a stony glare. Hand, brow, lip, were frozen to marble. All still—silent—death-struck! Alas! picture sadly truthful of Christ's slumbering Church to-day.

But exult not against us, oh, our enemy! Hark! Along the stony street comes a swiftly gliding footstep. A youthful stranger has crossed the barrier, and stands amid the dead. See; he lifts a golden trumpet—he peals one long, loud blast on the icy air. And now the sorcerer's spell is loosened. Life beats and bounds again. The champion springs to his seat; the war-horse neighs for the battle; the plumes wave; the banners stream in air; the dead men are alive again, and rush forth to victory. And such, in our generation, *is the young man's mission*. Put God's glorious trumpet to your lip and blow one loud blast that shall waken all these dead forms into mighty life, and lead forth the army of God to the victory of the world!

THE MOTHER'S SORROW.

"A foolish Son is the heaviness of his Mother."—PROV. x. 1.

I SHOULD hardly have chosen this simple text—suggestive only of homely thought—but for the fact, that, simultaneous almost with your request to address the Young Men's Christian Association, came another request, from an unknown mother in an Eastern State, that her son, now residing in this city, might become a special object of my watch and prayer. In her letter, which is but a sample of many which the ministers of this city are continually receiving from distant parents, she says:

"My dear child is away from home, among strangers, exposed to the peculiar temptations of a large city and your new social life; and though I have great confidence in his moral principles, yet I know the strength of the evil influences that surround him, and should he fall a prey to the spoiler, *the heart of a widowed mother would be utterly broken.*"

Coming as these two requests did together, I could not separate them in thought. They at once suggested both theme and text. And while they may not be promising of profound and eloquent thought, yet are they surely appropriate to the occasion, and will not, we trust, be found altogether unprofitable. Perhaps I am addressing that very son to-night. I am surely address-

ing sons in exactly his circumstances. I am speaking especially to young men. Every one of you has a mother somewhere—it may be in a distant home—it may be in the grave. You are all sons! You have all mothers! And I know—for in all these faces there looks up to me no soul that has been brutalized into shame or scorn of a mother's gentle love—I know that my simple text will come to your hearts tenderly as I speak of “*that foolish son that is a heaviness to his mother.*”

The word “*heaviness*” means, in this connection, sadness—sorrow—dejection of mind—a wounded spirit—a broken heart. The word “*foolishness*” is used here in a sense peculiar to Solomon, denoting, not merely an intellectual weakness, nor merely a religious want, but in general, any grand moral deficiency in the whole complex economy of character. The field opened before us is therefore exceedingly broad, over which our present limits allow us only cursorily to glance, as we consider a few of those more common classes of young men who, in Solomon's words, are a heaviness to maternal love.

Now, as particularly indicated by the word “*foolishness*” in its more popular sense of mental deficiency, consider,

FIRST—*The young man neglectful of his intellectual culture.*

I need not pause to show that in a day like this, every man should be educated, and that his progress in education should end only with his being, so that if the being be immortal, the progress should be immortal. And it is indeed immortal. A finite being never becomes—never can become complete. Paul, risen and glorified spirit as he is, *intellectually* even yet “counts himself not to have

apprehended." Still, before his lifted eye and advancing foot, rise the receding mountain ranges of "*things to come*"—still "to come!" In all the infinite range of being, after you leave the irrational, until you reach the divine, there is none whose "education is finished."

Surely, then, yours is not finished. And every young man ought to be giving diligent heed to his intellectual development and discipline. Of course, I do not mean that all young men should aim to become profoundly learned. The word "*foolishness*" in the text is the antithesis not of "*learning*" but of "*wisdom*"—two very different things. And, although learning is greatly to be desired, yet in its profoundness it is not possible to all young men, nor necessary to our present idea. We are speaking of "*education*"—and the word defines itself. It means "E-ducation" (*i. e.*) *eduction*—a drawing forth—a development—not a mind infused with erudition, but a mind led forth to think—educed into practical and profitable activity.

And here lies the grand popular difficulty. As thinking is hard work, and most men are lazy, few willingly think. They prefer to buy thought as they buy groceries, second-hand and diluted, and so deal only with the hucksters. I am not here to speak in disparagement either of the popular press, or the platform. They furnish what is called for. They meet the demands of the market. If profound thought were popular, it could be furnished for a consideration. But as diluted thought pays best, they utter it diluted. So the popular press roars and foams—a grand Niagara of sentiment and water. And the platform swarms with lecturers who throw rainbows by the hour over old nonsense vaporized

into the seeming of new truth. And all this answers the purpose of the utterer. It supplies the popular demand. It puts money into the purse. But as for all purposes of education—developing and strengthening the intellect—training the mind to think for itself—to perform successfully life's great ministries—to understand man's nature as it is, and God's world as it is, and to achieve upon that world and in behalf of that nature, the great ends of its creation—for all such purposes, the whole thing is a failure. It is like a physical regimen of sweetmeats and sleep—the edification of wild asses that snuff the east wind!

Now, I hardly need say that a young man, who amid the active business of life, sinks into this popular mental indolence and imbecility, fulfills the condition of the text. A true mother's first, and favorite thought is her child's education. It may be a very foolish style of thought. It not unfrequently is. Indeed, in its effort to secure a child's premature culture, parental solicitude becomes sometimes cruel and monstrous. We see small children whose great want is muscular development, set to master intellectual school-tasks of science or language, the sure results of which will be permanent physical infirmity, and a precocious development of the intellect and its prematured decay. We find faithful and competent teachers blamed or changed because they can not supply the child's natural deficiencies—creating brains where there are none, or, where there are, insuring their unnatural growth. We find children blamed and punished because they will be, what indeed they ought to be, what God intended they should be, not linguists, and mathematicians, and philosophers, and orators, but

simply little children, unstudious, and noisy, and riotous, fond of holidays and play.

Confessedly, this parental anxiety for a child's education errs oftentimes sadly, and yet these mistakes only manifest the strength of the anxiety. Sure we are that from the earliest dawn of the child's reason, the true mother's chief care is to fit him intellectually for the great tasks of life. She well knows that all his earthly successes, his respectability and usefulness among men; yea, the very permanency and strength of his moral principles of character, all depend on the style of his intellectual culture. And when, instead of strengthening its immortal wings to ascend the great firmaments of thought, her boy gives his nature the regimen of a parasitic vine, seeking trellises for its tendrils, sinking from the true rank of a thoughtful man into that lower life whose law is amusement, pursuing no thorough and comprehensive course of reading, ignoring all the philosophic and scientific discoveries of the age, becoming at most a critic of light literature and lectures, a great scholar of newspapers and small novels, then surely, in his sphere of intellectual inefficiency and insignificance, does he become "*a foolish son, the heaviness of his mother.*"

But now passing all this, for the text's more important references to styles and distinctions of *moral character*, consider

SECONDLY—*The indolent young man.* Of this class there are two distinct species:—*The man who has no regular business; and the man who has no energy in it.*

1st. In all communities there are found young men who have no regular business. If moving at the top of

society, inherited wealth, or parental indulgence place the youth above all necessity of personal toil or thrift, and so he has nothing to do but to rise late, and dress carefully, and ride out, and dine, and visit, and amuse himself generally, and go to sleep again. Or, if moving at the bottom of society, he has neither energy nor ambition to rise. Regarding himself predestinated to continue haggard, and squalid, and misanthropic, he yields to his destiny, as a shell-fish settles in the sand, and contents himself with the house and heritage of poverty. He walks abroad at noonday to inspect the streets; loiters of pleasant evenings on public corners to take care of the weather; and eats, if he have any to eat; and drinks at any rate; and goes to sleep again. These are specimens of young men found everywhere, from foundation to top-stone, in the great social edifice—growths indigenous and without culture in all savage life: but in our bargain-and-barter civilization, the result of that poetic progress whereby a man escapes all human cares, and attains to the serene dignity of a vegetable!

2d. In all communities there are other young men who, having some ostensible business, do not regularly and resolutely attend to it. The world is full of men who embark on the troubled waters of industrial life only to founder in the great deep, or to drive ashore shipwrecked. Various causes produce this:—

(a) In some cases it results from sheer indolence. The man has no bone or sinew in him—no instinct of effort—no adaptation for work. Probably some anxious and thrifty friend chose his business for him. But as it was a business which would not *do itself*, but required somebody to do it, the work is not done. The man might

have succeeded, and perhaps somewhat distinguished himself, as a zoöphite fastened to a rock and twirling tentacula. But among men of strong hands and brave hearts, he is simply a mistake—a maladjustment—his success is impossible.

(*b*) In other cases this results from a wrong choice of business. The man got into a sphere for which he had no adaptation either mental or physical. We see these things daily—giants twisting threads, and dwarfs carrying burdens; Shakespeares making shoes, and Tupperts making poetry; statesmen keeping flocks, and herdsmen gone to Congress. Men are everywhere out of place, maladjusted, and of course they fail. And by this first failure some men are hopelessly discouraged. Not perceiving that failure in a wrong path is a real part of success, by turning the feet into other and right paths, they have no energy to put their bark about on the stormy waters of life—and so continue in the mistaken business, sailing on the shoreward course, until becalmed in some quiet bay; thinking of no future progress, they roll lazily with the tide, waiting resignedly for decay to tear in pieces their sails and take apart their timbers.

(*c*) In other cases this results from false theories of success. The man is a believer in good luck and grand chances. He trusts to fortune, and waits for opportunities. The sky is cloudy and the husbandman will not plow. The wind is contrary and the mariner will not weigh anchor. The man is waiting for miracles and will not use means—always getting ready to do great things and meanwhile doing nothing.

(*d*) In other cases, still, the failure results from divided application and energy. The man attempts too much.

Ignoring the principle of a division of labor, as the grand law of civilization, he affects the practical barbarism of attempting to do every thing. Now, one business is as much as any man can do well at a time. This is the patent law of the universe. Every efficient thing God ever made, does its own work always and its own work only. The bee attempts not to sing, nor the bird to make honey; the vine does not essay to bear apples, nor the fig-tree to bear grapes. The sun is contented to take care of the day, and the moon is earnestly busy taking care of the night. Such is God's ordinance—and the successful man conforms to it. Life is too short for the accomplishment of great tasks with divided energies. One prize must allure—one business engross him. And the blazon on the banner he bears to the battle of life is Paul's glorious motto—“*this one thing I do!*”

But, be the reason of the failure what it may, the world is full of men who, with a business to do, never succeed in it. Life swarms with indolent and inefficient men—poor, passionless, stolid, statuesque dreamers of dreams in a waking world—maladjustments in the moving mechanism of the universe—living discords in the industrial harmonies of creation going on around them! And, surely, all such sons are a heaviness to mothers. Women's nature is proverbially aspiring. Ambition for her child is an element of her affection. When she bore him on her bosom and rocked him to gentle dreams, it was that he might become strong for life's work; that he might *be something* and *do something*.

And if I speak to a young man indolently disappointing parental hopes, then I speak to a son unworthy of his mother. Rouse yourself even now. Go forth to the

battle of life with a strong hand and a brave heart; laughing to scorn all obstacles; scattering all enemies; understanding that energy creates its own success; that circumstances do not make men, but that men make circumstances; that obstacles are only steps in the ladder which energy climbs; that opposition is only a wind on the bow whereby a drifting bark weathers a headland, and works itself into harbor. Those that love you are looking for your success in life. They have equipped the bark and sent it forth to the seas; and if, through any indolence or false seamanship of your own, you make shipwreck of your manhood—then, alas! you are “*a foolish son, a heaviness to your mother.*”

But passing now this large class of indolent young men, consider—

THIRDLY—*The young man who selects a wrong business, or pursues it with a wrong spirit.*

The grand aim of men to-day is to get rich speedily; and their practical theory is, that all business is honorable in proportion to its revenues. But never was a theory more false. All honest business is equally honorable. The man who, with shovel and pick, toils on a railroad, is nature's nobleman, in contrast with the swindling official of the concern who thrives upon villainies. The drayman, who hauls boxes from the cellar, is a prince royal in the presence of the master merchant who sits above in the counting-room, projecting dishonest gains or proud of fraudulent successes. The plowman—the mechanic—the merchant—the professional man—are all fellow-workers, and if alike honest, are all alike honorable. But the false theory is the popular one. And so the aim of young men of energy is, an occupation prom-

ising the earliest and largest success ; and this is well if it involve no compromise of moral principles. But if it do, let the work be what it may, the young man should shrink from it as from contamination. He should engage in no work requiring the slightest violation of a dictate of conscience. He should consider that the benefit of an acquired fortune is not objective, but subjective—*i. e.*, consisting not in the value of the possession, but in the moral character acquired in its pursuit—just as in a gymnasium the good to the athlete is not the weight lifted, but the muscular strength acquired. Evil work may have large revenues. A theatrical actor—a charlatan showman—a fraudulent speculator—may roll in wealth, while honest labor is in want. But such success is simply infamous ; such a man is a disgrace to his generation—“ *he is a foolish son, a heaviness to his mother.*”

Woman's nature is alive with lofty and chivalrous sentiments. A son's spotless honor is his mother's glory. And if from that high path wherein she trained his early feet to walk, he descend to an infamous calling, or even in a reputable business to seek success by dishonorable artifice, then does he purchase success at the price of her tears who bore him. And every item added to his wealth gathers but another monstrous weight to the already crushing heavings of his mother's wounded spirit.

O young men ! just unmooring from a home of peaceful love to the treacherous seas of a stormy life, take that mother's holy memory with you—a star to guide into all noble courses—remembering that a son's spotless name shall be, while life lasts, a father's truest glory and a mother's greatest joy !

But passing now from this whole matter of business, consider—

FOURTHLY—*The young man who makes choice of unprincipled, immoral, irreligious companions.*

This is perhaps the first anxiety of parental love, as a child passes the charmed circle of household affection. For such a child seems like an inexperienced insect moving amid the gossamer meshes of a watchful destroyer. His friendships are to be such as chance or business associations may fling in his way. And it is a favorite artifice of the great spirit of evil, to seduce through these fine social instincts the young heart to destruction. Beware then, O young men! as for your life, *of the friendships you form!* Choose your companions as you would if they were to go in daily to your mother's fireside! Beware, as for your soul's welfare, of all companionships like these:

Beware of the young man of fashion! I need not describe him. He is of a large class, found everywhere, whose life is summed in rising, dressing, dining, visiting, and sleeping. He differs from the indolent man in that he is always busy about trifles. A pitiful butterfly species—flitting from flower to flower, and dying like autumnal insects, despised and forgotten. And we say avoid such men. You are here to fit yourselves for the great duties of an earnest life. Possibly your honest earnings are too small to enable you to array yourself in the purple and fine linen of his fashionable attire. Certain I am your head has too much brain to be a hatter's show-block, and your heart too much brave blood to serve as a tailor's lay-figure. You are here to become men, not manikins. And if one of these poor ephemera

of fashion, who eat their father's bread and use their sister's perfumes, should cast on you a glance of patronizing friendship, just tell him you were created an immortal being, and not a zoöphite—that you live by work, and do not vegetate by suction. But take not to your bosom such a friendship as *a heaviness to a mother!*

Beware of the sceptical young man! There are two classes of freethinkers in the midst of us. There are those who think freely and speak freely of *human nature*. Their creed on this point is Calvin's total depravity malignantly intensified. They maintain that all outward morality is the specious disguise of some covert wickedness. "Honesty"—"purity"—"benevolence"—these, they tell us, are all shams—the stalking-horses of villainy lying in wait for victims. And their aim is to undermine all generous faith in man—to plant the fatal Upas of *suspicion* in the fresh gardens of the soul. These men are the croaking ravens—the screaming vultures of humanity—whose taste is for dead flesh, and not for nature's purple fruitage, and are to be avoided as the very apostles of pollution.

But worse even than these are the men that think freely and speak freely of *religion*. With them, a Christian profession is regarded as simple hypocrisy. To them the Bible is a falsehood—the Church an association of evilly-designing men—the priesthood a privileged and unprincipled caste, and retribution but a dream of mediæval credulity. In the main, they are men of impure lives. The Bible condemns their evil practices, and they set themselves to discredit it. So they call to their aid Hume, and Paine, and Volney, and Voltaire, and Wright, and Owen—and the whole motley crew. From one they gather a

low jest; from another, a malignant cavil; from another, a specious sophism; and, thus crammed with blasphemy, go forth to set their feet upon all that is pure, and their face against the heavens; and having got rid of all fear of God, and all principles of virtue, and all respect of honest men, and all decencies of personal character, they exult in the triumph of reason over superstition and priestcraft, and call themselves "*Freethinkers!*"

And, verily, they are "*free!*"—as a reptile is free to wallow in pollution! Free as unseemly satyrs, to dance and howl amid grand immortal ruins! Free to follow the trail of a serpent in the mire rather than a seraph's shining path through the firmament! Free to slaver with their venom the radiant purities of this book of God, and to adore as a new evangel the blasphemous and idiotic ravings of these abandoned and outcast lepers of humanity! Free to brutalize all their noble moral instincts—to dwarf all their gifts of intellect and genius—to demonstrate their brotherhood with cattle and creeping things—to exult in their brute-hood, and do after their kind!

Now, such men as these are around you—lying in wait for you—and our warning is, beware of them. Believe us, there is not an infidel objection these men urge against the Bible, which has not been so triumphantly answered a thousand times, that just to urge it again as an argument, is to parade a man's ignorance—is to show himself a weak, credulous Philistine, setting up again the poor shattered Dagon before the Ark of our God! If an honest doubt arise in your heart as to any great truth of religion, go, for its solution, to some one who has at least read the Bible carefully. But these "*free-thinkers!*"—

these men and women delighting to sneer at holy things!—oh, avoid them as creatures that would fain poison within you all the springs of peace, and purity, and immortality!

Your parents, alas!—that father, with his pleading prayer!—that mother, with her yearning heart!—rather would they see you coffined and sepulchred; that proud brow cold; that bright eye sightless—rather thus, a thousand times, than to see you fall a prey to the malignant spoiler, whose delight is in the ruins of *a soul—*
A SOUL!

Beware, above all, of *the young man of practical immorality*. I can not enlarge here. The name of this class is legion; and on all sides do they surround you. They are of every type and form of iniquity; but avoid them all as lepers in the market-place!

That man is a sharper in his business! He overreaches the ignorant, and drives hard bargains with men in trouble; his conscience is concerned with law-honesty; his integrity is intrenched amid statutes of limitation; his type is a spider entrapping thoughtless insects! Avoid him! Avoid him!

That man is untruthful! You can not trust to his statements, nor rely on his promises. He is wanting in the grand substratum of all noble moral character. Avoid him!

That man is a Sabbath-breaker, a profane swearer. He refrains his feet from the sanctuary; and lingers long over the wine! Avoid him!

That man is a quarreler! He wears much hair, and carries a weapon, and looks fierce, and talks of his honor! Avoid him!

That man's associations are with "fast men!" He gets behind the scenes at a theatre; and holds a watch at a race-course; and is critical of cards and wine in a club-room! Avoid him!

That man has no reputation for purity! He curls his lip and looks wise when men speak of goodness and virtue. Perhaps he boasts of vile deeds and vile associates; and makes a mock of domestic love, and woman's truth, and all life's gentler and holier affections! Avoid him! oh, avoid him as you would a malignant fiend!

Avoid, in short, every man whom you would not see seated in your own home-shadow—sharing the unsuspecting confidence of a father's, a mother's, a sister's gentle love! Alas! alas! for the direful contagion of these evil companionships! Deep seated amid the purities of your own better nature, are the germs of latent evil, which the rank breath of these corrupters of youth will nurture into broods of gigantic scorpions! Have, therefore, nothing to do with them. And if one of these men of *questionable reputation* seeks your friendship, tell him—you were made for better things than to feed the screaming vultures of passion; that you have not, as yet, got entirely rid of such old-fashioned things as a heart, and a conscience, and regard for a father's honor and a mother's love. That if *he* choose to go down to the asp's hole, and the cockatrice's den, and the serpent's dust—there need be no disputing about taste—but for *yourself*, you find in your bosom a winged and immortal spirit, and bending above you a firmament of glory; and, on the whole, prefer to fling abroad your pinion, and soar to the sun!

I repeat it: *Avoid evil companions!* I warn you

with all the power of my solemn text! I plead with you by all the tenderness of a mother's deathless love! If you would not fill her gentle eyes with tears, and her dreams with fearful phantoms, oh, take not to your life such fellowships, to be as lead, as rock, as a mountain, in their crushing "*heaviness to that mother's heart.*"

But passing now the case of the young man who chooses evil companions, consider—

FIFTHLY—*The young man who has become evil himself.*

And surely such a son is a mother's heaviness.

It seems, indeed, almost impossible that, coming from a happy Christian home, any young man should ever go so widely astray. But, alas! the strange thing happens. We see it every day. The youth crosses the threshold of affection, recoiling from all paths of open sin and shame, as a white-winged bird from a ravening vulture's nest. But, alas! to that young heart the guileful tempter comes—he points—he whispers—he smiles—he smooths the path down gently for the feet. His first words are all gentle and of good fellowship; he would improve the youth's manners; beguile his lonely hours; increase his knowledge of the world. Presently he takes a bolder tone; insensibly he paints vice in radiant colors. The youth at first recoils. It is hard work to force that immortal bark into the outer circle of the moral maelstrom! Conscience moves! Memory whispers! In visions of the night the father's gray locks seem to move! the mother's eye to watch and weep! But the tempter is not foiled. He comes again and again. The youth yields little by little to his honeyed words! I need not picture him further. He has cut from his moral moor-

ings, and the bark, on a wild, deep river, is carried mightily downward!

And what is that young man now? Ah me! a fearful "*heaviness*" to that father's life—to that mother's heart! Into that distant home have been borne rumors of that child's evil courses—of vile companions—of desecrated Sabbaths—of unseemly revels. And see that father and that mother now! Ah! those tear-stained cheeks! those sobbing, wrestling prayers! Had the news come that that dear child was only sick—only dying, this might be borne; for close, close to that dying pillow would parental love have pressed, and the bitterness of the hour been sweetened by the fond hope of meeting in gladness beyond the grave! But, alas! a son upon whose *soul* the pestilence has fallen! this is a burden that presses, oh, how heavily!

I can not enlarge here. I speak not to *describe* the downward road, but only to warn you against entering it! We have small hope of reclaiming the abandoned. We speak chiefly with a hope to preserve the unfallen. Nevertheless, if it should happen, as indeed it may, that I speak this night to one young man who has yielded to temptation and is rushing to ruin, then I fling myself in that young man's path with my text's strong motive, and I say to him now: "REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER!" Ah! I care not for that smile! I know that conscience works and stings beneath it! You are not yet a fiend; and the last angel that deserts your soul will be your mother's memory! So I look into that scornful face and cry, "REMEMBER YOUR MOTHER!" Do you say, "*she is dead?*" Thank God in her behalf, then! She is saved from the living agony of beholding

a son's ruin! But for you my motive is as strong! *Dead!* is she? And does this wild autumnal wind make melancholy music over her distant grave? Well, then, I tell you that every step you take in your present sinful courses, tramples the dust of her broken heart deeper in the shadows of that sepulchre! Or if she live, then I tell you that that faithful, gentle heart lives with you, dies with you. See! see! right in your downward path it rises! A phantom with a pale forehead and weeping eyes! Oh, pause, young man! Your feet! your feet! Behold, they are trampling on a mother's broken heart!

But I turn from this picture. I speak now to the un-fallen, whose life is beautiful with purity and filial love, and I seek only to warn you against the first beginnings of evil. Young man, you have yonder in your room, *your mother's picture!* Or if you have not, go get one! And carry it ever with you! Bind it to your bosom; *and when tempted to any evil, consult that silent monitor.* Draw forth and look upon that speechless face! Oh, what tremendous power to keep back from all evil there would be in *the simple vision of a mother's face!*

Imagine a young man sitting in some place of evil concourse—in a gambling house—an infidel club-room—at the sumptuous board of an inebriate revel, or in some place of darker, deeper infamy! And, now, in some scene like this, let divine power work me a simple miracle. Behold a shadow rises as along the fabled mirror of Agrippa! It grows denser! It takes shape and lineaments! And now a human face looks out, a calm pale brow, and eyes of earnest love! A MOTHER'S FACE! And see this young man now! How his cheek grows

pale! How his knees smite together! How he springs from his repose, and rushes from that haunt of iniquity as if pursued by an avenging spectre from eternity!

Believe me, dear hearer, parental love becomes agony when a child turns into evil courses! To save you from this dire moral pestilence a parent would gladly lay down life. When the plague broke out in Italy, and all who were exposed to it inevitably died, there lived a mother with three small children in an infected district. Presently she felt in her own person symptoms of the disease. In the morning were the chills and heat of fever; at noon the fatal plague-spot showed itself. She knew that she must die. But she could not bear the thought of communicating death to her darlings. With her first suspicion of her own attack she had sent her children away from her to an upper chamber, and when that suspicion was confirmed she rose in her great agony, locked her little ones into the chamber, denied herself the last embrace, the last look of those dear faces, the last accents of those beloved voices, turned in speechless agony away, dragged herself across the threshold, along the deserted street to the public dead-house, and then lying down amid the uncoffined corpses, died alone! Such is a mother's anxious care to save a child's body from the pestilence! But then, from this moral contagion—this plague that falls upon the immortal spirit—who can tell what a mother's heart would not endure to save the child of her bosom?

I can not enlarge. I speak to generous and ingenuous men to-night. And I say to them that, in crossing the threshold of these sinful courses, they are bringing a mountain weight of heaviness on hearts that love them.

Just let there be whispered in your childhood's home a story of your dissipation—your dishonesty—your intemperance—your impurity—and then better, a thousand times better, more generous, more merciful, the hand that should drive an assassin's dagger into that mother's gentle heart!

Now, there are other classes of character we had designed to exhibit here, but our limits forbid, and we conclude by considering,

SIXTHLY—*The young man who lives in neglect of personal religion.*

This is unquestionably the main thought of the text. In its last analysis Solomon always uses "wisdom" in the sense of *personal piety*, and "foolishness" as a synonym of *practical irreligion*.

And it does not matter for our argument whether or not you so regard it. You may be of the class of young men who sneer at religion, and think it noble and wise to call themselves infidels. But then your mother does not. And to her heart the very thought of your infidelity is a painful burden. To *her*, religion is no weak and driveling fanaticism, but a life—a power—a heavenly and eternal glory—an influence that makes and can alone make this earthly life peaceful, and calm, and pure, and prosperous, and ennobled—which heightens all its gladness and makes all its loads less—which hangs a heavenly lamp of hope at the lowliest lintel, and flings light as from the plumes of an angel, over the loneliest grave—which prepares, and alone can prepare, the soul of man to pass hopefully away from this scene of mortal cares, and to cross the threshold of an eternal door, and move fittingly among those higher spheres of the glorious life

that peoples eternity, and to wear diadems, and to wield sceptres, and to grasp destinies of unbounded splendor, and be kings and priests unto God for ever and ever.

To that believing mother's soul this Bible appears with a weight of evidence that is demonstrative—overwhelming. And the shallow cavils of an infidel libertine, and the blasphemous rhapsodies of a social outcast have no power to weaken her assured faith in God's glorious oracles. Religion seems to her no poetie dream nor philosophic dogma—but a momentous message from eternity. It is the revelation of overwhelming truths. It is a call to secure eternal interests. It tells of immortality—of probation—of retribution—of an eternity of gloom—of an eternity of glory! It stands before her in the pomp of a crowned creature of eternity! the robes radiant—the eyes lustrous—the voice majestic—the diadem ablaze! And with all tremendous, resistless eloquence, warns, pleads, entreats that mortal men will rise from the vanities of time, and aspire and ascend to everlasting realities.

Thus to that mother's holy thought seems the religion of the Bible. And, bound, as she believes herself to be unto a land of heavenly rest, she can not bear to think that her child may not be with her amid those glorious mansions! Whatever may be your unbelief, she is persuaded, that without personal religion there is no eternal life! and without eternal life what seems all the world beside?—[wealth, honor, usefulness, a conqueror's laurel, a monarch's throne!] Alas, they are the fair flowers and perfumes that only make more terrible a martyr's death-pyre! A son aspiring to earthly things, yet despising the Gospel! Alas, it seems to her, as if her boy

were floating above Niagara—now amid the rapids—now on the glassy death-curve, reaching for those gleaming rainbows! *Her child's hopeless eternity!* Oh, a thought of this breaks a mother's heart!

Ah, young men, who perhaps this very day have thought it little that you turned away from the sanctuary and broke God's holy day—and perhaps to-night will reject this Gospel call, and go forth to evil courses and companionships—pause a moment! think a moment! Where is that mother now! this holy Sabbath night in that distant home! Ah, this day she has been thinking solemnly, sadly of her absent and beloved child! And see her now, bowed down before the mercy-seat praying! But for what—for whom? *For herself?* Ah, no! Self is forgotten now—her own feeble strength—her declining years—her many cares—these are all forgotten! Only of her child she is thinking—only for her child she prays! And what asks she for her child? Health? happiness? long life? honor? Oh, no! Not now. Not on this holy Sabbath night! She has been reading about heaven! She has been thinking of the possible parting of parent and child at the coming Judgment! And now all earthly things seem vanishing vapors! Her heart is burdened with a mightier want. She prays for better things: that her child's heart may be broken in penitence—that her child's feet may be turned into paths of salvation! Ah me! those pleading prayers of wrestling agony, those quivering lips, those pillows bathed in tears, prove *that an impenitent son is a heaviness to his mother!*

And this is the text's thought. This is the motive with which we would fain arrest your feet in their evil

courses! O men! young men! *think of your mother!* That mother that watched over you in childhood, and prayed for you in youth; who, when earth was beautiful and life was young, made the world fairer with her smile of trustful love and faith. And when misfortune came, and friends deserted, and the world frowned, and there was no rainbow for the day's storm, and no star for the midnight gloom—who then, only the closer for the tempest, took you in holy fondness to her tender heart. And there was no tear that she did not wipe, and no sorrow that she did not share, and no howl of infamy that could shake her faith; and no shadow that could send a chill into the depths of that mighty and immortal love. *Oh, that mother—think of that mother!* and remember simply this: That if you are walking in sinful and forbidden ways; yea, if you are only living “without God and without hope”—if you do no more than turn away this night in impenitence, rejecting your Saviour—if from your father's glorious God, and your mother's blessed heaven, you go forth this solemn Sabbath hour, obstinate, rebellious, then you go forth to trample under foot the tears and the love of the breaking heart of her who bore you, and are this very hour a burden that may not be imagined—lead! adamant! a mountain! a ponderous world! a crushing universe! an impenitent and ungodly child! “*A foolish son, the heaviness of his mother!*”

PROGRESS IN DECAY.

"The flower fadeth."—ISAIAH, xl. 7.

THERE are at least two sides to every thing. To every thing in morals there is a dark and a bright side. Every truth is a revelation of God—a Theophany—a Shechinah. And, as the divine pillar in the Exodus had sometimes an aspect of cloud, and sometimes of fire, so is it with all truth. Its appearance alters with our own changes of character or condition; to the eye of sense it may be a Shechinah of gloom, to the eye of faith a Shechinah of glory. Thus is it with our text.

"The flower fadeth."—It is a prophetic illustration of the evanescence of human life. And to the hearing of sense it is touchingly mournful—the very refrain of a dirge! It is common in the rhetoric of the Bible to compare human life to a flower. And here its decline is emblemized by a flower's decay. The whole scope of the context is the brevity of man's sojourn on earth. *"All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass."*

"The flower fadeth."—I. Let us contemplate it first by the eye of sense. Let us sit solemnly together in the shadow of the Shechinah. How depressing seems the thought! How sad the emblem! What a tender and

fragile growth is "the grass!" How short-lived all the goodliness of "the flower of the field!" The hardiest lives but a few days; the frailest but a few moments! And yet such is human life! Its whole history is written on the flower's fading leaf. And the truth is especially befitting the closing meditation of the year.

"*The flower fadeth!*"—How impressive the truth *when we think of others*—the beloved of home and life! How hath every year of our past been, like a day whose hours should be indicated by the Linnæan flower-dial—the opening and folding of different blossoms in their order—marked and remembered by the passing away of beloved ones to return no more! Go back into childhood! You may have only just passed its bright morning, nevertheless you too have your dead! There are graves over which even your young heart breaks. The father whose strong arm upheld your faltering steps! the mother whose soft voice lulled you to slumber! the young brother or sister who shared your childish sports and toys! these may have passed from you! And your short life hath been measured, as by the opening and shut of blossoms on "a dial of flowers!" And if you are older, more touching still is the emblem. Where are the happy children who sat with you in the school, and went forth in your holiday? the youthful band that walked beside you in life's green and sunny paths? the men and women who shared with you life's heavier tasks and strangely saddened joys? How many of them do you meet to-day? Alas, most truly is your life's horologe "a dial of flowers."

"*The flower fadeth!*"—How impressive the truth *when you think of yourselves!* Where now is the bounding

heart of your childhood? Where the unclouded hopefulness of youth? Life seems to you no longer a rapturous holiday—the freshness, the brightness, the lavish aroma, the glorious bloom are gone forever! *The flower—the flower fadeth!*

And verily the thought saddens us. We are in the shadow of the Shechinah! You do not utter the text cheerily. The voice sinks instinctively into mournful cadence! Even the glad heart of childhood bemoans the bloom of its withered garlands! There is something so inexpressibly beautiful in the flowers themselves: so much of eloquence in their ministries and language, that the decay of even the commonest and smallest depresses the spirit.

And the moral truth is more solemn than its emblem. The evanescence of human life; the passing away of our years; the decay of whatsoever makes those years blissful—all this has ever been a theme of melancholy musing.

As the tide of time rolls on, first, youthful *beauty* fades like a flower! watch it as you will, guard it as you may, yet the cheek will lose its color and the eye its fire! Then *activity* declines, the airy step of childhood flags into the slow measures of weary feet! Then *strength* decays, the right arm loses its cunning, the form bends under its load! Meanwhile even the moral man seems to share the infirmities of the physical, the tender affections are chilled and torpid, the glorious intellect unhinged or exhausted, as under the spells of on-coming winter. And it is all saddening—this withering of the human blossom, and the heart recoils from its emblem—a fading flower!

And therefore it is a fitting theme for our meditation in this last Sabbath of the year. Indeed, to the eye of sense,

these gay holidays seem untimely—as if we were rejoicing over decay! Another period of probation is ended. Another stage accomplished in our journey to the grave. And even if it has been a year filled with divine mercies, yet they sadden us as things taking flight!

Surely solemn thoughts and emotions become us to-day; ours should be hearts regretful for the past, resolved for the future. Warned by these memorials of decay we should redeem the time that remains!

This, as we sit in its shadow, is the text's lesson. Let us so live that it may be said of us truly, "His glorious beauty was a fading flower." For the fading flower hath fulfilled well its ministry! Was its life long or short; was its beauty great or little; was its sphere wide or narrow, the flower spoken of in the text had done well the special work God gave it to do. It may have been the rose of Sharon in the imperial gardens; it may have been the queenly lily in some fair valley of Galilee; it may have been some brilliant pomegranate in a rich old orchard; it may have been some humble flower of the fragile grasses that crowned the Syrian hills as with a diadem.

Richly varied and full of splendor was the flora of the now barren and desolate Palestine in the days when Isaiah swept from his harp this requiem to the withering flower! And we know not on which of them all his inspired vision rested. But we do know that it was upon one which had both blessed man and glorified God in its life!

In nothing, perhaps, are there more notable differences than in the spheres and services of flowers. In the wild howling desert, where the fell simoom breathes, and the

fierce sun burns, the stately palm waves its radiant flower-tuft, and many a lowly plant and shrub open fragrant blossoms. And amid Polar ice-fields and in the fissured lava of volcanoes come forth these sweet children of the summer in their ministry of beauty and of love. Meanwhile, earth's fairer fields are beautified, like old Eden, with their blessed omnipresence. They are all of different classes and uses; but each, in its own season and sphere, makes its little life a blessing—and the air of heaven is sweeter, and insect-life is fed, and the heart of childhood is thrilled with joy, and the soul of wearied manhood is made happier and holier, because of the silent, yet earnest ministries of the fading flower! And blessed shall we be if thoughts like these come with this consciousness of our own fading being! If we too, in our own spheres and seasons—seasons, it may be, short as that of the primrose amid melting snows, and spheres humble as the violet's in some lonely vale—are, as well, fulfilling our appointed tasks, doing some good unto men, bringing some glory unto God; so that, as at the departure of something whose life was beneficent, and whose memory will be fragrant, men watch our declining days and strength, saying sadly and regretfully—“*The flower FADETH!*”—“*THE FLOWER fadeth!*”

II. But we may not linger longer on this sad lesson of the text—this shadow of our truth—this cloud-side of our Shechinah. For, as we said at first, it has a bitter and a bright side. To the eye of faith the Shechinah is glorious. If you will remember that flowers faded annually in the old Eden; and that, if the Apocalyptic “tree of life” be a reality, there must be an opening and dying of flowers even in heaven, then you will feel that, self-

considered, there is nothing really to sadden in these phenomena of vegetation.

Indeed, did these tides of time roll over a sinless world, every premonition even of our mortal decay would awaken only joyful anticipations and emotions. And, instead of uttering it with a dirge-like cadence, it would be with exulting look and voice he cried—"The flower fadeth"—"Look! Behold! Blessed be God—the flower fadeth!"

For what, after all, is a flower? Is it in itself a perfection—a consummation?—ah no!—far from it! It is, at most, a phenomenon of progress! And its decay is only the passing away of a good thing, giving place to a better! The great end and purpose of all vegetable life is *the perfected seed!* Buds, flowers, fruity pulps, rinds, husks, shells, are all only parts of the same process. And thus, when the flower in its mysterious function has produced and given form to the embryon fruit, it falls away, as something no longer useful. And, as the better thing takes its place on the stem, the philosophic thought should be in gladness—"the flower fadeth"—*and now we shall have fruit!*

And analogous to this, is the progress and development of man's mortal life. Its earthly offices and uses are only for the strengthening within of the spiritual and immortal!—*i. e.*, our present life, with all its activities and enjoyments, is but *the flower-form* of a being whose *fruit-form*, or *seed-form*, is in an after and higher life! And death itself is no more than the falling of the petals from the well-set fruit. And therefore, as the wise husbandman grieves not when his orchards shower their gay blossoms, but rejoices, rather, because this is

but a prophecy and promise of the golden wealth of autumn, so we should not grieve when, in the development of man, the mortal flower-leaves fall away from the swelling fruit of immortality !

Had we the limits, it would not be unprofitable to consider the analogy between vegetable and human life in regard simply of the earthly. It applies to *individuals*. Fruit is always of greater value than flowers. And, therefore, the trained intellect; the calm judgment; the sanctified affections; the subdued passions; the strong, regnant conscience of the mature man, are worth incalculably more than the fiery impulses, the hot and headlong passions, and all the prodigal bloom and aroma of his younger and fairer life. It applies as well to *communities or nations*—to that organic life of the race which constitutes its oneness. Here, too, the fruit is worth more than the flowers.

The world has had its radiant spring-time and its gorgeous flora. In Rome, Greece, Persia, Egypt, Assyria, Judea, human nature put forth splendid blossoms until the whole air was fragrant with intoxicating aroma. The old philosophy, the old mythology, the old arts and eloquence and poetry—the whole power and passion of the young imperial genius of old time gave to earth the seeming of a fairy palace filled with shapes and sounds of surpassing splendor.

And verily that weird glory hath passed away ! The rainbow hath left the cloud ! “ *The flower fadeth !* ” But have we lost by the decay ? Are earth and life sadder than in those heroic times ? Would you exchange your printing-press for all the pencils of old artists and the tongues of old orators, and the harps of old min-

strels? Would you barter railroad and telegraph and steamship for all the radiant dreams of the old idealists? Would you give up your simple Christian faith for the old gorgeous mythology—your unadorned sanctuary for the glorious Pantheon—your humble missionary in heathen lands for the old crusading chivalry on march to Christ's sepulchre? Will you bid the substantial fruit go back into the splendid blossom? Ah! no indeed! Fair as flowers are in their season, glorifying forest and field with their bloom and odor, yet more precious unto men are the golden grains and ripe fruits of the sombre-tinted autumn! And as phenomenal of simple mortal life, we can say exultingly—" *The flower fadeth!* "

But in our present meditation we are considering the whole of earthly life as the flower-form, rudimental to the heavenly fruit-form, and the analogy between flower-life and man-life is manifold.

1. Flowers differ widely in their beauty and glory. And, among species ranking as equals, how the lily differs from the rose, and both from the violet!

Yea, even of species, what a wide and wondrous variety! The aloe shoots forth one mighty flower in a century, and a thousand spectators delight to watch its development and decay. But myriads of myriads of grasses and grains burst every hour into blossom, unseen, perhaps, save by God's omniscient eye! And so is it of humanity. It has its roses and lilies and violets; and now and then a magnificent or monstrous aloe, and always its countless myriads of flowers of the grass. And although to the eye of sense the value of flowers is according to their outward manifestations; yet true wisdom regards color and aroma as only phenomenal of progress.

Presently the petals, alike of the grand flower and the tiny blossom, will wither, and of both the value seems only in the accomplishment of their Maker's purpose with the fruit or the seed.

And so God accounts of his children. The king, the conqueror, the man of imperial gifts and genius will die as fades the great aloe, and the mean man and the humble pass away as the flower of grass. And then the search, as material for the Judgment, will be for the fruit or seed of the developed *character*. And, as one more true to his spiritual mission, the reward of the peasant may outweigh immeasurably the prince's! The obscure flower of the dusty wayside may have ripened more carefully the inner seed than the rose of the royal gardens; and so, "the first shall be last and the last first!" Meanwhile,

2. Flowers differ widely in their *seasons and spheres* of influence. Some blossoms open only for a moment amid the chill airs of the lingering winter. When the north wind howls through the unclad forest, and no bird sings on the rocking boughs, then the snow-drop shoots through surrounding ice, and lifts its exquisite cup to the lip of fainting faith. Then comes the gentle primrose. Sweet emblem of childhood and day-star of the spring. And fast following, as on airy wings, troop the brighter and prouder creations of summer until earth seems glorified like the old Eden in our delicious June. Nor even when the summer hath died royally in purple and gold have the flowers all withered. Autumn, too, hath its flora, September robes herself in beauty; and brown October and sere November bind their brows with garlands, wherein the passion-flower and the tuberose are woven with the leaves of the corn and the vine.

And like these are the spheres and seasons of human life. Fair children die like snow-drops in the early spring. And although, at first thought, their brief mortal life seems without purpose, yet we may see, if we will, how in the heart and household their few days of blessed visitation wrought as wisely and mightily as the ministry of angels! Oh, thank God for the faith-strengthening, world-conquering, heart-sanctifying influence of these precious blossoms of the world's spring-time, even as they wither and die!

Then comes the summer flora. Men in the meridian splendor of their powers passing away as vineyards and orchards and meadows shower their prodigal blossoms. Nor is the human winter without its flowers of exquisite fragrance and beauty. We have them in our midst, men whose gray heads are our crowns of glory—spirits elevated and chastened as they stand on the boundary of two worlds, and therefore more reverently honored; more tenderly loved than Eden's youth's glorious beauty—like the lingering flowers of autumn, more fair and fragrant because of the disrobed fields and forests they beautify and bless!

And, as in their seasons, so in their *spheres*, men, like flowers, differ. At the foot of the awful arctic glacier did our heroic Kane find blossoms of delicate beauty; and in the dreariest waste of Sahara the eye of the fainting explorer grew bright as it fell on a bursting flower; and, in their living witness for God, quickening the faith of those troubled spirits, those frail things in their solitary spheres wrought, it may be, a nobler work than all the roses and lilies in the gardens of kings! And so have we all found lilies blooming far out on the bosom of

wild mountain lakes; or, fairer still, night-blooming flowers, on whose marvelous loveliness no sunbeam ever fell, and thereby on the stormy water or in the deep night felt our hearts more truly blessed than by all the crowded flora of the summer fields and woods. And so is it of human influence. In the loneliness of obscurity; in the humiliation of poverty; in the dark chamber of patient, unpretending suffering, have saintly spirits wrought a gracious work which, in the reckonings of the coming Judgment, shall seem of greater worth than the eloquence of apostolic men in the palaces of princes, or the heroism of old martyrs dying bravely for Christ.

3. Meantime human life and flower life are alike, mainly because *both are phenomenal of progress*. This we have already spoken of as the bright side of our Shechinah, changing the seeming of our text from a sound of requiem into a song of triumph. The flower fadeth. But what is a flower? Only a temporary protection of the inner fruit or seed! So that when its petals fall away, it is only as the removal of the scaffolding from a perfected temple!

And such is man's earthly life. And, therefore, it is short—as the flower-form of an immortal growth under development for grander forms and uses. Verily, our words are false when we speak of OLD men and OLD women on the earth! We might better term a plant “old” because its early flowers had withered! Even the nine hundred and ninety years of the antediluvian life left the spiritual man only the young infant of immortality! There is no such thing as an *old soul* in the universe! The fires of passion may die; the vigor of youthful hope decay; the frame-work become decrepit; even

the heart deaden in its fervent love, and the mind lessen its imperial range of thought; and yet all this be no more than phenomenal of progress—the withering of the petals around seed and fruit maturing for the immortal! And, as the fruit is ever only just set on the spray when the flower fades, so the man dying at fourscore is only the young germ passing into a higher form of the endless life!

Earthly life is short, and we would not have it longer. The season of flowers is full of peril to the tender germ of fruit. As the variable spring-time passes into the sunnier and serener summer, the husbandman rejoices more and more over the ever-ripening harvest. And so would true wisdom rejoice over even man's outward decay. And it should not be regretfully, but with accents of joyous hope, as, sitting in the bright side of this solemn truth, we cry, "*The flower fadeth.*"

We can not trace the analogy farther. Indeed it scarcely goes farther. Of man's future world and work, even with all the light revelation casts on them, we know very little. Having no experience of such things, a language which appeals only to experience can have no power to describe them. But even in that direction these earthly analogies may be suggestive. Having perfected the seed, nature's next care is to disperse or distribute them. Some are borne away on their own airy wings, and as they float up in the sunshine, freed of their heavy earthly beauty, the perfected seed, as a spiritualized blossom, seems fairer than all flowers! Some are borne across oceans, and take root in other continents. Some find spheres in new islands, making what was, before, a desert beautiful with the rich garniture of summer.

And what a development some of them have in the after-life! An acorn, which a singing-bird might bear across a continent, becomes a giant oak, and a thousand beasts and birds for generations rejoice in its shadow! The Indian fig-seed germinates and takes root, and lo! the stately banyan-tree rises and spreads itself, each branch bending to the ground, and forming a new stock, until an empire's armies are sheltered by its magnificent growth! Such is the progress and development of that whose young life was born of a fading flower! Oh, to a prescient eye what possibilities, what colors of beauty, what forms of majesty, what felicities, what glorious hopes, what ineffable fruitions, are embosomed in a seed! And analogous to this—but immeasurably more wonderful—are the embryonic powers, and shall be the development, of the human soul in the after-state! The babe, whose fair form we laid yesterday into the grave, will become a creature, in wisdom and power and love transcending all our present conceptions of what Gabriel is—yea, of what God himself is! Of such things we are not thinking to speak. Of the immortal man changed and glorified we could not perhaps bear the blinding vision! And if, responsive to our yearning love, one should come back for an hour to move visibly before us—revealed in the realities of that transepulchral life—instinct with its new powers, clothed upon with its new organs, speaking with heavenly tongue, wearing the heavenly diadem—oh, then, instead of a joyous uprising to that blessed bosom, uttering the old familiar names—“friend,” “father,” “mother,” “sister,” “child”—methinks we should shrink abashed from the blinding splendor of that new creature of God! Best for us is it

that heaven's wonders are unseen, and heaven's words are unspeakable. Enough for us till our own change come; and ours too are the eagle-wings that can lie afloat far up on the azure ocean, and soar highest toward the sun, just to know the great fact of immortality—that death is not destruction, but development—the earthly flower-form just passing into the higher fruit-form—"the mortal," not destroyed, but "putting on the immortality;" so that, perceiving by faith how the blossom falls away, just to give a freer sphere and a fuller measure of God's air and sunshine to the growing fruit, we can change the old requiem into a triumph-song; crying out regretfully, but rejoicingly—"The flower—the flower fadeth!"

These are the two aspects of our simple text—aspects differing like the dark and bright side of a cloud in heaven, and yet both needful for our instruction. This truth has a side of sorrow; and we need it that we may not fasten our affections too strongly on the things of earth.

Ah me! how foolish were a child so lavishing its love on a lily or rose that the heart must break forever when the fragile blossom dies! And how surpassing, then, the madness of an immortal spirit loving supremely these earthly things—wealth, pleasure, power, glory! Alas for them! The flower fadeth! Where are the wise, the renowned, the mighty of the past?—the kings, the conquerors, the statesmen, the orators, the bards, whose names are yet powers on the earth; whose tread and voice shook the world? Where are they? Gone! gone, to the land of darkness and dust and oblivion. "*The flower fadeth!*" It must fade, for it is a flower only. Let us look, there-

fore, upon earthly life as it is, and accept the text's lesson of the evanescence of all that is mortal. Behold that fair blossom! How like a crowned queen it lifts itself amid growing things! How the sun loves to shine on it, and the air to fan it! It looks like a creature fashioned in heaven for some precious purpose, and an endless life. But see! ere the set of sun the radiant vision passes; the bright leaves wither, fall, perish! The beauty decays—"The flower fadeth!" Truly sad as a requiem over all earthly things is the text's first utterance.

But blessed be God it hath another meaning, and may be chanted in other and exalting cadences. The flower is not a perfection. It is not the most of a thing, nor the best of it. Within and behind the sere petals behold the expanding fruit! And so it is of life and time. Therefore, ye children of God, dwell more and more in the bright side of truth. See how the wings are growing strong under the breaking shell! Behold the glistening plumes of the angel in Gethsemane's night! Why sit forlorn under the cypresses where the beloved dead repose? They overshadow only the withered garlands of the banquet whence the glorious guest hath gone!

Why bemoan these signals of your own decay—these growing infirmities, these multiplying pains, this dulling of the senses, this weakening of the thought-wings, these chills upon the heart? They are but the relaxing of Æolian cords in the dews of the day-spring; but the intermitting of the eagle's wing-beat in self-poise as he floats nearer to the sun. They are phenomenal of approach to spheres of seraph and archangel.

Thank God, when vernal woods shower their prodigal-blossoms: they are but the drooping of banners in gor-

geous heralding of autumnal kings! Thank God that our years, even by reason of strength, can be only four-score! Thank God that another stroke hath fallen on the great bell of time! Thank God that the mighty train hath accomplished another stage toward eternity! Thank God for the deepening earthly night, dusking the sheen of our grasses, but brightening our stars! Thank God for a faith that changes from requiem into triumph-song this old prophetic dirge—“*The flower fadeth*”—
“THE FLOWER FADETH!”

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