

S E R M O N S .

BY

REV. CHARLES WADSWORTH, D.D.,
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Philadelphia, March, 1882.

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SERMONS.

THE STRONG MAN'S PALACE.

"When a strong man, armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace."—LUKE XI. 21.

This is part of Christ's answer to the Jewish charge that He cast out devils by the assistance of, and in alliance or collusion with their chief devil, Beelzebub. We are not now concerned with that matter. Separating the text from its connections, it represents the soul of man, or, in a broader sense, the whole world, before it is conquered graciously by Christ, as a palace or stronghold wherein Satan, as a powerful chieftain, rules in unquestioned depotism.

The word "peace" is to be understood here in a sense answering to such a relation. In the Bible it oftenest expresses a condition of goodness and grace—a state of happy tranquillity, resulting from regeneration, and producing supreme love to God and sincere good-will toward men. But it can have no such meaning here, for in this sense "there can be no peace unto the wicked." This metaphor is strictly military, and

implies no more than an unresisting submission to a despotism—the unbroken torpor of the immortal spirit under the awful spell of a fiend.

“A strong man keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace.” The significance of the figure is apparent to a child. It states a fact, and explains it. We have here:—

First. *A strange fact.*

The soul of the ungodly man is at peace; *i. e.*, quietly torpid in its impenitence. There is an insensibility, a paralysis, a seeming unconsciousness in regard of all the great interests of eternity, which is amazing; a practical unbelief, in view of which we are told our Divine Lord Himself marveled. On no natural principle can you account for it. Men, wide awake in regard of every small temporal interest, are dead asleep as to the tremendous interests of eternity. This strange fact meets you everywhere. The husbandman toils diligently from seed-time till harvest for the perishing fruits of the earth, yet cares not to sow any good seed for an immortal ingathering. The artisan is busy all the day, working with “silver, gold, precious stones,” yea, with “wood, hay, stubble,” and yet will not lift a finger when the great voice out of heaven bids him “work out his own salvation with fear and trembling.” The merchantman stands anxiously on the Exchange, sorely perplexing himself with financial problems, or toils earnestly in the market-place, wearing away life and soul to lay up treasure on earth, which moth and rust can corrupt, yet lives the while utterly regardless of the everlasting inheritance that might be secured in heaven. The politician will devote his days and nights

to intense labor for the election of a favorite temporal ruler, and yet cares not even to express a preference when the destiny of his now immortality is at stake on the awful issue whether eternity is to be under the loving rule of a Heavenly Friend or the iron despotism of a cruel fiend.

I say this strange fact meets you on every hand. Go where you will, the monstrous marvel is before you. Men live here on earth as though they were to live here always. They lie down on their pillows at night as if they had never heard of a death-bed. They hurry forth to the activities of the day as if these beclouded skies were to bend over them forever. They abide in these frail tabernacles of clay as securely as if they were the dwelling-places of eternity. Surely all this is very wonderful. No uninspired philosophy can account for it. And this leads us, as the other and main point in the text, to consider:—

Secondly. *The divine explanation of this spiritual mystery.*

There is more in it than the natural (torpor of a hard heart and a sealed conscience, and a mind blinded and deafened and benumbed by sin. There is here some supernatural fascination, some infernal sorcery, some Satanic despotism.

“*A strong man keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace.*” So Christ Himself solves the dark mystery. And although the philosophy of this world laughs to scorn the thought of such Satanic influence, yet the Word of God everywhere affirms it, and our own observation and experience, and all the past history of the race, are at one in its demonstration. There are

hosts of mighty and malignant spirits abroad in the universe, to whose dire agency is to be ascribed all natural and moral evil. For unrevealed purposes, Divine Wisdom permits them to exercise fearful power on the earth. And the chief of that infernal host, the great arch-fiend, is denominated "The prince of the power of the air," "The god of this world, who blindeth the eyes of those who believe not," and worketh ever in the "hearts of the disobedient." And in perfect correspondence with all this is the representation of our text, "A strong man, armed, keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace."

How this terrible influence is produced is yet to us a mystery. The power which one spirit may have over another no human metaphysics can explain. The Bible itself does not account for, but only illustrates it. It repeatedly conveys the idea of the text, that between spirit and spirit there is just the relation of a house to its inhabitant. The Holy Ghost is said to dwell in the regenerate man as in a temple. And the glorified spirits in heaven are represented as worshiping in a temple which is itself the Divine Spirit, for God and the Lamb are the temple thereof.

Of course, all this is metaphor. But inspired metaphors are not rhetorical flowers nor sensational extravagances. They embody and exhibit great spiritual truths. And our text is not a fancy sketch, but the photograph of a terrible reality. The soul of every unregenerate man is a palace kept at peace under the despotism of a demon.

When it has been conquered by Christ, and regenerated by Divine Grace, it becomes again a temple

wherein the Holy Ghost dwells. And in Bible thought "a temple" is the grandest form of architecture. And to the divine mind a human spirit is "a temple," an immaterial building, better worthy than Solomon's magnificent sanctuary on Mount Zion, of God's own indwelling. How glorious such a soul was before the apostacy we may not conjecture, but as from the colossal *frusta* and fragments of the old Egyptian architecture we can form conceptions of the stupendous temples whereon the elder world worshiped, so may we judge of the spiritual. As we study humanity we find great thoughts, affections, imaginings, aspirations—shattered; indeed, mutilated; often misdirected; sometimes shamefully perverted and prostituted—nevertheless, even as moral and spiritual ruins, so huge, mighty, magnificent, that we feel that when primitively inspired, inbreathed by the Holy Ghost, the Divine One might fittingly be enshrined in it as a Deity, and abide in it as a Guest.

But alas! the glorious architecture has been shaken and shattered by moral earthquakes. The Divine Inhabitant has turned away from its fallen arches and dismantled chambers of imagery, to make his dwelling in holier spirits. And alas! too, fast on the footsteps of the departing Deity came this gigantic demon. And into those desolate chambers and pavilions he entered in ownership, and by the mysteries of infernal art he hath transfigured the moral architect and appointments. Dark and unseemly pictures, vessels and viands of ungodly revelry, ministrants of other forms and unheavenly faces, took the place of celestial and holy things in chamber and banquet hall. He drove out the angelic spirit of beauty and love, and filled it with scowling demons.

He fortified it with infernal munitions, and flung out black banners from its battlements, and dwells therein in unquestioned despotism. And behold, "The strong man keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace."

Now this, I say, is the awful explanation our text gives of the strange indifference of the carnal heart to all the momentous interests and realities of eternity! And therefore it is that we can never contemplate the condition of an unregenerate soul without a recoil of terror. ^xWe seem to stand in the presence of a mighty ~~x~~ creature of God, held in terrible bondage by the infernal destroyer.

The sorcerer's arts vary widely! The enchantment is sometimes mingled in sparkling cups, and sometimes breathed in triumphal music. And so the poor, fascinated soul will dream sometimes of pleasure, and sometimes of power, or of place, and sometimes the heart bounds with almost supernatural aspirations and ecstasies; but we feel that in every case it is the result of the demoniac incantations, and that the same mighty spirit that dared to battle with Omnipotence keeps his palace at peace. He colors these fading clouds of earth with a marvelous beauty, and he spreads over the higher spheres of immortality the dark curtains of sensualism, and his weird art blinds the eye to all the glorious trains that move behind the mortal haze, and deafens the ear to the great voices that speak from above. And it is the tread of his armed foot that re-echoes through the vaulted chambers, and the mandates of his despotism, loud in pavilion and banquet hall, that subdue the immortal victim into unresisting bondage. "The strong man keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace."

Now this is the Saviour's statement and explanation of a solemn fact, which we meet every day in our spheres either of observation or experience. We have no space left us now for its practical application. I can only hold up the dreadful picture, and beseech every impenitent and unregenerate man who hears me, to study it for himself, and take to heart its meaning. I do not address a thoughtless soul to-day, who has deliberately resolved to die in his present state of deep and dreadful insensibility. O, no! You are all thinking of other times and more convenient seasons, and hazarding all the tremendous interests of eternity on the wild chances of a future repentance. Accepting the blessed truth, that God is ever willing to accept and save you, and conscious of the glorious prerogative of a free will under his gracious Fatherhood, you regard yourselves as subject to no such despotic sorcery as the text describes, but altogether free and strong to turn away at any moment from these blandishments of sin, unto all the purity and peace and gladness of the children of God.

Now, if there be truth in the text, while on the part of God there is neither decree nor purpose hemming you in to destruction, but only the sincere wish and honest offering of a free salvation, yet in your own experience there is the fearful obstacle of the resisting Demon, who in despotism rules in the hearts of the disobedient. And to-day you may perceive, if you will, the pressure of his mighty bondage on all your immortal faculties and powers. Sure I am, in your own unaided strength you will find, even now, this strong man your master. You are like voyagers on a deep river, who, because of the smooth surface wherein the blue

heavens glass themselves, have no conception of the momentum of the seemingly tranquil flood. Believe me, you cannot fight this battle alone; for "you wrestle not with flesh and blood only, but with principalities and powers, and the rulers of darkness in this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places." And if you disbelieve all this, then we say, "*Go and try it for yourselves!*" I do not know with what chain your cruel master hath bound you; and be it what it may, I know that if you will, you can break it now and forever. You feel that you can, and God says that you can; but the question remains, *Will you?* WILL YOU? "Go," I say, "*and try it!*"

O, young man! you are giving yourself to intemperance, and to-night you will go from God's house to lift up the enchanting wine cup. Well, now, just as you lift it to your lip, and it sparkles to the brim, put forth your free might, and dash the goblet to the earth. Or, tempted by the golden mammon into ways of unrighteous gain, you will go forth to-morrow to defraud men in the market-place; now put forth all your natural strength, and trample the glittering bribe under your feet. Or you are setting your heart on the grand prizes of unsanctified ambition; and the great adversary, who caused to pass before the eye of Jesus all the glories of earthly empires, is filling your whole soul with aspirations for earth's palms of victory and songs of triumph. Now rise up in the grand freedom of your manhood, and cry in a like mastery with Christ—"Get thee hence, Satan!" O, go try this thing! Try it! And believe me, you will find it harder than you think. Yours will be the experience of the Indian warrior, who,

when first beholding the glancing rapids of Niagara, said he could float down the tide and play with the gleaming rainbows on the very death-curve; but who was borne resistlessly away by the flood, so that what should have been a shout of triumph came back only in a death-scream!

Alas! we tell you, and yonder poor, ruined victim of sin, once the idol of a happy household, now an outcast from all kindly sympathies, tells you, with an eloquence more convincing than an angel's, that Satan will overmatch your feeble strength in this great mortal struggle. And had we nothing else to tell you, no encouragement to offer, save your own unaided power whether to will or to do, we would in kindness leave you to dream out sin's short but brilliant dream. It would be wisely compassionate to pass by the immortal stronghold, and lift up no challenging cry at the portal, and leave the tyrant undisturbed in his despotism, if there were no mightier force than your own to be put forth in the conflict. (But, blessed be God, there is other encouragement! For this is indeed the other point of the parable we shall hereafter consider, and it gives to this terrible picture a wonderful beauty. For it tells you that though "this strong man, armed, keeps his palace in peace," yet there is "One stronger than he," who stands even now at the portal, lifting up His challenge, and waiting to deliver. O, this is what Jesus is! This is what Jesus does when He saves a poor sinner. And He is able, He is willing, He is waiting to save you. We tell you that unto you, it matters not what you are, what you have been—the coldest, the deadest, the veriest slave of evil habits, the foulest wreck of evil passions,

so sunken in the depths of guilt and pollution that human sympathies have all been turned away from you, and no visiting angel of love bends down at your threshold—yet we tell you that Christ Jesus offers Himself as your champion, armed and able to free you from thralldom. Yea, we tell you that from the first hour of this terrible bondage, during all the dark years of this despotism, this Almighty Deliverer hath stood at the door of the immortal palace, knocking for admission. He has knocked by every movement of Providence, by every dispensation of grace; in every sermon you ever heard; in every truth you have read about the way of salvation; in every sorrow you have ever felt; in every death-bed you have looked upon; in every tear you have wept; in every sting of conscience; in every bright hope withered; in every affliction that has wrung your heart; in every dark thought of death and the judgment and eternity; in every bright dream of the heavenly joy and glory—O! in all these—yea, in your whole experience of a darkly checkered, sadly changeful life, you have heard nothing else than this challenge of an Almighty Conqueror at the door of your heart, beseeching you to be loyal unto your own soul, unto your immortal self; only to open unto Him the door, that He may come in and do all the rest for you—deliver you by His omnipotent grace from all evil, and bestow upon you all good, and free you from all this infernal thrall, and “trample Satan shortly under his feet.”

This, this is the Gospel call. This, always and only. Such has it been when once, perhaps, a mother's voice told you the story of the Babe of Bethlehem and the

*Beloved, stand at the door, and knock;
If any man hear my voice*

Divine Man of Nazareth. And such is it to-day. You do not sit here in God's house to listen to human voices speaking about theology, or singing about heaven, but to listen to the challenge of One that cometh in arms, as a mighty Deliverer, "One who cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save."

And once more—and God only knows whether it be not the last plea of the gracious Saviour, ere He goes His way, and leaves you forever in your terrible bondage—once more, strong, distinct, tender, rises that beseeching voice of love, "*Open, open, open unto Me!*" O, admit Him! admit Him! and He will put forth His resistless strength, and tear the iron sceptre from the hand of the strong man, and break his awful rule, and drive out his infernal hosts, and cleanse the polluted palace; and there will be again heavenly pictures on its walls, and heavenly food upon its banquet-board; and beautiful angels will stand at its gates, and minister in its pavilions; and all its chambers will be flooded with celestial light and perfume and music, and again the glorious Jehovah will be enshrined in it as in a Temple, and dwell in it as in a Palace. But admit Him not, and the combined leagues of a universe cannot save you! For you will be given up to the destroyer—hopelessly "*delivered unto the will of them that hate you.*" And that immortal stronghold shall stand forever amid the sepulchres of the lost, and the hand of the strong man shall rule, and the foot of the strong man trample it forever!

and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he will walk with me."

STRANGERS IN THE EARTH.

"A Stranger and a Sojourner."—GENESIS XXIII. 4.

These are the titles which, in every dispensation of the Church, have been given to the children of God. The significance of the terms, however, is not, as we often think, in any peculiarity of their temporal condition, but in their character.

"Strangers" are not necessarily poor folks, and even in regard of this world, godliness has the advantage. David was a grand monarch in Jerusalem when he calls himself "a pilgrim and a stranger." And Abraham, when he thus spake of himself in the text, was dwelling in easy affluence in the promised land of Canaan. He had crossed the Jordan from the East with great flocks and herds, and all the retinue of a powerful noble; and so much had his wealth and power increased, that the sons of the heathen, Heth, answered to his speech in the text—"Hear us, my Lord; thou art a mighty prince among us." He was "a stranger and sojourner" mainly in his tastes and dispositions, because the abiding thought of his heart was, that earth was not his home; that he was looking for, and journeying unto "a city whose builder and maker was God." And so it is of all true believers. They may be rich

and powerful and honored in this world; nevertheless they feel that the world is not their home;—not that they despise it; they delight in it, rather, as a gift of God, and value it for its present uses. But the while God has promised and prepared for them a better world, and upon it are their affections fastened, and toward it their feet move as homeward-bound travelers.

Now let us consider this truth with a two-fold practical application—as exhortatory and consolatory.

First. We have here an *exhortation*.

A true Christian's life should be that of a stranger and sojourner; and we can apply the thought now very aptly, because the model of such a life passes every hour before us. Our city is full of "strangers and sojourners." From other cities—from distant States—from remote continents—from islands and empires in the very ends of the earth, they sojourn temporarily among us. (This sermon was delivered in Philadelphia during the Centennial Exhibition). This is a parable God is speaking to us. Let us lay it to heart.

Observe, then, first, and generally, that such persons are at once recognized as strangers and sojourners. The marks of nationality may be more or less prominent. Sometimes the foreigner wears a strange costume, and speaks a strange language; and sometimes these things are studiously avoided; he assumes our dress, converses in our dialect; nevertheless there is always something about him which bespeaks "the sojourner." And so should it be with the Christian. I do not mean that he should affect singularity, putting on an austere sanctimony, as if he thought himself better than others, and regarded the courtesies and amenities of social life

as a sinful, worldly conformity. Affectation is more ridiculous in religion than elsewhere, and the up-start adventurer who steals the title and assumes the airs of a foreign prince is no more contemptible than a pretentious Pharisee, who makes broad his phylacteries, and flaunts his self-righteous garments in streets and sanctuaries, to be seen of men. Nevertheless, a true Christian will very soon be known as a man who has not set his supreme affections on this world; and as he walks before the world, clothed with humility as a garment, and speaking some one of the dialects of the saints, and carrying the great principles of religion into all his earthly activities, all men will take knowledge of him, that he has been with Jesus, and is, at least in this sense, and so far, "a pilgrim and a stranger," looking for, and journeying unto "a city which hath foundations whose builder is God."

This is the text's broad, general lesson. But descending more to particulars, observe, secondly, that these peculiarities will be observable in all the common business of life. (Not, indeed, in any disregard of useful industries and occupation.) A wise foreigner, passing through a strange country, will make the best use of his time, mingling with its inhabitants, studying its institutions, observing its manners and customs, examining minutely its improvements in science and art, perhaps investing largely in its agricultural implements and mechanical machinery and scientific apparatus and many of its products and fabrics, ornamental and useful. He may for the time appear, more even than the native citizens, attentive to, and engrossed by such matters; nevertheless, every man who deals with him perceives

that his interest in them is that of a sojourner, who examines and purchases with a view to some use or enjoyment in his own distant land.

Now, just so should it be with the Christian. He will, indeed, even in regard of "things present" and secular, show himself particularly industrious and active, like the patriarch Abraham, busy with his flocks and herds; like the royal David, watchful of the temporal interests of his people and the revenues of his kingdom; and yet the world will take knowledge of the man, that in all this he is swayed by higher principles than those of mere expediency and law-honesty, or low, carnal thrift; that his overruling motive is to do good to men, and glorify God; and the end, even of his earthly industry, is "to lay up treasure in heaven." He has consecrated his worldly calling unto higher uses, and, though "diligent in business," he is the while "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Passing this, observe, thirdly, that these marks of a foreigner will be manifest in all the pleasures of life. A wise stranger in the land will not turn scornfully away from the social enjoyments of the people with whom, for a season, he sojourns. If they tender him hospitalities, he gracefully accepts them; if they afford him opportunity for fitting recreation and amusement, he improves and enjoys them; nevertheless, let him go where he will, we are all aware that the stronger and better feelings of his heart are far away over the waters, in the home of his kindred and the land of his birth. And just so is it with the Christian. He will not, indeed, either ignore or undervalue the earthly good things that surround him. He regards all his capacities

of enjoyment, and all their counterpart objects of gratification, as his Heavenly Father's good gifts to him, and would be ashamed of himself, as an ungrateful child, if, like a Pharisee or a Puritan, he turned scornfully away from them. He will, indeed, neither desire nor deserve to be slanderously called, like his genial Master, "a gluttonous man—a wine-bibber;" but will as little deserve or desire the unjust reproof of the austere John, "He neither eateth nor drinketh; behold! he hath a devil!" Truly Christlike in this, he will take delight in sharing the sinless pleasures of others, in blessing little children, in assisting at social festivals, yea, in "eating and drinking with publicans and sinners." And yet in all this grateful and genial enjoyment of every good thing God gives him, he will make manifest to the world that his greatest delight is in joys higher and heavenly, being ever mindful of, and preparing for "those everlasting pleasures that are at God's right hand."

Meantime, observe, fourthly, that a foreigner may be known by the opinions he forms and expresses of all things that surround him. Many such things, which to us, through custom and familiarity, seem proper and consistent and natural, will often strike him strangely. This point is finely illustrated in Oliver Goldsmith's "Citizen of the World." The work purports to be a series of letters written by a Chinese philosopher during his travels through Europe, wherein he is constantly expressing his amazement at many things he every day sees—as at the terrible war then in progress between the two mighty nations, England and France, for the possession of the distant, desolate province of Canada,

then inhabited only by savages; at the fact that the greatest reward a European monarch gave his successful soldier was a few feet of blue ribbon; that in France he found men knitting stockings, and women tilling the ground; that in England the fine gentleman was only a lay-figure for the hair-dresser or costumer; that in all countries alike, lawyers were encouraged and paid for fomenting strife, and quacks and charlatans for destroying health and life; that the marriage-feast was degraded into a boisterous revel, and the chamber of death darkened with hideous solemnities; and thus on through the whole range of social and religious life. And so, I doubt not, many things which to us seem natural and apt, strike these intelligent foreigners as inappropriate and absurd.

If we could read the epistles they write to their friends at home, or perceive the thoughts of their hearts as they go in and out among us, we should not always feel complimented. Indeed, we are ourselves conscious of many things preposterous or incongruous in our own manners and customs. There are absurdities in our ceremonies, monstrosities in our fashions, foolish things in our system of education, offensive things in our own forms of religion, dishonesties in our business, abominations in our politics, injustice in our jurisprudence, sophistries in our science, deformities in our art, extravagances in our literature, heresies in our faith, hypocrisy in our piety—many things, indeed, in all our varied spheres and scenes of life with which an intelligent sojourner might make himself merry, or work himself into indignation. Now all this illustrates the spiritual truth we are considering. In this regard

a Christian is a stranger on earth. If truly regenerated, his tastes, sentiments, and opinions have more or less become new. His true home is in heaven; and, like Paul's, his real citizenship is in heaven; and therefore, to a degree, at least, the things of this world should strike him as they would a visiting inhabitant of heaven.

Now follow out this thought for a moment. Just suppose a risen and glorified spirit should come back and visit us. How would some things in our daily lives impress him? Bring back Noah. And what would he think of the measure of Christian consecration in this nineteenth century? Why, methinks I hear him say, "I built a whole ark at my own expense of a hundred years of hard work and half a million of money." Bring back any one of the old Hebrew statesmen—Joseph, with his corn policy; Moses, with his constitutional law; David, with his imperial or international politics—and what would they think of our nominating conventions and political platforms? Bring back Daniel; introduce him to yonder complaining, murmuring, faint-hearted disciple, and methinks I hear him cry, "Why, the man is more afraid of the distant howl of an outlying wolf than I was of the gnashing fangs of a whole den of lions?" Bring back Simon Peter; take him to one of our summer prayer-meetings, and would he not exclaim, "Why, we did better than that even before the Holy Ghost was sent; for we were all with one accord, in one place, with the women and Mary?" Bring back Paul into our sanctuaries, to listen to one of our sermons twenty minutes long, addressed to the sensations, and would not his eyes flash as he remembered

his own experience on Mar's Hill, and in the judgment-hall of Agrippa.

Yea, bring back the risen spirit even of some beloved one who has only just left us—that child in its sweet beauty, that old man in his mature strength. Show them these bereaved mourners—that parent with a broken heart, that son or daughter who will not be comforted, and would not those blessed spirits be amazed? Would not their voices seem reproachful as they cried, “Why, what mean you by this unseemly grief? Are you sorrowful because we are in glory? Would you have us put off these white robes, these crowns of righteousness, and take up again the painful burdens of mortal life?”

Sure I am, many things seemly and seasonable to us would strike a redeemed spirit strangely, if permitted or constrained to visit us for a season; and so they ought to strike us, if “our conversation is in heaven,” for our home is as truly as theirs in that blessed land beyond the flood, and here upon the earth we are only “strangers and sojourners.”

Now this, I say, is the text's first use—furnishing an exhortation to a higher style and greater power in our spiritual life. The presence of these visitors from distant cities and foreign lands should be to us a parable, and our own acts and opinions should be analogous to those of these strangers. But it has another and no less important application. Let us consider it, then.

Secondly. *As a consolation.*

If we are “strangers and sojourners on earth,” then our better portion and grander heritage and home are in heaven, and, like the patriarchs, we should “look

for a city whose maker is God!" and, like the apostles, should rejoice to think that presently we shall be "absent from the body and present with the Lord."

There are, indeed, some very precious things on earth which we shall not find in heaven. We shall not have these old Bibles there, nor these prayer-meetings. We shall never sing these sweet hymns:—

"Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,"

"When I can read my title clear."

We shall not hear the Ten Commandments read, nor unite in the Lord's Prayer; for in all these there are sentiments expressed and emotions stirred which would be unbecoming, and indeed untruthful, in those spheres of higher life. Indeed, all these dear means of grace must be left behind, just as the Jews left the "manna" of the wilderness when they entered Canaan. And all these precious things of earth we ought to enjoy while we can.

There are certainly some exhibitions of the Divine attributes, such as long-suffering with sinners, and forbearance with only partly sanctified believers, which they never see in heaven; and as men leave their fair homes in the sunny Isles of Greece, and by the blue Italian seas, to traverse the burning sands of Syria, or the passes and precipices of the frozen Alps, so, I doubt not happy, spirits sometimes come from their heavenly homes to sit through chill nights in the shadows of Gethsemane, and bow the head through beclouded days on the rent rocks of Calvary. O, there is awfully sublime, moral scenery along our pilgrim-path to heaven! There are mighty mountains and terrible abysses and

old spiritual battle-fields, which, not to have visited and studied, will shame us when we get home to glory, just as a traveler from abroad would be ashamed not to have mused amid the death-dust of Marathon, or recoiled from the hot lava of Vesuvius, or been chilled under the awful shadows of Mount Blanc. He is surely a very foolish "citizen of heaven," who, sojourning on earth for a season, does not rejoice in opportunities to study its great moral wonders; and who would not indeed rein in for a little moment even his chariot of fire, and linger in solemn awe, where some Niagara of iniquity shakes the green earth, or some Alpine pinnacle of infidelity pierces the blue heavens, and would not delight to pluck some wonderful flower of grace, that, like the Arctic flora, blooms amid earth's Polar snows, and to watch the awful descent of an avalanche from some Alp of unbelief. Nevertheless, methinks the rein would soon be loosed again upon those flaming coursers, and the chariot of fire bear right onward the homeward-bound pilgrim.

These strangers and foreigners are thinking ever and most tenderly of their distant native lands. Of the dear doors that will open, and the loved voices that will welcome them, when, having accomplished the ends of their brief sojourn in those stranger-scenes, they cross yonder ocean, and cast anchor in distant harbors, and go ashore to their own cities. And herein they should be our models. Good as Christian life may be on the earth, yet there are better things in heaven. I am not thinking to discourse now on those transcendent differences. Enough for our present purpose is it, to remember that we have a better dwelling-place, and indeed our

only true Home, in Heaven—that our great Father hath prepared it with all His wisdom, and lavished upon it all His tenderness, and is fast gathering into it all our beloved ones, and will presently call us to go up and abide there forever.

This, then, is our text's second application as a thought of consolation. It will cheer us, amid the glooms of our grief, to feel that our sorrows are only the shadows of wild mountain-passes, through which lies the way of the homeward-bound pilgrim; and our earthly joys will be relished the more, because we know that they are flowers which fade only that the higher fruit-form may be developed more perfectly. For this we find to be true in our earthly experience before grace ripens into glory—even while in our pilgrim eye “the path of the just is as a shining light, shining more and more into the perfect day.” The picture is of one climbing an ever-brightening mountain. It may seem difficult and almost dark at first; but every moment improves it. A traveler, rising at early dawn to traverse an Alpine landscape, finds the air chill and the path in shadow; but as he gets into the uplands, and the morning light spreads and brightens, the breeze grows balmy, the shadows disappear, the dull gray along the Eastern horizon changes radiantly, like a kaleidoscope, into purple and violet and ruby and gold. And now things of beauty are seen which were hidden in the night. Fair flowers lift their cups along the wayside, and mountain-rills sparkle, and joyous birds flit through the green-wood, and sing amid the branches; and presently the whole landscape increases in breadth and in beauty; fair pastoral vales open through the passes,

and range upon range of mountain grandeur rise along the horizon. Silver lakes gleam out amid the hills, and vine-clad cottages are seen in wooded glens, and far away flame out in the rising sun the pinnacles of great cities and the pomp of glorious seas. And so, as he climbs higher, his journey itself waxes joyous, and his heart exults, and his feet bound, and his tongue sings, as his path brightens into the perfect day. Yes, thank God, the path is brightening, even amid this vanishing, earthly night. *But the night itself shall presently pass away forever!* And then all earthly images, even of inspiration, will seem false to the great truth. This fair world, these landscapes of beauty, these firmaments of glory, are really no more than the painted scenery—a curtain that falls between us and heaven—and as it shall presently be lifted and parted upon a city, and a firmament where no sun ever shines, but the face of God is the light thereof, then shall we understand better what is “a perfect day.”

And I say again, “Thank God we are approaching it. The journey is growing short. The home is nearer and nearer.” O God, give us the faith and hope and joy of these strangers within our gates. They sometimes seem to hear, even across these rolling seas, the beloved voices, and to see the fair homes in the old fatherland; and we should be more impatient than they, because the voices we hear are sweeter, and the homes we see brighter. O death! death! how it would lose all its terrors, if we would regard it rightly as only *God’s home-call to sojourners!* Only as yesterday we gathered, a little company of mourners, by a death-bed. The departing one was in life’s fairest morning, for the

blight had touched the blossom while the bright leaves were yet folded close to the tender heart. The struggle of that young life with the destroyer had been terrible, and we feared for the strength of her Christian faith in the final agony, and our hearts were utterly broken to think that one so dear to us was passing away forever! Then came the man of God, and bent to that ear, already deaf to our loving voices, and said, "Mary, is the Saviour still precious? Are you willing to depart?" And then, feeble indeed, for her mortal strength was gone, but O! how triumphant in its tone was her answer! "Did you say *Jesus*? Willing to depart? O, I shall be with Him!" Then her faded eye flashed with the first great rapture of eternal life, and her spirit sprang to immortality with the exulting whisper, "Home! *Home!* HOME!"

And ever since has death seemed to me only God's disguised, but loving angel, and the dark portal of the grave only the earthward side of the glorious pearl-gate, and the dying believer only a redeemed soul unmooring for eternity, to be henceforth a "priest," a "king," a "more than conqueror"—a child of God in a Heavenly Father's home, and no longer on earth "a stranger and sojourner."

CASTING SHADOWS.

"They brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them."—ACTS V. 15.

This is part of the record of the wonderful works of the apostles in the early Church. And whether or not, in this case, the shadow of Peter healed any sicknesses, the act here recorded shows that the multitude had been thoroughly convinced that he had power to work miracles. With all this we are not concerned now; but only with some simple moral lessons, which this text suggests, and may serve to illustrate.

If Peter's shadow, as he passed, healed the sick, it must have been by an involuntary influence, of which he himself was for the moment unconscious, and strikingly exemplifies the important truth, that we are all, in our daily lives, exerting such influences upon others. We are all casting shadows! The word "*shadow*" in the Bible is often used in this metaphorical sense. Sometimes it symbolizes *a blessing*, as "the shadow of the Almighty"; sometimes it signifies an affliction, as "the shadow of death."

In this sense, in one way or another, we all exert unconscious influence; *i. e.*, we all *cast shadows*. Even

in regard of common earthly life, we are doing this. Some men are always, without seeming effort or thought, making other people happy. Like the bride under the apple trees of the Canticles, we sit under their shadow with great delight; meet them where you will, and their smiling faces, their cheerful voices, the springing foot, the silent pressure of the hand, encourage and comfort, like the ripple of cool waters on the sultry day, like the voice of the nightingale in the dreary night.

But there are others whose very presence depresses and saddens us. Oliver Goldsmith's Mr. Croaker, whom Lord Lytton reproduced in Mr. Wormwood, is as truly a representative man as Bunyan's Christian Pilgrim. We meet such people every day, and they have always some new distress for us. Their sweetest smile is suggestive of the neuralgia, and their most cordial greeting depresses like a Boston east wind. They go home at night like an undertaker to a funeral, and children cease singing, and wives refrain from smiles. They go abroad in the morning, like a Scotch mist from the highlands, to drizzle discontent in the street and market-place. They enter the house of God to render its songs of praise requiems, and its oil of joy ice-water; and their religious light shines before men as heaven's sunshine through stained glass, and the priest at the shrine looks like a variegated ghost, and the reverent worshipers like brindled hobgoblins. A croaking raven is the device on their shields—a coffin, with cross-bones, the blazon on their banner.

And thus, even in our spheres of secular life, we affect one another. Our simple presence diffuses either gloom or gladness—some like bright palms beside a

fountain, and some like dark cypresses over a grave; yet all alike, and always "*casting shadows*." And even this is a most important lesson—our unconscious, but constant influence on the happiness of others. Would we might all learn it. Go back in thought, for a moment, to the times of this record. Behold! through the streets of Jerusalem are passing two men. One is Simon Peter, returning from the temple, and see how the eager multitude crowd upon his footsteps, blessing him as he goes, and filling all the air with hosannahs, until the darkest street through which he walks is brighter than at noonday, as if this old fisherman of Galilee were a very angel of God. But look again. Through another street is passing another man from the sacred presence. The priest has pronounced him "*a leper*;" and now, with his clothes rent and his head bare and his lip covered, he is on his way to the wilderness. And see! how all the multitude recoil from his presence, and the very beggar curses him for the shadow he casts by the way, crying, "Unclean!" "Unclean!" Let us, then, apply the parable, so that in our daily walk among men the world shall be more joyous for our presence, and the very shadows we cast render life more beautiful.

But the lesson of our text goes far beyond this. Our unconscious influence spreads into wider arenas, and rises into higher spheres. The magnetism and the glamour take hold on the immortal. Like the weird spectre of the Brocken, our shadows are projected, and become gigantic upon the very clouds of heaven. And in this reference the impressive and most solemn thought is, that our silent and insensible influence is the most

important and mighty. This, indeed, is the law of all forces, even the natural and material. Every child knows the old platitude—that God works out His grandest purposes by agents undemonstrative and imponderable. The earthquake and the hurricane and the lightning, which shake the mountains and convulse the heavens, are, in their wide and ultimate results, as nothing compared with attraction and caloric, whose very presence is often undetected, and whose whole power is insensible. And so it is with human influences, whether for good or for evil, and this for two reasons:—

1. Because our voluntary efforts are only occasional and interrupted, while our unconscious energy is operative and constant. We may speak but once in a day. We live every moment, just as a cloud in the sky may thunder only for an hour, but casts a shadow always. Meantime,

2. Our constant and silent energy is most expressive of our real character, and therefore comes most into the sphere of what we term *moral* influence, which is always the most important. For so it is always in God's operations. The material uses of things are as nothing to their moral uses. Physically, Mount Blanc shelters the Italian vineyards; and Niagara, as a water-power, might grind corn for giants; while in their moral functions, down through all the ages, they have been filling the world's heart with great thoughts of sublimity and beauty—stupendous symbols or hieroglyphs of eternity and God. *Materially* considered, a bird is a musical instrument, and a flower a vase of perfume; *morally*, they are both exquisite thoughts of God, realized and embodied. And therefore we say,

as alike most constant and mightiest, our unconscious and insensible influence immeasurably surpasses that which is voluntary and demonstrative. This, then, is our text's great lesson: that in every moment of our lives we are putting forth a tremendous moral power either for good or for evil.

Let us now consider a few of its practical applications. And,

First. It should impress us with a sense of the importance of human life. Life!—life in such a world as this!—a spirit passing, in view of the universe, from nothing to immortality; a being, made in the Divine Image, bound to eternity; ever radiating mighty influences, as a “morning star” shouting for joy in the firmament, or a “wandering star” bound unto the blackness of darkness forever. Life! human life! a link in a chain reaching from the dust to the Deity, whose vibration moves the universe! Ah me, what a power it is! I can scarcely wonder now that the Son of God became flesh; that, taking on Him this very life, He suffered and died, that He might redeem and sanctify such an influence, so that in all its progress and development it might be a savor of godliness, and not a shadow of death.

But beyond this, let this text teach us,

Secondly. That for even the unconscious influence of such a life we are solemnly responsible. We may think to evade this truth on the ground that the evil we do is unintentional. But apply this logic to mere physical evil; to the case of Solomon's lunatic, who, scattering firebrands, arrows, and death, said, “I am in sport.” Nay; apply it to the case of a man who

exerts no positive influence at all. See; he has gone forth in a summer day; he climbs a lofty mountain; his path winds along a sharp precipice. Weary with his walk, he casts himself for repose under a cool shade by the wayside. Presently a blind man passes by, feeling his way with his staff. He looks on him in silence, sees him approach the dizzy brink, knows that he is in mortal peril, but utters no warning; and now the blind man slides on the yielding verge, and there is a wild cry and a plunge, and he is dashed into a shapeless mass upon the rocks a thousand feet below. Now, what about that man? Will he say, "I am grieved at all this; I did not force him off; I was listening with joy to the wild birds that sang in the woodland when the accident happened?" But you cry, "Nay, but the man's blood is upon you! You murdered him!"

Alas! in a world like this, *just to do nothing* were to do terribly evil; but, then, in such a world, no man can do nothing. God must blot yonder sun out of heaven ere we can cease to cast shadows. By every word, look, breath, we put forth these insensible influences either for good or for evil. Our whole mortal life is embodied force. Nor, indeed, does the force cease even when death hath disembodied it.

O, that touching story of Joseph, who, when dying, "by faith gave commandment concerning his bones," exacting a solemn oath from the Israelites, that his body should be embalmed and kept unburied in their midst, and carried publicly with them when they went up to Canaan—and wherefore? Because he cared when or where his poor remains should mingle with the dust? Why, one would think he would have chosen to be

sepulchred in the Pyramids, with the Old Egyptian kings. No, no. His desire was, that his dead body should remain among them; that as a power for good he might still cast a shadow over them; that the counsels he had given them while he lived might be ever in their minds, and the prophecies he had uttered of that distant land of promise might be recalled to their memories centuries yet to come; that his words might breathe an insensible influence among them, ever magnified by the touching and resistless eloquence of death; that his very body, reminding Egyptian kings of his past services, might cast a protecting shadow over his own children's children.

Surely death does not destroy all this unconscious influence of human shadows. The old Greeks used to term the disembodied spirit "a saint"—a shadow—an invisible presence, ever haunting the spheres and scenes of its former life; and, though not in this sense, yet in all the realities of abiding influences, are the dead still with us? Is Lord Byron dead? Is Bonaparte dead? or Thomas Paine and Voltaire and Bolingbroke and Machiavel? and all those meaner men of infidelity and impurity who followed their march and kept step to their music—have they all gone from us forever? Do not their influences, their shades, their ghosts, yet stalk the earth, gibbering their old blasphemies in our halls of science and scenes of revelry?

And then, on the other hand, is John Calvin dead? is Martin Luther dead? and George Whitefield and John Wesley and Thomas Chalmers and Richard Baxter? Are such men dead? Why, when we sit in our libraries, is it not as if glorified spirits came,

moving in the air, casting blessed shadows over us? O, weary-hearted mourner, do not the shades of departed ones still glide through your chambers of imagery? Is not that child's sweet voice loud in the heart when the twilight deepens? Does not that mother's kiss still waken you in the brightening day-spring? Yes. Yet in all the power of insensible influences men never die. And thus, whether living or dying, *we* are putting forth powers which are tremendous, and so incurring responsibilities which are overwhelming. May God teach us that it is a solemn prerogative of man to move onward to the eternal world, like Peter in Jerusalem, "passing by—casting shadows."

And this truth, like all truths, should be practically powerful, either as a warning or an encouragement. To all workers of iniquity it should be a solemn warning. If a man could perish *alone* in his iniquity, then even self-destruction—this moral suicide of ungodliness—were not so terrible. But, alas! such suicide is never with an unshared poison-cup, but with an infectious pestilence; so that all who come near the man, every loving heart that sits in sympathy by his sick-bed, or weeps over his grave, is exposed to the contagion, and may share the awful death. See yonder proud apostle of infidelity, going down to mephitic caverns to find in developing protoplasm some substitute for God! If he were without personal influence, we might leave him undisturbed in his rapture that he thinks himself a beast. But, alas! he comes forth, filling all the chambers of purer life with a moral malaria. It pervades our literature. It poisons our

science. Young men come to our professional schools to take in the deadly virus till they regard it as a wise thing, and a manly, to despise their mother's Bible and blaspheme their father's God. And because of this do we hold a Christian public recreant to all its moral trusts, which applauds or welcomes the impure advent—yea, whose look of Christian pity does not deepen into an indignant frown, and whose hand of courteous welcome is not clinched in righteous wrath, when the insolent Atheist mouthes his foul blasphemies before Christian assemblies. Let him find his own brutal grave, if he will, amid fossilized monsters; but God forbid he should be suffered to lead better and nobler natures to perish with him in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. And so of all evil-doers. If the men whose daily lives are ungodly, the dishonest, the untruthful, the profligate and profane, were only shortening their own lives and imperiling their own immortality, the evil were not so terrible; but, alas! the while they are corrupting and endangering the whole life and soul of those with whom they associate, over young hearts and happy homes they are casting deadly shadows.

The old mad man of Sicily flung himself headlong into the crater of Etna, and men worshiped him as a god; but methinks if he had folded to his bosom a dear child when he took that terrible plunge, then the whole land would have execrated him as a devil. O ye men who will live without God and without hope in this world! you have near and dear friends, beloved parents and brethren and sisters and children, among whom you every day walk as mighty moral forces, radiating insensible influences. Beware how you lift up your

iniquities between God's glorious light and these hearts of love, "*casting shadows!*" "*casting shadows!*"

But this thought has another and a sweeter application. As we said, the word "shadow" is often metaphorical of blessings. "The shadow of a great rock in a weary land"—the shadow of green palms over sunny fountains—such shadows are "things of beauty and a joy forever;" and such, surely, seemed that of Peter in the streets of Jerusalem. And in this sense our text has encouragement and consolation to every true child of God. We cannot all, like Peter, heal the sick in the temple. But we can all, like him, cast healing shadows in the streets, so that, though on special occasions we can do no great work for God, we can every moment be glorifying His holy name, and blessing our fellow-men by our lives of humble piety. And this, we repeat, as it is the more constant, is, in the end, the more powerful. Mount Blanc does indeed tower to the skies as a monument for God; and Niagara does thunder a grand doxology unto God; but the myriad of lowly grasses that cover all the earth, and the song of birds, and the hum of joyous insects, making musical all the airs of heaven, speak more eloquently for God than all these giant wonders.

And so it is of Christian life. There is a religion of pomp and ceremony, which appears on great occasions and in consecrated places, to attract the multitude and astonish the natives; but it is a thing utterly weak and worthless when compared with that humble, practical, undemonstrative piety which makes itself manifest every day in the work-shop and counting-room and parlor and street, pervading, as a heavenly atmosphere, the whole

secular and social life. And the man who lives constantly to God in small things, doing his daily work unto God, and wearing his clothing unto God, and eating and drinking unto God, accepting all life's good things as a Heavenly Father's gifts, and all life's sorrows as that Father's loving chastening, living ever conscious of God's presence, and only careful for His approval—such a man, in the silent savor of his unpretending goodness, is a mighty giant when contrasted with the self-glorious soul, irrepressible on platforms, and inaugurative of all pious parades, one loving the chief seats in the synagogue, and to be called of men Rabbi, and ambitious to shout the great Hallel of the Passover, and blow ram's horns at Pentecost.

So Christ Himself teaches us. It was a little child He declared greatest in the heavenly kingdom. It was the unobserved disciple who ministered to the sick and gave meat to the hungry, and not the pretentious Pharisee who built the tombs of the prophets, that He pronounced blessed of His Father; and as He sat preaching His matchless sermon to the multitude on the Mount of Beatitudes, in the midst of the grandest creations of nature and of art—Hermon, sparkling with dew; Tabor, about to blaze with the glories of the transfiguration, and below him spreading the blue waves of Galilee; and beyond, Bashan, green with its towering oaks; and, farther away, awful Lebanon, crowned with grand cedars as a diadem—yet with His Divine eye ranging over all these splendid things, to search out the one most demonstrative of God's ineffable goodness, He did not point to the towering mountain, nor to the sparkling sea, nor even to the great sun shining in his

strength; but he bent down and plucked the humble flower, half hidden by the grasses at his feet, and as if it were of them all most eloquent for God, cried, "Consider the lilies how they grow."

And so, surely, it is in regard of all Christian influences. O! thou humble child of God, who in lowly walks and ways art diffusing sweet savors of goodness, whereby some orphan's faded eye is brightened, and some widow's sad heart blessed, you are doing more to honor your Lord than any pretentious Samson who, with the jaw-bone of an ass, routs a thousand Philistines.

May God teach us all this lesson: that Simon Peter did his mightiest work, both for man and for God, not when he walked on Galilee's stormy water, and wielded a glittering sword at the gate of Gethsemane, but when, returning to his humble home from his long day's labor in the courts of the Temple, his unconscious influence was "a savor of life" to dying men—just because *his shadow fell on them*.

SONGS IN THE NIGHT.

"None sayeth where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night."—JOB XXXV. 10.

This is part of Elihu's answer to Job's complaint that God did not relieve the oppressed, and he gives as the reason, that they did not apply to God in a proper spirit. We are not concerned at present with either the orator's philosophy or rhetoric; but only with the two practical truths of the text—the character of God and the conduct of men.

We have here first, God's character—"our Maker, who giveth songs in the night." The meaning of the metaphor is apparent. "*Night*" is the common emblem of affliction, and "*song*" is universally a symbol of gladness; and to say that "God gives songs in the night" is simply to say, God comforts in affliction. And this character, ascribed to Jehovah in the Book of Job, shows us how fully, even in their dim religious light, these early believers apprehended the great doctrine of redemption. The God of natural religion, as represented elsewhere in this very book, is in no way the consoler of men sorrowful because of sin. The guilty conscience gives to the very glories of the universe, like the fire-words on the Assyrian's wall, a

hidden meaning of evil. And the Creator walks through the world, speaking in the whirlwind, the earthquake, the thunder, coming not with "songs in the night," but with visions of the night, to perplex and terrify—"a spirit passing before us." And fear comes upon us, and trembling, and the hair of the flesh stands up, and there is a stillness and an image before us, and an awful voice saying, "Shall man be more just than his Maker?"

And it was only when seen in prophetic vision by Job, in the person of "the Redeemer, who was to stand upon the earth," blotting out men's iniquities, purifying their natures, opening to their ascending feet the glories of immortality, it was only then that he assumed to the heart, sorrowful in sin, the aspect of a Comforter, as "God, our Maker, giving songs in the night."

This, I say, is the character which the thought of redemption gave to Jehovah in all earlier dispensations, and more wonderfully does it seem His character, since personally in the Incarnation He stood upon the earth, for therein His mission was especially unto consolation. His first word unto the multitude was, "Blessed, blessed!" And at His every footstep songs of joy broke out in life's shadows. Blind eyes opened to gaze on Him in rapture. Sick men sprang from their couches to go after Him rejoicing. Mourners received back their dead in love's ineffable transport. Sin-sick souls cast off their iron fetters, and followed Him in the regeneration, trustful on earth, triumphant to glory. And thenceforth His precious titles have been, "Christ, the Saviour;" "God, our Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

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Meanwhile, beyond this fact of divine consolation, our text sets forth the philosophy of such consolation. Mark its phraseology, "Giveth songs in the night." God comes as an Almighty Comforter into this benighted world, and yet the night is not removed. No new sun, yea, not even new stars, are kindled in the firmament. The midnight-chill is still in the air, and its thick gloom on the landscape. But only in the heart and home of the sorrowful abide angels of peace, and break out voices of gladness. And this is ever God's law of consolation. (He removes not the affliction, but gives us grace to bear it in triumph. The poor man remains poor, blind, lame; the beloved dead sleep on in their graves; but as a mother to her suffering child, so a divine form comes, even nearer for the chamber's gloom, and the very midnight is sweeter than the morning, because "God, our Maker, giveth songs in the night.")

And herein we see how much higher and better are God's ways than our ways. We would have the night removed! But alas for our folly! Night is a great blessing—alike in the natural and the spiritual, it comes as a revealer. With a sun ever shining in the firmament, we should know nothing of the vastness and grandeur of the universe; and so it is of the spiritual. Even the great shadow which sin has cast over our race has brought divine glories, otherwise undreamed of, into the comprehension of all worlds. In the Atonement there is vouchsafed unto finite minds a glance beyond all God's natural attributes into the infinite tenderness of the divine affections. And the angels learned more of God amid the glooms of Gethsemane and Calvary

than from all the splendid systems of worlds that revolve round His throne.

Meanwhile, beyond this general thought, and considering only our own personal afflictions, we can perceive the same gracious truth. (They are just the discipline our fallen nature needs in preparation for heaven, and as we study more and more their true tendencies, and experience more and more their beneficent results, working within us higher developments of grace, and working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, we see God's purpose of love in allowing clouds to gather so thickly along the path of our pilgrimage, so that, even if a spirit, powerful to bring it to pass, should come offering to kindle a new Zion in our darkened firmament, we should say, "O, no, no; take not away my midnight, lest I lose sight of my stars;" and therefore, like Paul, we should glory in tribulations, as occasions wherein God reveals His lovelier attributes. Before the absolute God of nature, the Omnipotent and Omniscient Spirit, who makes the universe resplendent with His glories, poor, mortal creature as I am, as one too insignificant for His regards, or too sinful for His compassions, I should fall smitten and blinded in terror. But my faint heart grows strong, and my weeping eyes flash, and my faith rises into rapture, as He moves before me in this new manifestation of grace and gentleness. "God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

And this leads us to consider, secondly—*The conduct of man*. "None sayeth, Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night." They do not betake themselves to God thus revealed for consolation in their trials. There are some who ask not for God at all,

speculative or practical—atheists, who, in conscious fear of divine holiness and justice and truth, set themselves resolutely to disbelieve in the divine existence, and strangely choose to be creatures of chance, and slaves to inexorable fate, rather than the creatures of a personal God—the children of a Heavenly Father. So, instead of asking for God, they go groping amid old geologic ruins for some substitute for the Eternal One, crying into every skeleton and spectre, “Where is this monstrous thing, ‘force’ or ‘law,’ that hides itself in the night?”

And in this reference there is an undesigned, but withering irony in Job’s foregoing confession, “I said to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm thou art my mother and my sister.” (We suggest this as a proper text for Mr. Huxley’s next “lay-sermon” upon his gospel of filth and corruption.) And we leave the whole school to the raptures of such a brotherhood and sisterhood—to all the consolation, in coming trials, of the promise unto those who “honor such a father and mother,” to fill all the death-caverns of unbelief with the sibilation inspired by such a genesis. But be it our blessed privilege to honor a nobler Parentage, to cherish holier hopes and higher memories, and to go forth amid present glooms, crying, “Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?” Meanwhile, there are other men, who, though they do find a personal God in nature, yet seek Him not in revelation. But inasmuch as God in nature can seem only terrible to sinful creatures—an Almighty Spirit—unapproachable, unforgiving, inexorable, therefore while they feel after, and haply find Him who is not far from them—a God who maketh

wandering stars in the night, and scares with awful visions of the night, with the scenery of the Divine One when afar off on the stormy Tiberias, "*a Spirit*" passing by, yet only the more for the vision does the wild night seem terrible, and the affrighted soul cry out with fear, for He hath not the tender look and words of Jesus, "It is I, be not afraid;" and they do not know Him by that title, sweetest and dearest of all, "God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

Then there are others—and this is the class which our text especially reproves—who, accepting revelation, do not in loving faith seek this divine solace in affliction. Perhaps they forget God altogether, and seek for other comforters. Their cry is, "Where, tell me where is the man, the creature, the thing that will deliver?" Kindle some earthly light in this dreadful darkness. Is there night upon the nation, stagnation on her commerce, dissension in her counsels? then they cry, "Give us some new Daniel, to ponder the dream and read the interpretation." Is there night upon the churches? are her watchmen asleep, and her solemn feasts deserted? still their cry is unto the creature, "Bring us prophets with new visions, and bards with new songs." Is there night upon the household, sickness in the darkened chambers, beloved forms in the grave? then again they cry, "Bring us men of skill to master the disease—philosophers of immortality, to dispel with their logic the awful gloom of the grave." Is there night in the depths of the sore and suffering spirit? hath the blossom of earthly hope gone up as the dust? is the heart of love broken, as the golden bowl at the fountain? then the cry is again for some creature-consolation, "Give us

more of the world's riches and pleasure and glory and power." And alas for all this! these men do not perceive that things seen and temporal, so far from having any ministry of comfort, are themselves the very sources and instruments of our afflictions, so that all true consolation must come from above or beyond them, or be found only in soaring, like the eagle, from the torn and shattered nest into the serene heights of the firmament. All these created things have no light in themselves. They shine only with borrowed lustre. They may sparkle at mid-day, but grow cold and dark in the night. They make the happy happier, but cheer not the sorrowful. They may give us songs of sweetness and power in the cloudy noon-day, but it is only "God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

But the thought of the text goes further. Even when, in our frames of piety, we betake ourselves to God as the only great Consoler, our approaches are often in the wrong spirit. Perhaps we come in fear or distrust. We think of our own littleness and unworthiness, and of the infinite majesty and holiness of Jehovah, and as if shut away from His tender affections, cry, "Where is this all-glorious God, the maker of the universe?" And thus we come short of the text's blessed argument, that whatsoever is not too little for God to *make*, is not too little for Him to care for and comfort, and therefore cry not in filial confidence, "Where is God, my Maker?" Or we come only with remorseful and desponding confession, crying, We have sinned; we have done perversely; to us belongeth confusion." Or we come, as Job himself came elsewhere, with a self-righteous expiation, crying, "I have

sinned ; what shall I do unto Thee, O Thou preserver of man?" Or we come in the pitiful beggary of the prodigal younger son, saying, "Make us as hired servants," and not in the strong confidence of a child, crying, "Take me back to thy board and thy bosom." Or it may be even worse. We come with the selfish complaint of the elder brother, saying, "I will seek unto the Lord, who chastens me and gathered the deep night around me. Thou givest me no kid to make merry with my friends." Or perchance we come with short-sighted and sinful—though it be even apostolic—presumption, which, forgetting that God's thoughts are always higher than our thoughts, would dictate not only the kind and measure of blessing, but its *manner* of bestowment, and crying, "Let the thorn in the flesh depart from me," rather than, "Let thy grace be sufficient for me," so that not a few are inquiring, "O, where is the God who can change the night into morning?" And none sayeth, "Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

In short, our mistake is precisely that of the Uzites. We either do not seek for God at all, or we seek in a wrong spirit.

We come not up to our high privilege as children of God, casting all our cares on Him because He careth for us. Certainly, with such a Heavenly Father, no Christian heart should be overborne with sorrow. It is indeed a sad world at best, and its airs are chill, and its skies are darkened ; for this mortal life is no more than the night-watch of the immortal. But we should thank God even for the midnight, with its stars and its songs, for to the ear of faith the nightingale's lay is sweeter

than the sky-lark's warble, and to the heart of love, Gethsemane was brighter with its angel than Jerusalem with her kings; and if by reason of these thick shadows, we journey to Zion, keeping step only to sorrowful measures, it is just because, like the mourners in Uz, we lean on finite comforters, and ask not for "God, our Maker, who giveth songs in the night."

Every true child of God here to-day is as dear to Jehovah as were the old heroes of faith in whose behalf grace wrought such glorious miracles; as dear as Paul, as dear as John. And hark! how the Philippian dungeon resounds with glad singings at midnight, and the cold rock of Patmos re-echoes the very anthems of heaven. Surely our God is a comforter. There is no storm He cannot still. There is no cloud He cannot brighten. There is no thick gloom of grief which His presence will not gladden, and we shall not lament the darkness, if our Heavenly Father's smile of love cheers it, and shall not only endure the tribulation, but even glory in it, if we find in its experience "God, our Maker, who giveth songs in the night." And this is what our age wants. It is an era of cold, material, sceptical philosophy. We have quenched the fire in the bush, that we may achieve its botany; and we have classified the star of Bethlehem with the meteors, because of our astronomy; and would walk Zionward rather lighted by Gideon's lamps of conflict than cheered by David's harp of victory.

Our philosophy is digging down, that it may make broader the king's highway of holiness, so that distrustful Israel may march grandly, with the bleating of flocks and the lowing of herds, rather than like the ran-

somed and returning captives of Israel, with songs and everlasting joy upon her head. And our looking is for God, the awful spirit passing before us as a shadow, and not for "God, our Maker, who giveth songs in the night;" and thus we come short even of our present comfort, and what is worse, come short of all hopeful rapture; for though we have now no limits to consider it, yet this, after all, is the text's deeper significance. The essential thought in it is, that God is a song-giver. Here, indeed, He gives it in *the night*, but hereafter He will give it in *the day*. And what a glory it casts over all the blessed future! If these old songs be so sweet in our nights of mortal gloom, what shall be our rapture when God shall give us that "new song" in the full, cloudless, ineffable splendors of the eternal day?

O! blessed be God for this very "indescribability of heaven"—the inconceivable differences between the "things seen, which are temporal," and "the things unseen, that are eternal"—between the present flower of grace opening in the gloom, and the future fruit of grace opening in glory—between the poor, dusty, begrimed upholstery of the trampled *footstool*, and the unsullied, resplendent, uncreated regalia of the Throne! If it be thus a privilege, a blessing, a rapture, to sit here in our earthly Zion, even in the chill and shadow of mortal life, blending heart and voice in these songs of the sanctuary, what will be the immortal transport of the risen spirit, standing on the heavenly Mount Zion, and lifting up voice and heart with the hallelujah that, like the sound of many waters, swells round the Eternal Throne!

What, O what will be the thrilling, ever-deepening,

over-swelling ecstasy of the crowned conquerors of eternity, when under those skies which never know shadows, they cry, "We have found Him! We have found Him! God, our Creator, Redeemer, who giveth songs in the glorious day!" What, I say, will be that rapture, if it be so blessed even here, amid sin's chill winds and starless glooms, to cry, "*Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?*"

Ellen, Mich. 1874

THE TREASURES OF WISDOM.

"The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of Silver."—
PROVERBS III. 14.

We have here another of the most common and significant emblems of Scripture. True wisdom (by which Solomon always means godliness, or religion,) is compared to a treasure, and the man who has secured it, to a successful merchant. And this same comparison occurs frequently in these Scriptures, and is the ground of several of our Divine Lord's precious parables. And it is a comparison honorable alike to the two characters comprehended in it. In all time the true merchant has been a truly honored man.

Humanly and philosophically speaking, his business is the highest earthly secular occupation, because it is man's characteristic or specialty, a calling distinguishing the human from all other animal industry. Beasts, birds, insects, do almost all other things. Most trades are carried on, some professions practiced, by inferior animal races; kings, conquerors, fashionable men and fine ladies, hewers of wood and drawers of water, architects, sculptors, musicians; from the highest aristocracy to the lowest serfdom, human life finds its types and emblems in the lower races, which, guided only by

instinct, often surpass all the skill and science of the human intellect.

But among them all there is nothing like the merchant. Man is only the *trading animal*; commerce is his prerogative. The blazon of his trade or business or exchange is his patent of nobility. There is no distinction more honorable. There is no earthly title nobler than "a merchant." Of course, I use the term in the broad sense of the text as denoting the whole class of men who act as distributors between producers and consumers; and as such they are the controlling class in society—the chieftains and nobles of the later civilization. Without them, there could be no division of labor, and consequently no accumulation of capital, and therefore no education, no literature, no science, no fine art, no true civilization. The term "merchant" is altogether honorable and honored, and therefore, and as such, is aptly metaphorical of a true Christian. Consider very briefly some points of resemblance.

First. *The true merchant is a man of strong faith.*

Indeed, in regard of temporal things, he above all other men may be said "to walk by faith." His success demands often the present hazard of his all; and it is this fact that distinguishes the mere peddler or chapman from merchant princes. The *one* must be able to see and handle the things in which he deals. The *other* goes beyond them all, and transacts business in regard of matters remote in distance, and future in time. His barks are on the sea, and the sea is treacherous. His goods are consigned to men who may be plotting to defraud him. His ability to meet obligations depends on media of exchange, which some financial panic may

paralyze in a moment. Yea, his "walk by faith" goes far beyond this. His business extends practically to the very ends of the earth, to lands he has never seen, and with races of men with whom he has never mingled. He has never shivered amid Polar snows, nor fainted under tropical suns, and yet in those remote spheres he operates. His traders are carrying his gold into the cabins of the fur-hunters of Siberia. His barks, full of treasure, are moored among the spice islands, or fanning their way through unknown archipelagoes. His actual wealth is often in regions which he has never seen, and his hopes linked mainly with things far away and future.

He is, of necessity, a man of strong faith, of unflinching confidence both in God and in man, in the stability of God's physical laws, and the integrity of man's moral principles. And thus in this walk by faith he is a fit emblem of a Christian.

Secondly. *The true merchant is a man of great earnestness and activity.*

His faith is not an indolent trust, but an energizing principle. Other men may make progress by fits and starts of occasional industry, or even fold their hands in unconcern, while success is thrust upon them. But the true merchant must be ever vigilant and active. Like the manufacturer, he cannot be certain to find his business on the morning where he left it at night, nor can he, like the husbandman, be sure that his wealth is increasing while he slumbers. For him, with a business so extended, so complicated, so varied and delicate in its relations and dependencies, a scheming brain, a watchful eye, a strong heart, and a controlling will are

absolute essentials ; and herein he is also a fit emblem of a Christian.

Thirdly. *The true merchant is a man practically and pre-eminently useful.*

As we have just said, without him there could be no commerce, no negotiation between different producers ; no interchange of the great staples of different climes and distant continents. The true merchant is not a speculator, growing rich by gigantic frauds ; not a charlatan, dealing in worthless commodities. His wares are of real value—his labors sincere benefactions. Traced carefully back to their origin, and to mercantile enterprise under God, must be ascribed all real human progress, from the hut and hunting spear of their earlier barbarism to the palaces and emporiums of the last civilization. It is the merchant who has bridged the oceans and united continents ; covered the seas with sails and the land with machinery ; discovered new islands, explored old empires, and who to-day is doing more than all kings, conquerors, nobles, to put an end to war, oppression, superstition—elevating every tribe and type of life, and uniting all peoples and tribes of our race into one grand human brotherhood. In a word, the merchant is pre-eminently the useful man, and therefore peculiarly fit to emblemize the Christian.

We might multiply indefinitely the points of resemblance, but these are sufficient for our present purpose. Especially in these particulars must every Christian be like unto a merchantman, for,

First. *He must be a man of strong faith.* This is essentially and every way the foundation of his character. He must rely confidently for his salvation on

another, and live ever in reference to the far-away and invisible. He has never seen the absolute God; he has never seen even the incarnate Jesus. He has never seen one eternal reality. No angel has ever flung out his glory, either by a death-bed or in a grave. No cadence of the heavenly music has ever fallen on his ear. No palm of the immortal triumph ever flashed on his vision. He trusts his eternal all to the power and promise of one whose very being, it may be, a surrounding infidelity denies. As a trading citizen of Zion, he hath committed all his treasures to barks that are now outward bound to blessed islands that rise unseen in the far seas of eternity; all his grandest hopes are in eternity; his highest joys are in eternity; his ends and aims are in eternity; his immortal all hath been cast on one grand venture of faith. His very life is truly away from him—"hid with Christ in God." His life is preeminently "a walk by faith." Just like a merchant, is not he?

Secondly. *A Christian must be an active and earnest man.* That indolent reliance on Christ, which some men call *faith*, is a fearful delusion of the great adversary. While we can do nothing to merit salvation, yet we must do very much "to work out our salvation." This popular religion of sentiment and psalmody—a Sabbath matinee or sanctuary reunion, with its music and meditation relieving a week of worldliness, is no more practical piety than Jonah's gourd was a cedar of Lebanon. True piety is a consecration to God of our whole life in an earnest service. The truly godly man is, as the great end of life, doing God's business. A business like the merchant's, so broad in its reach, so

complex in its relations, so subject to adverse influences and unforeseen causes, that it requires all one's earnestness and industry to prosecute it successfully, and so the Bible exhorts him to give diligence, "to give *all diligence* to make his calling and election sure."

If a man desire the delight of poor, passive, indolent pleasure, he must seek it elsewhere than in the service of God. Butterflies are for flower-gardens, and owls for mid-day slumber in dim, religious caves; but for the singing bird there must be a gathering of daily food in the green wood, and for the eagle, the battling with the mighty wind rushing through heaven. The high calling of God in Christ Jesus is not a lullaby over a cradle, but a great voice out of heaven, saying, "Come up hither." It requires energy, ardor—a sagacity as to opportunities—a strength as to instrumentalities; a sleepless eye, a strong arm, a scheming brain, and a brave spirit to do well this immortal business, and a Christian's life is crowded with big and busy enterprise. Just like a merchant, is he not?

Thirdly. *A Christian must be a useful man.*

I mean practically useful in regard of his fellow-men. This we have seen to be the grand quality of the merchant—while accumulating wealth for himself, he is at the same time the world's great benefactor; helping the producer to sell, and the consumer to buy, and thus adjusting and moving all the forms and forces of our highest civilization. And in this especially a Christian is like him. What distinguishes Christianity from all false religions is its practical usefulness. Its progress down through the ages is as distinctly and radiantly marked as the course of a great river through a broad

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and blasted Sahara, by the green fields and growing forests, and blessed homes and beautiful hamlets, and magnificent cities that ever rise along its borders. And what distinguishes a sincere Christian alike from the openly ungodly man and the pretentious hypocrite, is his active usefulness, his practical benevolence. The law of his life is that of his Master, "not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and the strength and stature of his own spiritual life are measured by the Master's standard, "He that will be chief among you, let him be your servant." And the words of the judgment, as set forth by Christ himself, are not to be for the sermons we preached, and the Psalms we sung, and the martyrdoms we suffered, outward, perchance, in an ostentatious demonstration of godliness, but as manifesting a surer and sincerer religious principle; for the food and clothing wherewith we relieved human want, and the humble offices of love with which we consoled human suffering.

The mission of Christ to this world was not only to bring man, *after death*, to a heavenly paradise, but to restore to him, even *before death*, the old earthly paradise; and when the Gospel shall have had free course and glory in its final consummation, when redeemed in the temporal, as well as in the immortal, the trampled footstool shall resume its primal beauty, as "a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness;" all its wildernesses shall rejoice, and all its deserts blossom as the rose, and every home shall be a princely palace, and every garment an imperial robe, and every redeemed man a king and priest unto God, even in this earthly temple. And as a fellow-worker with God in that beneficent purpose, every individual Christian is a practical

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benefactor, not a strong swimmer in a stormy sea escaping from shipwreck, but a mariner manning a life-boat to take off the lost. In regard of all human interests, temporal as well as spiritual, approving himself, beyond all kings and conquerors, all philosophers and scientists, all patriots and philanthropists, the race's grand benefactor. Just like a merchant, is not he?

But we are not to forget that, while thus beneficent to other men, a Christian, like a merchant, is above all, and ineffably, benefiting himself. This, indeed, is the main truth set forth in the emblem. Mark the language, "The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver." It is implied here, that this trading of the merchant in earthly products is good, because profitable. But the Christian's exchanging of temporal for eternal things is affirmed to be obviously better, because ineffably more profitable. The commercial function exhibited in the text is especially that of the buyer, buying advantageously, and thus growing rich by his commerce; and such spiritual commerce is shown to be better than all temporal commerce.

1st. Because of the security of the transaction. All material commerce is manifestly with a hazard. Its ships are afloat on treacherous seas, its goods are stored in consumable warehouses, its assets are in the hands of uncertain debtors, its liabilities under control of unmerciful creditors; and so let the merchant be prudent and active and shrewd as he may, the next sweep of the financial storm may leave his bark a dismantled wreck upon the waters. But not so of the spiritual. The Christian's trust is in nothing finite, but in the living God. His bark cannot founder, for Christ sails with

him. Thieves cannot steal his treasure, for it is laid up in heaven. O no, no! The merchandise of wisdom is with no possibility of disaster, and therefore it is incomparably "better than the merchandise of silver."

Meantime, it is better, secondly, because the treasure it secures is infinitely more valuable. This, indeed, is the great truth of the whole passage. We have here a most beautiful climax of all earth's rarest and richest things. Silver, gold, rubies, all in their rarest purity and richest abundance, are declared to be of inferior value. Yea, the inspired penman affirms that "all things the human heart can desire are not to be compared with his." And if you will remember that this is the testimony, not of some poor, unsuccessful man, but of Solomon—of Solomon, too, at a period of his experience when he had tested, as no other man ever did, the worth of all earthly things—not the utterance of one who, disappointed in his struggle for riches, pleasure, honor, turns in melancholy misanthropy away, to rail at the world, and call it hard names, and scold from a hermit's cell, or a priest's pulpit; but of a crowned king in a palace, on a throne, around whom the world delighted to gather all the prizes of life's mightiest triumphs, then you will take his testimony as demonstrated, that the treasure secured by Christian life is better than all the results of an earthly commerce.

Indeed, this truth needs no argument. Its demonstration is everywhere around you. No great merchant-prince of the earth to-day is satisfied with his gains, and the eagerness with which he still pursues this earthly traffic is in proof that "he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver." We are not here to prove, but

only to proclaim and apply this inspired declaration, "This merchandise of true wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver." And the application is an exhortation to be earnest in the merchandise. O, how these merchants toil! The picture on our convass is "of men buying commodities in an oriental market-place," exactly the picture Isaiah wrought out more elaborately two centuries afterward, when he cried, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"—a simple commercial scene in those earlier times; a ship moored by the water-side, weighted with foreign commodities, and the voice of the shipper inviting traders to approach and purchase his most précieux goods. Such was the custom even of European traffic only two centuries ago. The London tradesman sold his goods after the manner of a modern country fair. The voice of the crier saluted every passer-by with a reference to his supposed want. "What do you lack? come here and find it. Little child, here are fine toys for you. Fair youth, here are rich dresses and bright jewels. Noble sir, here are rare equipages and the richest wines. Beautiful lady, here are the costliest adornments of furniture and bijouterie for your person and palace," and so on through the whole catalogue of rare and foreign commodities.

Such is the picture of our text. Wisdom is offering to all traders her rarest treasures; and the divine assurance is, that "they are better than silver." Consider solemnly our emblem. May God pour light through the transparency with a meaning of heaven! O what things of unspeakable price are to be secured in this merchandise of wisdom! O, thou laughing child, here

are implements of pleasure that do not break like wooden toys, nor burst like bubbles. O, joyous youth, here are rich robes and sparkling jewels which thieves do not steal, and moths corrupt not. O, noble men and women, here are magnificent equipages which do not dash you to the earth, and adornments that shall not be burned to ashes in the fires of the judgment. "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread?" "Ho, every one that thirsteth! come ye to the waters." "For the merchandise of wisdom is better than that of silver."

This is just the way in which Christ Himself offered salvation in those glorious parables of "the pearl of great price" and "the hid treasure." The wise merchant, exchanging poor earthly commodities for the "treasures in heaven," "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

"Treasures—treasures in heaven!" Hear ye that, O poor, mortal man, whose fairest things on earth these thieves are stealing, these fires consuming!

"Treasures in heaven!" Treasures for the body! Is thine eye blind? Is thine ear deaf? Is thy flesh wasted with disease and pain? O, then, it is only to fall asleep, at eventide, in the shadow of the grave, and in yonder sphere of a higher life, amid scenes of ineffable perfectness and beauty, "thou shalt wake up in the very likeness of Christ, satisfied forever."

Treasures in heaven for the intellect. Is your mind uncultured, and your thoughts feeble? Then yonder, as a child at the great Father's feet, you shall hear lessons of infinite wisdom, such as no mortal ever learned, "and know as you are known," and be satisfied.

Treasures in heaven for the heart. Have you lost friends? Is your home forlorn, and your life desolate, because of forms, words, footsteps, that return no more? Then look up from the grave's black shadows, to the radiant shapes that go by, behind the half-parted veil. You can almost see the beloved forms—almost hear the dear voices. And when that veil parts, and those clouds dissolve, ye shall walk with them in white robes, and be satisfied.

"Treasures in heaven." God alone can tell us what it means, and He has told us. Behold our simple emblem—a mighty market-place, and "a merchandise better than the merchandise of silver." Yes, and Christ has told us even better in His blessed parable of the pearl. Behold that wise, spiritual merchant. He had heard of a jewel of inestimable price offered on sale in a distant emporium, and he sold his poor, pitiful earthly all, and went forth to obtain it. He weighed anchor from the shores of a sinful life, and stood out for eternity. At first view, it may be, the venture seems foolish, and as we see that mortal bark tossed by wind and waves, yea, sometimes fearfully laboring with tempest, as the lightnings glare and the hurricanes roar, our hearts sadden, as for an imperiled voyager, and we lift up our voices in recall, and cry, "Come back! O! come back again!"

But the scene changes. We look again, and, behold! the battered bark has crossed the ocean, and there is a vision of blessed islands reposing in eternal sunshine; and there are rare trees of fadeless green, and flashing palaces of immortal life, and we hear words of joyous welcome, and a cry of exulting triumph as the adven-

turous bark casts anchor for eternity. Like an angel dream of heaven, it rose upon my vision, and then it faded away. But as I turned me to this poor mortal shore again, to the smaller and meaner things of this carnal world—this sinful life—I said, “I will go after; I will see what this great thing meaneth.” Let other men load their poor barks with stubble and coal and clay, and go trading along these mortal shores for silver that perishes; but for me, I have heard of islands of the blest that rise far away in the boundless seas; I have heard of “a pearl of great price,” so large, so lustrous, so ineffably pure, precious, perfect, that its price is beyond the ransom of an empire—of a universe; a pearl that on the brow of a risen spirit will make heaven more glorious; a pearl that may be sought—may be won; and I will seek it, and sell all and buy it. I will trade no longer with the sellers of dust and ashes; I will have traffic with no meaner commodities than divine grace here, and divine glory hereafter. O, our bark is on the sea, and our sails unfolding to the heavenly wind. “Come with us, *come with us*, and we will do you good.”

THE GREAT WATCHWORD.

"Go Forward!" —EXODUS XIV. 15.

This is the great Christian watchword—the general order of the Head of the militant Church, "*Go forward! Advance the whole line!*" You remember the connection:—Israel was encamped before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon. The tribes had been commanded to turn aside from the great eastern road which rounded the extremity of the sea, and to make their way southward, and encamp on the shore. Here, resting for a little from the excitement and toil of their departure from Egypt, they were appalled by the rumor that Pharaoh was advancing against them with his whole army. Presently the rumor grew into certainty. Behold! on the horizon's verge, line after line—horsemen and chariots, the strength and glory of the Egyptian hosts were marching hard after them. And now their destruction seems inevitable. Before them spreads the impassable sea; behind them the all-conquering enemy. To remain where they were was to be cut to pieces. To move either way was only to rush upon destruction. And yet just then came the command, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."

Now you are all prepared to regard the Exodus as a type of spiritual life—either in the individual Christian or the collective Church ; and if so, then the text is our great Captain's mandate to all believers on earth, "Go forward!"

On this theme we purpose no more than a few desultory observations. I need not insist on its importance ; all men are convinced of it. It is even now the great law of all noble life. No matter what or where a man is, his watchword is still, "Go forward !" Though the sea be white before the imperiled bark, though the dark gulf yawn before the headlong train, still the inexorable mandate is, "Loose the brakes ! Let on steam ! *Progress ! progress !*"

Now our text furnishes some of God's own thoughts in regard to this matter. All spiritual progress—indeed, all true human progress—is seen here to depend on a few plain and simple conditions. There must be a worthy object ; there must be fitting energy ; there must be an earnest movement ; and it must be against seeming obstacles, and in accordance with Divine laws. Without these there may be agitation, excitement, locomotion, but it will be all only a useless stroll on the land—an aimless drift on the water—the disastrous tossing of a ship on stormy billows without compass or chart. By these both the degree and the value of all progress is measured, and on them depends—

(a) They are measured by the object. A low aim produces only an inferior development. If wealth be the leading thought, there will be only material progress. But if wisdom be the aim, there will be true mental progress. The man seeking pleasure is descend-

ing to a swine, while the man seeking knowledge is ascending to a spirit.

(b) They are measured by the energy. The speed of a train is as the power of the engine, and while drowsy weakness is girding on armor, impetuous strength is glorified with the garlands of victory.

(c) They depend on obedience to a Divine direction. No true and lasting melioration is possible without either a Divine precept or Divine power. With only his own energies a man may travel two-score miles a day, but if he will work with God's elements he can traverse a thousand. With his own strength he may lift two cubic feet of granite; aided by the natural powers of God, he can cast an Alpine mountain into the depth of the sea. Moreover, all lasting progress must be under Divine direction, and without this, human history gives no encouragement to the aspiring. Left only to any principle or law of natural development, though there may be immense motion and occasional advance, there will be no real, lasting progress. For a thousand years, apart from Christianity, there has been no improvement on the earth. The splendid civilizations of India and Egypt and Greece and Rome have passed away, and of their kind nothing better has arisen.

Nor, indeed, if you regard man, apart from God, as a mere mortal, is any thing better desirable. If we altogether perish at death, then the Sybarite's rose-couch and the Assyrian's banquets are the highest triumphs of genius—the true "*summum bonum*," or chief end of man. Vastly happier is the primitive gorilla, feasting and gibbering amid the flowers and fruits of the luxu-

rious and delicious tropical summer, with no accusing conscience, and no knowledge of God, than the derivative, scientific gorilla, toiling in dark, old geologic caverns, and striving to expel from his chambers of imagery the phantom of a personal and all-terrible God! If there be no God, and man be not immortal, then the Epicureans were the truest and profoundest philosophers. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

But as there *is* a God, and man is immortal, all valuable progress must be under the Divine direction. In the case presented in our text—the grand Hebrew exodus—without this all their labor had been a failure. If, as seemed wisest to human reason, instead of encamping beside the Red Sea at all, they had hurried forward along the straight and short northern road to the Sinai Peninsula, then the Egyptians would have overtaken them in the open field, and either put them to the sword or carried them back to captivity, and the result of that strange detour to the south is in proof that the seeming foolishness of God is wiser than men, for the very sea into which it brought their recoiling feet was God's chosen instrument for destroying their enemies. And so it is ever. As all natural progress is by Divine aid, so all spiritual progress is under Divine direction. God's commands may seem to us unwise, and we may think we can improve them. So we mingle carnal philosophy with the Divine word, thinking to grow graces in the individual by some new appliance of a higher, hot-bed Christian life, or to edify the Church by the force of new machinery, or the attraction of meretricious ornament. But we shall lament our mistake at the last. Grace, grown in metaphysical

warmth and daylight, will have little heavenly flavor; and a popularized Gospel will be only shorn of its strength and abridged of its glory. God's exodus to Canaan is not with brave ships in the Red Sea, and grand railroads through the desert; and all true religious advance must be a pilgrimage, at once unphilosophic and along the seemingly unpromising way, in which the Divine mandate was, "Go forward."

(d) Observe, again, that all such progress must be in the midst of, and positively by means of great apparent obstacles. In the case of Israel, that broad, deep sea seemed impassable, and yet right through it lay their path, and by means of it they triumphed. And so it is ever. This globe, once a mass of molten granite, now blooms like a garden, and shows like a fair palace of life only as the result of successive geologic convulsions. All its exquisite flora spring from the fierce antagonisms that threatened death to the seed—the grand old woods that crown the mountains as a diadem are lifted up only because the sharp chemistries of the soil corroded acorns and cones, and the storms of heaven strove to blight the springing germs, and cast the stems down to destruction—and just such are the conditions of all spiritual development.

1. In regard of personal Christian character. Sorrow, suffering, want, even sore temptations, yea, even the law of the carnal in conflict with the higher spiritual life, and all the infernal forces, are only forms of antagonism whose end is development.

2. And thus, too, in regard of the whole Church of Christ. In old time the prejudices and passions of the Pagan world, the pilgrimage of patriarchs, the persecu-

tion of prophets, the captivity and martyrdom of the saints of God ; and in our own times, all this worldly opposition, this array of science against faith, this philosophic scorn and popular slight of the more solemn truths of the Gospel, are only so many forces, which, like the chemistries of the soil and the dynamics of the atmosphere, are giving a firmer root and a stauncher trunk to the great tree of God, the mighty Aloe of the ages. And with all these must Christian life do battle. We may think to advance faster by gracefully yielding to the adverse currents, but in the end our experience will be like that of the unadvised helmsman on the Arctic Seas. The old navigator placed him for one watch at the wheel, calling him to keep his eye fixed on the north star, and steer steadily toward it. But as he seemed to come no nearer to it after half a night's sail, he put to his helm hard aweather, and as the vessel fell off her true course, and the steadfast cynosure appeared, now right abeam and presently full astern of him, in joy of his seeming progress he cried, "Come, old gentleman, I have got by that star ; go show me another one."

Yes, all movement which is not steadfastly in the Divine direction is only a-stern to disgrace or a-lee to destruction. No man will question this who for twenty years has watched the Christian Church, and seen the upshot of all new measures and noisy machinery introduced as "modern improvements" into the household of faith, or who observes every day the differences between a mistaken zeal in religion, burning brightly at first, but presently dying away into ashes, and the true spirit of piety, which is content to walk humbly in the path of duty, and remains constant through all tempta-

tions and trials. We may find fault with God's manner of doing things, and suggest alterations and improvements, but we shall perceive our mistake in the end, as did the Israelites, who shrank at first from the Red Sea as from a yawning grave, but found it presently a sepulchre only for their foes, but for themselves a crystal door into the safe path toward their glorious Canaan; and when they stood on the far shore, they filled all the air with triumphant praise of the wiser Jehovah, whose merciful, though mysterious command was, "Go forward!"

Now, such as gathered from the exodus are the conditions of all true progress. And this leads us to consider the *nature* of such progress. And this is altogether apparent. It is simply an increase in all true Christian graces. (Here, as elsewhere, "the kingdom of God comes not with observation.") The outward pomp and show and circumstances of Israel were perhaps not even as great when they pitched their camp by the Jordan, in full view of the Promised Land, as when they shouted in triumph on the Red Sea's shore. And yet in all those long years of exodus they were learning more and more about God, and becoming better and better prepared for the glorious inheritance of Canaan. And so it is in things spiritual. (True progress is measured, not by outward condition, but by inward character.) King David was a godlier man when he put on sackcloth, and bowed his sorrowful face to the earth, than when, clothed in fine linen, he danced before the Lord with all his might. And Gideon's host of thirty thousand warriors beside the bright well of Harod was of less account with God than his three hundred brave men in the passes of Jordan.

In any real progress, whether of an individual or of the Church, all true graces will be in constant development. Faith will be increasing in its strength, and hope in its steadfastness, and love in its fervors. Humility will be striking its roots deeper, and trust in God lifting its clinging branches higher. Conscience will be tenderer, and confidence more filial, and knowledge profounder, and consecration more perfect. The peace of God will flow as a river, in ever-deepening channels, and good-will to men will be more and more manifest as a richer husbandry along the ever-widening current. And the world will perceive in the whole life a loftier justice, and a severer temperance, and a serener reliance, and a more patient long-suffering; toward man the outflow of a more earnest benevolence, and toward God the up-spring of a more entire consecration. So that under this Divine law of progress the individual Christian will exhibit more and more the excellencies of the perfect man in Christ Jesus; and the collective Church assume more and more the meek and gentle beauty of the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

In short, genuine spiritual progress is like the development of a heavenly tree—manifest not so much in the exuberance of leaves as in the strength of the branches and the richness of the fruit; or like the profluence of a river—not in the noisy rush and roar of its rapids, but in the depth and breadth of its everlasting channels. A progress—not in the following the banner of philosophic chieftainship, but in humble obedience to the Divine mandate, which said, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."

Now this leads us to consider *the motives* to such a

progress. And they are all included in the thought that such is God's law. The text is not an entreaty, nor merely an encouragement, nor an exhortation. It is a positive command. It is a law of God even in regard to our natural life. It is a Divine precept written on all creation, and on every man's conscience. We live in conditions where every thing within and around us cries, "Go forward!" We are abroad in a universe where all true life does go forward; where human art, literature, science, commerce, government, civilization, are in the excitement of progress; where all that lifts man in his complex social economy above the brute is the result of a fiery impulse within all aspiring spirits, driving the true man away from all good things possessed unto loftier and better things hoped for. And for a man spiritually to stand still here, in his unbelief, is only to ensure the fate of the infidel lord of Samaria, whom the rushing multitude trampled to death in the gate of the city.

This is God's revealed law in regard of the higher life. The Bible has no record of any lazy saint; *i. e.*, of any believer who gave all the energies of an earnest life to mammon, and worshiped God only on Sabbaths-days, or when asleep. Abraham went forward; and Moses and Joshua went forward; all the prophets and apostles went forward. True, indeed, David and Peter seem at first exceptions, and to have come to a standstill; but they did not. Theirs was no imbecile paralysis, but a terrible downfall, as of a spiritual athlete stumbling in the race and dashed headlong to the earth, but the next moment up-springing, all bemired, indeed, and bleed-

ing, yet in penitential faith and love pressing more earnestly on in the race of immortals.

The race with immortals! Surely in that favorite figure Paul settles forever the question of perfect sanctification, or no further spiritual progress on earth. You see a course stretching away and upward from these mortal spheres to the very gate of heaven, and all the galleries of the sky are crowded with glorified beings watching the struggling combatants. And there—see! in the van, far beyond all others—close, indeed, to the goal, with his outstretched hand almost grasping the prize—see that ardent apostle, still with unabated zeal, with bounds mightier even than at first, pressing toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God. Surely from all the storied past the voices of the mighty dead cry aloud unto all flagging zeal and all dreaming faith, “Go forward!”

Meantime, we have, as well, great voices out of heaven crying, “Come up hither!” “Excelsior!” This law of God, like all His laws, offers to the obedient a large recompense of reward. Though not for our works, yet according to our work, will be the beauty and glory of the heavenly prizes. What will be the immortal condition of this modern fashionable, artistic, sentimental, silver-slipped pietism we are not told. French theologians say that “all good people in New York *hope to go to Paris when they die!*” And one meets, every bright Sabbath morning, scores of professing Christians returning from the sanctuary, whose highest aspirations would be satisfied with an immortality of Parisian millinery and music. They will sleep at the foot of Jacob’s ladder, and dream sweet dreams about heaven; but as

for climbing, that is another thing. They are waiting for the horses and chariot of fire. But unlike all this, before every brave, aspiring child of God rise up, as incentives to progress, all the ineffable "things to come," in all their immense differences of glory; and every sin conquered, and every grace cultured, adds a gem to the diadem, a city to the kingdom.

Meantime, as the strongest motive to this progress, our text urges the truth of Divine aid in going forward! If a man stands still in his Christian course, the God with whom he should walk will surely walk away from him. Had Israel disobeyed this mandate, they would have been abandoned by the advancing Shechinah, and utterly destroyed by the Egyptians! The Divine command was to go forward; and right forward they went—seemingly only to be drowned in stormy waters, but really to find those waters rolled away and lifted up as a crystal wall at their side, and presently poured back as a devouring flood upon their haughty oppressors! And thenceforth, so long as they followed that all-glorious cloud, their exodus seemed rather the march of a triumph than the press of a battle. And so is it ever. So long as an individual Christian, or the universal Church—faithless of Divine aid, and fearful of infidel opposition—stands still, they stand hopelessly imperiled. But if they will only rise up and go steadily forward in their grand, prescribed practical Christian work, leaving Almighty God to settle this matter with the Egyptians of infidelity—then will He roll His great waters over the blaspheming host, and the stars of an infidel Astronomy will fight against Sisera, and the rock of atheistic Geology give forth the living waters, and the whole

motley hordes of unbelief be driven back, like the Moabites and Midianites, before the outflaming presence of Jehovah. And more blessed a thousand times than the song of an angel, lulling to sweet dreams in tents pitched under green palms, will prove that great, stern voice out of heaven, crying, "Go forward!"

This is the text's simple, yet all-important truth. Would that we might all learn it; for surely, as never before, do we need it just now. The grand Catholic Christian Church needs it! We want a stronger faith in our glorious Jehovah. Twelve separate tribes, and each a powerful tribe, under the guide and guard of Omnipotence, with every divine attribute pledged to carry us triumphantly over all obstacles, through all conflicts, against all human and infernal foes, and which from Abraham's time to our own has never failed to keep faithful every covenant. And yet we, ever stopping at Pi-hahiroth, to build philosophic rafts to get over the sea; or even worse, turning back from the very borders of Canaan, in terror of the vamping sons of Anak, whereof foolish spies make report. And herein lies our sin. Why should exulting Israel pause in the glorious Exodus, to give chase to every hissing reptile, or howling wolf that gives voice from the wilderness? The time has gone by when the Church of God had occasion for logical championship against atheists and infidels. If any fool now thinks to get himself a great name by denying the being of a God, or the immortality of the soul, or the terrors of eternal retribution, or the plenary inspiration of the Bible, then in regard of such the mandate of Christ is, "Let the dead bury their dead; follow thou me." These men

are never so well pleased as when the Christian pulpit and press re-utter their blasphemies, even with the purpose of disproving or rebuking them. If the Church will "let them severely alone" for a twelve-month, the world will have forgotten them!

Certainly the general order of the great Captain of Salvation is, "Go forward! Advance the whole line in the direction of practical Christian work!" Talk not of opposition or enmity. Trust Almighty God to adjust this whole scientific controversy, and vindicate His own heavenly oracles. Turn your back upon yonder advancing banners. Lift your eyes above these roaring billows. Behold there! there! flaming out in mid-heavens, that cloudy, fiery Pillar! That is *God!* GOD! before whose awful Presence, in all time, armed enemies have been only as chaff before the tempest, and opposition and obstacles have proved only crystalline walls of defence round about advancing Israel. Behold, above, before, all around, *Jehovah*, and "*Go forward!*"

And the individual Christian should take to heart the same truth. O man, immortal man, be this your exulting watchword. It is faith-strengthening and comforting, and the human spirit needs it. For earthly life is at best a pilgrimage and a warfare; without are fightings, and within, fears. At our feet dash the dark floods of temptation, and beyond spread the dreary wastes of a mortal life; and farther away still, the wild swellings of Jordan, the black billows of Death! But let us grasp our high privileges. Above the seas, the sands, the sepulchres, lift the eye to the Heavenly Glory, and then, right onward through storms, floods, and athwart sterile wastes, and against the bravest array of

armed foes, shall our march be in triumph. And when, presently, our feet touch the waves of the swelling Jordan, even they shall all be rolled back—yea, be lifted up around us in all forms and colors of beauty; and then, when we stand on the immortal shore, and before us open the celestial gates, and the welcoming hosts of heaven part to give us an avenue to the enthroned Christ; and the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead us forth unto fountains of living water, and these shall rise up before our winged feet as “things to come,” forever to come; those mountain-ranges of knowledge and rapture and love, which make up the progress of the redeemed and risen spirit, nearer and nearer unto the ever-unreached and receding heights of the Infinite—then, surely then, we shall understand, as we cannot now, the blessed meaning of the text, which points us to those unspeakable things which are as yet invisible, and will be forever to come, and cries, “*Go forward!*”

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"MY JEWELS."

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."—MALACHI. III. 17.

We are not now concerned with the objections made by small critics to our English rendering of the text. We have here certainly an inspired truth, setting forth the relation subsisting between God and His people, and illustrating His love for, and His joy in them. And we purpose nothing more than to apply it in a few practical points. We have here,

First. *God's own estimation of the real value of a sincere Christian.*

He calls them His "jewels," or, as the word is elsewhere rendered, "His peculiar treasure." This is a truth constantly recurring in the Bible. All precious things are employed to illustrate their value. The prophets speak of them as "God's royal diadem." And the apostle declares them to be "Christ's especial glory." They are termed "pillars in God's temple"—yea, "God's entire temple." And in imagery, ineffably higher, they are called "God's children;" "God's heirs;" "God's dear children;" "the friends of Christ;" "the pride of Christ;" "the brethren and sisters and

mother of Christ." Indeed, all rare and beautiful and precious things in earth and heaven are employed as metaphorical of the value God puts upon them, and the affection He bears them. This strikes us strangely at first. We are like poor David when he got out of faith into philosophy, turning from the Scriptures to study the stars, and as he considered the magnificence of the heavens, thought that God, the Creator, could not be mindful of the little creature, man. But such philosophy is foolishness. Compared with a sun or a star, man may be a small object, but who estimates values by the mass or bulk? Who sells Raphael's paintings by the square yard, or buys the sculpture of Praxitiles by the cubic foot? Yonder lustrous star, yonder burning sun, they are alike insentient, inorganic, dead matter. But man is a "spirit." We do not understand as yet what this means. But in all metaphysics, from the Mosaic to the Platonic, the "spirit" or "soul" is as distinct from the animal life which man possesses in common with lower animals, as the perfume of a flower, which floats forth upon the air and ascends to heaven, is distinct from the woody fibre and circulating sap of the vegetable life. And such a distinction the later Scriptures abundantly confirm. There is within the body, apart from its physical, functional life, a sentient, immaterial principle, capable of living and acting separate from the body.

In the present, indeed, we know nothing of its essence; but we do know much of its attributes and action. Even in the mortal, it does wonderful things. What mighty machinery, what magnificent architecture; what marvelous art and science and literature,

what grand philosophies and civilizations and religions it has wrought out among men! How it subjects to its sway and sovereignty the tremendous forces of nature, until the lightnings have become its messengers and the whirlwinds its chariots! How it soars beyond earth and time, and communes with God and His angels! And who can even dream of its immortal future? of the mighty possibilities it embodies, as the cedar in the cone, the oak in the acorn; of the ineffable thoughts it shall think, and the stupendous works it shall achieve, and the enrapturing affections it shall feel and share when it has crossed the threshold of the eternal world? This soul! O, it is God's last and grandest creation; and so beyond all the suns and systems of the universe God declares that it is precious, and reckons it as His "treasure."

But, then, a Christian is more than this: not only a "spirit," but a redeemed and regenerated spirit. The value of a gem is not in its composition, but in its crystallization. Even the diamond is composed mainly of carbon, and differs from the black coal of our furnaces only in this mysterious transfiguration. And a change analogous to this has every saved soul undergone. The natural man may be only a black coal, absorbing heavenly light, and therefore only fit for the fire. But the spiritual man has, through gracious crystallization, become a gem, reflecting Divine light, and thus fitted for a diadem. Thus every true child of God hath become "a jewel." And jewels are accounted "the peculiar treasure" of kings. A single gem set in the Russian sceptre cost Queen Catherine a million of dollars. The Regent diamond, among the crown jewels of

France, was valued at fifteen hundred thousand dollars. There was a precious stone in the palace of Portugal valued at fifteen millions of dollars. And therefore are redeemed spirits likened unto jewels. They were created as the grandest work of infinite Wisdom and Power, and redeemed at the ineffable price of infinite expiation and agony. The spiritual diamond has been dug out of the black caverns of death—the spiritual pearl brought up from the stormy billows of hell! And what marvel, then, that God counts them as more precious than the stars, and calls them “His peculiar treasure?”

Passing this, we have in the text,

Secondly. *An explanation of God's strange treatment of His children.*

To the true believer, whose earthly experience is so often sorrowful, the question will often arise, “If I am thus valued and loved by God, why does He so afflict me?” And the text suggests the answer. After finding or purchasing a gem, the next thing is to polish it. And this is always an ungentle work, and the severity of the process is usually in proportion to the value of the precious stone. Of the rarer gems the ancients supposed the cutting and polishing impossible. The large diamonds which ornamented the imperial mantle of Charlemagne are yet preserved as uncut crystals. It was only in the fifth century that men learned that the diamond might be cut by attrition with another diamond, and polished on a wheel charged with diamond-dust. And herein is found the only criterion of the true gem. These precious stones have been all counterfeited, obtaining from flint and rock-crystal a transparent base,

or radical. You can color it variously with metallic oxides till most buyers are deceived. The celebrated Genoese Vase, which was only colored glass, was for centuries regarded as a real emerald, and in a certain financial emergency was pledged for thirty thousand pounds sterling, and the cheat was detected only by the hardest abrasion of the file. And all this is analogous of, or may at least illustrate God's use of, or allowance of afflictions in the experience of His dear children. Their service is two-fold. They prove and they polish the spiritual gem.

1. They are necessary to prove it. There are many counterfeits in religion. From apostolic times until now, the Church has abounded in hypocritical or self-deceived members, the old carnal nature, so wrought upon by excitement, and colored by sensation, as to seem for awhile really a new nature, normal sensibilities and sympathies so kindling into flame that the unrenewed soul has sparkled like a genuine brilliant. Therefore any reliable test of genuine godliness must have power to go beneath the outward, and show the real essence. It must be, not a silken glove and rose-water, but a sharp file and corrosive acids. Ah me! it is an easy thing sometimes to seem pious—to seem to love God, and really to believe that we do love God, when He makes all our life bright and all our labor prosperous. And it is easy to seem to love men when they favor and flatter us, and yet this may be only the sparkle of a false gem in noonday sunshine. But to manifest a true brotherly love when men spitefully use and persecute us, and to exercise supreme love to God when He sorely afflicts us—singing loving hallelujahs amid the ruins of

our fortunes and beside the graves of our kindred, Ah me! this is hard, for it is the sparkling of a true gem growing bright by attrition; and therefore, just to test the genuineness of the grace, and make manifest its preciousness, does God take the glittering ornament out of the religious show-case, and subject it to the sharp acids and files of life's daily trials. And alas! how often the lustre departs, and the mocking world despises it as a fabrication and a lie!

2. Even when the piety is sincere, such afflictions are useful to develop and discipline it. The spiritual, like the natural gem, must be cut and polished. Before the diamond is set in a kingly crown, it must be roughly pressed on the diamond wheel. (And although we all know how the human heart often faints under earthly trials, so that we bitterly complain of distressing providences, yet the simple metaphor of the text sets forth the unreasonableness of such murmurings; for afflictions are only God's means of polishing, and all precious stones, ere they be set in regalia, must be both polished and cut.

And here, too, we are instructed as to the seeming partiality of God's treatment of different Christians, for men may be equally pious, and alike dear to our Heavenly Father, and yet their mortal experience be widely dissimilar. While the one is rich, the other remains poor; the one walks in sunshine, and the other goes down into the valley of the shadow of death. And in all this, at first view, God's ways do seem unequal. But our text explains it. Gems are of different degrees or hardness, and are to be set in different conditions. Some are to be cameos and others intaglios; some clus-

"*Still will we trust in God.*"

tered in a necklace or tiara ; some single in a signet-ring or solitaire, and therefore they require widely variant cutting and unequal polishing. And so it has ever been with God's beloved ones. Abraham was a hard old diamond, and needed sharp abrasion and rasping. Isaac was an inferior and softer agate, and his father's terrible attrition would have ground him into powder. God had need of a beautiful pearl in His armlet of love, and so, even without the trial of Death, He translated the pious Enoch. But when there was need of a glorious ruby to blaze in His sceptre of righteousness, He allowed Satan to have his way, cutting and polishing the magnificent Job ; and in allusion to such metaphors, the old Christian fathers used to call the apostle Peter God's jasper, and Andrew His sapphire, and John His emerald. And thus it is of all the true people of God. Their character on earth and their condition in heaven are widely variant, and therefore one is only smoothed with a file, and another pressed on the grinding-wheel ; and though we cannot know now exactly what God is doing with us, yet we shall know hereafter.

Meantime, we should be patient, nay, joyful, under the dispensations, perceiving in them a precious evidence that we are God's peculiar "treasure," His "jewels," which He will not polish more than they need, and in regard of which He hath pledged both His wisdom and power that they shall all be treated only in tenderness, and not one of them be lost.

And this leads us to observe that we have in the text,
 Thirdly. *A prediction of the future dignity and glory of the children of God.*

This is indeed the main lesson the text should teach

us. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." The reference here is to the great day of Christ's coming, predicted in a preceding verse. The metaphor is of a mighty conqueror, who, having overthrown all enemies, appears laden with spoil, leading captive his foes; marching in triumph; magnificent in regalia—as in reference to the same event in Isaiah—over the royal highway God appears in omnipotent career, "And the glory of the Lord is revealed, and all flesh see it together." And then, when all infidelity hath been destroyed, and the wicked swept away, God's saints will be gathered to Christ, and God's jewels be "made up" as precious stones into a crown, or stars into a constellation.

We are not now concerned with the application of the prophecy of the Jews. To ourselves there is here, as repeatedly elsewhere in the Scriptures, a prediction of the coming day when Jesus Christ shall be finally and ineffably glorified in the face of the universe, and then the declaration is, that redeemed spirits will constitute the priceless gems in the divine regalia. We cannot comprehend all this now; for to us it seems that from all this broad universe brighter stars might be gathered for the diadem of the Creator. But we are to remember that in that great day of manifestation the moral, rather than the natural attributes of God are to be especially glorified. In regard of God's power and wisdom, perhaps no new revelation can be made, even by the creation of a more magnificent universe; and therefore, when the present system of things was finished, all the stars of heaven did seem as immense brilliants set in the Creator's diadem.

But meanwhile, over another and a grander empire is Jehovah a sovereign; a moral or spiritual economy, to which this material universe is preparatory and subordinate; and in this God's mightiest manifestation is of His moral perfections, not so much of His skill as a designer and His power as an architect, as of His adorable loving-kindness and tender mercy in redemption. It is indeed only in this economy of grace that what we may term the divine *affections* are perfectly displayed. To the archangelic intellect there would be perhaps nothing very wonderful in God's creation of a star, but in the redemption by suffering of a sinful soul there was an ineffable, overwhelming manifestation of the Godhead, compared with which all else seemed as nothing—and therefore infinitely beyond any sun or system must a saved soul seem a precious gem, procured by infinite labor, purchased at an infinite price, with infinite skill and tenderness to be cut and polished and set as the chief brilliant in the many crowns of Christ; for it is never to be forgotten that the power which any redeemed creature has to glorify God at all is not so much (ministerial as monumental.) Not in what he can do for God, but in what God has done for him; in the sins He has pardoned; the sorrows He has comforted; the graces He has quickened.)

When the comparatively weak and childish spirit of Abel appeared in heaven, there was none of all that unfallen and glorious host that did not feel that a creature so rescued from death and hell stood in their midst, making display of the transcendent love of God beyond the power of the archangel; and thus it is of all the redeemed. They are the diamonds for which

divine nature went down through all the mountains of iniquity. (They are the pearls for which God's own Son sprang from the eternal throne into the fathomless ocean of sin and death with sobbing breath and dying agony, that He might bring them up to the spheres of eternal joy and glory; and in this way especially are they to be regarded as "the peculiar treasure of the Lord.

Like natural gems, they may differ in size and splendor. But just as in the adornment of the Jewish high-priest (who was ever Christ's especial type), twelve manner of precious-stones, unequal in beauty and price, were set in the breast-plate—the imperial diamond, with its dazzling splendor, and the sardius, with its glowing fire, and the topaz, with its golden lustre; the emerald, green with the seeming of earth's unfading verdure; and the sapphire, blue with the likeness of heaven's unclouded azure—all these, and other strangely variant gems—yet so exquisitely arranged in the sacerdotal regalia that their every-varying colors, heightened by contrast and softened by combination, filled the whole temple with surpassing splendor as the high-priest bore them on his breast, through the courts, and amid the golden furniture, and beside the awful altars of God—just so, I say, these redeemed spirits of the just made perfect, each in its own sphere, and with its own measure of grace—from the moral emerald, fair with the noblest virtues of earth, to the spiritual sapphire, glowing with the purest graces of heaven; from the mature intellect of the aged patriarch, like a diamond, cut and polished by long-suffering into wonderful splendor, to the gentle affections of the sweet child, who, like a

precious pearl, scarcely needs polishing—yet all, at last, with God's infinite skill, set together in the Divine adornments, do all mingle their peculiar lustre, and wonderfully glorify God in the face of the universe.

We cannot en'large. We will consider hereafter other lessons suggested by this inspired metaphor. Meantime, let this fair picture be hung in our chambers of imagery. This material universe is only a great platform, erected temporarily, for the coronation of Immanuel and the redeemed spirits of the just made perfect, the radiant gems set in the regalia of the soul. "God's jewels"—or, as Isaiah has it, "God's crown of glory," "God's royal diadem." Surely, as yet, we know not what these words mean. Our conceptions of the sphere and service of the saints in heaven are as yet too earthly. John was, indeed, vouchsafed wonderful visions; but if they had regard to anything higher than the perfected millennial Church, their imagery is yet altogether gathered from earth and time only, purified of all imperfections, and glorified by the Divine Presence.

But surely this is not all, nor even the most of immortality. Heaven is not so much a paradise of palace and garden, where the redeemed are to repose after conflict, wearing white robes and singing hallelujahs, as it is a sphere and condition of higher service and more magnificent ministries unto God and the Lamb; "pillars in a temple whose very walls and arches and portals are of the very essence of God." And it is just because of such a transcendent service that we wonder no more that the beloved dead come not back to visit us. That old saint, whose gray head was one crown of

glory, is lifted up as a monumental pillar in such a temple; and who would displace it? That sweet child blazes as a precious gem in God's royal diadem; who would loosen it from so glorious a setting?

O blessed oracle! "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, when I make up my jewels." We shall understand it hereafter. In that surely coming hour, when this great plan of redeeming grace shall have been consummated, when the mysteries of creation shall all be made plain in the moral uses it has subserved, and the intricate problems of Providence shall be solved, and Divine justice and holiness and love thoroughly vindicated, and in the higher reach and range of His Mediatorship "all things in earth and heaven shall be gathered together in one in Christ"—then, I say, we shall apprehend the higher meaning of the prophet's figure; for then all this material creation will seem no more than a grand platform for the coronation of Immanuel, in the face of the adoring orders of seraphic life. (And then it will be seen that the most wonderful of all God's works was this human salvation; and it will be felt that the most stupendous spoils borne in the march of the Divine Conqueror are the keys of the kingdoms of death and hell, the black banner of Satan, the broken bars of the grave. And the sublimest strain in the triumph-song will be the hallelujah unto the Lamb that was slain. And the richest gems blazing in the many crowns of Immanuel will be the souls of Christ's redeemed ones—these diamonds dug from the black caverns of death—these pearls brought up from the stormy depths of hell—these blood-bought, grace-preserved, grief-polished "Jewels of God.")

RETRIBUTION.

"The stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it."—HABAKKUK II. II.

The prophet in this connection is declaring that the Chaldeans shall be punished for their cruel rapacity. The theme, therefore, which our text presents is *Retribution*. But as here presented it is not a thesis to be defended, but a truth to be proclaimed. Indeed, the whole matter of future retribution is never argued in the Bible—is not often asserted; but is everywhere assumed as a great first-truth, which nature itself constantly teaches, and to which man's universal conscience as constantly responds. And thus should a Christian teacher ever treat this solemn doctrine; and if any man thinks either to disprove or disparage it with pitiful special pleading, or profane swearing, he may, we think, be left to settle the whole matter with his own conscience and Almighty God.

Certainly, our text to-day leads us to no argument, but only to consider some simple points of illustration. Our limits must confine us to two:—

I.—*The Sin.*

II.—*The Punishment.*

First. *The Sin.* What was the iniquity for which the Chaldean monarch is here so solemnly denounced? Now I need hardly say that it was not for building a great city and royally adorning it. It was as right and as wise for him to magnify his metropolis on the Euphrates as for Solomon to make Jerusalem glorious on Mount Zion. Self-considered, these cities were not unlike. The Hebrew monarch seems, indeed, to have set the example. His metropolis was as well the wonder of the world. There princes dwelt in magnificence; and for himself he built a golden palace, and planted imperial gardens scarcely inferior to Nebuchadnezzar's, and upon the temple he erected for the worship of Jehovah was lavished greater treasure than the Chaldean bestowed on a sanctuary for Belus, his god. (The sin, therefore, lay not in the outer act, but in its manner and motive.)

1st. *Its manner.* The treasure used by Solomon was saved from the righteous revenues of the State and the gains of lawful commerce; but Nebuchadnezzar's was wrung from conquered nations and the labors and lives of an oppressed people, and therefore the "woe" denounced here was because he had "built his city in blood and established it in iniquity."

2d. *There was sin in the motive.* Babylon was built only for the monarch's selfish aggrandizement; but Jerusalem was beautified only in honor of Jehovah. Note how carefully this point is put in the record. Solomon stood in the midst of the nobles of Israel, and, looking in humble reverence toward the holy temple, said, "Behold, I have built a house for the name of the Lord God of Israel. Arise, O Lord God, into Thy rest-

ing-place!" But Nebuchadnezzar looked in haughty pride upon city and sanctuary, and cried, "Is not this the great Babylon which I have builded by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?"

We perceive, then, glaring ungodliness in both manner and motive of this great work of Babylon. Of course, there was sin in all the outward activities. He was working out his character, and this was his probation. And this is every man's probation. This, if not the design, is surely the result of this strange union of spirit and manner. So God Himself stands in relation to the universe. He is working out His own moral character in material forms, that all beholders may understand Him. Every thing, from the flower of the field to the stars of the firmament, are God's thoughts and feelings made manifest. We loose the scales from the adamantine scroll of geology, and lift the eye to the crystal tablet of astronomy, that we may study the sublime biography of our God. So God treats even Himself, and so He treats His moral and intelligent creatures. He links the spiritual with this purpose of manifestation. Every work of man's hand is only a revelation of a pre-existent idea of His intellect. The sculptor's statue, the painter's picture, the rich man's palace, the miser's hoarded gold, the conqueror's crimson war-field, are positive transcripts of the man's character. And so in our every-day work—building houses, investing in stocks, purchasing books, pictures, furniture, apparel, we are achieving our probation. And if the manner and motive be, like Nebuchadnezzar's, evil, we are, like him, indulging and exhibiting sin. But passing this, let us, as indeed the main matter of the text, consider:—

Secondly. *The Punishment.* Wherein was the retribution? And this question comes to us now with unusual emphasis, because just now it is a matter which the world is widely considering. The whole irreligious multitude laughs to scorn the idea of ANY retribution; and the Christian world is reviewing its old logic, as if fearful lest divine benevolence might be impeached by the doctrine. Of course, I am not thinking to enter on the general argument. It is a pure matter of revelation. The solemn asseverations of God on this point are so explicit that even to moot the matter of eternal punishment is to treat the inspiration of the Scriptures as an unsettled question. Let me only say, in passing, that the popular objection to the doctrine is altogether a fallacy. The Bible does not teach that men are punished eternally for the sins committed in time. Man goes on sinning forever, and therefore is punished forever, so that if it be consistent with divine goodness to punish sin at all, it is as manifestly consistent to punish it eternally.

But apart from this thought, the record we have now in hand puts this whole matter of retribution out of the reach of even this infidel objection. As set forth in the text, what was the punishment, and who was the punisher? What is the scene brought to our view in the history? Is it a prison-house, dark and frowning, in some land of desolation, and filled with implements and ministries of torment? O no! It is the fairest and loveliest of all earthly scenes! Babylon! Babylon! with all possible beauty of gardens and palaces! the wonder of kingdoms! the glory and pride of the Chaldean excellence! And in the midst thereof, fair as a

poet's dream of an angel's dwelling, the marble and golden palace of a monarch. Surely God is not treating Nebuchadnezzar cruelly. Monster though he has shown himself in his career of crime and blood, yet no thunderbolt has smitten him, and the earth has not opened and swallowed him up. Behold! as a king, he still walks through his gardens and sits on his throne. Fair forms, joyous voices, floods of light and music and odors are with him and around him. 'So far, at least, there is no direct divine infliction. But is there no terrible punishment? Behold the imperial worker of iniquity! The envied and worshiped owner of all that glorious show. What aileth him there on his couch and throne? Why do his eyes gaze wildly upon vacancy, and his unnerved limbs smite together in terror? Ah! he—he alone hears strange sounds amid all that light and music. A hissing whisper; an appalling wail: "The stone out of the wall, the beam out of the timber," crying, Woe! woe! woe!

And now we know that by a law of his own mental constitution, as patent and resistless as the law of gravitation, memory and conscience are summoning from the past both ministry and material of a righteous retribution. As David puts the thought in regard of himself, "His sin—his sin is ever before him." The scenes and the cruelties of his iniquity seem to rise in vision before him. Crimson war-fields, smoking cities seem pictured to his eye. The thunder of the conflict and the cry of dying agony seem breaking on his ear; and as he walks those matchless pavilions, and reclines at those sumptuous banquets, it is as if great drops of blood oozed out of those pictured walls, and filling all the perfumed air,

came wild, weird whisperings—"And the stone out of the wall seemed to cry, 'Woe to him that buildeth a city in blood!' And the beam out of the timber made answer, 'Woe—woe to him whose house is built in iniquity!'" Until that city and palace became intolerable to his tortured spirit, and he rushed away from them, to wander, a forlorn outcast, from all abodes of men, "to eat grass as oxen, his body wet with the dews of heaven, until his hair was grown as eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

And herein surely there was a retribution for sin. Mark me, though for a moment. I am not saying that this was all its punishment. There may be, even as a result of God's natural laws, something very terrible in the *conditions* of the future retribution. Certainly no believer in Revelation can for a moment question this; and the universal conscience, even of all heathen races, has looked forth on such conditions quite as terrible as those of which the Bible speaks "as the place of torment," "the outer darkness," and "the undying worm and the unquenchable fire." And in the case of Nebuchadnezzar another inspired prophet affirms this awful fact. Isaiah represents him as approaching the Hades, or spheres of immortal spirits, where all the ghosts of the myriads he had slain rise up to meet and mock and torture the soul of the old conqueror. These are his burning words:—"Hell is moved to meet thee at thy coming! It stirreth up its dead for thee! And they speak to thee, and say, 'Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, and did shake great kingdoms, and make the world a wilderness, and art thou become weak like unto us? and is all thy pomp brought down to the

grave? How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!’”

Surely all this differs widely from the contrasted description in these scriptures of departing saints, who, guided by God’s counsel, are received into glory. But I am not considering this point now. I am only insisting that there is a terrible element of retribution in the simple working of the laws of our moral constitution. And it happens well for our illustration that this law of conscience is so well understood and universally felt that these infidels themselves always insist on it as a sufficient punishment for sin. There is certainly no fact more established than that no impression once made upon the mind is ever obliterated. We all know how some trifling thing—a word, a voice, the view of an old landscape, a strain of some long-forgotten harmony—has power to awaken in the mind thoughts, feelings, memories long passed and forgotten. We seem suddenly to be borne away to other scenes. We live amid other societies. Voices of the departed are whispering around us. Pale faces of the dead look out on us, and for awhile we are given up to the despotism either of a pleasing or an appalling recollection.

Now it was, manifestly, not by any direct divine interference, but by the natural movement of this beautiful and most beneficent law, that this cruel king of Babylon was punished. And so it is ever. Even in this world, this law is always at work. See that murderer. In darkness and secrecy he slew his poor victim. No mortal eye saw him. He washed his hands of their blood, and threw his weapon into deep water, and went back to his places of business and recreation, and no

law arrested him—no man suspected him—no hand, either human or divine, was put forth directly in punishment. But is he not punished? Behold! what aileth him as he walks alone in the field, or sits with his mates in the revel? How he starts and trembles, and his eyes flash, and his cheek grows pale! O, he sees things we see not. He hears things we hear not. In the noisy din of the market-place, in the silences of the old woods, there are sounds like the cry of a dying man. To the pillow of his midnight slumber comes a shape, shadowy and spectral, and the face of the dead looks sadly or wrathfully upon him; and evil memory re-opens the doors of old graves; a guilty conscience stalks through his chambers of imagery, and peoples God's universe with tormentors; and so terrible does all this presently become that to escape it he will sometimes welcome the dungeon and the gibbet and the grave.

Now this is retribution—a punishment really more dreadful than any material imagery whereby this Bible sets it forth—a retribution which becomes, of itself, eternal torment, if the soul is immortal and remains unregenerate. But surely there is nothing in all this to impeach God's mercy. And yet there is enough in it, one would think, to silence these blasphemers of unbelief, and startle these workers of iniquity. For all it needs is but the continued play of a universal law, under which we all live, as patent and irresistible, and indeed beneficent, as the law of germination, "that we reap as we sow," or the law of gravitation, which, while holding the universe in equipoise, dashes a drunken man down a precipice. For just suppose an ungodly man resolutely rejecting all God's gracious calls of salvation,

to be at last let alone to the memories of past misdeeds and the fell ministry of conscience. Suppose the assassin forever to hear the dying cry of his victim. Suppose the oppressor to think constantly of the widow's desolate home and the orphan's broken heart. Suppose the disobedient child, the unkind parent, the unfaithful husband or wife, whose daily lives tortured trustful hearts, to carry with them into immortality the stinging memory of their deed of iniquity, so that the wan faces and tearful eyes of injured and outraged love seem ever looking reproachfully upon them. Yea, suppose a man, whose conscious sin is a heartless rejection of the gracious Saviour, to carry into eternity, as a memory of things gone—gone forever—these lessons of the Sunday-school, these simple Gospel sermons, that father's earnest warning, that mother's pleading prayer, the picture on the soul's tablet of the old home, the old church. Let these things so abide in the memory that the immortal sphere shall seem ever echoing with the voices and peopled with the forms of past mercies and lost opportunities.

Let only these things be (and they must be if man be immortal, and his evil nature be not sanctified), and then, surely then, in this alone there will be an element of retribution overwhelmingly terrible. The man will be like Nebuchadnezzar in his palace, yet possessed in his own inner life of immortal tormentors. And let the sphere of his after-life, in its scenery and accessories, be what it may, still through their shadows or their sunshine alike will glide ghostly phantoms, and all the air will be filled with awful voices, crying, "Woe! woe! woe!"

Alas! there is a fearful meaning in the text's peculiar

representation. The scene upon the canvas is not a darkly-frowning prison-house filled with engines and ministers of torment. We hear no screwing of racks, no clanking of fetters. Ah, no! it is a royal palace, an imperial conqueror, crowned, throned, adored—in the very noonday of his haughtiest triumph; but yet then and there arrested, convulsed, overwhelmed, as with ignominy and anguish, as if surrounded and pressed upon by forms and images of torment, as if oozing blood-drops were upon all those fair pictures and voluptuous couches, as if hissing voices filled all that perfumed air, as if ghostly shapes were gliding and gibbering through chamber and banquet-hall—"The stone crying out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber answering it." And thus this fearful punishment of sin seems a self-punishment and a suicide—only a natural result of the man's own deeds—the eating of the fruits of his doings.

We do not say this is *all* of retribution. If we could examine the essence of the soul itself, we should perhaps find that sin is to it just what sickness is to the body, like fever, or plague, or pestilence, disordering, and so torturing. Indeed, we know that there is in the exercise of an evil passion a pain as positive as in the movement of a diseased bodily organ, so that regeneration is as necessary to the happiness of the one as healing is to the comfort of the other.

Meanwhile, we know that there are other principles in our moral constitution working together for evil. For example, there is a great law of moral affinities, which, even without any divine interposal, would separate the race into two great classes—the lovers of sin

and the lovers of holiness ; and as the element of what we call hell is hate, and the very essence of heaven is love, we can see that in the simple community of spirits given up to this interplay of evil passions there would be a very pandemonium of agony. And, according with all this, Revelation represents the angels as gathering all the tares together, and even binding them in separate bundles—every class of evil-doers having hereafter, as here, their distinct communities—murderers with murderers, extortioners with extortioners, blasphemers with blasphemers. And methinks there were enough in this, the thought of associating forever with such kindred spirits, each exercising on the other those malignant passions that made them horrible on earth—enough just in this to frighten man away from what they term the terrible spheres of the after-life.

Nor do we say that even this is all of retribution, for every believer of the Bible knows that it is not all. God everywhere asserts in it that He will positively interpose to arrest the evil-doer, and inflict on him retribution ; and for that matter, indeed, it amounts to the same thing, whether God do it by natural laws or by supernatural inflictions. In either case, “the sinner is driven away in his wickedness,” or, as Christ Himself puts it “he dies in his sins.” “He that is unjust will be unjust still, and he that is filthy will be filthy still.” And without the heavenly Jerusalem, in our hopeless and horrible community, “are dogs and sorcerers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.” And each man goeth “to his own place,” that is, to a spiritual sphere just fitted to his character. Most assuredly is this the great Bible

doctrine, and no amount of sophistical reasoning or false exegesis can destroy or modify it. There is no possible escape from the truth of eternal punishment for sin, save in the bold, bald Atheism which denies the being of a God and the immortality of the soul.

But we repeat it, this is not the truth our text leads us to consider. It presents only a single aspect of the general truth—the present evil and perpetual agony of an unholy character and an accusing conscience.

We cannot pursue the thought farther. Let us all learn this one simple and obvious and unquestionable truth—earthly life is probation. In all our walks and ways we are working out our own destinies, even with these natural laws providing for our retribution. You may call it business or pleasure, yet it is living, thinking, acting for eternity.

Alas! for this great monarch. He sincerely believed that as he accumulated the spoil of destroyed kingdoms, and compelled oppressed myriads to painful labor, he was building for himself a monument of glory, a garden of exquisite delight, a palace of imperial splendor; and yet we all see now that he was only outworking for himself scenes, spheres, conditions of suffering and anguish. And alas! as well for all workers of iniquity. Souls hastening to eternity, unto whom God, in ineffable mercy, has accorded us in this Gospel of salvation a new power to work out for themselves destinies of unbounded splendor; to dwell in blessed palaces, to sit on glorious thrones—"kings and priests unto God forever and ever;" and yet whose persistent and terrible work is, out of the substance of their own spiritual nature, to build dwelling-places of everlasting ignominy

and anguish, where thick glooms shall gather, and ghostly shapes wander, and appalling voices whisper, "And the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." O take this picture home with you, for it is not a picture of a wrathful God, but of a self-destroying sinner. If God be seen here at all, it is only in the aspect of a loving father reaching out arms to woo to his embrace a suicidal child about to spring headlong from a precipice—a Father whose voice falls on the ear from every page of Revelation. "As I live I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies. Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" O behold! behold the picture! But behold it as it hangs here in God's great gallery; placed, as if for the very impression of contrast, directly under another picture—a picture whose scene is, and in that same Chaldean land. You remember that between those same great rivers there dwelt, a thousand years before, a man of the same descent, of the same heroic character, of the same boundless ambition, for the record is, that they both sought great cities, and indeed did both lay the foundations of great kingdoms. But then they wrought under widely different inspirations. Nebuchadnezzar would build for himself a city on the earth, and he laid its foundations beside an earthly river, and gathered its material from earthly quarries and forests, and beautified it with the spoils of earthly kingdoms; and after all, his mighty labor found it only at last a poor, torturing mockery, vanishing away. But that other Chaldean, Abraham, the friend of God, the father of the faithful, having learned earlier that he could build for himself no substantial dwelling on the earth, with a lof-

tier and immortal ambition lifted his eyes higher, and "looked for a city with foundations whose builder and maker was God." And he found it; he found it. And inspiration has pictured it, and hung it here in God's great gallery, that we may all see how poor and mean, in the contrast, seems even glorious Babylon. Behold! behold! Here! here! on the low earth, the old Chaldean metropolis, fair, indeed, with all earthly adornments, hanging gardens, marble palaces, yet from all its fading splendor the affrighted monarch rushing forth to herd with the beasts of his field.

But now lift your eye heavenward. There, only seen through a glass darkly, the new Jerusalem, the city of God; its eternal walls, precious stones; its gates, each a mighty pearl; its streets of pure gold, like unto transparent glass; its rivers of living waters; its gardens of the trees of life; and within it the throne of God, and the temple of God; and over it a firmament which night shall never darken; and there in all the transcendent splendor of immortal life, Abraham, Abraham! And now, as you look at these contrasted scenes, which will you choose? Will you dwell with Abraham in a city where the voices of ten thousand times ten thousand, all the crowned and glorified creatures of eternity, cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy!" or will you dwell with Nebuchadnezzar, "where the stone out of the wall and the beam out of the timber cry," "Woe!" "Woe!" "Woe!"

SHINING LIGHTS.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—MATTHEW V. 16.

This is Christ's own practical application of the preceding assertion that true Christians are "the light of the world." That great general truth we are not now concerned with. A moment's thought confirms it. We all feel that Christianity is the world's only true spiritual or moral light. We should know almost nothing of the true nature of God, or of our true character and ultimate destiny, but for this precious Gospel. But as in nature there is no such thing as abstract light, that is, light apart from luminous bodies, so morally there can be no abstract Christianity, that is, Christianity existent and operative, save as exhibited in the lives of sincere believers. Manifestly, if all Christians were taken out of the world, all Christianity would, as well, be taken out of the world. And if, in general, Christianity is the world's light, then, in particular, each individual Christian, in his own lot and sphere, is as well "the world's light."

Of this manifest truth our text is the personal, practical application. Its reference is rather to the manner

than the matter of practical Christianity. The emphasis of the sentence falls on the word "so." Christ takes it for granted that every true Christian will "let his light shine." A luminous body may be beclouded or eclipsed, or even put under a bushel, but can never, so long as it is luminous, entirely cease shining. This the text assumes, and goes on to consider the manner of such manifestation. It is compared here to God's natural light in creation, and the evident meaning of the figure is, that a true Christian life in this world must be like God's sunshine.

First. Consider a few particulars. True Christianity, then, like light, must be first complete in its elements and harmonious in their combinations. Let a sunbeam fall upon a prism, and it will be decomposed into the seven distinct colors of the spectrum. And although each of these colors may be very beautiful in itself, and have a special function and peculiar excellence, yet every one of them is absolutely necessary to a true beam of light. And so is it of all true Christian life which glorifies God. It consists of several distinct moral excellencies or virtues, each precious in itself, and yet if one of them be absent it will not come up to a true piety. "Knowledge" is a Christian grace, and so is "temperance" and "godliness" and "brotherly kindness" and "charity." And yet not any one or two or three of them, without all the others, can constitute that beautiful composite of Christian character which we call "piety," or true godliness. And so, you remember, the exhortation of Peter is to give *all diligence*—not to cultivate these graces in their separation, but to add each one of them to all the others, in symmetri-

cal combination. And this is the first thought of the text.

In order to glorify God, our piety must exhibit itself to mankind as the sunbeam illumines creation—not in the distinct colors of the spectrum, but in the beautiful composite of the mid-day light. And just here, alas! is the Church's great practical shortcoming—her light flames round her in prismatic colors. One man's piety has too much of the fiery "red" of passionate zeal, and another's the cadaverous "blue" of acerbative sanctimony, and another's the uncertain "green" of immature knowledge, and another's the sallow "yellow" of feeble decrepitude, and another's the sweet "violet" of languishing sentiment. And so, were we disposed, we might find that each particular denomination of Christians hath its peculiar color. For ourselves, belonging as we do to the great Presbyterian family, we have always been termed "blue" Christians. And we might as justly characterize our sister denomination as the "green" Church, or the "red," or the "violet," or the "yellow," and which is the best is a matter of taste. And so we may say of the whole Christian hosts, that the aggregate light we fling on the world is rather the rainbow sparkle of parti-colored sectarianism than the pure, lambent sunshine of celestial spirituality. And therefore, just as in nature a landscape seen through a red glass, or a blue, or a yellow, assumes a strange, startling, repellant aspect, and we feel that it would have been a divine mistake so to have colored it, so in the moral world, if this heavenly light is diffused in single-colored rays, or in brindled combinations, we may feel quite certain that however brilliantly the light may

shine, it will prove unnatural and repulsive. It will tend neither to win souls to Christ nor to bring honor to God, in that it will not "so shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven."

Certain we are, that if either an individual Christian, or a single church, or a particular sect make extraordinary exhibition only of some one or two favorite graces; if they are all patience with no resolute courage; or all zeal without knowledge, or all temperance with no brotherly kindness, or all fortitude with only small leaven of charity, or all godly sorrow with no joy and peace; if, in short, our piety make exhibition of two or three moral excellencies in huge overgrowth, rather than of all those excellencies, softening and modifying each other to one symmetrical whole, then that piety, though it may glare as a volcano on a mountain, or gleam as a rainbow on a cloud, and travelers be startled, and the natives astonished, yet it will not fulfil the conditions of the text—a light "so shining that men shall see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven."

Secondly. Passing this, we observe that in order to glorify God piety, like the light, must be steady and constant. Although these diurnal revolutions may bring a whole earthly hemisphere into darkness, and sometimes storm-clouds obscure the mid-day splendors of heaven, yet we know that from the morn of creation until now yonder glorious sun has been pouring abroad, ever steady and constant, the same blessed radiance. And thus it is with true godliness. It is not a thing of capricious feeling or spasmodic raptures, but a firm, persistent, ever operative principle of the renewed life.

Alas! therefore, for very much that in our times pretends to be Christianity, that corruscates and sparkles and dazzles—sometimes a fire-fly, and sometimes a sky-rocket—the *ignis fatuus* of tropic swamps, or the chilling aurora of polar snows. Surely this is not what our text enjoins; for such light only so shines that men may see our artifice and clap-trap and shams, and despise our hypocrisy, and dishonor our God.

Meantime there are some good men and true Christians, the type of whose piety is not sunlight, but lightning! Now and then, at long intervals, and on great occasions, you see in their lives a glorious flash, and hear a tremendous roar, and you know that a storm-cloud has been rent, and the whole landscape gleams and is glorified with a marvelous transplendency. But next moment it is all dark again, and to our poor, dazed vizion, alas! it seems even darker than before! Such men, doubtless, do some good.

We read of a poor, weather-beaten bark doubling Cape Horn on a stormy, starless winter night. The helmsman stood shivering at the wheel, unable to see a cable's length through the howling tempest, when suddenly the whole scene was aflame with the lightning, and by the terrible gleam he saw close on his weather-bow, and within hail, a great ship bearing down upon him, and with his strong hand straining at the helm, and his awful cry sent out upon the tempest, he escapes destruction. *That* flash of lightning saved him. And sometimes I do not doubt God uses this spasmodic piety to alarm the ungodly. Unquestionably a fitful and intermittent life is better than *no* life, but as certainly it is not the type of life most efficiently useful. "Be ye steadfast, im-

movable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," is the inspired rule of Christian living; and whatever qualities a man's piety may have—though at long intervals and on great occasions it may flash and roar like a fearful thunderbolt, and flood the whole landscape with an awful splendor, nevertheless I am persuaded that in all this he does not come fully up to the text's requirement—"letting his light so shine that men may see his good works and glorify his Father who is in heaven."

Thirdly. Passing this, we should observe that the piety which brings glory unto God must be like the light, exquisitely gentle. It is a marvelously beautiful fact in nature, that the most stupendous results in the material world are brought about by agencies noiseless and unpretending. The grand master-force of nature is what we term gravitation—an influence or law which rounds every separate world into a solid globe, and binds all worlds, all systems of worlds into one immense and harmonious universe. And yet this tremendous power is without noise or observation! It comes with no flash of fire, and no voice of thunder; it dashes no dew-drop from the lily's leaf; it disturbs no feather on an insect's wing. And so, too, is it of "light"—an agent of immense results, and yet so subtle and gentle that philosophy questions its old nomenclature, and favors the notion that it is rather an undulation than a force. Certainly of all physical agents it is the calmest and blandest. It comes with the day-spring, flooding the whole world with celestial splendor. Yet the whole disturbs not the sleeping insect, rends not the gossamer, stirs not the golden dust on the tiny filament of a wild

flower. And yet this most silent, dull, subtle of all forces is the world's, yea, creation's great life and glory. Destroy it, remove it, withhold it only for a brief season, and the universe will become a desert and a desolation; vegetation sickens, animals grow frantic, man trembles and despairs. Then comes wild famine; the fields yield no corn, the vineyards no wine, the rivers all freeze, the forests decay, the seas become adamant, all life dies, and this world, and all worlds, as sepulchres of universal death, wander through the blackness of darkness forever.

"Light," of all things the most widely and radiantly beneficent, is of all things, as well, the most exquisitely gentle. And so is true godliness. There are men, indeed, who, emulous of the title of "champion Christian," have not drunk of its soothing cup, nor been bathed with its gentle baptism. Their delight is to roar for Christ like the rushing wind, and convulse the world in God's behalf like the roused earthquake, but have no gentle gift of love to shine as the sun in mid-heaven for man's good and God's glory. And they may be of use in their day and generation. Even in the natural world, rough and violent things have their own office. Storms purify the air, earthquakes upheave metalliferous strata, cataracts and volcanos blaze and roar, working out God's great purposes. And thus, doubtless, does God make use of a fierce, stormy, turbulent Christianity to break up dead forms of error, and purify spiritual atmospheres of deadly mists and malaria. Nevertheless, such is not the type of piety most efficiently beneficent. The glorious triumphs of the Gospel have been won not by the thunderingartil-

lery and onsets of logic, but by love's sweet strategy; and powerful as Christianity has ever been in the grandeur of her miracles, far mightier she has ever proved in the grace of her meekness.

Said our blessed Saviour: "If I be lifted up, I will"—do what? drive men out of their iniquities? Is that it? No; "I will draw them unto me." Yes, that is what God does; He *d*-*raw*s men by the goodness of His providence—by the gentleness of His Gospel, by the gracious wooings of the Heavenly Comforter. And if man in the highest style and sphere would be a co-worker with God in saving a lost world, he must "win" them to Jesus. He, and he only, that "winneth souls is truly wise." And whatever elements of piety he may have, he yet lacks its grand master-power if he abound not in gentleness. And though he may heave like an earthquake till a whole continent be rocked with convulsions, or blaze like a volcano until the whole landscape, with its mountains and valleys and abodes of men, be flooded with the terrible and fiery illumination, nevertheless, in all this he is world-wide of our text's blessed requirement. He does *not* "let his light so shine that men may see his good works and glorify his Father which is in heaven."

Fourthly. That piety which, by doing good unto men, most honors God, is essentially *joyous*. This is pre-eminently the quality of light. Sometimes, by reason of lurid or lowering clouds, the mid-day landscape shows sombre, and even terrible, and the very wildest of birds can scarcely chirp or twitter in the gloomy woods, and the most festive and frolicsome of men walk splenetic and forlorn through the dreary

street and the Stygian market-place. But all this is manifestly the result, not of the light, but of the bedimmed vapors. Sunshine is essentially and always beautifying and gladdening as it floods a landscape. All things rejoice in its ministry; the rose blushes with a richer red, and the snow of the lily shows purer and fairer; every dew-drop in forest and field sparkles like a rare gem, and the very storm-cloud in the firmament is all aglow with the splendor of rainbows; and amid the blessed visitation insects flit and whirl on their merry wings; and the glad birds soar and sing; and beasts low and gambol; and little children shout and dance; and care-worn manhood unbends from its discontent; and decrepid age grows younger and stronger in the sparkling baptism. And as of the light of the natural sun, so is it of the full, clear shining of the Sun of Righteousness. While its higher function is to reveal the far-away glories of the eternal world, yet it flings, meantime, an enchanting glow on things temporal and earthly. Life's roses are redder and life's lilies whiter. The wing of hope soars higher into heaven, and the tongue of love pours forth louder harmonies; even the tears of grief sparkle like gems, and the storm-clouds of sorrow are glossed and glorified with heaven's rainbows; and, therefore, the more religion a man has, the more joyous will his life be unto himself, and the more a charm and a gladness and a strength to all that are about him. Manifestly a believer's influence in the world, either in winning the ungodly to Christ or encouraging God's children in their way to Zion, will be exactly in proportion to their own "joy in the Lord."

A weeping, dolorous, tragical saint may do good in his generation, just as the dim, tenebrous, murky half-light of a rainy day is better than a pitchy, cimmerian midnight. Nevertheless, this is surely not the type of piety most efficiently beneficent. And whatever other excellencies the man may have, yet he lacks the most winning and masterful if the joy of the Lord be not an inspiration within him; and while a forlorn and woe-begone saint may imagine himself greatly honoring Christ by his ostentation of sham and very cheap martyrdom, yet the lurid and smoky glare of his lacerated life certainly does not fulfil the condition of our text, "A light so shining that men see his good works and glorify his Father which is in heaven."

We cannot at present pursue farther the analogy. Thus and otherwise are we to let our light shine. And the text presents a powerful motive to the duty—"That men may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven." Christ here ignores all that is vain, self-complacent, sensational service of God, which makes exhibition of good works as a peacock flaunts its plumage—that men may glorify the actor. Some religionists show their graces as my fine lady wore her diamonds. The "Jenkinses" made report that they had cost half a million, and two policemen attended her lest the pickpockets should steal them. And so it is in morals. Out of iniquitous gains men build splendid churches and endow seminaries, and orchestras execute psalmody with operatic *empressement*, and preachers parade melodrama, and issue manifestos and bulletins, and the Church overflows with irrepressible men and women, bound to show off their works.

But alas for it all! They do not glorify God, nor are they good works at all. Such things may crowd churches and sell pews, but they neither save sinners nor edify Christians. They are, indeed, utterly selfish in their end and Satanic in their inspiration. Our Lord, in the context, terribly denounces all exhibition, even of good works, whose chief end is anything less than to glorify His Father. And the great adversary has no fouler emissaries than the Pharisees who give alms and make prayers that they may glorify men. A Christian's life is not a Drummond light, to show off a street parade; but a pharos on a headland, to save imperiled argosies. Every soul truly won to Christ is a priceless gem in the regalia of Jchovah. But no soul was ever saved by a sensation, as no imperiled bark was ever saved by a wrecker's false light over the surges, or a fiend's blue-light on the sails.

Our only agency in human salvation is such a manifestation of divine truth, either in word or in work, as shall warn men of their danger and bring them to Christ; thus glorifying God not so much by a proud display of what we do for Him, as by an humble demonstration of what He has done for us. And our light is so to shine that thus He may be glorified. And what a motive it is! We know not to the full what it means. We use language transcendently, and therefore, in some respects, falsely, when we speak either of man, or even of God Himself, as increasing the divine glory, for it implies either something wanting or something selfish in the divine nature or essence. Nevertheless, so God speaks, and so we may believe, that a Christian may make such exhibitions of piety in

the present life as shall positively enhance the declarative glory of the enthroned Jehovah. And ah me! what a vast, thrilling, overmastering thought it is, overwhelming alike in its responsibilities and its raptures, that if I am a true, humble, self-sacrificing child of God, doing all my simple life-work in the spirit of true godliness, I am, as verily as the crowned angel before the throne, honoring God in the spectatorship of the universe. O what a motive it is—"My light so shining as to glorify my Heavenly Father!" This little mortal life, a light—a light which not only illustrates the Gospel of Christ in the apprehension of men, and by saving them casts a heavenly radiance into every darkened chamber of their homes and hearts; but a light that positively flames up through the firmament, and pours round the very throne of God a most glorious manifestation;—that just as the unclouded sunshine on those mortal landscapes makes every flower fairer, and every dew-drop brighter, so my earthly Christian influence passes on through yonder firmament, and flashes as a pure light on all those heavenly landscapes; falls on the sea of glass; falls on the crystal river; falls on the fruit of the trees of life; falls on the pinnacles of the Celestial City; yea, falls on the white robes of the saints, and on the gemmed crowns of the archangels, and on the awful throne of the Infinite Jehovah!

My lowly, earthly life—a light—making heaven itself more beautiful and blessed, making the flowers fairer, and the waters more sparkling, and those white robes more lustrous, and those diadems more dazzling—yea, making the very throne of the mighty God more adorably magnificent! O what a motive is here to

higher and holier living! Ah me! what a measure of light should that be that is poured abroad on such scenes, such landscapes, such regalia! O that God would give power to His own metaphors, and send us forth to ponder, each one for himself, the depth and breadth of the commandment of Christ—"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Abraham Lincoln

TO THE GLORY OF GOD.

"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—1 COR. X. 31.

In considering such exhortations as this we are never to lose sight of the essential distinctions between the design and the result of all action. For this distinction is fundamental to all moral distinctions. Design is subjective—having reference to the agent; result is objective—having reference to the influence. We can, therefore, predicate morality only of design or motive; and an action may be sinful, though resulting in good; and may be virtuous, though producing great evil, because in the one case the motive was good, and in the other the motive was evil. An oversight of this principle in studying our text would lead us to serious error. The apostle is here speaking of the design or motive of conduct, and not of its results or influences. The Greek word rendered in the text "to," or unto, denotes the intention, purpose, end, or aim of our conduct, and the spirit of the exhortation is, Do everything with an honest desire to honor Jehovah; and the serious error, which we said might result from overlooking this, is the supposition that the ultimate result of all action can be other than to the divine glory. It is as evidently a truth of reason

as of revelation, that all things whatsoever do work together ultimately for the glory of God. This was unquestionably the divine purpose in creating all things—and if anything does occur under His government failing to subserve it, it must be because God failed, either in His wisdom to understand, or His power to control the operation. All things do actually work out God's declarative glory, so that whether we design it or not, yet in the ultimate results of our conduct we do all come up fully to the apostolic exhortation, "Do all to the glory of God." The entire universe, as well material as moral, was made for this, and thoroughly accomplishes it; for let its processes and phenomena be what they will, they are under the control of that eternal purpose of God, which, as surely as He is God, will work out His highest glory in the greatest good of the universe.

To do everything for God's glory, then, is the great law of the universe. For this the flower blooms; and the bird warbles, and the rivers murmur, and the ocean roars, and suns and systems make brilliant the firmament; and from the standpoint of celestial science all seemingly anomalous facts and antagonistic forces yield to the same law; and the thunder and the earthquake, and the comet spreading consternation in its flight, and the awful disappearance of stars in heaven—all these, no less than the exquisite harmonies of all holy and happy worlds, are working out God's glory.

And just as universally and unvaryingly is this the law of God's moral universe; all actions of all spiritual and sentient creatures work out the same divine purpose. Sin itself, the great mystery of our scholarship in respect of its origin, is no exception to this rule in

respect of its results. Even sin itself is working mightily out God's declarative glories—like the thick cloud on the sky, a background for His rainbows; like the black night on the firmament, revealing His stars. So far as actions in their results are concerned, Judas wrought as effectually as Paul for the glory of the Divine Son; and the fallen Lucifer and the soaring Gabriel are fellow-laborers in the stupendous work of begemming the diadem of the Eternal Father. There was, therefore, no need, so far as the ultimate and divine overruling of action was concerned, of any exhortation on Paul's part unto the Corinthians, that they should do all they did unto the divine glory. They could do it. They must do it.

On the conceded principle that a righteous government is as truly honored in suppressing crime as in encouraging good citizenship, so that its frowning prisons are as monumental of its optimism as its joyous palaces—on this patent principle, not more from the pearl-gates of the celestial city than from the dungeons of despair, flash the lustres of God's attributes. Yes, yes, Paul understood too well the ultimate results of all things in an economy which Omniscience had contrived and Omnipotence had achieved, to spend words in urging any man to bestir himself lest, peradventure, God should come short of His ultimate and infinite glory. O, it has seemed to me sometimes that the hardened rebel against God's government, the bold defier of God's law, the proud despiser of God's Gospel, a rebel and defier and despiser under the very eye of Omniscience, amid the very lightnings of Omnipotence, kept back from the gloom of despair only by the resistless pleadings of the

rejected Saviour, held above the wild billows of eternal wrath only by the infinite compassion of an insulted Jehovah—it has seemed to me that such a man, in the exhibition he affords of God's amazing forbearance, God's stupendous long-suffering, standing up in creation, a monument whereon, more than on all the palaces of heaven, is inscribed the grandest of all truths, that "Jehovah is Love;" that such a man in the real, though unintended and overruled results of his monstrous iniquity, is bringing a greater revenue of glory unto God than the radiant archangel as he bows before the throne. O no, Paul does not mean to fling himself in pitiful plight at the Corinthians' feet, crying, "Take care, O take care, lest by your daily shortcomings you make Jehovah a despised God in the face of the universe." "Take care, lest ye cast a stain on His robes, or tear the diadem from His brow, or rock His throne into dust."

No, no. Paul knew they could not do it. He knew that if all earth should go over to the Apostate, and throughout all the dwellings of the race there should be heard only cursings and blasphemies, and never another penitential tear be shed, nor another trustful prayer uttered; and all tribes and families of men should gather under the black standard of rebellion, and breaking away from all restraints of righteousness, and rushing madly into all the depths of guilt and abandonment and despair, man should become a devil and the earth a hell, still Paul knew that only the brighter, for all that dreadful night, would a glory flash from the Cross of Christ; and when the great day of visitation had passed by, and divine justice came

down at last upon the race, and the fires burned, and the lightnings blazed, that then the smoke of the consuming world would ascend through immensity and eternity, the very noblest of all incense, unto the glory of God.

From "the savor of death" of flowers crushed under the conqueror's chariot-wheels, as richly as from "the savor of life" of flowers worn in his chaplet of victory, rose the sweet favor of Christ in the path of Omnipotence. O, these moving invitations of the Gospel are not urged by Jehovah out of any fear lest He come short of His ultimate glory. He needs no human voice in the great anthem of hallelujah. He needs no earthly palm strewn in the path of His victory. Love, love it is, love only, love omnipotent, that brings the Eternal One from His throne thus pleading with rebellious mortals, that they turn and live. I repeat it, therefore, you are to regard the apostle as having reference, not to the results of action, but only unto motives, when he exhorts the Corinthians in the words of the text, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The exhortation means simply that we should live ever as in God's presence, and act ever in the inspiration of His love. In other words, that we should be sincerely religious in all things. Practically, the emphasis rests on the word "*whatsoever*," and is expressive of the breadth and comprehensiveness of Paul's idea of the religious life.

This is more strikingly put in the context—"Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God." Here you have Paul's notion of the absolute constancy and universality of the religious principle—we have.

First. Its constancy—as a principle to be kept in every-day exercise. Our religious life is no more to be confined to Sabbaths and sanctuaries than is our eating and drinking. I need scarcely enlarge on this thought. There are few things stranger than this practical demand in our thought of man's work and God's worship. Surely holiness to the Lord ought to be inscribed as well on the bells of our horses as on the bells of our sanctuaries; and market-places and store-houses and exchanges and parlors and drawing-rooms and dining-rooms should be places as honestly consecrated to God as these Christian sanctuaries. And all the sounds of busy civilization—the axe of the woodman, and the chisel of the stone-cutter, and the saw of the carpenter, and the noise of wheels on the street, and the ringing of factory-bells, and the voices of trading men and visiting women, yea, the joyous laugh of manhood in its recreations, and of childhood in its noisy sports, should blend with the new song of the redeemed in heaven in harmonious hallelujah unto the glory of God.

That it is not so practically, we all know. To profess religion hath come to mean little more than to unite with a church and partake of a sacrament. There may be during the entire six days an absolute arrest of all manifest thought of God, and the man may be in no degree distinguished from the veriest worldling. He may be selfish and sensual, a tyrant in his home-circle, and a sharper in the market-place—seemingly given up unto worldliness through the entire secular week of business or pleasure. But now comes the Sabbath, and lo! as if the archangel's trump had sounded, there is seen a sudden resurrection of his buried Christianity.

Now he goes up to the sanctuary as to a periodic Turkish bath, where with intense sensations he may have his worldliness scrubbed out of him, and sits at the communion table with capacity for a month's food, like a prophet or a camel; and it may be, once a year, in some season of revival, he rises into flames of ecstatic and spasmodic godliness, like a long-stabled horse let loose for an hour on some green hill-side pasture. So that, on the whole, the man's religion is a poor copy of the Hebrews' at Mount Sinai, seemingly worshiping Jehovah so long as the lightnings blaze and the mountain rocks; but just so soon as the thunders cease and the grand sensation is over, crying even with an increased idolatry, "Now, then, Aaron, bring out the calf!" And this, and just this, is what the text earnestly rebukes. Practical Christianity is no sanctuary sensation, no Sabbath-day service. It is the conscientious discharge of all duty, with a desire therein to honor Jehovah. It makes the whole world a temple, and the whole life a priesthood, "eating and drinking, and doing all things to the glory of God."

But the text goes further, and as a point even more important and practical, sets forth,

Secondly. The universality of the religious principle. The apostle speaks of actions not only secular and social, but seemingly trivial and insignificant, as to be done religiously, "eating and drinking unto the glory of God." And here, even more than before, do we need exhortation. The taste of our times is for great things in religion. As the summer tourist hurries carelessly by all the tamer beauties of landscape, and can experience no rapture save on the height of some ma-

jestic mountain, or in the spray of some stupendous waterfall, so the modern pietist feels no ecstasies of godliness except when breathing an atmosphere elevated into the Alpine height of sentiment, or surcharged with electricity. Nothing less than a powerful revival, a thronged inquiry-room, a crowd gaping at the explosive roar of sensational gunpowder, the billowy heave and swell of some intense and universal excitement, seems to him a season or sphere wherein God can be honored.

Now, against this disposition to regard only great things as acceptable unto God, our text launches its exhortation, and its fine practical wisdom will appear if you consider in connection a few common-sense thoughts.

First. That human life is made up of little things and trivial occurrences. As in nature there is but one Mount Blanc, and one Niagara, and one Yosemite, so in grace there occur but few great crises like the Reformation, wherein a man can heave like an earthquake, and flash as a thunderbolt for the divine glory; so that in the mass and in the main, if we do anything for God, it must be in the little, common, ever-recurring things of our daily life, as it were, "eating and drinking to the glory of God."

Secondly. That though one might occasionally do some great thing for God, yet this neglect to honor Him in these small things would destroy all the influence for good of these grander achievements. Ah me! it was a wonderfully wise metaphor of Solomon—that of the ointment—cut its vase, if you will, out of crystal or alabaster, and distil its perfumes from Sheba's rarest gums and Sharon's loveliest roses, and yet one dead fly in its limpid olive will decompose into a pestilent odor

its most exquisite aroma ; and so, so verily, doth a little, a very little, destroy the moral power of a man that is in reputation for wisdom. Let a man be as ardent as Peter, or as eloquent as Paul, or as fervently loving as John, nevertheless, if he make manifest in his common life that he is vain or proud or selfish or extravagant in his statements, or given to slander in his conversation, or to levity in his deportment, or be an unkind man in his household, or overreaching and tricky in his business, or simply unreliable and unstable in any sphere of life, and then, alas ! it will be as the dead fly of Solomon—the savor of his godliness is an offense—a spot hath he become in the feasts of charity, a dead-weight on the sinews of the militant Church. This want of a small grace is oftentimes more than a counterpoise for the momentum of a great grace. The towers and battlements of religious professions are manfully guarded and kept, but the sentinel sleeps at the sally-port, and the enemy enters, and Zion is yielded, and God's honor despised. Nay, we may go even further than this, and observe,

Thirdly. That the absence of these small graces of Christianity does not merely weaken the influence, but destroys positively the very essence of the great graces. So dependent are all Christian principles one upon another, that they cannot even exist separately. Christian character is not a conglomerate of heterogeneous excellences, but a composite of all, in beautiful crystal, under the affinities of a gracious chemistry. Cardinal virtues, in their separation and overgrowth, are simply monstrous, and may be brutal. Let a man be all patience without courage, and he becomes more a sheep

than a saint ; let him be all courage without gentleness, and he is simply a tiger. Zeal without knowledge is a devouring fire in a harvest-field ; and even love without labor is a scorching sirocco on the tropic seas, withering the strength of the becalmed mariner. And therefore it is that Paul, when speaking of all Christian graces, calls them not separately the fruits of the Spirit, but all together a fruit of the Spirit. So that if the small are not mingled with the great, you can no more have any true Christian fruit than you can have a true peach without its sugar, or a true apple without its acid. Sure we are that a lack of the small graces weakens immensely the soul's capacities to do anything for God.

Fourthly. That even in regard of His own actions God is more sensibly glorified in small things than in great things. Indeed, strictly speaking, God's great things are only an aggregate of little things. Mount Blanc is but a masonry of sand-grains ; Niagara only a multiplication of rain-drops. And apart from this thought, it is from God's least splendid operations we learn most of His glory ; and even to a simply philosophic mind more wonderful does He seem when feathering the insect's wing than when upholding in their stupendous travel the great orbs of astronomy. The arguments whereon theology rests as a system are drawn with more confidence from God's little than from God's great works. And thus the efforts of the unbeliever is to seduce trustful faith abroad from its divinely-appointed scholarship of the fowl of the air and the lily of the field, that it may be overborne as it considers the heavens the work of God's fingers. And even Atheism is less staggered at the truth that the firmament is

crowded with immense worlds, than that a water-drop teems with sentient inhabitants.

Fifthly. How altogether arbitrary and often false are our reckonings of what are really the great and what the small in human achievements. Philosophically speaking, great actions are such only as produce great results; and short-sighted as we all are in respect to life's issues, we can never exactly know when we are doing great things and when we are doing small. Our daily lives are spent amid an economy of instrumentalities, whose sweep is outward through the universe and onward through eternity. Every secret thought plays along the immense telegraph; every small deed affects the tremendous mechanism. Paul here seems intentionally to make mention of the least significant of all moral actions, "eating and drinking;" and yet had our first parents in Paradise ate and drank not unto a selfish lust, but "to the glory of God," then death had never come into the world. O thou father, that beloved form had still filled the vacant place in your home! O thou mother, that sweet babe would be nestling still, with its blessed smile, on your yearning bosom; and this great planet would be still in all its first beauty and glory and love, moving unto sweet harmonies in the smile of its God, which, alas! to-night sweeps onward through blackened skies as the great death-car of creation, unto the universal grave.

Sixthly. How, without any reference to these results, but only self-considered, it requires and manifests a higher style of piety, and a more intense consecration unto God's service, to do well the small thing than to do well the great. Naaman, the Assyrian, found it im-

measurably easier to bear his banner in triumph over mighty cities than to go down in childlike obedience to the cool waters of Jordan. And you and I would find it easier to ride Sheridan's foaming war-horse into the very van of the battle, than to relax the clenched hand and turn again the burning cheek to the insulting blow of the ruffian.

Why, even martyrdom itself, under the impulse of a grand heroism, is among the easiest of all things; and if the days of persecution should come again, I have no question that Christian heroism would kindle again—to rush exulting into the flames, and perish nobly for Jesus; and perhaps out of every communion in the land a hundred believers would be found rushing dauntlessly to the dungeon and the stake for any ten that will leave a party of pleasure, and come on a cold and stormy night to a prayer-meeting, or go forth to carry a basket of bread to the chamber of forlorn and suffering poverty. For, I repeat it, it would require less piety to do this great and splendid thing for God, than to subdue every selfish and carnal thought, to love an insolent and provoking enemy, to return gentle words for malicious slander, to bear a rival's success without envy, and to cherish even that heavenly yet homely charity which Paul himself ranks above martyrdom, that envieth not and vaunteth not, but hopeth all things and endureth all things, and whose crowning glory is that it is not easily provoked and doth not behave itself unseemly. And practically, Paul found it easier to combat Ephesian beasts than to bear his thorn in the flesh; and Simon Peter, whose delight was to plunge into stormy seas for Christ, and to flash his sword in the face of the

Roman soldiers for Christ; yet poor Peter could neither keep his temper nor govern his tongue; and the pages of martyrology abound with histories of men and women who, under strong excitements, could brave death triumphantly, and yet who could not maintain domestic proprieties under small daily provocations—who, indeed, found it positively easier, in the face of admiring multitudes, to be eaten of wild beasts in the amphitheatre, than, by the quiet boards of their humble habitations, “to eat and drink to the glory of God.” Now this would lead us, had we time, to consider as we had designed,

Seventhly, and finally. The importance of these smaller things in religion, inasmuch as they perhaps most abound in the spheres of our pleasures or recreations. It will already have struck you that in Paul’s selected specifications he had an eye to this thought. “Eating and drinking” are not usually classed with labors and duties; and in selecting them as occasions for honoring God the apostle carries this religious principle into the whole sphere of social and secular enjoyments. We reserve this large and important particular for some future and extended examination, but simply remark, meantime, that it is most important, and, perhaps, most of all in this direction does the Church of Christ need enlightenment. The old Puritan and the new Pharisee alike need to be taught that, as indicated by the almost gross and altogether animal pleasures of eating and drinking, the sphere of simply earthly enjoyments is one in which we may especially glorify God. If we may eat and drink to God’s glory, then as certainly we may gather bright flowers and

listen to singing birds ; we may go abroad on summer excursions over rolling seas and athwart sunny landscapes ; we may share all the common pleasure of domestic and social circles ; we may gratify all taste of art and literature and science ; we may bless the eye with all shapes and colors of beauty, and the ear with all combinations of music ; we may do ten thousand things, nay, we may positively do all things, which, while they neither violate a divine law nor infringe any human interest, do give us new heart and strength for our own great life-work. Away for evermore with this foul self-righteousness, which thinks of our own earthly sufferings as any part of expiation for sin. God wants His children, even on earth, to be happy. He delights more in their songs than in their sorrows, and is better pleased when they approach Him wearing bright raiment and garlands of flowers, than when tortured with sackcloth of hair and a crown of thorns.

O, thou poor, mourning, disconsolate soul, dash that tear out of thine eye, cast that heavy burden off thy heart, come away from those gloomy cypresses that overshadow love's graves, out into God's fairer world of summer and sunshine. On the day when a great king is honored, they bring not forth from prison and cell forms macerated and manacled, to clank fetters and wail in the procession, but behold strong men bearing banners, and women showering chaplets, and joyous children with dancing feet keeping step to festal music ; and so shall the redeemed soul best honor Jehovah. Rise, therefore, O children of God, to your birthright privileges, with flashing eye and bounding foot and rejoicing heart, as ye eat and drink to the glory of God.

This is Paul's rule of life, that not merely in special emergencies and on great occasions we are to work for God's glory, but that, carrying our religion into all the minutiae of the street and parlor, the counting-room and the workshop, we are to love ever as if earth were a great temple, and life a great priesthood, the altar ever aflame, and the censer ever swinging, and knowing that if we adorn the doctrine of Christ in anything, it must be positively in all things, and if we honor Jehovah at all, it must be by doing life's little things with an eye single to His glory; we must be ever busy at our blessed work, "eating and drinking to the glory of God."

And O, my brethren, what a blessed world this would become under the full play of so heavenly a principle! What a prodigious power it would give to the Gospel in the eyes of gainsaying men, if, instead of this mere Pharisaism of sanctuaries and sacraments, it was seen to inspire its disciples with all practical graces of undeviating truth and magnanimous honor and public spirit and beneficence and brotherly kindness and charity; if, instead of rendering its professor a sectarian zealot or a doctrinal bigot, it pervaded with a matchless beauty the whole field of the secular and social, and it make him a trustful mechanic or a fair-dealing merchant or a faithful public officer, a kind father and a loving husband, a conscientious politician and a comprehensive patriot, a Christian gentleman and an honest man. How it would vindicate Christianity from the suspicion of the world that it is, after all, only a driveling fanaticism, or, at most, a scheming hypocrisy, and send it forth to win triumphs over the

philosophic intellect of the times, were it seen to work what God ever meant it should work, the regeneration of our nature in all its nobler qualities, pervading with its higher, heavenly life all the world's arts and science and commerce and literature and jurisprudence and politics and governments. Not satisfied when it had made its disciple merely a keeper of Sabbaths and a partaker of sacraments, but as well a diligent well-doer in "all that is pure and honest and lovely and of good report." How it would win to its embrace a great multitude of our beloved youth, if, instead of walking among men forlorn and forbidding, as a wrathful soldier with a sword, or a weary pilgrim with a burden, its feet ever bounded and its eyes sparkled and its voice sang in the heavenly inspiration of peace and blessedness and love. How it would make earth beautiful almost as heaven, and there would be a Paradise in the street and the workshop and the social circle and the household, by board and heart.

If to be full of the apostolic exhortation we were honoring God in all things, ever mindful of His presence and grateful for His favors and obedient to His precepts, we ate our meat to God, and wore our clothes to God, and made our bargains to God, and enjoyed our pleasures to God, and furnished our houses to God, and spent our strength to God, sleeping to God and waking to God, living to God and dying to God—how this marred and blighted footstool of Jehovah would assume at once new beauty; yea, resume almost its old primeval glory, and the old prophetic visions would be seemingly realized, the whole landscape flashing with divine lustre, the sea roaring, and the

hills leaping, and the floods lifting up their voices, and trees of the field clapping their hands, and the mountains and plains breaking forth into singing, and the very tabernacle of God be visibly with men—if man, redeemed man, trod the landscape ever as a child and heir of God's love and kingdom, going joyously home to heaven! How it would bring back to our lost race the grace and glory of redeemed immortals, and we should scarcely envy Gabriel his power and his pinions. If we could only feel that amid life's little cares and common secular labors we were working not merely for the daily bread of our beloved ones, but that when plying tools in the workshop, or reading on exchange, or selling goods to a customer, or administering medicine to the sick, or pleading for a charity, or busy in the thousand activities of the home and the household, we were nevertheless all like, angel and archangel, glorifying God in the face of the universe, quarrying immortal stones for Jehovah's temple, polishing the jewels for Jehovah's diadem, rearing platforms and pavilion for Jehovah's coronation—"doing all we do to the glory of God!"

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN.

"Our conversation is in heaven."—PHILIPPIANS III. 20.

I suppose none of you need be told that this verse is not well translated. There are several words in the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures of which our English rendering is "conversation." The word in the text is found nowhere else in the original. It is "*politeuma*," from which comes our word "politics," or "polities," and means a state, or republic, or commonwealth. But as this word is derived from another, signifying "manner of life," or "conduct," it is sometimes used in this sense by inspired writers. In our text the word means "civil rights," or "citizenship," and is much better rendered in the French version, "Our manner of life is that of citizens of heaven;" as the same thought is put elsewhere, "On the earth a child of God is only a sojourner, a pilgrim, a stranger," while his true home is heaven. Had we time, we would in this connection consider our text in its bearing upon the millenarian expectation that Christ is presently to appear and set up a visible kingdom on the earth. The apostle does, indeed, in this very verse, tell us that he was looking for the appearance of his Lord, but not that He was to remain on the earth, or establish His reign among men. He

was to come only "to change our vile bodies into the likeness of His own glorious body." Were our Lord so to reign personally in this world, then for the time being the text would not be true, for the saint's conversation would be here. But here it never has been and never will be. Christ's kingly and priestly offices are performed, and ever will be, in heaven. His kingdom is not of this world. Even when all earth's peoples and kingdoms and tongues shall have bowed to His sceptre, and become His loyal subjects, and our planet be transfigured into "a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," still it will be no more than a small island in Immanuel's mighty kingdom. That kingdom, in all its imperial essentials, will be in some transcendent, and to us unknown sphere of the higher life which we call heaven. There Christ dwells, and ever will dwell, in His glorified and enthroned humanity, as the Omnipotent sovereign; there are kept the royal archives, the sacred and precious register of the names of his subjects; there are His armies, not the poor, scattered, half-hearted, half-trained Christian soldiery, but innumerable legions of angels; there He receives His embassies, not alone from this small revolted province, but from millions of millions of the unfallen worlds and systems and clusters which, "gathered together in one," constitute His universal mediatorial kingdom. There, too, is Christ's *true Church*. What we call His Church on earth is really nothing more than a training-place, or, as we may term it, a mission-chapel or school for church members, presently to be translated to the higher communion; and whenever a child of God becomes meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints

in light, he is called to that higher membership and mission.)

The same truth was signified by the building of the Temple, where just so soon as the stones and timbers were prepared for their places in the divine architecture they were borne away to their destiny. Christ's true Church is not in this world, and in that loftier realm and all-glorious Church are performed, and forever will be, the stupendous functions of His eternal priesthood; and therefore we repeat it, both in regard of our Lord's established kingdom and His perfected Church, this bright dream of the millenarian can never be realized. But we have no space here for the argument. This is the great truth which the text teaches. As our Lord's kingdom and Church are in heaven, so, as well, must be every Christian's citizenship. (Below the skies he is only a sojourner, but above is his home.)

Now, thus considered, the text presents two topics of simple, practical discourse—Christian duties and Christian privileges. We have set forth,

First. *Our peculiar duties in this world.* If we are the recognized and recorded citizens or members of that higher commonwealth, or heavenly kingdom, then we should magnify our immunities; we should live worthy of our high calling, our celestial citizenship. Let us consider this thought in a few of its practical applications. Take the analogy of a man traveling or briefly sojourning in a foreign land, and how does he act? Certainly the whole manner of his life will be different from the citizen's, whether native or adopted. You will perceive this in many particulars.

1st. In regard of property. He may be a rich man.

But if he be a wise one, he does not travel with all his wealth about him. Nor has he brought all his wealth with him, for he knows there are highwaymen on the road and thieves in his resting-places. He may even in his travels add largely to his wealth. If he come upon a golden mine in the mountains, he will take out the precious ore, but he will not be likely to build a palace beside it nor purchase a vast ranch, nor, indeed, any very valuable real estate within sight of it. He will transmit his gains as he makes them for permanent investment in his native land.

And so, 2dly. In regard of pleasure. A foreigner passing through a strange land may experience many real delights. He will sometimes be happier than many of the natives. He enjoys its scenery; he is pleased with its society; he will sing along its highways, sleep sweetly in its hostelries, walk smilingly through its art-galleries and flower-gardens, and sit cheerfully, perhaps merrily, at its boards and banquets. Nevertheless, it will appear in all his bearing, in the eagerness with which he seeks news from home, studies the despatches by cable, opens the letters by steamer, as his face brightens at glad tidings and grows pale if they are sorrowful, in all this it will be apparent that his strongest sympathies are with unseen things beyond the waters, that "where his treasure is there is his heart also."

Meanwhile, the same thing will be observable, 3dly. In regard to honors. These, too, a foreigner may receive as he sojourns in strange lands. If illustrious either by birth or achievement, the countries and cities through which he passes will delight to dispense hospitalities and offer congratulations. And if he be wise, he

will accept them gratefully and gladly. Nevertheless, even in the highest gratification they afford him, it will be as manifest that he regards them in their true value as only things incidental or occasional, forgotten perhaps on the morrow, and never for a moment to be compared with the permanent, life-long honors, the place and power and glory he has secured by his character, or won by his achievements in his own fatherland.

Such are some of the laws or conditions of the stranger's daily life. And in exact analogy with them should be those of a true Christian on earth. Alike in its riches, pleasures, honors, he may be a large, and should be a glad and grateful participant. Such have been in all time the real children of God. From the time of Abraham until now, just because their lives were in obedience to divine laws, and all their plans and purposes adjusted to the grand currents and courses of God's providence, as prosperous argosies moved by gulf streams and trade-winds, have their lives been successful. Their possessions have been the most secure, their pleasures the richest, their honors the highest and noblest that ever this world can give. Even all "things present" are truly the Christian's; and as the gifts of God, and the evidences of His love, every true Christian accepts them and rejoices in them, and feels glorified by them. God brought His dear children into this world that they should make the most and have the best of it. They are "citizens of heaven," and even in this world their whole bearing should show that they are blest by their birthright. If a man put on camel's hair, and live on locust meat, men will think he has a devil, and the ascetic who affects awful sanctity, retiring from all

earthly pleasures, dwelling among tombs, and cutting himself with stones, is doing his best to make the world believe that "his conversation is *in hell*."

A Christian is indeed in this world only a sojourner. He is a citizen of heaven. But so, even in a higher sense, are the angels. But angels are happy in this world. They rejoice to come into it, and for a time to abide in it. Just as princes and nobles delight to visit distant lands, so do they delight to descend to the earth, for they can learn lessons about God and do work for God which they never did or can in heaven. There are here exhibitions of divine attributes—His long-suffering with obstinate rebels, His gentle forbearance with wayward children, which they never dreamed of as they sat on their heavenly thrones, or went forth in chariots of fire through the immensities and effulgencies of the unfallen universe. And just as men now leave their luxurious homes and magnificent cities to traverse wild and savage regions—now pitching tents in awful deserts, where wild beasts howl and dark nights horrify, and now climbing precipices, terrible and perilous, of huge and icy mountains—now shivering amid the blinding spray of some thundering cataract, and now recoiling from the smoke and flame of some rocking volcano—just so many a mighty angel has come from his blissful home in heaven, in the very city of God, to sit through cold and clouded nights in the black shadows of Gethsemane, and stand silent and shuddering on the rent rocks of Calvary.

There is surely awfully sublime moral scenery along a Christian's earthly pilgrimage well worthy his eager study. There are mighty mountains and terrible abysses

of moral evil, and old spiritual battle-fields, where heroic faith won splendid victories; and there are ruined Babylons of old infidelities, and sepulchral Petras of dead atheisms; and there are Ebenezers of God along all the path of His chosen people; and seas through which, dry-shod, they passed; and Sinais, around whose awful peaks the divine glory flamed; and smitten rocks that poured forth living water; and green and sunny places where their tabernacles rested; and Pisgahs where men of God died exulting in heavenly visions; and Jordans that rolled back their stormy ideas, and whose waters stood up like walls of flashing gems in the pathway of the redeemed as they went up to Canaan—and surely scenes like these are worthy Christian visiting. And though we are citizens of heaven, yet there are gold mines of graces amid these mountains, and pearls of great price in the depth of these waters, whence we may gather precious treasure to be laid up in heaven. And there are here all kinds and styles of pleasure, which it becomes us to rejoice in as manifestations of God's loving-kindness. And there are honors to be struggled for, and victories to be won, whose guerdons will be the brightest crowns which creatures can ever cast before the eternal throne; and therefore, I repeat it, the law of the Christian's life in regard of the good things of earth, is to accept them gratefully, and diligently make the best of them. Nevertheless, his bearing the while should make manifest that the whole set and strength of his affections are on the invisible things beyond the stars and the sepulchres—the commonwealth of a spiritual citizenship—the eternal kingdom of God!

In this regard, therefore, the text's first teaching is of Christian duty. We said that a child of God, as truly as an angel, is "a citizen of heaven." His peculiar rights, his richest treasure, his highest immunities, his strongest affections, his very home and heritage are as really in the skies as are an angel's, and therefore the laws of his daily life, the direction of his tastes, the decisions of his judgment, his opinions on great moral subjects, should be like those of an angel. I do not mean that God expects any man or woman on earth to be thoroughly angelic. For, alas! we have all evil hearts, and the remains, at least, of a carnal nature; and if any of us have wings like angels, they are not yet strong enough to sweep the firmament, nor even yet fully plumed to fly at all. And our calling of God on earth is not to strike harps of gold to seraphic symphonies, but to ply implements of honest toil; to wield hammer or saw in a workshop; or to sell goods over a counter; or to deal in bank stocks or real estate; to use a pen or a plow; to practice law or medicine, or to be busy in some higher or lower sphere of earth's honest, homely industries. And if we were to affect the exquisite emotional and æsthetic sensibilities of angelhood, our performances of their higher functions of this heavenly citizenship would probably be somewhat curious, and, on the whole, rather a failure. And yet, I say, we are expected, in our own walk and sphere of life, to think and act in the true spirit, and under the laws of such "citizenship;" and perhaps, practically and to profit, we can in no better way judge of our spiritual performances than to inquire how our daily lives would appear unto a literal "citizen of heaven."

Suppose, then, that the spirit of some just man long since made perfect in glory, or that some unfallen angel should come down, and for the time being dwell among us, how would many things current in our daily lives seem to him, or affect him? Take him into our spheres of business, and let him perceive how its controlling principle is not Christian integrity, but simple "law-honesty." Take him into our circle of pleasure, and show him how Christian casuistry is concerned largely in deciding how near we can approach the border of sinful delights without boldly overstepping it; how much of the prodigal's "riotous living" in the far country we can bring back as adding zest to the old patriarchal banquet. Take him to the sphere of our religious activities, and let him witness the popular style of the service and the measure of the consecration; how the preaching of the pulpit is more "unto the times" than about the eternities—a hundred sermons about the Bible and science—about the cavils of infidelity—about the bigotries of creeds—about the Shibboleths of controversy—about the obscure symbolism of prophets, or the "hard things" of the Epistles—about the picturesque and the poetical, the biographical or geographic, the sentimental or philosophic—in short, a whole hundred discourses about matters incidental or non-essential, for a single earnest sermon about Christ and Him crucified. Let him see how our popular psalmody is performed rather to delight an audience with tasteful harmonies, or to astonish the natives with tasteless extravaganzas or fashionable agonies—which some people call music—than with any thought of lifting the soul heavenward on the wings of devotion. Let him ob-

serve how there are more professing Christians every night at the opera than any week at a prayer-meeting; how a storm which never keeps a sick man away from his business will keep many a well one away from the sanctuary; how we spend more hours over the daily newspaper than minutes over the Bible, and give a hundred times as much money in selfish indulgences as on Christian charities. Take such an angel, in short, through the entire sphere of our ordinary religious life, with his whole heart full of heavenly impulses and affections, and would not his honest words be loud in denunciation of our shortcomings and disloyalty to our "citizenship in heaven?" I can fancy him approaching some child of God in a time of deep affliction; he has lost property, or been thwarted in his worldly purposes, or disappointed in his hopes, and, like Jonah, sits down under his withered vine in despairing anguish; and how will all this strike the spectator-angel? Ah! methinks I hear him cry, "Why, what mean you thus to let your heart break under God's tender chastening? These are only the gracious fires purifying the gold for the crown; only the strong winds along the waters, bearing the immortal bark to the haven! Your mansion in the skies is not burnt; your pearl of great price is not lost; yours are still all the pleasures at God's right hand—all the treasures laid up in heaven—all the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"

I can imagine this angel entering even the darkest scene of mortal suffering, the chamber of the last agony, the cold, pitiless grave, where the heart of love lies buried. But even there, with an intensity of grief, he will have no sympathy. He will say, "Weep on for

your own sakes, for it is good for man to weep, for your gracious Master wept. But why weep thus as those without hope! What mean these overmastering griefs that will not be comforted? Death! death! Why, have you found earth such a paradise that the word should be dreadful? Death! death! And have you never heard that great voice out of heaven saying, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord?' Do you grieve that the dear eye has ceased to weep? that the aching head rests? that the broken heart is comforted? Do you sorrow when a freed bird mounts to the skies? when a storm-beaten bark makes its haven? when a yearning exile hath gone home? Do you not know that in the blessed world of our higher citizenship there rises ever and only a voice of joyous rapture, and all the harps are swept to strains of triumphal music when a redeemed spirit mounts from an earthly death-bed to a better home and an eternal throne in heaven?

I cannot enlarge. In regard of such things, in regard, indeed, of all things in our daily lives and conversation, which would excite indignation, or even surprise, in the mind of such an angel, we may be sure we come short in our duty "as citizens of heaven."

And now there remains brief space to consider our text in its other aspect. As we said, it sets forth,

Secondly. *A Christian's prerogatives, or privileges.* This, indeed, is its especial meaning, or force, in its connection. This epistle was written by Paul when imperial Rome was in the meridian of her glory, and when simply to be enrolled as a citizen of that transcendent commonwealth was regarded as an immunity and an honor surpassing that of common conquerors or kings. The

rights of Roman citizenship were counted precious, yea, priceless. The old Latin eagles spread wings of mighty protection over the most distant and undistinguished of the race. Woe! woe to the man! woe to the tribe or nation that dared wrong a citizen of that all-powerful commonwealth. And thus we find this great apostle, more than once in times of extreme peril and persecution, escaping personal suffering and violence, and breathing terror into the hearts of his enemies, by simply declaring that "he was a Roman." And it was in allusion to this that he penned our text, and the metaphor is full of the power of consolation. If it were so good and glorious to be a citizen of Rome, O how unspeakably precious the prerogative of a citizenship in heaven! The aspect of the text-consolation is two-fold.

1st. It strengthens us mightily amid the trials of this life. In this sphere of the mortal we must have tribulation, not, indeed, because we are Christians, but because we are men. But let us be of good cheer, for not one of them, nor all of them, can injure a true child of God. Once, you will remember, this great apostle found himself in the power of incensed enemies, and seemingly hemmed in unto destruction. But what did he then? Why, only proclaimed aloud his citizenship. And the raging multitude grew pale, and the lictor dropped his scourge, and the proud centurion trembled in his brave array, when they heard that that poor outcast Jew was all the while a Roman citizen. For who dared to touch a man overshadowed by the imperial eagles?

But how much surer and stronger a Christian safeguard and defense! What will, what dare, what can injure a child of God, an heir of glory! an immortal

spirit, overshadowed by the cross! yea, by the burning throne of the living, risen, reigning Christ! O! assure me that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and I will go forth a pilgrim-soldier along a path beset with mightiest enemies. Sorrows may approach as ghostly phantoms gliding through the dark night of life; spirits of evil may glare on me as armed giants in ambush; and death may come in all his terrible majesty to meet me in my way, yet if I am in Christ Jesus they cannot hurt me. Nay, if I am a Christian, I am stronger than they all, and can drive them back and scatter them from my path in terror, as I lift up my feeble voice in triumphant faith, and cry, "Touch me at your peril! See! see! I am under the cross! See! see!" (as the old soldier wrapped the imperial banner round him and dared the mightiest chieftain to strike)—"I have wrapped myself in the glorious folds of Christ's righteousness! I am a citizen of heaven!"

Surely in the trials of the present life our text is full of consolation. Meantime, and above all, does it gladden us,

2dly. In its glorious promise of the future. Although strangers and sojourners on earth, ours is a home, and a city, and a kingdom in heaven; and although of the goodness and glory of that kingdom the text leads us not to speak, yet of the nature and security of our citizenship in that commonwealth it does lead us to speak—yea, to speak of its nearness and insist on its desirableness. We have said that there is much of good to be enjoyed by a Christian on the earth, and have fancied angelic potentates leaving for a season their celestial palaces, and thrones even, delightfully to gaze

upon its scenes and mingle in its society; yet we must insist, as well, that, as citizens of heaven, their hearts were the while where their treasure was—in their immortal home.

And so should it be with every true child of God. Here, indeed, lies the main point—the absorbing and enrapturing thought of Paul when he penned the text, “Our conversation is in heaven,” whence we look for the Saviour, who shall change our vile bodies into the likeness of His own glorious body—not to stay with us as poor mortals on the earth, but to bear us with Him as risen immortals to His kingdom of heaven. O glorious hope! Not a splendid fancy, but only a realization of Christ’s own promise, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also,” and inherit with me my kingdom, and sit with me on God’s throne. The figure here is that enrapturing one so often repeated in the Bible—the saved Church or the saved Christian rescued, as a princess from captivity, and united in Love’s everlasting bonds with the conqueror as the Lamb’s wife! And what a home-bringing, such as bride never knew, that will be, when in the flaming chariot of fire, in the blessed eventide of time, upward, onward, upon the crystalline arches, along heaven’s azure and starry pathway, homeward-bound! Homeward-bound!—through the uplifted door, through the golden streets, through the opening ranks of angel and archangel, to the place prepared in that house of many mansions! Who, who shall speak of such things?—things of which Paul himself could only speak bewildered—“A far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”—

"Things to come"—"things to come?" O city of God! O palaces of immortality! O sea of glass! O trees of life! O throne of power! O diadems of glory! O ye impenitent and ungodly children of immortality! how can you barter for a momentary gladness on earth your heavenly birthright to such an inheritance? Why will you press to your lip the sparkling draught around whose golden cup coils the terrible adder whose sting is death? Why will you turn away from the text's bright visions of eternal joys and glories to take your forlorn way onward, downward into that unknown and fathomless "Forever," where the only goal and guerdon must be either annihilation or hell? Tell me, tell me what terrible shape of despair you have seen haunting the Heavenly Jerusalem, that you so recoil from its hallelujahs! Tell me, tell me, what shape of ineffable loveliness you have beheld flinging seraphic glories out amid the blackness of darkness, that you will rush to the bridal!

O child of the living God! exult in your immortal birthright! "Things to come!" "Things to come!" These earthly airs seem now fragrant with the breath of the flowers of the Life-trees. Hark how, in the great silences of life's night, you can catch cadences of the hallelujah. See! see how these wintry skies sparkle as with a lustre flung back from the portals of the palaces—the pinnacle of the temple of the City of the Immortals! O for the wings of angels! O for the chariots of fire! O for the opening of the gates of pearl! O for the blessed welcome of the voices of heavenly love! O blessed, joyous victory over the grave! O eternal triumph over death! O thrice blessed child of the liv-

ing God ! mounting, mounting from the prison to the
palace, from the footstool to the throne, from the earthly
exile to the Citizenship of Heaven !

THE GREAT QUESTION.

"What is a man profited?"—MATTHEW XVI. 26.

A striking peculiarity of our Lord's teaching was its plain, practical, common sense. He seldom reasoned as a philosopher; He never rhapsodized as a poet. He would not argue with infidelity about the being of a God. He left that to the birds and the lilies. He never sought to attract crowds by sensations. He left that to buffoons and harlequins. He met men on the level of their ordinary emotions, and addressed their common faculties, and always presented His own divine system of truth as something not philosophic or poetic, but simply as *profitable*. So He does in the text. His appeal is not to their ethical sentiments or emotions or passions, but to their prudence and common sense. He would have men come to their religion as to any other great interest, guided by reason and judgment, and accept or reject it on the ground of the world's great controlling question, alike in his time and our time, and all time, "Is the thing profitable?" "Is it worth what it costs?" "Will the thing pay?"

It looks at first like an appeal to the man's selfishness, as though, knowing him thoroughly, he saw the futility of discussing questions of high morals with the carnal

heart, and would knock at its door with a motive to which it has never denied entrance—a thought of the positive profit of goodness and godliness in the market-places and exchanges of life. Without any abatement or modification of the fundamental truth, that salvation is altogether of free grace, and cannot be procured by human merit, he yet represents man as a spiritual merchant trafficking in great earthly emporiums, “with a price put into his hands to buy wisdom.” And this figure is our text, and it is no other appeal to his selfishness than is made everywhere in the Bible—that we present this great salvation as “the pearl of great price,” the transcendent “hid treasure,” the “one thing needful,” above all others, which a wise man should buy. And with such a text, methinks I stand on vantage ground with every ungodly man. I come to him with no appeal to those high principles either of religion which he does not feel or of morals which he cannot appreciate. I address myself only to that sentiment of *self-love* which is universally felt, and from the little child who buys a toy for a shilling to the merchant-prince who purchases great ships and marble palaces and silver mines, with an outlay of millions, constrains all men to spend money judiciously. I do not bring him the Bible at all. I lay before him the book that he opens in the counting-room and consults in the market-place—the schedule and register of price-current and invoices and stock-exchanges, the arithmetic of barter and balance-sheets and profit and loss, and only ask him to be, in regard of his spiritual interests, as cautious and shrewd as he is in regard of his temporal, and that in respect of his moral, as of his material interests, he will make no bar-

gain and venture on no enterprise till he has carefully considered "how it will profit," and "whether it will pay."

Now, in applying this great principle of life we will look, first, at the side of *worldliness*. In this great "Vanity Fair" of life there are many things a man may buy. But he should purchase wisely. He should examine the auctioneer's catalogue carefully, and compare the true value of things with their current prices. We have no space here for particulars. As a general rule, all Satan's wares cost too much. Take sensual pleasure, as the most common of all. Take the wine-cup. I am not going to preach a temperance sermon. On both sides of that question a great many foolish things have been said. To say that to drink a glass of wine is *per se* sinful, is to blaspheme our Divine Lord, who furnished it for a wedding. I am now only considering the real *cost* of the thing. Five years ago a young man paid a shilling for a cup of strong drink. "O," he said, "this is a very cheap pleasure. Only an hour's earnings for a whole night's enjoyment. How it re-nerves my wearied body! how it revives my flagging intellect! What brilliant fancies it makes! what good fellowships it fosters! And all this almost for nothing." But, after all, did it not *cost him too much*? Look at him now—that poor, wretched, haggard out-cast. It has cost him health, happiness, character, the friendship of the virtuous. It has cost him a broken heart, a wounded spirit. It has cost a brother's and a sister's tears, a father's gray head bowed in sorrow to the earth, a mother's loving heart broken in anguish. These, and such as these, are the items in the bill of

costs for that one night's revel. Surely the thing did not pay. And what is true of that form of worldly pleasure will be found true of them all. I see a young man buying a French novel, buying a pack of cards, buying a ticket to a theatre or a Sabbath day's pleasure-party, or for any scene or form of enjoyment which God's people regard as evil, and I say to him, "Stop a moment; consider a little." But he answers, "O, I am not a professor of religion, and there is nothing wrong in this thing." Well, for the sake of the argument, grant it. I am not now speaking about wickedness, but only about waste. I only suggest in a friendly way that the thing costs too much. And when he answers, "Why, it costs almost nothing," I tell him he has not counted it. The coin he takes from his purse is not its real price. If it results in nothing worse, it will at least sicken him of the calm realities of life; it will render daily labor irksome; it will take the zest from his old home-comfort; the beauty will be gone from the mother's smile; the music gone from the child's voice; it will make life's paths drearier and its burden heavier. But then it will do worse. There are under-currents of deep corruption under the sparkling of these streams of pleasure. That sensational romance! It will hold up vice to your imagination in disguise of strange beauty. That ticket to the play-house! It will stir in your heart feverish excitements, stormy passions, mighty as tempests, to drive life's bark amid breakers. That small bill at the race-course, the gambling-house, the Sabbath-frolic! Alas! its final payment will leave you bankrupt in virtue and character. I cannot enlarge. We see men indulging daily in what they term cheap plea-

asures, which are dear at any price. It is only buying wild horses for life's road, to dash in pieces the chariot; wild beasts for life's garden, to destroy and devour all its rarest flowers and richest fruits; wild satyrs and fiends, to abide and cry in life's chambers of imagery. O no, no; these things *are not cheap*. If there be anything for which men pay exorbitant prices, it is sensual joy. If there be anything in God's universe that does not pay; it is sin, sin.

But the thought of the text goes much farther than this. Our Lord is not here speaking of things that are altogether evil, but of things which may be in themselves good—which, indeed, are evil only when pursued as the grand end of our being; when purchased and enjoyed in the service of Satan, as he puts it in this terrible question, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" And assuredly, in this aspect, the best things of impenitent men cost too much; and we pray you, O men, even of noble impulses and lofty earthly aims, ere you choose this world as your soul's portion, and yield yourselves up to its idolatries, and go forth in those ways which will make your whole being an agonizing struggle for fortunes or honors you must lay down at the grave, we pray you to sit down as wise men, and count the cost. Grant all you claim for the thing—that it will yield life-long pleasure; four-score years of unmingled and intoxicating rapture; nevertheless, when the end comes, and the mighty hand of death rouses you from the bright, delirious dream to the dreadful reality, and through the dissolving cloud you see the precipice that yawns at your feet, and hear below the dash of the aw-

ful billows, and see above the fading away of the pinnacles and palaces of the eternal city that might have been your own, then, at least then, there will be a solemn consideration of the wisdom or folly of the purchase, a thorough conviction of the truth that the whole thing did *not* pay.

We cannot pursue farther this direction of the truth, for the text has another and an opposite one. As we said, it represents man as a spiritual merchant trafficking in great earthly emporiums, with a price put into his hands to make an eternal purchase, and leads us to consider the side, secondly, of true *godliness*—the case of the man who selects as his object of purchase the soul's salvation, or the "pearl of great price." Now, our Lord did not conceal the fact that to a soul wedded to its sins it will seem to cost something to be a Christian, while He does everywhere teach and insist that a godly man enjoys all the best things of this world. Yet as it lies in the carnal thought, this giving up even sinful pleasures may be like the cutting off a right hand or the plucking out of a right eye, the selling of that the man most values to buy one "pearl of great price." But even in this case he puts it to the carnal judgment, to ply the question with the veriest earthly calculus, and see whether the thing is not worth all it costs. And this is just what we do now. We ask you to take the weight and dimensions of salvation even as an earthly good; to calculate the value of its daily strength and consolation; to consider how it dries the mourner's tears, heals the wounded spirit, binds up the broken heart; how it smooths the dying pillow and pours light through the grave.

We ask you to compute the real worth of this thing, to see for yourselves whether the Bible exaggerates when it speaks of the believer as a blessed child of God, watched and warded by angels; whether it does not come to the heart and home of man, as the angel unto Daniel in the den of lions, as the angel to Paul in the terrible night of his shipwreck, as the angel to Hagar, revealing the spring in the wilderness, as the angel to Mary, pouring heavenly light through the grave. We ask you to take testimony in this regard. Ask the *old traders* in the things of the Spirit, not those poor infidels, who know no more about the matter than the hissing reptiles and hooting owls of the Sierras know of the values of the rich and exhaustless metalliferous strata that lie beneath and around them—ask Abraham and Moses, ask Paul and John, who in the days of the flesh made seemingly great sacrifices for their religion—ask these Christian men and women—ask your father, your mother, your sister, your child—ask them whether, even if they did give up some sinful pleasures when they came to the Saviour, yet if, on the whole, their salvation cost too much—whether the thing did not pay.

O! put religion to the test, weigh it in the scales, measure it with the rod, try the gold in the furnace, bring the pearl to the jeweller, and see whether their values are quoted too highly in the prices current of the markets—whether, even in regard of this world, there be not a real gain in godliness, so that, though in a lower sense, there may be a “forsaking all to follow Jesus,” yet in a higher sense it be not true, as well, that every one that hath forsaken houses and brethren for Christ doth not for it all receive an hundred fold even in the

present life—so that, even without the addition of the “life everlasting,” and only reckoned as to its values in this life, salvation be not profitable—whether the thing *does not pay*. O no! no! dear hearers, even in this world, godliness is not an experience of suffering and sacrifice. Come, ye clear-brained, cool-blooded speculators of the gold-market, with your prices current and calculus, and tell us whether salvation “rules too high” in our spiritual exchanges.

Take the apostolic schedule of the Christian’s possessions, and tell us, in round numbers, what they are all worth. Here is Paul’s inventory—“All things are yours.” “Why, how is this?” you exclaim; “does not the Bible say we must give up our all for salvation?” And I answer—Not at all. Nothing like it. It says, indeed, just the contrary. You are to come to Christ and *receive* all. It says you must give up your sins. Nothing but your sins. The prodigal must give up his rags and his husks and his swine-trough; but this only that he may wear the Father’s best robe, and recline at the banquet. “All things.” All good and grand realities are the Christian’s. Here are the items: “The world”—yes, mark you, “*this* world.” All that is in it which is not a badness and a bane and an incumbrance, is altogether and only the Christian’s. The starved, blood-redeemed world is only the cradle in which God’s man-child is rocked, and the chariot in which He journeys. “And Life”—yes, this common, mortal life. Even this is not the pleurist’s, the bacchanal’s, the voluptuary’s. Theirs are not things at all—nothing but the semblances and shadows of things—clouds, vapors, phantasms!—the mocking mirages in life’s

desert! the gibbering ghosts in life's dwelling! All that makes life good, joyous, glorious, all this is the Christian's. And "Death! Death!" Even this very monster of nature, no longer the soul's proprietor and master and tyrant, but its ally, its servant, its ministering spirit, coming to unclothe the encumbered mortality and open to the upspringing immortal the radiant gates of an eternal world. "And things present." Yes, all these are the Christian's, too. Alas for the poor worldling, who bargained for these things, and paid down the purchase-money, the very price of his soul! Alas! there was a defect in the conveyance—a cloud on the title! He dealt with a deceiver. He bought the estate of aliens, and the lawful heirs have appeared. Even "things present" are the Christian's—all you can see or hear. The miser's wealth, the philosopher's science, the great man's glory—these are not the possessions, the goods, the freeholds or reversions of the sinful man; they are the inheritance of the righteous. From the fading flower of the field to the flashing star of the firmament, they are only a vast system of forces, "working together for good unto them that love God."

Aye, and as if all this were nothing, after that rapture into Paradise, whereon there burst on his vision the ineffaceable realities of eternity, Paul closes the glorious inventory with "Things to come." We cannot tell what these words mean. We see through a cloud darkly. No mortal thought hath measured the height of the throne, or counted the jewels in the diadem, or summed the ineffable values of the broad lands and bright cities which make up the inheritance of the saints in light, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of

glory. But as the vision of faith lifts to the skies, and the voices as of exulting conquerors fall on the ear, and the trains as of eternal triumphs pass before the eye, we feel that the grandest items of the riches of the redeemed spirit is in the "things to come"—"things to come." Sure we are, whatever they may be, they are the Christian's—all the Christian's; and if you only add them to the "present things," which are "working together for his good," and working out his glory," methinks it will seem to you that salvation is a good thing—that there is a profit in piety—that godliness pays.

Ah me! that buyer of the pearl of great price was a wise merchantman. What though he sold all the poor little all he had—his low cottage on the hills, his few cattle in his pasture, his moth-eaten robes, his tinsel bijouterie—and went forth with scrip and staff to traffic in lands beyond the sea; yet he came back bringing in his bosom one magnificent gem, so pure, so lustrous, that the rarest crown-jewels of the Eastern king seemed in the contrast but baubles. And he felt, and his beloved ones felt, and the whole world felt at last that the purchase was with profit—that the radiant pearl paid. And it is under a symbolism like this—he that knows best sets forth the wisdom of the man who takes Christ to be his Saviour.

We cannot pursue the thought. We only put it to you individually, in conclusion, if you think you can invest the price put into your hands in anything better. O the pearl of great price! It is too precious to be dissolved, like the Egyptian queen's, in one cup of sinful pleasure. O this inheritance of the saints in light! It is too glorious to be sold, like Esau's, for one mess of

pottage. And even if you must give up all your poor, sinful pleasures—these mocking phantasms—these flowers that bloom along crumbling precipices—these bubbles that sparkle and break along the death-curve of the cataract—these rainbows that play on the black wing of the hurricane—if you must even give them up for your soul's salvation, yet sure I am you will understand at the end that it is worth all it costs. Surely, in that swiftly-coming hour which shall wind up forever all this worldly business, and the traffickers in immortal things turn away from the market-place, and the store-houses are all closed, and the wares all gone, then your souls will be sorrowful even unto death, if you have purchased only this world; for you will see above you the Palaces of Heaven opening to welcome, and below and around you hear only the mocking cry, in derision and scorn, of the demon who beguiled you, "In what measure were you profited? Did your sin pay? What will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

"Men see not the bright light which is in the cloud."—JOB XXXVII.
21.

This is part of Elihu's argument in vindication of God's mysterious providences. He compares earthly life to a day darkened with clouds, which will ere long be swept away by strong, clearing winds, and meantime on the heavenly sides of which a glorious sun is ever shining. Even the lower, earthward sides have bright edges, although men will not often, perhaps cannot always, perceive it.

So it was with Job for awhile. Nor is it to be wondered at, for his afflictions were most mysterious and terrible. Stricken down in a moment from his high place amid Edom's princes into poverty, disease, childlessness, there seemed really nothing to alleviate his sorrow. It did look, to mortal sense, as if God had forgotten to be gracious. Amid such terrible experiences few men would have found much occasion for thanksgiving. And we are not surprised that, at first, Job sat down despairing in the thick gloom, without thought of God's hidden purpose of love in thus afflicting him, and "saw not the bright side that was in the cloud."

Certainly most men in this matter do worse than Job, and without his provocation. If into our great heaven of blue there rise even a stormless vapor, we sit down complaining in its shadow, neither patiently waiting till it passes, nor observing the bright side of it. Now and then, indeed, we meet with a joyous spirit, whose rule of life is "to make the best of everything." Job himself came at last into that blessed frame. And there hangs in all heaven's grand gallery of arts no fairer picture than that of this sorely-afflicted saint—a pale, wan, haggard, and wasted man, sitting amid the ruins of his inheritance, and by the graves of his children; yet the while lifting his weeping eyes to heaven, until every tear sparkled like a gem, and filling all the dark and stormy air with faith's triumphant hallelujah—"The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away; blessed! blessed! blessed be the name of the Lord!" Verily, above him lay a cloud black as night, where the tempest raged and the thunder roared. But to his trustful spirit it was as if all the lustres of heaven were poured through the shadow, until the shattered crystal of his old joys, and even the dust and ashes of death, showed beautiful as the jewels and gold of the Eternal City in the loving smile of his God.

And such sunny spirits there are yet abroad on the earth—found oftenest in conditions of greatest trials, as the nightingale's song is sweetest of all birds because born of the night. Souls that will find occasion of thanksgiving in the darkest shadow and wildest storm of sorrow and suffering; Daniels, that keep step to joyous music as they descend into lions' dens; Pauls, who thrill the grimy walls of old dungeons with triumphant

hallelujahs; Hagars, whose eyes are opened to find springs of bright water in the most desolate wilderness; Marys, who behold glorious visions of angels in the depths of the grave. Yes, blessed be God, we do yet find such sunny spirits, whose smile lights up these night-scenes of life like the face of an angel, just because they are ever searching the dark heavens that they may "see the bright side that is in the cloud."

But this is surely not the great law of life. Alas! most men are born grumblers—always complaining of what they have not, rather than thankful for what they have; forgetting the ten thousand daily blessings where-with God is crowning their lives in the occasional gloom of a shadow that flits across their path—bemoaning the broken shell, rather than exulting because of the bursting pinion. Of course, this is as foolish as it is sinful. If you were, on some summer morning, to release from their cages a sky-lark and an owl, the unclean bird, with a hoarse cry, would make a straight flight to some dark cave or sepulchral cypress tree; while the sky-lark, like a shining, singing spirit, would soar up into the blue heavens, filling all the sunny air with exulting harmonies. And we should be willing to learn wisdom of the birds. Certainly, for man, it is the strangest of follies to turn resolutely away from life's fair things, as if enamored of the foul!

In the experience of us all, God's chastisements are to His mercies only as one to ten thousand. Even in those extreme and exceptional cases where, for a moment, affliction seems the rule, there are yet in the present so many sweet compensations, and in the future so much of hope, that the suffering soul would find abundant

matter of thanksgiving if it would only look for "the bright side that is in the cloud." It may require a strong *faith* to perceive it. But a true man ought always to have such faith. And so, instead of sitting in sackcloth, with poor, half-blind sense, striving to catch some stray sunbeam on the lower and earthside of Divine Providence, we should plume Faith's strong wing, and soar up clear through the black vapor—yea, above even the glinting rainbows, till, emerging on the heavenly side, we look *down*, as the angels do, upon what hath no seeming of cloud at all, but rather of a heavenly "sea of glass mingled with fire," lustrous with purple and azure and crimson and gold, as it smiles and sparkles in the sunlight of God!

Always unto trustful faith, and often unto true philosophy, the darkest things of Divine Providence have a meaning and mission of love, "Every dark cloud hath a bright side." But we do not look for it. Nay, we do worse. Even when the cloud itself, on its earthward side, hath more of the bright than of the dark, we turn the eye ungratefully away from the beauty! Here is a man whose business does not prosper. He is honest, industrious, frugal, and yet he is not making much money, and must dwell in a cheap house, and live on small means. This is *his cloud*. Nevertheless, he is still healthy and strong; and, sitting by his board and fireside, there is an affectionate wife and dutiful children, happier in his smiles than in the revenues of a principality! Surely his cloud has a silver border, if he would only look for it.

Here is a woman who hath come up from her dear child's grave, and entering again her dwelling, all things

are so linked with the memory of the departed that her temptation is to sit down in anguish, as if in the very "valley of the shadow of death." And this is *her cloud!* And yet the while God is gathering round her ten thousand priceless blessings, a hundred friends that love her as their own lives, and other children rising up to call her blessed. And surely even that dark cloud, from which came forth the thunderbolt, hath edgings of light.

But there is more than this to be said of life's shadows, aside from their earthly edgings of beauty. There is a *whole heavenly side* that is altogether lustrous! That man's unpropitious business, his foundered bark, his burnt storehouse, his clamorous creditors, his diminished luxuries, and it may be his absolute necessities—these are the cloud's *dark side!* But meanwhile, in the hidden meaning and sure working of God, all this is weaning him from the world; uprooting from his moral nature many evil growths of pride, vanity, covetousness, perhaps stopping him in some downward and disastrous course in which prosperity was leading him, or strengthening in his chastened soul the higher Christian graces—purifying the gold—polishing the gems for his crown of righteousness! And this is the *heavenly side of the cloud.* And surely it is very *bright and glorious!*

That *mother's* sore bereavement! That sweet voice and sunny smile gone from her dwelling! That vacant place by board and fireside, which no singing angel could so blessedly fill. And this is her cloud's dark side, and our Heavenly Father knows that its earthward side is very dark! But then it has a higher side. See there! A glorious place filled in heaven! A fair flower

of earthly love transplanted to the gardens of immortality; a dear child, safe forever in an eternal home, in the enfolding arms of Jesus! - Yea, and the while in that mother's own soul, a mighty strengthening of the wings of faith and love to mount presently along that same radiant path, and to take again to her yearning heart that loved one—not a child of sorrow, but a crowned creature of immortality! O this is God's meaning of love in her sorrow! This is *the heavenly side of her cloud!* And it is all very “*bright*”—very *glorious!*

And so it is of every sad providence that darkens Christian experience. We have no space to consider them in detail. Take one as the very greatest of them all, which, as the consummation of mortal suffering, we call “the king of terrors.” Take *death*, and we shall find that it comes under the same law of compensations.

A *cloud*, doubtless, it is! A cloud, black, storm-breeding, with all the terrible meaning of God's curse upon sin; verily, no poetic pencil can color beautifully its lower earthward edges. And when in that evil hour of apostacy in Paradise the monstrous thing came forth to walk amid human dwellings, and cast its awful shadow over man's life and love—when that stricken mother bent to press her quivering lips upon the cold, pale brow of her martyred Abel; then, indeed, every bright thing of earth seemed blotted out in thick shadow, and there was no one beam of sun or star to flash even a momentary lustre on the *black cloud of death*.

Nevertheless, ere long, Faith's lifted eye read in type and prophecy the promise of the Redeemer's triumph over the destroyer. And as those revelations grew

clearer, until the chariot of fire, upbearing patriarch and prophet, rushed flaming through the firmament, then a strange lustre played on the dark cloud of death. And when at last, in the fulness of time, the Omnipotent Redeemer appeared on the earth, and stood up full in the path of the king of terrors, and reined back the pale horse, and tore away sword and sceptre and crown from his phantom-rider, and there rose up from all worlds the shout of exalting triumph, over a dead death and a spoiled grave! then for a moment it seemed that the black cloud was swept away, and naught but the sunlight of heaven lay soft and clear on death-bed and tomb. And ever since, through the long history of the Church, have redeemed men achieved such sublime triumph in that dark valley, and the voices of gentle womanhood and timid childhood filled the dying chamber with such songs of victory, that even unto mortal *sight* the cloud, rising up from the grave, hath had gleamings of heavenly light. And O! when *faith*—FAITH—following on strong wings the upspringing immortal, hath gained empyreal heights, above all these mortal seemings, and can look *downward*, like God and His angels, upon the sepulchres of redeemed ones, then verily the iron portal of the grave seems only a pearl-gate opening into Paradise. And in all God's universe there is nothing fairer or more glorious than the *bright side* of that thick cloud *whose dark side is death*.

Now, if this be true of the very king of terrors, it must be even more manifestly true of all smaller and subordinate Christian trials. And therefore it is our blessed privilege and duty to go bravely out of every valley of deep shade to the serene heights of a spiritual

life, where we can see ever and only "the bright side that is in the cloud." For in the moral, as in the material, the *bright side* is always the RIGHT side. As in tapestry or cloth-of-gold the wrong side is only unsightly ravelings, and in exquisite pictures the wrong side is unseemly canvass, so is it ever with the web of life God weaves for us, and the grand pictures He paints. And the soul that persists in studying only their sorrowful aspects is like a foolish upholsterer who carpets his rooms with the fair pattern turned downward, and hangs splendid mirrors and masterpieces with their faces to the wall.

And such study is evil, and indeed sinful, every way ; for,

1st. *It greatly injures ourselves.* It blinds the eye and weakens the wings of the soul, until the spirit that ought ever to soar and sing like the sky-lark, sits moaning like the melancholy owl in dark caverns, enamored of night.

2d. *It grieves, meanwhile, the true hearts that best love us.* The sad-faced, complaining, fretting, scolding man comes home from his walk under clouds, bringing a thick darkness with him ; and even the heart of love is chilled, and the eye of love too full of tears to see the bright side of the cloud.

3d. *And most of all, it displeases and dishonors our Heavenly Father.* If you build a beautiful dwelling for your children, and fill it with works of exquisite art, and surround it with fair gardens, and yet find that those beloved ones, instead of smiling and singing in its pleasant rooms, or going forth with dancing feet amid the vines and flowers, are ever shutting themselves up

to weep in some darkened chamber or damp cellar, then you think yourself pained and wronged and dishonored. And just so it is with God! Surely in our Heavenly Father's earthly house there are some pleasant chambers, and in His earthly gardens some singing birds and bright flowers; and deeply is His infinite love grieved, if he finds His dear children ever complaining—mourning, weeping, as if *ours* were a SAD home and He an unkind Father.

True, indeed, we are not in heaven yet, and we are all sinners. But glory be to God, we are *redeemed sinners*, and a redeemed sinner is an immortal spirit, which Christ's mighty arm hath saved from death and hell, and is bearing heavenward in this great world-chariot as a trophy of His glorious victory; and we ought to sing sweetly and joyfully as we journey home to God, for the flaming horses will not keep step, nor the angel-wings beat time to death-song and requiem. They demand and deserve songs of praise—shoutings of victory. Surely it is their sin and shame if children of God go to glory like grimy and glum slaves scourged to a dungeon.

True it is, even the brightest cloud will cast shadows upon the landscape. But what, after all, are shadows but a shelter from evil, or the adumbration of good? Certainly, in Holy Writ they are almost always significant of blessing—the umbrage of bright palms, as we sit in life's desert beside clear, cool waters; the shelter of love's roof-tree over the home-blessed heart! Such things as David rejoiced in when he tells us of the "shadow of God's wings." God's wings! The pinions of infinite loving-kindness! Like the plumes of

the imperial eagle, as she flutters over her disturbed nestlings, sheltering them from the screaming vulture and the roaring tempest.

They may be black as the night. But what of *the night* even? Think of the first night in Paradise! The young immortal—man—had as yet never seen it. Through the hours of that first bright day he had walked rapturously amid scenes of surprising loveliness. Around him fair flowers, sparkling waters, singing birds, waving greenwoods, and above him the great blue heaven, in all its illimitable and ineffable splendor! But see! Now the night comes. The sun sinks along the western sky. The shadows lengthen and deepen on the landscape. And then gathers a chill, a gloom, a thick darkness on all things beautiful. The birds hush their joyous songs, the flowers lose their splendor, and now, to that Man-child of God, it is as if all life's raptures were passing away as a dream, and Paradise itself going down with the dew-tears of nature into the great grave of night!

And methinks a moment there was, mingled with the nightingale's lay, one sadly sweet human voice heard as a requiem.

"O my poor, fading flowers! O my poor, forlorn birds! O my dusking waters! Alas! alas! my overshadowed home! Alas! my bedarkened Paradise! (Alas! my blessed dream of life, so short in its glory!";

This and thus for one moment. But the next, as in weeping, yet still trustful love, those eyes were lifted heavenward. Behold the stars! All the stars! World after world, system after system, constellation after constellation, flamed out in mysterious, but surpassing

splendor in the firmament of heaven. "Heaven! heaven!" God's own broader, grander universe unveiled, as if lustres from the palaces and temples of the City of God, all lighted for festival. And now—now he forgets silent birds, bechilled waters, darkened greenwood and garden, and lifts his voice louder in hallelujah, blessing God for the night.

O shadows! shadows! What blessed things they are to the eye of faith! Clouds! clouds! How they only pour down a joyous baptism upon the heart of love! I say, if clouds had no earthly edgings of brightness, their heavenly side is all glory. For what are clouds but the curtains God gathers around the blinding splendors of His throne—the noiseless chariots of His love as He comes nearer to His children?

The Bible is full of this thought. It was in a thick "cloud" He led Israel in Exodus, so that all the dreary desert was more blissful under its shadows than a palm-shaded fountain; and the parted waves of the dreaded Jordan sparkled and flamed like the jeweled walls of heaven in its ineffable light. It was "a cloud" the exulting Job saw spread upon the face of His throne. It was "a cloud" the joyous David beheld as the chariot of his journeyings. It was a swift "cloud" whereon Isaiah saw the Lord riding gloriously. It was with the "clouds" of heaven the eye alike of prophecy and faith have ever looked that the Son of Man shall come in His glory.

"Clouds!" "clouds!" and not sunbeams, are unto finite vision the regalia of the Eternal One! Their dark side is toward us yet, lest we should be dazed and blinded by the uncreated splendor. But we know they are only the tremulous veil that falls between us and

heaven. And how near, then, heaven is to us! Who talks of "a land afar off in its beauty?"

Far away! Why, where is eternity? Transcendental—transepulchral, in the remote distances and silences of the Infinite? O no, no. All around you. Just behind this cloud-veil of things, seen and temporal. And see! See how this curtain seems to stir—to tremble, as if the risen and beloved Dead were breathing behind it; as if invisible hands were even now lifting it—parting it. And there! there! is your prepared place—your white robe and sceptre and diadem! And see! How the uncreated light seems to flash along its edges, and through the rifts of its thickest gloom! And how soon all these resplendent "things to come" will be yours—all yours! And then—then, as you fold the white robe around you, and walk with your beloved ones beside the living waters, you will wonder that your eyes were so tearful, and your hearts so sad, and your feet kept step to such mournful measures, when only under the shadows of the Eternal One, you followed your Lord in the regeneration.

And as you look back and down on this mortal life, and understand how these glooms, that lay sometimes so thick on your home and heart, were no more than the shadow of heavenly clouds over love's earthly gardens, first pouring down upon fainting flowers of grace a bright and blessed baptism, and then, like shadows over summer grasses, to flit and be gone; then, surely then, you will wonder that you could so have missed the merciful meaning of your Heavenly Father's dealings, and would not "*see the bright light that was in the cloud!*"

THE UNRIVALED TEACHER.

"Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? And Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?"—JOHN VI. 68.

It is very popular just now to decry old-fashioned doctrinal preaching, and to substitute for it short, stirring discourses, philosophic, poetical, practical, modeled, as we are told, after Christ's beautiful Sermon on the Mount, as if, forsooth, our Lord preached no other sermon. Now we find in our context another specimen of His discourse, after which our fathers modeled theirs, a sermon setting forth several strong points of their "cast-iron theology." Here you will find Christ's divine pre-existence, "I came down from heaven;" His sacrificial atonement, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life;" justification by faith, "Verily, I say unto you he that believeth on me hath eternal life;" human inability, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him;" God's absolute sovereignty in salvation, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" the final perseverance of saints, "This is the Father's will, that of all He giveth me I shall lose nothing," and in this, and Christ's other recorded discourses, you will find every doctrine of our

Calvinistic or Pauline theology most sharply exhibited and solemnly insisted on. These discourses resembled modern popular preaching as little as Jonah's gourd simulated an old cedar of Lebanon. Surely these men who please the people by ignoring strong doctrines, and astonish the natives by illustrating half-truths with second-hand rainbows and diluted moonshine, have not taken Christ as their model. He would entertain no thought of conquering the world by compromising with Satan. His preaching offended the carnal heart as solemn truth ever offends it. Our text is part of the record of such an offense. After that sermon many even of Christ's disciples "went away and walked no more with Him;" and it was in this connection He said unto the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" and Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

Now it is this question of Peter we propose to consider. It implies the truth that as a great teacher Christ is without rival, that the soul which, either for instruction or consolation, turns away from Christianity must forever ask the unanswerable question, "Lord, to whom shall I go?" Take these points separately.

First. *Christian doctrine.* If we reject revelation because of some things in it hard to believe, where shall we find a substitute? Consider some of its competitors.

1st. *Atheism*, or the denial of any personal God. It rejects, as a saying too hard to be believed, that an Infinite Spirit made all things out of nothing. But I ask, is it any easier to believe that all things made themselves or were never made at all? Is it easier to believe that watches and jewels and bijouterie grew like

fruit on trees than that a goldsmith made them? Is the thought more comprehensible that the substance of the universe is self-existent and eternal, and that, though absolutely without intelligence and essentially inert, it is constantly exhibiting the most marvelous phenomena of power and wisdom? that an infinitude of atoms, which from eternity had never stirred, woke suddenly up from their stupor and projected and achieved all the stupendous splendors and harmonies of astronomy? that in the economy of each of the separate worlds this brute, dead, inert matter cast itself into forms and originated processes of such wonderful complications and adaptations, of utility and beauty? that a few grains of sand, rain-drops and sunbeams agreed together to change themselves into all this countless variety of fruits and flowers, each with its own exquisite flavor and fragrance? that dead atoms, originating within themselves an intense vitality, and acting on the last great thought of civilization, a division of labor, said one to another, "I will become a bird, and you shall become a fruit to feed the bird, and some other atom shall become a rain-drop to water the fruit tree?" that the dead rocks of Mount Lebanon first ground themselves into powder in creation's mill and then projected themselves heavenward as magnificent cedar trees? that an invisible infusoria got itself out of the mire and then wrought itself into vertebrate form, and then furnished itself with the varied faculties of manhood, an imperial right hand to subdue the earth and an imperial intellect to wander through the universe? I say, in receiving all these and innumerable other and greater marvels, does atheism escape from any greater difficulties of revelation? Is

it easier to believe that all things made themselves than that an Almighty Spirit made them?

Passing all this, consider,

2d. *Deism*, a belief in a personal God, while rejecting revelation. Now, were I concerned with the great argument, it were easy to show that natural and revealed religion are so precisely analogous that every hard thing to believe in the one finds exactly the counterpart of some hard thing in the other; and beyond this I might show, in other directions, the enormous credulity and unparalleled capacity for believing incomprehensible things of this modern infidelity. Its theory is, that in the proudest era of the old classic civilization a few poor Jewish peasants set themselves to produce and promulgate a monstrous imposture; that as its absolute prerequisite it must be adjusted, first, to the whole system and series of Hebrew prophecies, and second, to every deep and most latent moral principle of the human constitution; that designed to be a popular and universal system they infused it, as the very breath of its life, with a spirit of sharp antagonism unto all the philosophies and prejudices and evil passions of the race; that this imposture, conceived in ignorance and carried forward by iniquity, went forth on its mission, and that presently the wise men of the world accepted it, and the mighty men honored it; that (itself the creature of man's vilest instincts) it became the imperial controller of his mightiest passions, doing what all old moral and religious culture had never done, making the malignant gentle, the impure holy; that, before it went down, man's pride and prejudices, the pillars of his philosophy, fell, and the shrines of his superstition crumbled; that, down

through all the ages, amid all civil convulsions and ethical revolutions, this infamous imposture has flamed out as the only catholic and immutable truth of the universe, and as an embodiment of superhuman wisdom this pitiful fisherman's lie has been the admiration of wise men, the adoration of good men, until now, after the lapse of two thousand years, and when human opinions have undergone the drift and transitions of forty generations, and the whole warp and woof of society is of another fashion, even now this peasant's lie, as the living spirit of this last grand civilization, is going abroad over the face of the whole earth, conquering and to conquer. Now, I say, the man who can believe all this shows at least an amazing capacity for digesting hard sayings.

But I am not now reasoning the matter. I have only to do with contrasts. Indeed, I have no word to say against the Deist's natural religion. It is a true religion, an unwritten revelation of divine truth unto man. I only insist that to man's reason, benumbed and blinded by sin, it is not an all-sufficient revelation. It does not go far enough. It demonstrates the being of God, and gloriously displays some of His natural attributes. It abounds with intimations of man's immortality, and is even fuller of suggestions of his guilt and danger. But it scarcely goes beyond this. Over the whole broad field of ethical and practical religion it affords no guidance. It does not tell us what is right and what is wrong, what is safe or what is dangerous. It leaves the present life an unknown and pathless desert to the imperiled pilgrim, and the eternal future, an ocean of black waters, terribly tossing and moaning around this

small island of being. And here is the marvel, that the God of whom nature so eloquently speaks should leave man in this ignorance. God teaches every other creature all it needs for the working out of its destiny—the bird of the air and the beast of the field are guided surely through their little lives to the annihilation that awaits them. And why, then, has God left this immortal creature, man, with this instinct of immortality so strong within, but without guide to its realities? Surely this is not like God! Even the old classic philosophy looked for a revealed theology to supplement the natural, for some voice out of the infinite silences bringing to light the life and the immortality. And this is just what Christianity does. And now our text asks us if it be wise to turn away from the revealed, and accept only the natural; to deafen the ear to the matchless words of Jesus, that we may listen to the roaring seas and the rushing hurricane; to go down from this high communion with our Heavenly Father as He sits on His eternal throne, and seek out nature, in her solitary grandeur, and listen only to her inarticulate and awful voice. Tell me, O child of immortality, is this grim skeleton in its death-cavern, is yonder glorious star in the firmament, an equivalent for Immanuel, God with us, the Revealer, the Redeemer? And so the question comes back again, “Lord, to whom shall we go?”

We cannot pursue this point farther. Surely, in regard simply of instruction, the man makes a terrible mistake who rejects revelation. If he will furnish us with something better, we too will accept it with thanksgiving. But in regard of all he has as yet offered us

we will rest the whole argument on his own logic, and agree to reject the system which offers the hardest things to be believed, for every thoughtful mind sees at once that every school of infidelity prefers that which is absolutely impossible as a fact to that which is only incomprehensible in its philosophy ; and while, with captious Pharisaism, straining out every gnat of Christian difficulty, opens its mouth wide to all monstrous absurdities, and 'with all the coarsest raptures of gluttony "swallows the camel" and the whole camel's load.

Passing this, let us turn to the other point which our text involves. Those inconstant followers of Jesus deserted Him not only because He preached hard doctrines, but because He prescribed hard duties. And this leads us to consider,

Second. *Christian delights.* If we go away from Christianity for *consolation*, "to whom shall we go?" On this point the argument would be to show that the service of God is every way easier and sweeter than the service of sin. This we have recently dwelt upon, striving to show how truly "Christ's yoke is easy;" that although Christianity has its burdens of self-denials, cross-bearings, martyrdoms—yet that every other religion, and all irreligion, had vastly more and severer crosses and martyrdoms. And not to repeat ourself, passing all this now, let us consider this contrast in regard simply to the consolation afforded in seasons of suffering. And here it were enough to show that neither infidelity nor natural religion, nor irreligion—nor, indeed, any opponent of, or substitute for the Gospel, offers any such consolation. Whatever natural religion might have been to unfallen creatures, to the fallen and sinful it is

only a religion of alarm and terror. The only comforting thought infidelity can give, or attempts to give, is that of annihilation—that we shall presently get rid of our sorrow by getting out of life. And even of this—so long as man has a conscience, and an instinct of immortality—infidelity can have no assurance; it stands in the dark night of sorrow, and hears awful sounds, as of unseen monsters around, or the dash of torrents below into unfathomed gulfs, or the crash of avalanches above, as if coming down upon it, and it opens no way of escape. And even when life is at its brightest, if we sit at the banquet of sinful pleasure, the very stars seem, as unto Belshazzar, only the fiery words, “*Mene, tekel;*” or if we stand in the high places of ambition, the great voices of the universe seem, as unto Nebuchadnezzar, crying, “Woe, woe, woe!”

Thus natural religion to fallen and sinful beings is always disquieting; even when our path lies “through green pastures and beside still waters,” it is with a constant, secret dread of unseen evil; and when “we walk through the valley of the shadow of death” there is no Shepherd’s staff and rod to comfort us. But just here comes in the Gospel, with its twofold beatitude, making its fair scenes fairer, and its dark scenes bright. Like all God’s angels, its sweetest visits are to the sorrowful. There is no conceivable experience of affliction wherein its ministry is not gladdening. Take the very sorest of all—take death in its most agonizing aspect, the mother’s ineffable anguish beside a beloved child’s grave. See, she sits alone, desolate, despairing! She is thinking of her darling’s winning words and ways—of yonder place forever vacant in her once joyous home—of that cherub-

face which will no more smile on her—of that little form that will never nestle to her heart again! Behold how her eyes weep, how her lips quiver, how her heart breaks! She wants consolation; but unto whom shall she go?

Come, now, you that reject Christianity—come, put forth your mightiest ministries or miracles of comfort. Will you take her to the world—to its bright scenes of gayety and amusement? Will you spread for her a grand banquet with mirth and song and wine? Shall she go to the theatre, the opera? Shall she visit the great cities of the world, and behold their marvels of art and architecture, and gaze upon the magnificence of Mount Blanc, and listen to the awful voices of Niagara? Will you build for her a princely palace, and array her in queenly robes, and lift to her pale brow an imperial diadem? Will you open for her the schools of philosophy, that she may hear eloquent discourse upon the dignity of human nature, and the moral grandeur of rising superior to all mortal suffering and anguish? Shall she worship in the great temple of natural religion, while you gather all its lilies and roses, and weave a fair garland for the awful brow of death, and convene all the birds of the air to warble their songs, and summon all the stars of heaven to flash their unclouded splendors round the dark portal of the grave? And with all this have you comforted?

Ah me! there are tormentors in that mother's chambers of imagery which your incantations cannot exorcise. There are vacant places in that home and heart which no angel can fill. Back from all this goes the mourner to her desolate dwelling, her eyes still tearful, her heart

still broken. O where, where, where shall she go? Where! Hark! Did you not hear it?—that voice sweeter than a seraph's? How gentle, how full of tenderness! "Come, come, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And see! the mourner has heard it. She has risen up from the dust, she has gone forth to meet Jesus, and she sits at His feet and hears His words. And what precious words they are!—words of immortality and eternal life?—of a bright land beyond the sepulchre, where the dead live forever!—of that precious child, not as a delicate blossom blighted by an untimely wind, but as an undying flower transplanted in Paradise, to open all its glorious loveliness in Heaven's unclouded, uncreated light!—of a star not lost forever in the outer darkness, but melting away sweetly in the splendors of the sun!—of that departed one, her child still, remembering her, loving her, waiting for her—only gone a little before her, that there in a better home, watched and nurtured by a tenderer, mightier love, that head may never ache again, that gentle heart may never break again! Yea, more, more; telling of a meeting again presently, that it is only for her a little longer to bear the weight of bereavement, and yonder, in stormless airs and under cloudless skies, there shall be such a rapturous bound of a loving child to a mother's arms as mortal love never dreamed of! And is not the mourner comforted? O go to her now, you that turn away from Jesus to other comforters, and would substitute this bitter lethe of forgetfulness for the blessed water of life—go now and woo her, if you can, from the feet of the Redeemer. I seem to see her sitting there in serene trust, lifting her

eyes steadfastly to that Heavenly Face, listening rapturously to His adorable words, and when, as unto the disciples, come these questions, "Wilt thou also go away?" answering with more than Peter's trustful love, "Lord, to whom shall I go?"

O what words of consolation the Saviour speaks! "Words of eternal life!" Life! life! what a blessed thing it is! Suppose there should come down from heaven a crowned creature of eternity, with power from God to speak words even of temporal and earthly life; that as he flung out his splendor in the darkened chamber death, the king of terrors, should be driven from his victim; that at his mandates the dear one laid yesterday into the grave came forth again in new life to your heart and home, how precious would that mighty spirit seem. What a rushing of mourners there would be from the islands and continents of the earth to sit at the feet of one whose divine speech had the power even of earthly and mortal life. What a song of adoring rapture would go up to that blessed angel from watchers beside sick beds—these mourners over graves!

But this were all as nothing to the mightier power of Christ Jesus. O what means it?—"Words of eternal life!"—words which render this earthly, evanescent life as indestructible, immortal as the life of its Great Creator—words that plume the soul with wings to soar into the companionship of angels, and open to the ascending feet of the redeemed child of time the glorious gates of an eternal world!—"Life! life! eternal, eternal life!" and from one that hath power to bestow it who will turn away?

Now this is the text's lesson, that as a great teacher

Christ is without rival; that the soul which, either for instruction or consolation, turns away from Christianity has only "forsaken a fountain of living water to hew out for itself broken cisterns which can hold no water." We repeat it, ye rejecters of this blessed revelation, give me something better, and I will reject it too. But until you have found it, out of my path, away from my presence with your babbling and blasphemy. I will not sell my immortal birthright for your mess of black pottage, nor dissolve in your unclean cup of trembling my pearl of great price. Lord! Lord! to whom shall we go? As a teacher, a comforter, a guide unto eternal life, O our Master! our Redeemer! where dwells Thy rival in these schools of time? Thanks, everlasting thanks be unto God for this mightiest of all mercies—"His unspeakable gift." Glory be unto God for the bread that came down from heaven, for the light that shineth in darkness, for that resting-place loftier than the throne of the archangels, that place with Mary at Jesus' feet! Earthly life has, and as a mortal pilgrimage and pupilage must have, its times of darkness, hours of bitter memories of the past, of hard experiences in the present, of fearful questionings as to the future, and in all these where is our only solace and safety? When reason agonizes with the great problem of immortality; when poor, blind thought sends forth its yearning cry for some revelation from eternity; when earth's joys all fade away, and all its griefs gather round us; when our possessions are destroyed, and our friendships are alienated, and our homes are desolate, and our hearts broken; when disease fastens on the body; when agony wrings the heart-cords; when we go forth to bury our

beloved in dark sepulchres ; when our own souls are rending their way from these frail tenements in death's terrible convulsions ; when the trumpet sounds, and the graves open, and the great white throne is set, and the dead, small and great, stand before God, O then tell us, men and angels, tell us if there be any other refuge or resting-place than this Rock of Ages.

Aye, ye who have gone home to glory, and know all the height and depth of the blessedness of salvation, tell us if there be anything better in all that immortal experience than this—to be with the Redeemer. O Heavenly Father ! O Divine Master ! tell us “to whom shall we go but unto Thee, whose words are the words of Eternal Life !”

MAN RESPONSIBLE.

"What have I to do with thee?"—MARK V. 7.

I have separated these words from their connection because, apart from their importance in the record of a great miracle, they set forth a strange error, into which all true men have fallen. Christ had commanded the devil to come out of the wretched outcast of Gadara. And his reply was an indignant denial that Christ had any right to interfere in the matter—(a very convenient logic—whose only fault was that he could not persuade the Son of God to accept it). After his defeat by our Lord in the wilderness of temptation, Satan had made up his mind to let Christ alone. But the difficulty was, that he could not prevail upon Christ to let him alone! And we commend this fact to the consideration of those men who, under the pretense of separating Church and State, are really insisting on driving God out of the nation. And because the fault of their logic is just that of this devil—*that God will not go!* A nation may, in their infidelity, let the Great Jehovah alone. But the Great Jehovah, in His Omnipotence, will not let them alone. And with every such nation it will assuredly fare as it did on that occasion with the swine when the devils got

into them. They will drive headlong down steep places into the seas, and perish in the waters.

But as we said, we are not now to study this miracle, but only the false principle the text implies—as a formulary, wherewith men are ever seeking to evade duty and escape from responsibility, saying, “What is it to me?” “It is no concern of mine!” “I have nothing to do with it.” A most false principle, surely! For as constituting only one great material and moral universe, all men have something to do with all things. And it is just this simple fact which renders earthly life a probation—a development and display of character. What shall I do with it? or, What will he do with it? is an inquiry wherewith we judge of our own duty, or of the dispositions of other men. This, indeed, is the principle whereby we form our opinions of the qualities and proclivities of all living organisms.

(a.) Take vegetable life. Two seeds of the same size and vital energies are placed side by side in the same conditions of soil, moisture, light, and heat, and the question, what each seed will do with the same things, is that whereby we decide whether the seed be of a good or evil species. For the one swells, germinates, buds, blossoms, and produces delicious fruit, while the outgrowth of the other is foul and poisonous and deadly.

(b.) Or take animal life. A bee and a spider have to do with the same flower; and plying it with the same animal chemistries, the one gathers a deadly virus, and the other a delicious nectar.

(c.) A child, wearied with its long holiday, lies down to sleep on a green bank in the forest, and a bright bird, perched on the overhanging branch, charms it to repose

with a sweet song. But the while a deadly serpent glides from its foul covert to terrify and destroy it.

And so universally we judge of instincts, or the qualities and dispositions which make up natural character, as we see the creature brought into relation or juxtaposition with something else, and observe, "What it will do with it!"

Especially is this true of man. This is just what makes up his probation. God has placed him in this world that he may show forth his character, and work out his own future condition, as he rightly uses or abuses it. Different men use the same material or implement or opportunity either for good or for evil. From the same forest and quarry one man builds a hospital, and another a gambling hell. Out of the grain from the same harvest-field one man leavens wholesome bread, and another distils a destroying beverage. With the same ink and type and press, one prints Huxley's blasphemies, and another God's Bibles. And while in all this perhaps few men are conscious that they are achieving their probation, yet verily they are. God has brought them into these conditions that the universe may see what the man "will do with them." And according as he does evil or good, he displays his character and decides his own destiny.

"What, what shall I do with it?" Ah me! it is a solemn question! These days, hours, moments of common life! The sunshine that warms us, the breezes that refresh us, the talents God has given us, the property we may accumulate, the influences we exert in any civil or social relation, the men and women we meet in circles of business or pleasure, the questions, moral or political

or religious, which are pressed daily upon our consideration—these things, and such as these, all indeed, whether larger or less, that make up our complex and ever-varying experience, are realities which come to exert mighty influences upon our characters and destinies; and from whose effects, rendered good or evil as we use or abuse them, we can no more escape than we can flee away from God's presence, or get out of His universe.

O that I could impress this thought fittingly upon impenitent hearts! This solemn, awful thought of accountability—probation—having simply "to do with things!" See that man at the vessel's helm in a night of storms, his iron hand on the wheel, his eagle eye fixed on yonder foaming line, where wind and wave meet in tumultuous conflict! See that great captain, commanding from the heights of Waterloo the terrible battle—his glass studying the chances of the awful game, his voice directing the movements of the tremendous conflict! Who marvels that those eyes blaze and those hearts bound? But why? Simply and only because they are dealing with things! things! For things are God's creations; God's thoughts made manifest; parts of the mighty mechanism by which God manages the universe. And with them we all have to do. And this is probation. Every shape of materialism, every force of the universe, every providence of our daily life stands before us, as a mighty creature from eternity, to prove in our behalf either an angel of beauty or a devouring fiend, as we shall entreat it for good or for evil.

And precisely with the solemn tones and emphasis wherewith we would address a revealed spirit which should rise up suddenly in our path, or flame out in our

chamber at midnight, should we question everything of God—"What have I to do with Thee?" "O why have you come to me?" "Tell me, tell me your meaning and mission!"

Now this, in regard of all things, even secular and social, is the great law of life.

1. But how much more is its solemnity increased when it has to do with matters religious and spiritual?

This question, in its first connection, was addressed to Christ; and its most significant application is to the case of impenitent and ungodly men who, with a like question, turn away from the Gospel.

"O," say these men, "I have nothing to do with it! I am not a professing Christian! I never joined any church! What, then, is all this to me? What have I to do with the Gospel of Christ?"

But alas for their false logic! They have something to do with it. Ah me, dear hearer, you may turn away from religion with indifference or dislike. But what then? Your indifference cannot alter your relations to the Gospel. Those relations grow out of your character and condition as a moral and accountable creature of God, and are as immutable as His throne. I can imagine a foolish man to cherish a settled dislike to the great law of gravitation, overlooking its beneficent results as working out, from the rounding of a dew-drop to the rounding of a star—from the graceful equipoise of a lily's leaf to the harmonies of the stupendous systems of the universe—all the grand and gracious processes and phenomena of creation—overlooking all this, and thinking that but for its restraining power he might spring up as a pure spirit into the boundless expanse of

heaven, and wander at will from star to star through immensity. I say I can conceive of such a one as disliking that great law, and in his insane hate blaspheming the Omnipotence which devised it.

But what of it all? Can the man escape from it? Will God have respect unto his perverted taste, and annihilate that glorious force whereon depends all the beauties and harmonies of the universe? O, surely not. None the less for his dislike, if he walk off a precipice, he will be dashed in pieces. If a rock fall on him, it will grind him to powder.

And just so it is of religion. It is that irresistible law of God under which all immortal creatures live—the moral gravitation, working out all the blissful harmonies of the spiritual universe, and which hems you in, holds on to you, and from which, if you think to escape by a spring from the adamantine mountains of faith, its everlasting force will dash you to destruction!

You may sit there in your seat, and the preacher of smallest gifts may stand here telling you the simple story of a Saviour's love, how He came from His Father's bosom to this lost world, and suffered for you, and died for you—pleading with you to be reconciled to God, and offering you salvation without money and without price. And you may listen the while with no more personal interest or concern than if the discourse were about the law of gravitation among the fixed stars. Nevertheless, in all this you have had to do with the Gospel; you have had to do with Christ crucified; you have had to do with all your eternal interests; you have rejected the great salvation; you have spurned God's angel of mercy out of your path; you have

trampled under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant, and counted all the glorious realities of heaven as unholy things. And as surely as God liveth, you must meet presently a just recompense of reward.

In the very nature of things, retribution must follow every act and experience of probation. Its solemn elements are twofold. First, there is a loss of all the unspeakable blessings which the Gospel offers you. Consider again these natural analogies. Take the law of gravitation. And the foolish man says:—"I do not like that law; it is the law of falling bodies; it dashes men down precipices; it brings the destroying avalanche upon human habitations; I will let it alone!"

But not so a wise man. "Nay," he says, "I will have something to do with it; it makes the pendulum vibrate; I will set it to keep time for me; it gives momentum to the water-courses; it shall grind for me as a mill." And so of all the natural forces of the universe, by diligently working with them we secure immense benefits. O that mighty word, "*Opportunity!*" Even natural opportunities—what are they? Why, God's richest gifts coming without observation! Golden keys cast at our feet, wherewith to unlock adamantine doors, opening into great galleries of art, into treasure-chambers filled and flashing with priceless gems and gold, into palace and throne-room in the central cities of immortal kings. And what then must be moral and spiritual opportunities? Ah me! This glorious Gospel of the blessed God! Even if you could slight it with impunity, still how ineffable the madness that will have nothing to do with it! That will have nothing to do with the Son of God when He comes to save the lost!

What if a child, lost in a dangerous forest in the stormy night, amid ravening beasts and howling tempests, catching through the darkness the gleam of torches and the accents of gentle voices, and beholding the face of the father who, in agonizing love, had come forth to seek and save him—what if that child, instead of springing joyfully into those outstretched arms, should turn away with the despising cry, "*What have I to do with thee?*" What would you call all this but madness? Madness! And yet immeasurably greater is the madness of the impenitent man who rejects the precious Saviour; for the sinner's danger is more terrible, and the Saviour's love more tender. Unto man, the poor outcast, astray in life's desert, the destroying monsters howling, the appalling night gathering, seemingly separated from all hope—shut up unto certain destruction—unto him, see! see! a radiant light breaks in the distance! a glorious Form approaches through the blackness and the storm—the great and gracious Saviour! He draws near; He bends over him; He says:—"I have come to save you! I am here to bear you back from all this darkness and danger to yonder blessed home, where beloved ones wait, where the board is spread, where fragrance and music and light and love make your Father's house a heaven. O come! come! let me lift you in my arms! Let me press you to my heart!"

Thus Christ stands this day! And yet, instead of a trustful, loving, joyous uprising to those outstretched arms, your only response is the rejecting cry of this malignant demon, "*What have I to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth, Thou Son of God!*"

O ineffable madness of the carnal heart! As if the flaming chariot of the old prophet stood at your door, its wheels amove, its winged coursers impatient, panting for the uprising; and yet *you, you*, instead of ascending the seat and loosening the reins, longing to mount heavenward, you dismissing the glorious pageant, turning away from the angelic cohort with these scornful words, "What have I to do with Thee!"

Ah me, what ineffable blessings you lose by not improving these opportunities of salvation. But then retribution means more than this; there is more than a negative loss; there is a positive infliction.

Observe, therefore, secondly, that in this rejection of the Gospel you incur terrible guilt. That Gospel is not merely an *invitation*, but as well a sovereign *mandate*. God not only pleads with you to be reconciled, but commands you to repent. The Gospel is a *law*, and no law of God is ever violated with impunity. It matters not that we will not accept the law; it matters not even that we do not believe in the law; nevertheless, to violate it is to perish.

You may not believe in God's ordinances of health; but if you make your bed in a Lazar-house you will be stricken with pestilence. You may not understand God's formulas of chemistry; but if you apply flame to the tissues of stage furniture, and sit still in a play-house, you will be burnt into ashes. You may laugh to scorn God's law of great forces; but if you launch your bark above Niagara it will sweep you to destruction. Alas! alas! for this folly of Infidelity and Atheism! It may be effectual in persuading its abettor to have nothing to do with God,

but is utterly powerless in persuading God to have nothing to do with him.

O retribution ! retribution ! It is an awful thought, and an awful truth. But I have no space to dwell on it now. The aspect in which our text sets forth the neglect of the Gospel is that of the utter folly of *rejecting a great blessing*.

Go back in thought to that strange scene in the record. There, under the bright skies of Palestine, by the blue waves of Galilee, see that forlorn outcast of Gadara, pale, haggard, convulsed ; his eyes wild with frenzy, his immortal soul tortured by demons. But see, too, there by his side the gracious Saviour, the Almighty Wonder-worker, ready to cast out the tormenting fiend, and send him back a restored, redeemed, rejoicing man, to his beloved ones in yonder blessed home. And yet that poor outcast, clanking his broken fetters, waving, waving his torn and bleeding hands with repelling gesture, putting all Christ's enrapturing ministries away from him with this cry of indignant scorn, "What have I to do with Thee, Thou Son of God !"

And all this is only a feeble illustration of the folly, the sheer madness of every impenitent soul that despises this precious Gospel. O that God would expound His own parable, and bring this solemn truth home to you. In every simple sermon you hear you "have to do with" salvation.

Here you stand on this lost world, as a scene and sphere of probation, like Bunyan's "man with the muck-rake," on the verge of a tremendous precipice ; close at his unsteady feet a fathomless abyss, yawning, dark, and terrible ; above him a shining angel, bending down in

beseeking love, and reaching forth a golden crown ; yet he the while turning away from the glorious vision, to scrape together a few bemired and worthless straws.

So here you stand in your probationary life—as it seems to infidelity, the appalling gulf of annihilation yawning below—as it seems to impenitent belief, looking forth on the black sea and stormy night of despairing retribution—as it seems to both alike, an unblessed spirit, wretched in the present, hopeless in the future, when suddenly there breaks out around you a glorious light from heaven. It grows brighter. It draws nearer. It takes shape, substantiality—aspects of ineffable blessedness and beauty. It seems, indeed, John's vision on Patmos—the new Jerusalem descending unto men out of heaven—a city of some new and higher life—foundations of precious stones—gates of pearl—streets of gold—palaces of immortality; and see within happy, holy, glorious creatures moving through its avenues, reposing on its honors, radiant, rapturous with palms, white robes, crowns, sceptres, thrones.

And those heavenly battlements, crowded with the beloved ones who have gone before to its blessedness, looking tenderly down on you, reaching forth their wooing arms, lifting up their voices in love's beseeching accents, crying:—

“Come! come! Come up higher! Come up hither to our heaven, our home, our gracious Saviour, our glorious Father! Come! come! come!”

And yet *you, you*—O, I see you even now in unconcern, in coldness, in rejection, in scorn, going forth again to the poor, beggarly elements of this world, and from that apocalypse of ineffable and everlasting rapture and

love, turning forever away, saying: "What have I to do with you?" "What have I to do with you?"

THE CEASING OF THE MANNA.

"And the manna ceased after they had eaten the old corn of the land."—JOSHUA V. 12.

The manner in which I have separated these words from the context indicates the simple train of thought I now purpose to pursue. The history of the manna is familiar to you all. It was that supernatural or miraculous food with which God fed His people on their long exodus to Canaan. The various questions often asked concerning it, and the many important lessons to be learned from it, we have neither time nor occasion now to consider, but wish only to deduce from it a few simple, practical lessons.

1st. If you regard the text as simple narrative, it is well worth our study. The word *manna* as a question, "What is it?" and as expressive of *wonder*, at once disproves the infidel theory that it was only the coagulated juice exuding from trees or shrubs growing in the wilderness; and the *recorded facts* that the Hebrews found a double portion of it every sixth day, and none on the seventh, is in proof that it was simply supernatural. And yet this inquiry of the Jew is worth our consideration. It was a very simple sort of food. It fell round the camp like white frost, in the shape of coriander

seed, having the flavor of a confection of flower and honey. Nevertheless it astonished the people. And it were not amiss if you and I were, in this regard, a little more Jewish. The natural grain out of which we make bread, and the various kinds of fruit we gather from our fields, are altogether more wonderful both in form and flavor, and require more power and skill in their production, than this strange food of the wilderness. Yet I do not remember ever to have seen a man lift any of them up in wondering gratitude to the Divine Producer, saying, "What is it? O, what is it?" Here I say we should learn a lesson, intellectual and emotional, and we should receive all these common mercies of life as direct gifts of our heavenly love, crying, "Manna! manna!"

2dly. We should learn a lesson practical to our common daily life. The historic fact that it was given only in the wilderness, after the departure from the natural harvests of Egypt, and withheld as soon as they came into the natural corn-fields of Canaan, should teach us that in all things, either physical or spiritual, we are not to expect miracles when God has given us means. These and many other important practical lessons we ought to learn from this simple fact, "That the manna ceased when they had eaten the old corn of Canaan." But we have no room for them now. We are only considering the manna in its symbolic meaning. It was evidently a type, not, indeed, of Christ Himself, as we are usually taught, for then it would signify that we shall not find Christ in that heavenly country, prefigured by the old Land of Promise; and this God forbid. Give us the wilderness with Christ

rather than the glorious Canaan, and all the angels of heaven, without Him. Strictly speaking, this manna typified, not the personal Saviour, but the manner and means of salvation, and thus we would now consider it.

Observe, then, that what we here term means of grace, or those operations and ordinances whereby spiritual life is developed and disciplined on earth, will not be found in heaven. There will be no Sabbaths in heaven, for we shall not need special seasons of sacredness in that perfect life of holiness where all work will be worship. There will be no prayer in heaven, for prayer pre-supposes want, and therefore more or less unhappiness, and these will be impossible unto the higher experiences of immortals. There will be no sacraments in heaven, for what use of memorials of our Lord when He Himself will walk with us in the Paradise, and abide with us in the palace? There will be no Bibles in heaven, for what need of any letters from our glorious Father when we shall see Him face to face, and His living force will instruct and comfort us? There will be no sanctuaries in heaven, for God Himself will be the temple, and as we behold His very attributes in that uncreated architecture, "His strength in the pillars, His beauty in the ornaments," we shall not need the chiseled marble and silken upholstery, and colored glass and crystal candelabra, not all nor any of the ostentatious appliances and accessories of these cathedrals and basilicas, wherein, as old classic pantheons, we render worship to Deity. There will be none of all these sanctifying afflictions and disciplinary and developing experiences, for what need will there be of fires for the gold and abrasion for the brilliants, when

the fine gold and polished gems are sparkling in the regalia of Immanuel? O no, no. All means of grace will give place to grace itself in that mysterious economy of the revelation of God. And all this, I say, is beautifully set forth in the text. The manifest difference between the food in the wilderness and the food in the Promised Land was that one was a miraculous production and the other a natural and indigenous growth.

And so it is in the spiritual. Holiness will thrive naturally and spontaneously in heaven. *Here* piety is self-denial. *There* piety will be self-indulgence. There will be no need, yea, there will be no possibility, of self-sacrifice in heaven, for the soul will be freed from every propensity to iniquity. There to sin would be to deny ourselves, and to live a holy life will be to give widest play to every appetite and passion. O, what a blessed thought it is! O, enrapturing transfiguration of our spiritual life! *Here* we are kept safe in Christ. How? Why, just as the sheep enclosed at night in warm folds and watched by the unseen shepherd, or as a flock which the keeper guards from beasts of prey in a howling wilderness. *There* we shall be kept safe, as sheep led by the glorious Lamb into green pastures and beside still waters, in all the cloudless sunshine which no night can ever darken. *Here* the food of our spiritual life is gathered day by day from the hot sands of the desert. *There* it waves as golden grain in the husbandry of an eternal summer.

This, then, is our text's first lesson—that these means of grace will give place to new appliances of culture when the corruptible becomes incorrupt, and the mortal puts on immortality. But the instruction goes much

further. There are in it certainly intimation not only of great differences in the food that sustains life, but of even greater differences in the modes and manifestations of life. Observe, then, that much that constitutes spiritual work on earth will cease forever in heaven. This, indeed, seems so much a matter of course that the favorite notion of heaven is, that we shall have there *no work* at all; nothing, indeed, to do but worship. But all this our text corrects. This gathering manna from the ground was very short and simple work compared with the varied industries of husbandry whereby they were furnished with their sustenance in Canaan. There they planted vineyards and orchards, and built houses and cities, and achieved all the manifold industries of a commonwealth whose chief occupation was agriculture. And if it was a far more delightful work, it was surely as well much more a diligent work, to gather their grapes and figs, and pomegranates and olives, and all manner of summer fruits, and to reap their various grains in their season—in short, to sow and plant and gather into storehouses and barns all the material of their daily food, than simply to take up, every man for himself, every day an ounce of manna.

I have no space now to pursue the thought, but it surely should enlarge our ideas of the heavenly life as we thus contrast the pilgrim economy of the Exodus with that of the citizenship of Canaan. The pitching and striking of tents certainly called for not more industrious activity than the building of great cities and substantial dwellings, and plying the various implements of agriculture and manufactures, and commerce and art of a broad, social life; and while the temple service on

Mount Zion was vastly more splendid than that of the humble tabernacle of the Exodus, it took up no greater portion of their time, nor constituted more of their life-work. Ah! no, no; wearing white robes in the temple, and singing hallelujahs before the throne will not be all the risen spirit will find to do in heaven. We are not, indeed, told, nor is it for us to conjecture, what high ministries will be ours when we shall have put on immortality; but certainly such active, earnest, and all-glorious ministries are signified in the text—"symbolism"—that we shall cease to gather the manna in the wilderness only to sow and reap and gather into garners the old corn of Canaan.

Meanwhile, as a lesson of the text, observe 3dly. That many things whereon our earthly happiness depends will not be found in heaven. I have not space here even to enumerate them. So many and so great they sometimes are, that the very thought of parting with them is very painful; and when we go out and lay into the grave the rich man and the honorable, the child taken from a home of love, and the youth stricken down just as he was entering upon life's brightest paths of enjoyment or ambition, then it is with emotions of regretful pity we think of them as having no longer part or lot in the things we ourselves enjoy. But alas for all this short-sighted commiseration! Our text surely should rebuke it. The manna was unquestionably a pleasant food, for its taste was that of wafers made of honey. But what, after all, was the richest and most sumptuous feast ever spread in the pilgrim-tents in the wilderness compared with the luxurious banquets gathered from harvest-field and vineyard and orchard

and garden—all manner of things fair to look upon and good for food, all heaped in prodigal abundance on the festal boards in the princely mansions of Canaan. O no, dear friends, we should never look on the pleasant things our departed friends have left behind with emotions of pity for those who have left them; but it is for them to look pityingly back upon us, even when in the experience of earth's greatest delights, and cry, "Alas for those beloved pilgrims left behind on the earth, fed on the poor, corruptible manna, while we—we are feasting on the old corn of Canaan."

But we must pause here with our thought of these special lessons of the text. Its one great, general truth may be thus stated—that the whole economy of the heavenly life, both in the service to be rendered and the delights to be enjoyed, will be altogether unlike the earthly and mortal. We cannot too often be reminded of this truth. We are so prone to think of that glorious, but to us almost unknown world, as only the purification and perfection of things earthly and temporal. We only take away night from the sky, and death from the dwelling, and wipe away all tears from the eye, and lift all burdens from the breaking heart and the wounded spirit—in short, we only reject from our ideal all that is evil, and gather together all that is good in our mortal experience, and call that heaven. We regard the Church triumphant as only the glorious consummation of the Church militant. And in this surely we grossly err. The real glory and blessedness of heaven depends upon, yea, consists in, its utter and absolute unlikeness to this earthly life. So the Bible everywhere teaches us. Paul, who had been taken up

to gaze upon celestial realities, tells us that they cannot be described by earthly language, nor even conceived of by human imagination. And nowhere do these inspired writers attempt this. John, indeed, tells us of a few things that are not in heaven, and in figures drawn from our poor, earthly experience would give us faint intimation of its positive beatitude. But the Bible tells us no more; yea, it can tell us no more, and for a plain reason. The great change the mortal experiences when it puts on immortality is a change of faculties. It rises at once into spheres and ranges of thought unto which the things of the earth seem as trivial and unsatisfying as a child's cheap toys to the experiences and exercises of the full-grown man. And for us while in the flesh to conceive of them is as impossible as for the chrysalis, shut up in its little pendulous shell, to conceive of the bright and boundless sphere into which it is presently to burst and soar on its new pinions. Hence I say the futility, nay, the very falsity of all our attempts to describe heavenly things. We gather together in thought some of the fairest and grandest things we have known on earth—"trees of life," and "rivers of pleasure," and "thrones of power," and "crowns of glory," and fashion according to our childish taste a little, pitiful, tinsel, mimic Paradise, and call the place Heaven. Alas! alas! for our folly, and our text illustrates it. For just as the golden harvests of Canaan that waved in exhaustless abundance along the fair landscapes and beneath the bright skies of that blessed land of prophecy and promise were unlike the hoar-frost of manna gathered in small vessels from the barren sands of the desert, so the state of the risen spirit is unlike our own. And all

those descriptions and word-paintings of heaven with which ambitious poetry and oratory so often strive to interest and astonish us are as pitiful caricatures of the ineffable reality as a child's notion of the universe—a flat, earthly plane a score of miles in circumference, and a firmament above it a little greater in altitude. The heaven they describe is but the poor, flitting phantasms of man's childish fancy. But heaven, as it is, is the perfect realization of the infinite and transcendent imagination of God.

Perhaps we may from this very text gather with the *a fortiori* logic a feeble conception of the blessedness of heaven. We might reason on this wise:—If there be such happiness in these means of grace, what will be the rapture in the realities of glory? If the experience of the Exodus be so joyful, what will be that of Canaan? If the eating of the sweetened meal makes us happy, what will be the sitting down at heaven's glorious banquet, with all its living fruits—the “new Eucharist,” the “marriage supper?” If it be so sweet to have Christ with us in sorrow, when hopes wither and the heart breaks—in the chamber of suffering, by the bed of death, under the cypresses which overshadow the dear sepulchres—O what will it be to have Him with us in the many mansions!

But I repeat it: we cannot realize heaven's raptures. But we can believe in them, glory in them, look up to them, as did Abraham, and press on toward them. Therefore, ye pilgrims on the earth, while we thank God for the manna, let us exult at the thought of the golden corn. A little longer this pitching tents in the desert, and this gathering of this seeming hoar-frost from the

sand, and then we, too, like the old Hebrews, shall come within sight of the bright land toward which we journey. Uncreated light will be flashing round the great cities and grand mountains and sweet pastoral valleys—the gardens and vineyards and boundless harvest-fields and palaces and temples of our promised land. And then old Jordan will roll back its dark, cold water, and we go over with bounding feet and great songs of triumph, to stand in the midst of all these ineffable realities, and understand the blessed meaning of our text, that “the manna ceased after they had eaten of the old corn of the land.”

ADVANTAGES OF RELIGION.

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."—1 TIMOTHY IV. 8.

There are few things in which men exercise so little common sense as in regard of religion, whether it be the practical part of religious life, or the doctrinal part of religious opinion. With many men religion is a thing of Sabbath days and sanctuaries and sacraments, and if not treated worse, is respectfully bowed out of doors if it appear in counting-room or workshop. And perhaps with most men personal piety is regarded as so thoroughly antagonistic to common earthly principles that its only law is self-denial and sacrifice.

Now, so far is this from being true, that real piety consists, over and above faith, which is its life, in a proper and profitable discharge of current duties, and an enjoyment of the common privileges of this world and life. The soul's best preparation for heaven is not found in cutting loose from the world, and feeding on roots, and wearing sackcloth in caverns, but is found in using the good things God gives us for man's good and God's glory, having the while the whole set and strength of the affections lifted above the best things of this

world unto the better things that are far away and beyond it.

In the concise language of the text, "Godliness is profitable unto all things." So far from requiring us to sacrifice earthly interests, or forego earthly comforts, it teaches us practically how to secure the one, and positively prepares us more exquisitely to enjoy the other. It is not profitable merely in fitting us to die, and to enter upon the untried and mysterious existence beyond the grave; but it is profitable as well in all conditions and circumstances of common earthly life. As under the old dispensation God instructed His people in regard of life, common business, and pleasure, so that they excelled all their cotemporaries in the arts of architecture and agriculture, and surpassed them immeasurably in all social comforts, so under the new dispensation the very tendency of religion is to render men prosperous and happy. God has promised to His children as truly *this world* as the world to come, and Christ died for us not only that we might have white robes and blessed mansions in heaven, but that we might have as well on earth comfortable houses and clothing. And the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit is not merely to impart or strengthen those dispositions which fit the man to wear a crown and sweep a harp in the eternal world, but to develop and strengthen as well all those mental and moral qualities which fit him best to perform the common business of this earthly life.

A Bible instructing a man only about eternity would be a poor book for this world. A chart of yonder blue Pacific seas, with the grand headlands of those golden shores and sunny islands, is a priceless thing when we

have doubled Cape Horn. But meantime, what we especially need in getting to Cape Horn is a steady light on the dangerous Hatteras we are crossing, and a reliable chart of the stormy Carribean just beyond. While a soul remains in this world, it wants and must have a religion for this world; and this is just what God hath given us in this blessed Gospel of Christ.

Now this, you will observe, is what our text teaches. It asserts that for this life, as well as the after-life, godliness is profitable. Let us consider this thought a little in detail and practically, for the common idea is that we must build this work for Him; and beginning with life's most common interest, we observe—

First. That godliness is profitable in regard of the business of this life. And here I use the word *business* in its ordinary sense, as indicating a man's particular employment or. occupation; and in this regard, while piety will not supply the place of talent or genius, or make a man naturally stupid, supernaturally sagacious, still, other things being equal, the most godly man will be always *the best business man*. And this not by reason of any special revelations within, or special providences without him, so that he may lie in bed trusting God, but as a philosophic result of a high and true moral culture and training, developing and strengthening those qualities of character which insure success.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BIBLE AND OLD CLASSICS.

1. *Godliness makes a man honest*, and Infidelity being the judge, honesty is the best business quality. I care not what may be a man's other gifts and advantages, if there rest on his character a suspicion of double

dealing and deceitfulness, he is rendered incapable of large and permanent success. Now we say this: integrity and truthfulness are insured by a man's godliness. We do not say that he may not be honest without piety, but we say he cannot be pious without honesty. Confessedly every truly pious man is an honest man, and therefore godliness, which develops and strengthens honesty, aids unto business success, and so "is profitable unto all things."

2. *Godliness makes a man industrious and earnest;* and industry and application are elements of all worldly success. An indolent man, I care not what may be his other qualities, will prove in the end a failure. He must rise early and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, who, amid the jostling rivalries and crowded professions of this world, becomes opulent or eminent. And this is the very thing which godliness produces. A man may indeed be industrious without religion, but he cannot be a truly godly man without industry; for godliness means "godlikeness"—being like God. And God Himself is eternally busy—all, all glorious beings are as well untiringly busy. No man ever dreamed of a lazy angel; and there is no such thing as a lazy spirit in heaven—no night for sleep there. They rest not day nor night. And so God Himself declares of the indolent and inefficient man on earth who provides not for his own household, that he hath denied all Christian faith, and is worse than an infidel, and that no man can serve God at all who is not as well "diligent in business" as fervent in spirit. Godliness, we repeat it, makes a man industrious, and thus proves itself profitable to all business success.

3. *Godliness makes a man prudent and forecasting*, and manifestly such prudence and forethought are essential to success. Man cannot rest in the present like the beast and bird, trusting to the promptings of instinct to secure a passing good, or to escape a pressing evil. Man is gifted with reason and foresight, and he must exercise them. A bird swings in a tree, letting God think for him, but a man must think for himself. He must watch for the harvest, and have his sickle ready. He must foresee the coming tempest, and put his bark in storm-trim. The successful man is always the man sagacious to procure future probabilities. The successful physician anticipates the approaching type of disease. The successful merchant foresees the future demands and purposes of the market. Forethought is essential to all earthly prosperity. But godliness tends directly to develop and strengthen this quality in human character. The very faith by which he walks is nothing more than an elevated and sanctified forethought—the resolute, earnest looking above and beyond the present moment to perceive future good, and escape future evil—to lift the eye from the fading things of time to the eternal things far away and beyond. Godliness, as a fixed habit of life, leads a man to look unto, and live in view of the future; and that, by cultivating forethought, aids in business success, and proves itself “profitable unto all things.”

4. *Godliness makes a man firm and decided*, and confessedly firmness and decision are grand business qualities. We do not care what else a man may do, if he cannot say “Yes” and “No” with a downright emphasis, he will never make a business man. I do not mean that brute stubbornness is an excellence. A noble,

magnanimous yielding in all things, save great principles, is a quality essential to all grand achievements. A rock yields to nothing, and is always a stone; a reed yields to everything, and is always an osier; but it is the glory of the *oak* that it will yield every branch and spray and leaf to the gentlest zephyr, but stand, meanwhile, in majestic strength against the rush of the hurricane. And if a man attain true eminence in any walk of life, rising above the insignificance of the fixed rock and the facile reed into the glory of the oak's great height and strength, it will be as a result of that beautiful composite of gentleness and firmness which made Paul, on the one hand, all things to all men, and made him, on the other, the champion against the world in arms, and made him, on the whole, the chiefest of the apostles and the noblest of men. Now I need scarcely show you this very firmness is a product of godliness. The first thing the Gospel teaches us is to say "No," "No," decidedly—to stand up in the very path of evil solicitation, and frown and spurn the foul thing away from it. And the habit it sets itself most carefully to cherish is that fixedness of purpose and firm religious decision which will enable the soul to weather the storms of temptation, and escape unwrecked from the wild sea of life—to say "I will," with Daniel, in spite of the lion; "I won't," with Shadrach, before the fiery furnace. Therefore, in cherishing in man's character this noble quality, godliness tends to success in life, and proves itself profitable unto all things.

Now, our limits forbid us to pursue these thoughts further. Do it at your leisure, and you cannot fail to perceive how every several element of character tend-

ing to success in worldly business is encouraged and strengthened by personal piety, and so patent and universal is this truth, that the veriest infidel on earth will prefer as his partner in trade, or physician, or counsellor, or clerk, or salesman, or bookkeeper, or grocer, or gardener—will prefer, indeed, in any and every earthly occupation, the real Christian to the avowed infidel; and he will think twice before he deals with a man whom he finds reading Paine's blasphemies, and will rely almost instinctively on him who makes God's Word the name of his counsel; and if, through years of toilsome and trying life, the merchant or the professional man has proved himself a sincere and humble Christian, then the whole community will entrust their interests to that man unhesitatingly, and verify their faith in the divine oracle that true godliness is profitable unto all things.

Passing this, observe, Secondly, that godliness is profitable in regard of the *true pleasures* of this world. And here I use the word "pleasure" in its ordinary sense, embracing, in its broad range, the gratification of the senses, the appetites, and the affections. And we say that, in regard of them all, godliness is profitable. The Bible does indeed deny us what it calls the pleasures of sin, but it does this only because such things are in the present injurious, and in the end painful. It forbids me to go down to the haunts of all evil, because those places lie in the road to death, and the fire burns there, and the adder stings there. But in regard of every *real pleasure* experienced in using the good things God gives men, the Bible allows, nay, commands me to enjoy them. In respect of such earthly delights, true religion does two things.

1. Most manifestly it gathers round the man new material of pleasure. Christianity is confessedly the grand principle of all true industrial civilization. Christianity finds man a barbarian, and elevates and refines him. It comes to the poor savage clothed in skins, and feeding on roots, and sleeping on the hard earth, and it builds for him a comfortable dwelling, and clothes him in soft raiment, and covers his table with the luxuries of all climes—arts, sciences, literature, commerce. These are all positive creations of practical Christianity. You go to your homes to-day, and all that makes them pleasant dwelling-places, all modern improvements and appointments, carpets, couches, firesides; the paintings that hang on the walls; the books that make up, or that ought to, its libraries; the luxuries of the board; the comforts of its wardrobe; its instruments of music; and more than all, the gentle voices and looks of love that fill all its chambers as with airs from Paradise; all, all these innumerable objects, which are sources of delight that distinguish your homes from the squalid huts of the savage, are as positively the products of operative Christianity as this Bible and this sanctuary. Christianity accumulates, and indeed creates these objects of pleasure.

2. It greatly develops and strengthens within the man every capacity for their enjoyment. Godliness in its earthly influences is only the harmonious development of every faculty of our nature, the stringing of the perfect instrument, and so it gives man a finer ear for music, and a quicker eye for color, and a keener relish for the fragrance of flowers and the aroma of fruits. It makes his eye to sparkle, and his nerves to thrill, and

his heart to bound ; and denying the only things which would brutalize my nature, bids me enjoy to the full everything I can approach without a blush, and drink and drain every cup of delight wherein is not mingled the gall of discontent or the hemlock of destruction.

O away, away, with this foulest blasphemy, which represents my Heavenly Father as delighting to clothe His children in sackcloth and feed them on ashes, while He lavishes all the fair, bright things of this world on the violators of His law and the enemies of His righteousness ! and will have it that the Omnipotent and all-loving Shepherd of Israel is ever leading lions and bears into green pastures and beside still waters, and the sheep of His fold and the lambs in His bosom only into the terrible valley and shadow of death ! O no, no, no ! So it never hath been ; so it never shall be. I tell you that in old time it was not Christ, but the legion of devils that drove poor, tormented men forth from pleasant homes to cut themselves with stones on the mountains and abide in sepulchres.

And I tell you it is the same legion of devils that shuts men up in prisons and alms-houses, and drives them in shivering, starving beggary through your streets, and gives them eyes that are red, and limbs that are palsied, and hearts that are broken, and homes that are cursed. True piety is now and then found clothed upon with a beggar's rags, and when it is, so much more glorious does it seem for its gloomy surroundings, that God Himself, and all His angels, and all true men delight to honor it. But in the mass and in the main, religion dwells in comfortable houses, and wears warm clothing, and sits at plentiful boards, and shares pleasant fellow-

ships. And if, all arrayed in heavenly loveliness, it will not descend to the haunts of the profligate and impure, it is only on the principle that the white-winged dove will not seek the owl's foul cavern when the glorious sun is shining on the fair, green glades of the woodland, because the heart needs not the stranger's swine-husks when the Father's fatling is killed, and will not pluck the bitter apples of Sodom when the vine bends with its purple clusters, and the tree of life bears twelve manner of fruit in the garden of God. Hark to Christmas songs! Yes, yes, yes, my brethren. Religion, as a quickening and conserving power, adds alike to the capacities of, and the sources for pleasure. And so, in respect even of life's natural delights, proves itself profitable unto all things.

And so everywhere, and always. Had we the limits, very easy were it to show how, in regard of every earthly and mental interest, there is a sure profit in godliness. That by making a man prudent, sober, industrious, honest, adding to the strength of the body and vigor of the intellect, and of the purity and power of all the moral faculties, it secures worldly pleasure, and enhances earthly prosperity, and helps on to those high places of influence, which are the guerdon and goal of honorable ambition. Verily, the Bible is full of this truth.

Bear with me, beloved hearer, while I press this truth on you. Do not say that I appeal to the lower and carnal impulses of your nature. O no, no. I but urge a divine promise in the very words of inspiration. I only insist, as God everywhere insists, that (even if there were no world to come) you want religion in this world.

Dear little child, you want piety to make your school-tasks easier and your holidays happier. Beloved youth, you want piety, as a blessed sunshine, making life's fields greener around you, and its skies brighter above you, to make your life a long and happy one. Honored men, who are bearing the heat and burden of the day, you want piety as a heavenly bread, and the living water to cheer and strengthen in the race and the battle, to make your children safe and your home happy. Religion is not merely a supernal light, to flame out in a dying chamber. It is a radiant sun shining all the life through—on the field, by the way, in workshop and counting-room; love's blessed household lamp, with heavenly light for all the dwelling, shining alike on the strong man's tomb and the sweet babe's cradle. It is God's best earthly gift, a divine provision for man's highest good even in this world. God's positive "promise of the life which now is, and so profitable unto all things."

But then this is not all the text, nor the half of it, nor the beginning of it. "Having the promise of this life," and—and—and "of that which is to come." And herein pre-eminently is godliness profitable unto all things, because confessedly on all hands it alone has that promise. For the future world religion furnishes the only preparation; and this, therefore, is that which gives of such infinite pre-eminence, for it is "the promise—God's promise of the life that is to come." I leave this for another occasion.

Think of it; O think of it! ye so slow of heart in accepting salvation. How precious every word! "The promise;" *i. e.*, God's promise—assured by all His infinite

truthfulness. Not a hope, not an inspiration, not a fair and glorious dream, not a philosophic deduction from the immateriality and consequent immortality of the human spirit. No, no; but a promise, a promise of that unchangeable God whose unimpeachable verity creation and providence are forever attesting. A promise—such a promise of “the life that is to come.”

A higher life! a heavenly life! a life developed and adjusted to the conditions and ministries of the spiritual world. And who shall speak of such things? Even in this world the phenomena of development in progressive life absolutely overwhelm us—a dark seed, opening into flower, living, fragrant, lustrous—a tiny acorn, opening, rising, spreading into the monarch oak of the mountains—the pearly shell falling off, that that which plumes and pinions the imperial eagle may mount above storm-clouds, soaring to the sun. And if such changes in the life of soulless things, what shall be the transfigurations of the risen man in Christ Jesus when he puts on immortality!

No wonder Paul could not speak of it. But when I look on him ever after that rapture, and see a man ever longing to depart, ever home-sick for heaven, athirst even for the fiery baptism of martyrdom to melt away the mortal fetters that chained him from the immortal, then his bounding heart and his flashing eye are more eloquent than words. I know it is life, all these earthly affections, faculties—redeemed, risen, glorified!

This heart-life of love,

This soul-life of faith, glorified.

Eternal life!—life on which sorrow can cast no shadow, and over which death hath no power! Life on the

other side the flood! Life by the bright waters! Life amid the splendors of the many mansions and with the beloved dead! Life with a raised and glorified body! Life as a risen and sanctified spirit! Life in a temple as a grander priesthood! Life on a throne as a glorious kingship! Life sphered above seraph and archangel in the very sonship of God! Life! life! life! not mere existence; for life is progress, life is development—"the life that is to come"—forever to come.

Why, if you could stand where Abraham stands to-day, or Moses stands, or Paul stands, in the great height of their present progress, still before you stretching away upward in endless distances would be glorious mountains for the immortal feet—receding firmaments for the upsoaring wing. O tell us, some risen spirit, winged to wander through immensity and eternity, returning from rapturous excursions amid the system-clusters of worlds—O tell us what it means, the life that is to come!

But let it mean what it will, it is ours if we are Christians, and what do we want more? O sorrowing child of God! lift up those dim eyes till the tears sparkle as gems in heaven's eternal sunshine, and tell me what you would have more. This stupendous promise yours, "The life that is—and the life that is to come," to come! And you, poor, impenitent soul, before whom all these eternal realities move as divine motives, and yet are sitting sadly in the poor dust of sense and sin, as the poor, maimed, wounded, thirsty eagle, with soiled plumes and shattered pinion, when the free wind, and the flashing sun, and the great heaven of blue are all calling him away—upward—onward!

O guilty and perishing immortal, what would you have more? O my God! my Heavenly Father! take up Thine own parable. Speak those words, by man unspeakable. Lift the curtain, dissolve the clouds, reveal the glory, that these precious ones, made in Thine image, yet grovelling in the dust, may feel the immortality beating within them, and burst from these poor limits of sense and sin, and soar! soar! soar! to the everlasting glory.

THE CHARACTER OF UNBELIEF.

"He marveled because of their unbelief."—MARK VI. 6.

These words are among the most wonderful to be found in the Bible. They affirm the co-existence in the divine mind of Christ of omniscience and surprise. The explanation is found only in the fact of the two natures in that divine person. But even this hardly explains it; and though we can partially comprehend how the Son of the ever-blessed God might be overwhelmed with sorrow, and the Son of the "omnipotent" God could become faint and weary, yet we can only be astonished at the record that the Son of the Omniscient God could find anything in the universe at which to be astonished, to wonder, to marvel. But this fact only serves to give impressiveness to the text's one great lesson, namely, the marvelous character of unbelief—the surprising, inexplicable, monstrous nature of infidelity.

We have no space now to set forth the wonder that the people of Nazareth, in their skepticism, rejected both the ministry and the miracles of Christ, but go on at once, as something more important to ourselves, to consider how marvelous a thing, in any form, and always,

is infidelity or skepticism. I am not now speaking of the sinfulness of unbelief—we will consider that hereafter. I only speak of its strangeness. Take whatever form of infidelity you will, whether speculative or practical, and there is nothing even in the sinfulness of our nature that can account for it; and it was the wonder of Christ's time, as it is the wonder of our own; and all Heaven marvels, and all thoughtful men marvel, even as our Lord Himself "marveled because of their unbelief." Entering so broad a field we must, of course, confine ourselves to a few general and desultory thoughts.

We begin, then,

First. With speculative unbelief; that unbelief which shapes itself into a creed denying either the being of a God or the inspiration of the Bible. And we say it is a marvel, a great wonder every way, whether regarded as a matter of taste or of judgment, as a matter of taste, or preference, or choice. We are astonished that any man should be willing to disbelieve these great facts.

Take Atheism. Even if there be no God, still we should suppose that any intelligent being would wish there were one. The simple idea of living in a world, sustained and managed by no almighty and benevolent intelligence, and which the next hour some tremendous brute and blind force might shatter and send back to the old primordial chaos, this very thought is so dreadful that our very instincts recoil from it. Even if Atheism were a logical belief, we should expect every man to argue against it—that men of philosophy and science would go abroad through creation, climbing

every mountain, traversing every desert, sounding every ocean, descending into all the spectral caverns of geology, ascending all the sublime heights of astronomy, questioning all phenomena, or forces, or forms of nature, in the intensest agony of a desire to find evidences for a God, crying in the words and accents of a child searching for an absent father, "O tell me, tell me! have you not seen Him? have you not heard Him? In all these broad realms is there no print of His footsteps? no trace of His handiwork? Am I, indeed, a poor, wretched, forlorn orphan? O tell me, tell me! is there not a God?"

So one surely would expect, and when, instead of this, we do see men striving to root and ground themselves in this terrible unbelief, traversing in thought this universe, from the death-dust of geology to the fire-mist of astronomy, only for false witnesses wherewith to disprove the glorious truths of a theology which all living things are demonstrating, looking not for a living spirit, but for a resistless law; not for the habitation of a living God, but for the sepulchre of a dead God, then, I say, this all seems to us, as it did to our Master, a strange thing, and "we marvel." But beyond this, and even more wonderful, is this Atheism considered.

As a matter of the judgment. If the question were manifestly an open one, and in view of counter-testimony and conflicting witnesses the reason were compelled to sift carefully the evidence, and decide on the ground of a balancing of probabilities, we should certainly expect that there would be no leaning of the understanding in favor of unbelief. But, marvelous to tell, when this great question is to be sifted, carnal rea-

son, like a prejudiced or bribed judge, suppresses evidence, perverts truth, yea, denies even the poor benefit of a doubt to the truth of God's being. Creation is a vast court-room crowded with living witnesses. Every organic form, every inorganic force, all material and immaterial processes and phenomena give, in their unimpeached harmonies, glad testimony for God.

But what does the unbeliever? Like a righteous judge, does he render a verdict in accordance with the law and the facts? Why, look at him! He has left the high seat of judgment. He stands up in the place and attitude of a special-pleading advocate. He suborns false witnesses; he perverts established facts; he not only insolently browbeats and bullies the truth, but even, with inquisitorial fiendishness, puts truth to the torture, stretching it on the rack, breaking it on the wheel, to compel lying utterance. He traverses oceans and continents for wriggling atoms, which, by any extravagant hypothesis, may be supposed to be a *quasi-genesis* of life; and he brings these unsightly embryos up into the glorious sunshine, and amid all these mighty voices eloquent for God, if the dead atom will only peep, or mutter, or speak, or squirm, cries, "Hear! hear! Behold a Daniel come to judgment! Harken, all ye creatures of the universe. We claim a verdict by acclamation! We have got rid of your God!"

Now, I repeat it, all this is simply marvelous. It is marvelous that a man should choose rather to be a creature of chance than a child of Jehovah; and more marvelous that he should take testimony rather of pulsating spawn than of soaring seraphim, and choose rather to follow a reptile's trail in the mire to God's

awful grave, than mount exultingly in the glorious track of an archangel to God's everlasting throne. And now, passing this as no less a marvel, take Deism, which, believing in the being of a God, denies Revelation; and this, too, in regard of judgment and of taste, we count a great marvel. Here is an inexplicable preference. We cannot but think it a wonderful thing that any rational being should wish to disbelieve the great truths of the Bible; that he should hate in his heart the doctrine of immortality, and the resurrection of the dead, and the life everlasting; feeling, as every living man cannot but feel, and confessedly does feel, that he is a sinner; that he should not rejoice in the Gospel; that an all-pitying, all-merciful God came into the world to save sinners; that he should desire to regard death as an eternal sleep; that he should be glad to believe that the dear ones who have passed away have absolutely perished.

This does seem to us wonderful. If this Bible be a book of false oracles, if this hope of immortality and heaven be only a dream, yet it is a dream of such transcendent beauty and splendor that it seems to us that any soul, through whose chambers of imagery glide its magnificent phantasms, would cry out: "O, do not dispel the vision! Do not wake me yet. I would not be recalled from these spheres and seemings of immortal glory to the terrible realities of the skeptic's black and starless night." Surely the wish to disprove revelation is a marvel.

Meantime the judgment that deliberately rejects it is more wonderful still. Certainly one would expect, in regard of so glorious a hypothesis, a candid examina-

tion of evidence ; but alas for our disappointment ! In behalf of the Bible there comes forth an amount of testimony which, so far as is possible on moral questions, amounts to demonstration ; miracles recorded, where falsehood were impossible ; prophecies marvelously fulfilled, and ever fulfilling ; the revelation of great facts, just such as an immortal creature longs for, and of enrapturing truths, of which no uninspired fancy could ever have conceived ; a record of past triumphs over the arrayed powers, prejudices, and philosophies of the world, absolutely impossible to any system of falsehood ; evidences, in short, of a great cloud of witnesses, which nothing but a counter or higher revelation of mightier voices and visions out of heaven can ever disprove. And yet, in face of it all, what does the deist do ? Why, he goes abroad through creation like a false, special pleader for a criminal's forfeited life, suborning false witnesses. He mines amid earth's strata, soars amid heaven's stars, lifting up, as he goes, to every living and every dead thing in the universe the same cry of pleading agony :—"O come, come ! and bear witness that I am not an immortal creature ; that heaven is only a phantom and the Bible a lie !" And I say this is a marvel—that a man should stand here, in creation's vast chamber of evidence, and when all voices of living things on earth, and all visions of enrapturing things in heaven attest his immortal birthright as a child of God, and by a Mediator's intercession entitled to, yea, invested with an heirship over all the high things of immensity and eternity—that then, I say, instead of joyfully accepting the enrapturing affirmation, he should strive to set it aside with a sneer and a curse, and bring-

ing up some old skeleton from the grave, and setting it carefully up before that judgment-seat, and prying open its dead jaws, cause it to peep and mutter a lying testimony; that he has no eternal home, and no Heavenly Father; that as a beast he was born, and as a beast he will perish.

Verily, all this does seem strange to us. Such a man seems, indeed, a monstrous, stupendous wonder, a prodigy of guilt, of ingratitude, of madness, from whom all holy beings recoil with horror, and over whom even the omniscient Son of God marvels, because of his unbelief. Nor is the wonder less—nay, it really seems greater—when you advance from this whole sphere of speculative error to consider:—

Secondly. That practical unbelief which consists in a personal rejection of the Gospel of Christ, as manifest in the man who, believing in God, and accepting the Bible as His inspired Word, yet goes on, from day to day, putting his eternity away from him as carelessly, yea, as resolutely as if he stood boldly forth with the infidel, professing to believe that God is but a phantom and the Bible a lie. We say the attitude of this man is even more wonderful than the other. We are less astonished at an intellectual mistake than at a great practical blunder. We are not so profoundly shocked when a blind man walks off a precipice as when a man does the thing when possessed of all his senses, and with his eyes wide open.

And so it is in the spiritual. To a man who accepts the Bible as the Word of God, it comes not so much a compend of truth to be believed, as a directory of momentous work to be done—work upon whose instant

and earnest performance depends the most stupendous interests of time and eternity, and enforcing its exhortation by motives drawn from three worlds, and pressed, as by the very power of God, upon every emotion of our nature; appealing to our fears by all that is terrible in the thought of a judgment to come, and eternal retribution; appealing to our hopes by all that is enrapturing in the imagination of a higher, an immortal, an everlasting life; appealing to every true and tender affection by all that is touching in the thought of the Almighty Creator of all things, bending from His throne of glory to care for us more tenderly than ever a mother cared for the babe of her bosom—yea, with a love so absolutely ineffable and infinite “that He gave His only-begotten Son to die,” that He might save us. And coming thus as a powerful, practical, personal appeal, in behalf of our own most momentous interests, a man’s inattention or procrastination does seem the mightiest of all moral marvels. If he were to set fire to his own princely palace, or resolutely to spring into a burning volcano, or in inhuman cruelty to wound a father’s spirit, or break a mother’s heart, it would all be as nothing to the tremendous motives he overbears in his rejection of the Gospel.

For just think of it for a moment! To believe—really to believe—that in this world of probation we are positively working out our own salvation, absolutely settling the question whether we are to be saved or whether we are to be lost; to believe that there is a coming judgment, when our eternal destinies shall be settled according to the deeds done in the body, and not prepare earnestly for the reckoning; to believe that

there is a hopeless condition of everlasting ignominy and anguish prepared for the finally impenitent, and yet go on resolutely to its tremendous realities; to believe that there is a heaven of inconceivable and everlasting happiness and glory, and yet turn madly away when its gates are lifted up to our immortal footsteps—I say to believe thus, and yet act thus, is to make exhibition of a folly, a madness immeasurable, ineffable, and all the angels of heaven must stand astonished at the spectacle, and the omniscient Son of God “marvels at our unbelief.”

I will not enlarge. This is the lesson set forth in our text, and a most striking picture it is. O take it home with you, for it illustrates the true character of unbelief, whether speculative or practical; the speculative unbelief, that is not convinced by the evidences of Christianity. Behold that infidel Jew! That Jesus was the Christ, their expected Messiah, the glorious Son of God, was a truth positively demonstrated—a new star in heaven, a vision of angels on the earth, a great voice out of the firmament, a long line of prophecies fulfilled, a record of amazing miracles wrought—evidences such as these were pressed upon the intellect; yet the infidel put them all away with the sneering cavil, “But is He not a carpenter?” And is he not just the parallel of this modern skeptic, who thinks to blow away all this stupendous advocacy of Christian faith by a poor, undeduced, unfounded, yea, impossible conjecture of scientific fancy?

Or take practical unbelief. Jesus had been abroad in all that land, working glorious miracles. He had opened blind eyes; He had healed incurable diseases; He had con-

trolled raging elements; He had raised the dead; and now He stands in Nazareth to repeat these deeds of divine love. Messengers speed through the streets, crying, "Come forth, ye stricken, ye afflicted ones, and be healed and blessed!" They knock at the door of that poor leper; they stand by the couch of the smitten paralytic; they take hold on the hand of the miserable blind man, and cry, "Come, and be healed!"

In yonder chamber children keep weeping watch beside a dying parent. Beside that cradle a mother bends in love's ineffable anguish over her convulsed babe; and the loud cry of the multitude falls on the ear:—"Joy, joy for you, O sorrowing one! Jesus, Jesus, the divine wonder-worker, has come to heal your sick one!" and so from house to house speed the messengers of mercy. And certainly we do look that there shall be a hurrying forth from all those scenes of suffering to find healing and consolation and rapture at the Saviour's feet. But alas for our expectation! as if positively enamored of their agonies, not one of them comes to the wonder-maker. The blind beggar sits still by the wayside, caring only for alms; and the leper still stifles on in his hot chamber; and the mother bends in stolid sorrow over her dying child; and surely it is wonderful, very wonderful. "O fools and slow of heart," we cry, "What mean you? What mean you?" and Jesus Himself might well marvel,—*"marvel because of their unbelief."*

And is not this again just the parallel of impotent and imperiled souls who reject salvation. Nay, it is scarcely a fitting parable, for the spiritual want is greater, the moral disease deadlier, the immortal danger more

imminent and terrible; for it is the *spirit's* eye that is blinded; it is the endless and higher life that is faint with the palsy, or foul with the leprosy; it is the soul made in God's image that lies death-struck in anguish. And though even now we stand here to tell you of the mighty Redeemer who is ready, able, willing, waiting to heal and comfort and save every one of you, you will still reject the salvation; you will cling to your sins, and go away again to the poor, unsatisfying world, as if delighting in defilement, enraptured with despair, enamored of damnation. O verily it is wonderful, very wonderful; creation hath no such marvel else. Christians wonder, angels wonder, infernal spirits wonder—yea, the Son of God Himself “ marvels because of your unbelief;” and if you perish in this mad rejection of salvation, you will be the wonder of the universe forever and ever.

I do not know what stupendous prodigies there may be in the far away realms of God's boundless empire, but I am sure this will surpass them all; a soul for whom a Saviour suffered, to whom salvation was offered, and heaven opened wide its glorious portals, around which the angels of God waited, and which the Spirit of God moved; and yet rejecting eternal life, and rushing madly to the agonies of a death that never dies, and standing forever up, the great wonder of the universe, an everlasting monument of sin's stupendous folly and guilt, like that wild, appalling, monstrous pillar of salt on the plains of Sodom, an immortal pillar beside the lake of eternal death, the black, sulphurous asphaltites of the universe; and creation will behold it with ever increasing wonder, “ and marvel because of its unbelief!”

MINISTRATIONS TO ANGELS.

"Some have entertained angels unawares."—HEBREWS XIII. 2.

We have been considering from time to time various aspects and applications of the great truth *of the existence and operations of angels*. Their employment as subordinate agents in the divine administration, whether physical or spiritual, is a great truth everywhere meeting us in the Bible. Angelic hands guarded the gates of the earthly Eden, and angelic hands guide believing souls to the portals of the Heavenly Paradise.

Our text leads us to consider the reciprocal or reverse truth—the truth that these same glorious beings are ministered unto by men. Our text is part of Paul's argument for hospitality, "*Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels.*" The reference is to the cases of Abraham and Lot, who, under the form of men, opened their doors and spread their boards for disguised angels. Paul does not mean that in Gospel times angels literally come to us in the form of strangers. Nor in any application of his argument for hospitality are we bound to open our doors or bestow our charities on *every stranger* who solicits them. Indeed, we know of few sorer evils than this indiscriminative alms-giving. The indolent beggar that in

the city street, and the insolent bohemian that along country roads clamor for our charities are never to be entertained under this apostolic rule. They are not angels. There is a mawkish and mongrel sensibility abroad in our time which would turn our prisons for criminals into luxurious hospitals, and execute felons under the influence of chloroform, and even take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs, which Paul never enjoined; and when our Lord encouraged these tender ministries unto the suffering and imprisoned, He very emphatically insisted on careful inspection and discrimination. "Ye did it unto these, my brethren," and no true brother of Christ was ever found among these insolent and indolent bohemians; and without this discrimination our lavish charities are oftenest only encouraging lazy villany, entertaining not angels, but ogres and evil-doers and outcasts unawares. Nevertheless, with this discrimination there is in Paul's thought an exhortation to hospitality unto strangers. "*Strangers!*" O, it is a sacred word. Be kind to them. Their homes may be afar; their hearts may be broken, and a kind deed, a kind word may be like dew to a fainting flower, like a flash of heavenly light into a dark chamber. And in giving bread to the hungry, and consolation to the sorrowing, if we do not literally entertain angels, we can surely do what is immeasurably better—in the persons of His suffering members we may be entertaining Christ.

But as intimated at the outset, we have selected this text, not for this special exhortation, but for the sake of the broad, general truth it implies—that these angelic beings have from the first, and do now, go abroad in our world unknown and unrecognized. In the Bible the

word "angel" is a designation, not of essence, but of office. It denotes any being, perhaps; indeed, anything, executing a divine purpose, or bringing a divine blessing, and therefore God's ancient people ascribed many events which we term natural to such supernatural interposals. Perhaps it will be found at last that theirs was the truer philosophy. Certainly it is our blessed privilege to accept this divine representation, and regard very much of our earthly experience as positively wrought out for us by the ministry of angels. This truth we have before considered, and now we are to consider its reverse—how we are to accept such a ministry, the Christian duty of entertaining angels; and just here methinks you will all say, "Show us an angel, and we will entertain him. O, let them come on their bright wings, and we will excel even Abraham in our hospitality. We will open grander pavilions, and purvey costlier banquets."

But stop a moment. The very point of Paul's argument is that they were entertained "unawares." They were found out to be angels only afterward by their works. And in this sense we repeat it, angels are always about us—instruments or agents of God, coming to instruct and bless us. It is not a childish and credulous fancy, but only a philosophic Christian faith, which regards God's providence as carried on by supernatural, yea, by purely spiritual agents. And how often, then, are we visited by angels unawares. It may, indeed, have been utterly unappreciated, and for the time being apparently anything but an angel. Perhaps it came under the guise of an adversary or an evil; perhaps a dark, cold shadow fell on our life; it touched some bright

hope, and that hope withered. Property, reputation, friendship, alas! these flowers of our life-tree fell to dust, torn into fragments, burned into ashes, and we called the thing disappointment. But look ye! it was the shadow of a winged creature from eternity; a glorious spirit swept down from the presence of God as verily as unto Lot amid the Cities of the Plain, to rescue us by a severe ministry from a mortal peril, and help us on to the blessed highlands of Canaan; and we, too, "entertained angels unawares." Perhaps a personal suffering overtook us, a chill, a fever, a sharp pain; it laid us on a sick-bed; our strength departed; the silver cord of life waned into a feeble, fretted thread. We called the visitation "sickness." But look ye! it was a heavenly stranger ministering to the immortal soul, despoiling sinful, earthly life of its false glamour. Half-parting the veil from the resplendent beyond, "we entertained angels unawares." Perhaps even a darker shadow gathered. There was an idol in the household, a beloved one; it may be with flashing eye and ringing voice; it may be with gentler and tenderer ministries, yet filling all the chambers with light and gladness. But upon that flower of love fell the blight; that eye lost its fire; that voice grew silent; there was a coffin and an open grave, and a poor, overladen heart broke; as you turned away to your desolate dwelling, you called the thing "Death! death! death!" Why, look ye! Had you known it, a crowned creature from eternity had crossed your threshold on a mission of heavenly love, to teach you priceless lessons, to work out for you by this ministry of affliction "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," translating both your "treasure and

your heart" to spheres of a higher, holier life; and had your eyes been opened to the bright reality, as in Bethel's old vision, you would have seen the ascending and descending seraphs. Verily, verily, you "entertained angels unawares."

But not always in these dark disguises come the heavenly strangers. Though almost always in hours of darkness, yet almost always as well in ministries of beauty and gladness have they crossed our threshold. How often in your checkered experiences have these gloomy forebodings given place to enrapturing deliverances. The threatened disaster did not overtake you; the personal sickness gave place to healthful life and strength; the beloved one did not die; and you were blessed; and you went forth to tell your joys, perhaps to express gratitude. But even then methinks you came short of one element or increment in your gladness—the thought that yours had been a visitation of angels. I repeat it, without being wise above what is written, we may be as well assured as of any revealed truth that God carries on His purposes of mercy toward us not merely through these established laws of nature, but by the ministrations of these glorious, though invisible spirits. And while there may be no sin, there is surely a loss of consolation in forgetting all this. The mysterious truth of the omnipresence of God is too transcendental or occult to our feeble comprehension to afford us all the consolation we need in those seasons of sorrow when God really seems to have forsaken us. We feel after Him and do not find Him. Then even a human presence or voice, seen or heard in the dark night of life, gives us rapture, and even more of joy

there would be if we apprehended, as we should, this revealed truth of angelic ministries, so that in "enter-taining angels it should be *not* unawares.'

In many cases the old saints were aware of the visitation. We do not know that Daniel *saw* an angel in the den of lions, or that Paul saw the angel in the perilous hour of his shipwreck; but we do know that through faith as seeing the invisible they were both aware of the presence. They said, "It is an angel!" And thus should we be. Surely, we need not envy the saints of former times. We used to do so. When with childish fancy we read the sweet stories of these heavenly visitations unto men, we envied them the bright visions. Thirsting and faint we walked in the wilderness, and cried, "Would God we could find Hagar's angel revealing the spring!" Restless and alone in the still and solemn night, we cried, "O, for Jacob's bright vision of shining angels descending to our pillow!" Broken-hearted, we went forth to the grave whereinto had gone down all that made life beautiful, and lifted up the voice in a deep and bitter cry, "O Lord, send, as unto Mary, a mighty angel to fling heavenly glory through the glooms of our grave!" So foolish and ignorant were we to envy those men who had their spiritual life amid shadows, when of all those most favored servants of God there was not one who would not gladly have exchanged *his* angels for *ours*. "Hereafter," these are the words of true prophecy, "hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God descending"—and we live in that hereafter. Those patriarchs could come only to the "mount that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness, and to the

voice of words. But "we, we have come unto Mount Zion and to an innumerable company of angels." "We have come to them." We have! *we have!* They are here, here! in our paths, in our dwellings, beside us, all around us! They do come to the tent-door; they do reveal the living spring in the desert; they do, as in Bethel, descend to the restless pillow; they do strengthen us, even as they did the Master, with gentle words in the garden and glorious light in the grave. In this only we come short—in the strong, abiding, exulting faith that keeps us "*aware*" of their presence. It is with a wise purpose of love that God does not vouchsafe us literal vision of their wonderful beauty. But surely our faith-sense should apprehend them, for manifestly such an apprehension would be for our good.

It would exhort us to higher frames of Christian life; for if it be a blessed thing, it is as well a solemn thing, thus "to entertain angels." Methinks Abraham, that grand old patriarch, at first came short here. "Butter and milk and cakes of fine flour, and the chief fatling of the herd," such things, offered in his ignorance, were hardly a fit banquet for the angels. He made it all up presently in spiritual things—in adoring worship and wrestling faith; and as they went on their way to the Cities of the Plain, all heaven perceived that Abraham, the friend of God, had been at last aware of their high presence, and entertained angels fittingly. And on this point surely we have need of exhortation. "To entertain" is a strong word. It signifies more than to receive and treat hospitably; it implies such treatment as is agreeable and affords delight to the guest—a courtesy in every way adapted to the tastes and habits of the visitor.

The same hospitality extended to an Esquimaux and a Parisian would not equally entertain them.

Now we must presume that an angel's taste is very holy and his habits very glorious. Paul speaks of them as having a peculiar language; and there is probably much in our fashionable styles of art and *belles-lettres*, conversation and conviviality, elocution and music, sermonizing and psalmody—many things, indeed, both in our secular and sacred life, which are regarded as very tasteful and *a la mode* in Philadelphia and Boston and Paris, which would not altogether please these heavenly strangers.

If we were preparing for an angel-visit, there would be many things modified or removed in both our houses and our hearts. I do not mean that all things in which we delight would be displaced or discontinued, for the very visit of an angel would be to add to human pleasures, as Christ turned water into wine; and as the Bright Being crossed our threshold, so sweet would be His voice, and so bright His smile, that both the weeping and the laughing child would spring to His arms, and look up in trustful love into His face of glory. Nor would an angel turn away from or frown on many a shape and scene of earthly pleasure. There might be a feast on the board more sumptuous than Abraham's, and palaces opened more princely than Solomon's, and pictures of highest art might hang on all the walls, and bright flowers and singing birds and musical instruments and childish toys might be in all the chambers, and over all of them the angel would cast a smile of complacency, and finding it a home of beauty and joy, he would leave it only brightened into a home of glory.

Nevertheless, in fitting up our homes for angel-visit, some things would be changed. Perhaps some pictures would be taken from the walls and some books from the libraries and some luxuries from the tables; certain I am that the old family Bibles would be brought forth from the secret places, and some volumes which our fathers love to study laid on the centre-table, and many a sweet song of Zion would take the place of some fashionable agonies which the world calls music. Our daily walk and conversation would rise into higher frames, our hearts would be as heavenly instruments attuned unto hallelujahs, and our lives as fair trees laden with the flowers of love, and the fruit of the Spirit would fill all the air with a richer, heavenly fragrance, and the very lowliest cottage of humble piety would be radiant and rapturous as the old Bethel, "the very house of God and the very gate of heaven," if with wise and fitting preparation "we would entertain angels."

We repeat it, therefore; there is in the text an earnest exhortation unto the moods and ministries of a higher Christian life. It would tend to purify the Church of many foolish and worldly things, and to restore to piety those old qualities whereby "faith waxed valiant in fight," if we lived daily under the power of the text's solemn truth—that these mighty creatures of eternity were ever around us; that even when unaware of it, we "entertained angels." And beyond this, as indeed its higher meaning and power, it would greatly comfort us; for who, rightly thoughtful, would class it with wearisome duties? Who would not rather accept it, and glory in it, as a surpassing privilege, "to entertain angels." And we *do* entertain them. It matters not

that we cannot see them. We do not see this air we breathe, yet how our hearts bound as its blessed breezes fan us! All the tremendous forces of creation that are at work above and around us—light, heat, electricity, gravitation—though they hem us in and press upon us, yet we never see them; and yet our eyes flash and our hearts bound as we rely on them and glory in them. And surely the eye should flash and the heart bound with greater rapture at thought of this more glorious ministry that surrounds us—for it does surround us—we live in that transcendently gracious “hereafter”—“we have come unto Mount Zion.” And crowned creatures of eternity come to our tent-door as verily as to Abraham’s, and sail with us on the stormy seas as demonstrably as with Paul.

It is our own faith only that is at fault. If God assure us of any truth, we should rely on it more surely and gladly than in all truths demonstrated by our reason or objective to our senses. If a resplendent spirit should descend visibly from heaven, and cross my threshold, and stand in my presence, its very glory and beauty would confound me, and I should cry out in distrust, “Alas that this should be no more than a mockery!—the beguiling lie of my poor senses! Alas that all this heavenly loveliness should be only the ghostly phantasm of a dream!” But now when God tells me that He has sent His mighty angels to be my ministers, then surely I can believe Him, and believing it, then O how fair and bright and blessed this life and world ought to be! I may be in adversity, forms of suffering and sorrow may surround me, as in Daniel’s terrible trial—fierce monsters from the desert crouching for the spring—but then, as

if a shining form rose between us, my joyous cry would be, "God hath sent His angel and shut the lion's mouth." Is there a vacant place in the home and the heart of some dear one passed away, and do I, like the desolate Mary, go forth with all life's precious spices, to pour them in love's torturing sacrifice into the pitiless grave; why, then, having faith in God's Word, it should be only to find the sepulchre all ablaze with uncreated light, and to feel the broken-hearted swelling with unspeakable joy at the angel's words, "He is not here! He is risen!" Nay, hath the form of terror sprang upon myself—death! death! is its cold breath on my brow? its mighty hand on my heart-strings? Yet even then it would be only as unto Elijah on the far side of Jordan, and the living spirit would spring toward the terrible shape of evil with more than a conqueror's rapture, as the chariot of fire, with its angelic convoy, rushed in glory to the skies.