

IN MANY PULPITS

by Scofield C.I.

Scofield's collection of 27 topical sermons on various Christian themes including waiting on the Lord, the deity of Christ, grace through faith, prayer, resurrection, spiritual maturity, the mystery of godliness, the cross, joy, and the loveliness of Christ.

28 Chapters

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00.2 FOREWORD

FOREWORD MY withdrawal from pastoral work that I might prepare for publication the Scofield Reference Bible, made possible the larger pulpit ministry to which many doors in the United States, England, Scotland, the North of Ireland and Canada were open. From that ministry this book is a selection. Some sermons preached to my own people in Dallas, Texas, and East Northfield, Massachusetts, are also included.

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Douglaston, L. I.

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01 THE BEST OF ALL GOOD RESOLUTIONS

THE BEST OF ALL GOOD RESOLUTIONS “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned” — Luke 15:18

I DO not know what day of what month of what year the prodigal said that, but I do know that for him it was the real New Year — the real beginning of life. The children of Israel sacrificed the Passover in Egypt on the fourteenth day of the month of Abib, but they were made to revise their whole chronology because of that event.

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months:” — Exodus 12:2 No man who is wrong with God is really living. In the deepest of all senses, he is like the corpse in the death ceremony of an ancient people, who dressed in costliest attire the body of a dead friend and carried it about to their houses, seating it at their tables before the finest feasts. The cheeks were painted to represent life and the most flattering compliments were paid to what, after all, was a mere dead body.

Let us consider together this good resolution of the boy in the old parable. It was for him the best of good resolutions, because it began with the most important fact in his life — the fact of his father. And the most important fact in the whole universe to each one of us is the fact of God. We are in God’s universe and we cannot get out of it. God made it, God sustains it, God rules it. It is all His. Every acre of ground, every blade of grass, every one of the cattle upon earth’s thousand hills, every spring of water, every bird, every fish, every molecule of air — all are His. He has never parted with His title to one of these things. We are all tenants by sufferance. We till God’s earth, breathe God’s air, sustain life upon His bounty. We are absolute paupers, from king to peasant. The next moment, the next breath are not ours.

Furthermore we all want to go to God’s heaven when we die. There is no other heaven. Money can neither buy nor make heaven. The world, for whose opinion we care so much, has no heaven. Satan has no heaven. The heavenly things which are available here and now — unselfishness, helpfulness, purity, high and noble thinking, clean living, love — these are all God’s. Think then of the folly of living on wrong terms with God. Think of the unspeakable unreason of supposing that anything in life can be really right, till we are right with God. But who and what is God? Creation is an answer to that question. God is the Being who made this fair universe. He it is, who made this wonderful earth for man, and man for this wonderful earth.

He it is who adorned the heavens and sprinkled them with stars. He it is who painted the flowers. And it is He who made us capable of love and all the blessed relationships of life. That is one answer. The Bible is another. God is the God of the Scriptures. The Bible is the most human book in the world, because it reveals God at work in human lives, and at last reveals Him in the terms of a human life. What is God like? He is like Jesus.

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;” — John 14:9 And in all the Book of God there is no more alluring portrait of God than that painted by the Son of God in the parable of the prodigal son.

What is God like? Like this:

“But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” — Luke 15:20

“But the father said, to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” — Luke 15:22-24

We are all prodigal sons. The son in the parable committed his worst sin when he wished to be independent of his father. When he said:

“Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me,” — Luke 15:12 his heart was already in the far country. The riotous living and the wasting of his substance were but details and mere incidental consequences. The Bible says that sin is anomia — lawlessness. When Isaiah says that “We have turned everyone to his own way;” — Isaiah 53:6 it does not seem like a very serious charge. But it is the sum of all iniquities. Self-will is the Pandora’s Box out of which come all the evils of earth. We have treated God evilly. The meanness of sin is that it robs a loving God of the love and fellowship which are his due. When David said of his greatest sin, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,” — Psalms 51:4 we do not at once see the truth of his bitter words. First of all, we think that his sins were against the husband whom he had wronged and the wife whom he had degraded. But whose creatures were these? They were God’s; and every sin against a fellow man is tenfold more a sin against God. This prodigal about whom we are thinking, doubtless did many a kindly act in the far country. It is the way of prodigals to be generous and to wish all men well. You and I have done that. We have had kindly thoughts and good intentions. We have wished other prodigals happy new years with all sincerity, and because of this, have thought well of ourselves. On one of Mr. Moody’s western campaigns, he was followed from city to city by an aged and broken man of venerable appearance who, in each place, asked the privilege of saying a word to the great congregations. He would stand up and in a quavering voice say: “Is my son George in this place? George, are you here? O, George, if you are here, come to me. Your old father loves you, George, and can’t die content without seeing you again.” Then the old man would sit down. One night a young man came to Mr. Moody’s hotel and asked to see him. It was George. When the great evangelist asked him how he could find it in his heart to treat a loving father with such cruel neglect, the young man said: “I never thought of him; but Mr. Moody, I have tried to do all the good I could.” That is a good picture of a self-righteous prodigal in the far country. He was generous with his money and with his words — yet every moment of his infamous life he was trampling on the heart of a loving father. The other day, I met a foul old sot whom I knew as a beautiful boy and later as a handsome and high-spirited young man. But he was no more in the far country when I met him in his degradation than he was when I parted with him in the pride of his youth. The far country is anywhere away from God. Did you ever think of the parable of the Prodigal Son as an unfinished story? Why have we no account of the boy after he came back to his father’s house?

Perhaps you have all felt what some forgotten poet has expressed so well:

“You have told me, preacher, the story sweet,

How the prodigal son, bereft of pride,

Left the far country with wayworn feet
And came back to his father's house to bide.
You have told of the father, unfailing, fond,
You have told of the ring, of the robe, of the feast;
Of the long night's revel all care beyond,
Till the Syrian stars grew pale in the East.
But, O, could I more of the tale invoke,
I would pray you tell me, thou man of God,
How it fared with the boy when the morning broke,
And his feet the old pathway of duty trod?
Did he never forget that he ate with swine
And suffered sore 'neath far-off skies,
Remembering only the nights of wine,
And the light in the dancing woman's eyes?
Did he never go frantic with equal days,
And long to the wide world prisoner-wise,
Till a host rose up from the banished ways
To beckon, and beckon, with gleaming eyes?
If thus he fared, as we fare today,
O speak, that the world may sing with joy,
And tell how the father could banish away
The beckoning hands from before his boy."

Ah, that is why the story seems unfinished. When we have really come back from the far country when through faith in Jesus Christ we have come to God and have found Him, through the new birth our Father, — a new story begins, and it takes an eternity to tell it.

There is a way from the far country to the Father arms. The actual journey of the prodigal may have been across forbidding mountains and along caravan trails over blinding deserts. No such obstacles intervene between the returning sinner and God. The blessed Christ from whose lips fell the tender story about which we have been thinking, also said:

"I am the way," — John 14:6 When we come to Christ we find the Father, for Christ and the Father are one. And the way to come to Christ is to believe on Him; to put our whole life into His care and ordering, knowing that He has put away our sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and that all who come

unto the Father by Him can never more lose the way. Let us say:

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned” — Luke 15:18 “but know Thou hast saved me through Jesus Christ.”

02 WAITING ON THE LORD

WAITING ON THE LORD

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” — Isaiah 40:31

LET us confess at once that these blessings are not usual in the lives of Christians. As a matter of fact we run and are weary, we walk and do faint. The wings of our soul do not habitually beat the upper air. On the face of it, it is very simple. There is a condition entirely within the reach of every Christian, whatever may be his age or environment, and then resultant blessings made sure by the “shall” of Almighty God:

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” — Isaiah 40:31

If there is one condition thus performed, the resultant blessings are sure; obviously then the absence of the blessing proves that we do not meet the condition. Perhaps we have never stopped to read it very carefully. We like certain promises of Scripture largely because we feel there is something strong, beautiful and triumphant in them, but we do not really consider what they mean. What does the Scripture mean by “waiting on the Lord?” Everything hinges on that. It is the sole condition. First of all, waiting upon God is not praying. Praying is petitioning God for something. Praying is “supplication with thanksgiving,” — Php 4:6 It has its own great and unique place in the Christian life, but it is not waiting upon the Lord.

Three Hebrew words are translated “wait” in this connection, and three passages may serve to illustrate their meaning.

“Truly my soul waiteth upon God.” — Psalms 62:1 The literal translation of this is “Truly my soul is silent upon God.” That is not prayer, it is not worship. It is the soul, in utter hush and quietness, casting itself upon God. Take another illustrative passage.

“These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.” — Psalms 104:27

Here the word is the same, but it implies both dependence and expectation — a faith that silently reaches out to take hold upon God, and which has its expectation from God. Then

“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” — Proverbs 8:34 The thought there is of a servant and his master. He has no service just at that moment, but he “waits” at the door, knowing that at any moment the door may swing back and the master may say, “My servant, go; do this or that.” It is the attitude of readiness, of obedience.

Now I think we are ready to gather these passages into a definition of what waiting upon God means. To wait upon God is to be silent that He may speak, expecting all things from Him, and girded for instant, unquestioning obedience to the slightest movement of His will. That is waiting upon God. All the spiritual senses alive, alert, expectant, separated unto Him, His servant and

soldier — waiting. It is not the waiting of an idler, it is not the waiting of a dreamer. It is the quiet waiting of one who is girt and ready, one who looks upon life as a battle-field and a sphere for service, who has one master and but one, to whom he looks for everything, from whom alone he expects anything. This is waiting upon God according to the Scriptures.

Now, glorious blessings depend upon this attitude toward God. Are we waiting? Are we silent upon God? Is our expectation from Him, or from ourselves, or from the world? If our expectation is truly from Him, and we are willing to yield Him an immediate obedience, then we are waiting upon God. Then the four blessings of the text must follow, because God says they shall. Let us look at these blessings.

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” — Isaiah 40:31 The word “renew” rendered literally is “change” — they shall change their strength. It is a word used to denote a change of garments. They shall lay aside their strength and put on, as a garment, strength from God. This whole fortieth chapter of Isaiah is a series of contrasts between the frailty and feebleness of man and the strength and greatness of God. Yet man is a being who fancies that he has some strength. And so indeed he has in the sphere of the natural, but it is a strength which utterly breaks down in the sphere of the Christian life. The problem is to rid ourselves of self-strength that God may clothe us with His own strength; and this is the first blessing promised to those who “wait upon the LORD.” — Isaiah 40:31

How does God effect this? I do not know, but I know that somehow when we are waiting upon Him, our strength, which after all is perfect weakness, is laid aside, and divine hands clothe us with the strength of God. We do change our strength.

We now come logically to that great second blessing promised to the waiters upon the Lord:

“They shall mount up with wings as eagles.” — Isaiah 40:31

What does that mean? Why as eagles? Why not with wings as doves? I think it is because the eagle is the only bird that goes so high that he is lost to sight in the upper heights. Think of some of the peculiarities of the eagle. He is the most solitary of birds. Did you ever see or hear of a flock of eagles? You may sometimes see two together, but very rarely. His eye is on some beetling, inaccessible crag. The eagle has to do with great things, mountains and heights and depths. An eagle can also be very still. No creature holds such reserves of quietness; there is no restlessness in him. There is the repose of perfect power. He can be quiet when it is time to be quiet. But when the sun rises and his eye catches the first ray, you may see him stretch his mighty wings, launch out over the abyss and begin that tremendous spiral flight up, up, up, higher and higher, until he is lost to sight; and all day, on balanced wing, he is there in the vast upper realm of light, above all storms, in the great tranquility of the upper spaces. That is mounting up with wings as eagles. To be up there, as we might say, with God. No Christian ever comes into God's best things who does not, upon the Godward side of his life, learn to walk alone with God. Lot may dwell in Sodom and vex his righteous soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked, but God will have Abraham up in Hebron upon the heights. It is Abraham whom He visits and to whom He tells His secrets. Moses, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, must go forty years into the desert to be alone with God. Paul, who knew the Greek learning and had also sat at the feet of Gamaliel, must go into Arabia and learn the desert life with God.

Before God uses a man greatly, He isolates him. He gives him a separating experience; and when it is over, those about him, who are no less loved than before, are no longer depended upon. He realizes that he is separated unto God, that the wings of his soul have learned to beat the upper air, and that God has shown him unspeakable things.

If we mount up with wings as eagles we shall often grieve the judicious, and must count upon some experience of misunderstanding; but we can keep sweet about it. We may avoid this. We may nest low enough to be understood by the carnal, turn sedately the ecclesiastical crank, and be approved; but if we take the upper air, we must, like the eagle, go alone. That is precisely our calling. Christ will never be satisfied until He has each one of us separated unto Himself. Hear:

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.” — Colossians 3:1

How far above?

“Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.” — Colossians 3:1

Stretch the pinions of your soul, remember that you belong up there, and beat the lower air and rise and rise until you are with the enthroned One. You remember John McNeil's story of the captive eagle. A man had a young eagle which he put in the hen yard with a clog on one of its feet, so that it could not fly, and there it grew up. At last, when the man was going to move away from that part of the country, he decided to liberate his eagle. He took off the clog, but the eagle went hopping about just the same. So very early one morning he took the eagle and set him upon the coping of the wall just as the sun was rising. The eagle opened his eyes and looked for the first time at the rising sun. Then, lifting himself up he stretched his mighty wings, and with one scream launched himself into the upper air. He belonged up there all the while, and had simply been living in the wrong place.

Now another blessing, the third:

“They shall run, and not be weary.” — Isaiah 40:31 That seems like an anti-climax, as does the fourth blessing:

“They shall walk, and not faint.” — Isaiah 40:31

What! must we come down and run and walk here on this stupid, prosaic earth after these eagle flights? Yes, precisely. The eagle flight is unto that. We go up there that we may serve down here, and we never can serve down here according to God's thought of service, until we trace the spirals of the upper air and have learned to be alone in the silent spaces with God. It is only the man who comes down from interviews with God who can touch human lives with the power of God. Yes, we must run down here, and walk down here, but only in the degree in which we know the inspiration of the upper air can we either run without weariness, or walk without fainting.

What is the “walk”? It is the everyday of life. It is the getting breakfast, dressing the children, getting them off to school; it is going down and opening the stoic; it is going out and feeding the herds; it is going into the study and opening the Word of God. It is whatever our appointed task may be. It is doing this all day, in heat and cold, dull days and bright days — the common life. It is this, the everyday walk, that tests and tries. Far easier is it to gather one's energies for a swift run sometimes than it is to walk. But we have to walk; we are made to walk. We live a common life, a

life of everyday duty, plain, prosaic and unbeautiful. But we may “walk, and not faint” — Isaiah 40:31 under the wear and petty vexations and frictions of everyday life, only on condition that we have been “waiting upon God.” The man who does that will be a reservoir of sweetness, quietness and power.

03 THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” — John 1:1

I WANT to present to you, as best I may, the grounds upon which Christians receive Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh. Beyond all question, Christianity as a religion is committed to that proposition. Whatever it may call itself, anything less than that is not Christianity. Eliminate that and there is left a marvelous story, indeed, but like a box of wonderful gems to which the key is missing; there is left a wonderful ethic but without adequate authority; there is left the promise of a great spiritual kingdom, but the kingdom is without a king.

Christianity stands or falls by the proposition that Jesus of Nazareth was more than man; in other words, while being man, that He was God manifest in the flesh. That is a stupendous assertion, but God, my dear friends, does not ask us to believe it without proof. What then are the reasons why we Christians receive Jesus Christ as God manifest in the flesh?

Now, I shall feel more comfortable as I go on, if I say at the outset that the merits of my cause should not be judged by my ability in presenting it. Truth itself transcends the ability of any man to present it. All the more then, if the reasons themselves shall seem to you to be convincing and the proofs shall seem to you to be adequate, will you as honest men be under compulsion to accept them. Give me, then, your attention to that cumulative body of truth which establishes beyond all question this proposition — that Jesus of Nazareth, the historic Christ, was God manifest in the flesh.

First, the four Gospels present the record of a life and the impress of a character which are absolutely unique. The Jesus of the Gospels stands alone. He makes a class by Himself. There are points of resemblance between Cincinnatus and Washington; between Caesar and Napoleon; between Chaucer and Shakespeare; between Hesiod and Homer; between Dante and Milton; but Jesus is alone unique.

I will not stop to prove that, because no one denies it, but I ask you to take note of three respects in which the character presented in these four Gospels stands solitary among men. First, in that it is absolutely without sin. Now, neither in Scripture, nor in history, nor in fiction, nor in our own observation, do we find another of which that can be said. History gives the record of no sinless men. Fiction has never yet presented a perfect character. The effort has been made a thousand times, but upon the most perfect character ever constructed by the genius of man is some fatal defect, some taint of imperfection. Did it not lead too far from the subject, it would be interesting to take up some of the most perfect characters in the Bible, in history and in fiction, and show how true it is that, tested even by our own imperfect standards, there is, in the best of them, some obvious defect. They are too strong or too weak; they are too tender or too severe; they are all marked by excess in one direction and limitation in another. Not one but bears the mark of human frailty and imperfection. But the four Gospels present a sinless life. It is not merely that the four

Evangelists assert that fact; they give us the life itself, so that we may see for ourselves that it was sinless.

Again, the man of the Gospels is unique in that He is the only absolutely universal man, the only catholic man, the only man with no race mark upon Him, and who, as He reaches the differing families of men, interposes no race barrier. We know as a matter of history that He sprang out of Israel, that He was a Jew, and we are called to account for the fact that out of that most exclusive, most distinctive, most peculiar of all peoples, should have come the one universal man, who has no mark of race upon Him. You know how instinctively this has been brought out in art. As the gospel spread through Europe, there sprang up great schools of Christian art. Men strove to put on canvas and to carve in stone, their conception of the Christ. A very remarkable thing about it was that a Scandinavian always painted the Christ as blue of eye and fair of hair, just as an Italian always painted Him with dark locks and olive skin. It never seems to have occurred to them that He was not of their own race.

One of the missionaries in Africa tells us that native converts in the heart of that country were greatly surprised when they were told that Christ was a white man — it never occurred to them that He was not black like themselves. Now, this universality would be singular enough if Christ came of Rome, or of Greece, if He had been born in one of the world empires; but He came out of a little nation which has ever had the strongest marks of race distinction and race peculiarity. More than this, He grew to manhood in a remote village of Galilee, far from the slightest cosmopolitan influence. Try to imagine a Scotchman two hundred years ago, who had grown to manhood in Inverness, having no marks of the Scot upon him. Shakespeare, who has been called the most impersonal of all men, was an Englishman to his fingertips, and Homer was a Greek through and through. No human being, save Christ, ever escaped a race mark. The third respect in which the man of the four Gospels is unique, is that He was as perfect in the balance and proportion of His qualities as He was in His sinlessness. Not only was He a sinless man, but He was a perfect man, a rounded man. Now all other wisdom has been marred by some folly, all other strength has gone over into excess or violence, all other sweetness has degenerated into weakness. But Jesus was wise without folly, strong without violence, sweet without weakness. In these three respects, this man of the Gospels stands alone among all men, the records of whose lives have come down to us, or which have been invented by the genius of man.

Leaving the Gospels now, and coming on down the stream of time for the last 1900 or more years, we find the influence of Jesus in human history has been as unique as his sinlessness, his catholicity, or his perfectness. In all history, no one else has influenced the course of human affairs or the trend of human lives just as the man of the four Gospels has influenced them.

Napoleon, speaking of Alexander, Caesar and himself, said: "We founded great empires, but we founded them on force. The principles upon which we founded our kingdoms were natural principles, but Jesus founded an empire which is indestructible, which is growing day by day, which is ruled over by an invisible king, and which is founded upon love. I," said he, "know man, and I tell you that Jesus was more than man." In history then we have the impress of Jesus Christ, and that impress is just as unique and peculiar as all else which concerns Him. These things are indisputable.

Now, the startling fact concerning this entirely unique impress of Himself upon humanity is that Jesus said it would be so. He said for instance:

“I am the light of the world.” — John 8:12

Think of the audacity of that statement. A young Jewish peasant, a carpenter by trade, without learning, without acknowledged rank, without wealth, announces to a little group of converted fishermen and harlots and tax gatherers, that He is the “Light of the World.” When uttered, it was a mere assertion, but after 1900 years have passed, it is a statement which admits of disproof if it is not true, or of verification if it is true. Think of the audacity of it! Not Homer, not Socrates, not Plato, not Moses — it is no one of these, but a peasant, who says:

“I am the light of the world.” — John 8:12

Well, after more than 1900 years, you may take the map of the world, and shade that map according to the degree of enlightenment, moral and intellectual, which prevails today among the nations, and you will find that where your map comes nearest to perfect whiteness, there Christ is most known and most honored; and where your map shades off into absolute blackness, where the human mind today is in chains and darkness, where there is no picture, no statue, and no book, right there Christ is not known at all.

Dear friends, here are these undisputed phenomena. No one can or does dispute them, and they are to be accounted for. That explanation which adequately accounts for them all, is the one upon which reason will set her seal. Is not that a reasonable statement? You may be interested to know that that formula belongs to the vocabulary of the exact sciences, not to theology. In the investigation of nature certain material phenomena are to be accounted for, and science says: “That explanation which adequately accounts for them all, is the true explanation,” and reason says “Amen!”

It can scarcely be necessary to refer to the various theories which have been propounded to account for the phenomena which we have been considering, but which have been abandoned as inadequate. It was said for instance, that Jesus was invented by the Evangelists; that the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John invented the character which they present. It was pointed out long ago, by the unbeliever Renan, that “only a Jesus could invent a Jesus.” How does it happen that what the strenuous efforts of patriarch, prophet and priest failed to achieve, what the sublimest human genius failed to invent, these four writers accomplished with an ease, precision and naturalness to which every page of the artless narrative bears witness? It puts a greater strain upon credulity to believe that four men could have created such a character as Jesus than to believe the simple, sublime and rational Biblical explanation of Jesus. How did it come that four different accounts, written by different men at different times, in a different style, and selecting for the illustration of this character different incidents very largely, should all succeed in producing identically the same impression? If you read Matthew, you get the impression of a sinless Being, perfectly wise and universal. If you read Mark, there comes to you the impression of the same sinlessness, the same universality, the same perfection of character; and if you read Luke and John, the impression is precisely the same.

It does violence to reason and probability to say that such men could invent such a character. But the theory has passed out of the minds of men as inadequate and irrational, and I refer to it merely

to show how men have striven to avoid the only reasonable conclusion concerning this character.

Another theory which had possession of unbelieving minds for a time was the mythical theory of Strauss, the theory which said that the Jesus of the Gospels was a myth; that the Gospels, as we have them, were slowly built up through some 400 years; that the first crude record was subjected to numberless prunings and increased by numberless inventions, until finally there came out the picture which we have of Jesus of Nazareth. Well, even Strauss abandoned this theory before he died, and he did it for this reason, that the severest hostile criticism was compelled to concede the authenticity of at least four of the Epistles of the apostle Paul; that they were written within thirty or thirty-five years after the death of Christ; and because of these Epistles of Paul there is the impress of the same character. There are the same affirmations concerning His personality; the same doctrine concerning His work and the purpose that brought Him into the world, and Strauss admitted that thirty years was too brief a time for the development of a myth. So that theory was abandoned. Just recently, as many of you know, there has been discovered a work, known once to have existed, but believed to have perished, the Diatesseron of Tatian, the work of a man who was born in the year in which the apostle John died, and this work proves that the four Gospels, as we have them, were then in existence. Exit, then, the mythical theory. But the problem remains: we have to account for Jesus. How shall we do it? You know the Biblical solution:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,” — John 1:1 and “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” — John 1:14 That is the Biblical solution. Now, no one can question the adequacy of this solution; it perfectly accounts for all the phenomena. If this unique Being were indeed God, “manifest in the flesh,” His sinlessness is accounted for, the absence of all race mark is accounted for, the rounded perfection of all the attributes of His character is accounted for, and His unique influence in the world is accounted for. No one questions that; it is a complete solution of all the phenomena.

Now we are prepared to see how perfectly this solution harmonizes with adequate motives for an incarnation. First, if God was ever to be fully revealed to man, there lay upon Him the inevitability that He should do precisely that thing. All of nature, all of history, all of the Bible is in truth the unveiling, the self-disclosure of God. If you look out upon the universe you see His handiwork. You remember how short, and it seems to me unanswerable, is the apostle Paul’s argument from the universe for the existence of God.

“Every house is builded by someman;but he that built all things is God.” — Hebrews 3:4

If we see a house we do not think that it was built by anything less than a man. We look out upon this great universe and say, “Nothing less than God has been here.” From the universe we get a revelation of God’s power. We get a revelation of His wisdom. But how far off that God is from a mortal being on this earth, stumbling along a dark path which he never trod before, and will never tread again, to fall at last into an unexplained grave! When God puts His self-revelation into words, there is of course an immeasurable advance, yet after all, a kind of incompleteness. You know how we try sometimes to describe a thing in words. Then we do better than that; we make a picture of it. But when we are able to lead the person to whom we are endeavoring to communicate the idea, to the very thing itself, then the description becomes intelligible, the picture full of meaning.

Suppose I were trying to describe to you the beauty of the sunset, and you had never seen a sunset. I might pile words upon words and fill them with color, yet I should give a very imperfect idea of a sunset. But if I could take you to some western slope, and let you stand there while the sun sank behind the cloud-palaces of the sky, fusing their dull greys into purple and scarlet and gold, and the glory and beauty of the sunset gave themselves to you, you would no longer need my words, you would know for yourself. Now there is God, infinitely tender and beautiful and glorious, and here are we, finite and stupid and earthly — can you think of any way by which it would be possible for God really to make Himself known to us, except to enter into a human life and translate Deity in Its power and perfection, Its light and Its love, into the terms of human experience? That this is the only perfect divine manifestation is felt dimly by all races; and there is no false religion (except Mohammedanism) which has not the thought of incarnation in it, the thought that the God they seek and whom they serve and worship, has at some time incarnated himself in a human life. Incarnation inheres in the very necessity of the case; and when you think of God adopting this expedient and really clothing Himself with human flesh for the revelation of that which He is, through the stress and trial of a human life, you have a motive which is at once God-like and adequate. If God had never been manifested in the flesh, if no prophet had ever predicted it, reason would compel us to anticipate the incarnation.

Now this very thing is declared to have been the purpose of the incarnation. John says:

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” — John 1:18

If you think of Jesus Christ in this way, if you go back to the four Gospels and study them with the thought of Jesus Christ as God making Himself known to man, you find that the manifestation satisfies every demand of your heart and of your reason. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is the God who answers in every respect to human need. He is felt to be at once a God worthy of adoring worship. He is felt to be a God of power and a God of wisdom, and a God of matchless, inexpressible love. No one has ever contemplated the character of Jesus Christ as the manifestation of God and has felt repelled from God by that manifestation. The power of God in nature may terrify, and an imperfect revelation of God through written words may perplex, but when we stand before God unveiled in Jesus Christ, we love and adore Him. It is impossible not to do so.

Again, the prophets foretold the incarnation:

“And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” — Isaiah 7:13-14 and

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” — Isaiah 9:6

Thus beyond all question, hundreds of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a prediction was uttered that there should be born into the family of David, one who in some mysterious way

should also be God. We may or may not believe that the prophecy was fulfilled, but that it is there no one can dispute. Now when we invoke prophetic testimony, my friends, we bring into court a witness never yet discredited. We have not only this prophecy that the Messiah should be in some mysterious way The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace, but we have literally hundreds of other predictions, minute and specific, relating to nations, to countries and to individuals; and these predictions invariably have been literally and precisely fulfilled. The prophets foretold the place of the Messiah's birth and no one ever questioned that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. They foretold the family in which He should be born, the family of David, and no one ever disputed that He was born in the family of David. They foretold the tribe of which He should come, the tribe of Judah, and no one ever denied that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. If in the life-time of Jesus Christ, or in the years of the first proclamation of the gospel, while the records were still in existence, the Jews had shown that Jesus was not born in Bethlehem, that He was not of the tribe of Judah, and not of the family of David, every disciple would instantly have forsaken Him. They were not able to do it; they never disputed it — never. Of the many prophetic details concerning Jesus, I have called attention to three particulars which were literally fulfilled, and therefore reason compels us to give great weight to the prediction concerning His Deity. If a witness has always testified truthfully, the presumption is that all of his testimony is true. A third incontestable proposition is, that Jesus Himself claimed to be God manifest in the flesh. Read the following passages upon that point:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

Then they took up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”—John 8:56-59

There then, was the distinct assertion upon the part of Jesus Himself that He existed before Abraham, and that He was the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David.

He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord,” — Matthew 22:41-43 Another assertion of His Deity:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;” — John 14:6-9

You will remember that not once, but many times, this humblest of men, this meekest of men received the worship of His fellow men, an act of unspeakable blasphemy, a shocking violation of the First Commandment, did Jesus not know Himself to be divine. We have a marked instance of that in the twentieth chapter of John:

“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them:thencame Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peacebeunto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrustitinto my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.” — John 20:26-28

Here let me anticipate an objection. You are saying that this is what Jesus says of Himself. Very true; but it shuts a candid investigator up to one of two alternatives. Either Jesus was the Son of God or He, the only sinless Being of whom any record has come down to man, was a conscious impostor, a blasphemous wretch, or he was a deluded enthusiast, one or the other. It does not matter which of these latter alternatives you take, the position is abhorrent to reason. That a sinless Being would consciously, deliberately commit the most flagrant of all sins in the violation of the First Commandment, “Thou shalt have none other gods before me” — Deuteronomy 5:7 could be explained only on the ground of insanity. But the whole record of Jesus’ life impresses a candid observer with His sanity, His strength of mind, His perfect wisdom and self-poise; and the effect of faith in Him as divine has ever been to purify the character and lift it up and sanctify it. On the other hand, were Jesus a weak religious enthusiast, you have to account for the undeniable fact that a self-deceived fanatic was the author of the only perfectly pure religion which when applied to sinful lives has demonstrated its power to transform them into holiness. By either alternative, we are shut up to a greater inconsistency and to a greater demand upon our credulity than to receive as true the simple and sublime statement of the Word of God; that for the purpose of making Himself known to a race which had gone astray from Him, He in His infinite love and pity clothed Himself with flesh and lived among men that they might know Him, come to Him, trust Him and love Him.

Remember, too, that other all-compelling motive to incarnation which grows out of our guilt. The most evidently God-like thing in all Scripture is the record of self-sacrifice of Jehovah for the sins of His creatures. Only a sinless one could make that sacrifice; only Deity could gather all sins into one expiatory act; only in the flesh could Deity become a sacrifice.

Well, you have here a great mystery, and if the doctrine is true, that needs must be.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” — John 1:1

There is one mystery — God. How much do we know about God after all? How much are we, under human limitations, capable of knowing about God?

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” — John 1:14

—another mystery. We know a little more about man than we do about God, but men are great mysteries. Two mysteries — the mystery of God and the mystery of man, and these brought together in the Incarnation. Indeed it would be a difficult religion to believe if there were no mystery in it. That there are mysteries in Christianity is the very mark of God upon it.

We have, then, the fact of the Deity of Jesus Christ and it accounts perfectly for all the phenomena of His life and His character and of the influence of that life and character upon personal experience and human history. No other theory will account for all those phenomena. Furthermore, it agrees with the predictions of the prophets and the testimony of Christ Himself. Are we not, by these very processes of reasoning, shut up to the necessity of believing that this explanation is the only one credible to sound human reason? Philosophy and Scripture agree in the consent that this explanation is adequate; it accounts for all the facts and accounts for them perfectly.

There remains the testimony, upon which I will not dwell, of personal experience. Suffice it to say, that for 1900 years, faith in Jesus Christ as a divine Saviour and Lord has laid hold upon the most degraded human lives and lifted them up into purity. Faith in the Deity of Jesus Christ has transformed barbarous into civilized nations. It has established a new standard of right and wrong. Even those who do not accept the personal authority of the Divine Jesus know that that human personality is the fountain head of every blessing of light, liberty and law under which they live. As we stand before that gentle and loving and mighty Jesus, shall not our hearts confirm with trust and love the verdict of our reason, which compels us to proclaim the Deity of Jesus Christ to be the essence of Christianity?

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” — John 1:1

04 THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION EVER ASKED

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION EVER ASKED “What must I do to be saved?” — Acts 16:30
A QUESTION does not always imply a doubt. A child wants to know, and asks questions about everything; but a child asks because it believes that it is possible to know. So we can ask of Scripture the great questions that we must ask, if we are thoughtful and real. And we should ask questions, not because we doubt, but because we desire to know; because we believe that if God has given a revelation to man, He has answered in that revelation every reasonable question of the human soul, not every idle and curious question that might be asked, but every question that touches the real things of human destiny. Let us look at the questions that the jailer asked at midnight in the Philippian jail.

“What must I do to be saved?” — Acts 16:30

Many think there is an antecedent question: “Do I need to be saved?” Is there any necessity such as is supposed in the question? I shall not insult the intelligence of any thoughtful person by seeking to prove what is already true to every honest soul — namely, the need of salvation. You and I know that in ourselves and apart from something that God may do for us, we are unfit for a holy heaven, and I should feel that I were trifling with you if I went into any elaborate proof concerning the need, that lies in every one of us, of a salvation. Let me simple re-state the grounds upon which I make this statement. First of all, we have all done, in thought and act, what a holy God cannot approve. I do not stop to prove that. And secondly, we all feel within ourselves the possibilities of evil beyond anything we have ever done, therefore there is something in us that needs to be saved. When the son in the parable came to himself he gave a very good proof that he had indeed come to himself. He said,

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,” Luke 15:18 That is the first evidence of the sinner coming to himself. So long as the son in the far country may have thought, “I will arise and go to my father and say, ‘Father, I have got into a bad environment; I was weak and they led me astray; and sin looked very beautiful and attractive, and you never told me much about it, and so I am in this plight,’ “he has not come to himself. When a sinner comes to himself, he says, “Father, I have sinned.” Never mind about the influences, never mind about the environment — “I have sinned.” This question of salvation, then, must be a personal and not an abstract question.

You know a great many intelligent people, thinking people, whose minds are alive and alert, lay hold upon problems and think about them, interested in the abstract questions that have to do with human responsibility. But this is not an abstract question. It is not what the man across the road must do to be saved, but what must I do to be saved. Furthermore, the question is specific:

“What must I do to be saved?” — Acts 16:30

If there is something the questioner would seem to ask that I must do, oh, tell me in no mistakable words what that something is. Be ambiguous about anything else, but not about this, for there is

too much at stake. Don't darken counsel with words; don't fill the air with controversy about that. What is it I must do?

There are many answers. Every religion that has ever appeared among men is an attempt to answer that question, from the crudest form of fetichism to the adequate and light-filled answer of Christianity. The savage who carves in a gnarled piece of wood an image uglier than himself and falls prostrate before it, is trying to find an answer to that word "What?" I ask the Hindoo — and it is very fashionable now to find a great deal of beauty in Hindooism. No one, I believe, finds any beauty in the practical outworking of Hindooism — oh, no, bless you; it is when in a Christian land and in the light of Christian civilization, and surrounded by all the comforts that have come to us from the influences of Christ, that men take the Hindoo books and find in them here and there a little maxim that they say is very beautiful — "just as beautiful as anything in the Bible" — but out there, where Hindooism is believed and lived, we do not find any pleasant fruits from it. But it tries to answer my question. I go to some filthy man who is pointed out to be as holy as men ever become, and say, "What must I do to be saved?" "Why," says he, "roll yourself on the ground nine hundred miles to a certain shrine." "Will that save me?" "Oh, no, not exactly save you," he answers, "but it may propitiate the gods, and the next time you are born you may not be born a monkey or a snake." Do I want that? That is not saving me. But there is a very much easier answer ready for me. I go to some generalizer and he says, "Why, the matter is perfectly simple — just be good." And then he has started more questions than he has settled. I ask him what he means by being good, and comparing his standard of goodness with that of the holy Being whom I have to meet some time, I find that the moralizer's standard of goodness is not high enough; it won't answer. And then, too, I have to say to him, "But, sir, I have a record; I have not been good. What am I going to do about that?" Oh, my friends, that was an awful word of Pilate's when they came to him and wanted him to change the writing over the cross. He said, impatiently, words that held a weight of meaning he little thought of then:

"What I have written, I have written." — John 19:22

Oh, yes, friends, what you have written, you have written; and what I have written, I have written. It is rather late in the day to try to save me by telling me to be good now. But I must have an answer. I am not saved and I need saving. And I turn to the Book of God and there I read an answer that seems to me so God-like that it wins my confidence at once. It seems adequate; it seems to cover the ground. I can find no flaw in it and it is beautifully simple. What is it? Let me take an instance. A pagan, whose office was that of jailer in the town of Philippi, had in his custody one, the apostle Paul. The apostle had been beaten with rods and his back was lacerated. For companion, he had one Silas, who had endured the same scourging. These men were brought to the jailer to be kept securely till the morning, and so he put them in an inner dungeon. And these two men sang in the night; and they had a God, and things began to happen, and they happened in such ways that the jailer began to see that he was in the presence of a God who could shake the earth and fling wide prison doors, and he came and fell down in all his sins and pagan blindness and ignorance, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" — Acts 16:30 And from these men there came the answer which I give to you:

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." — Acts 16:31 There is not any other answer.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” — John 3:16

“Whosoever” — no matter what his place might be in the sliding scale of human guilt, away down at the bottom, or pretty well up at the top. The drunkard down here, and the thief and the harlot, and the moralizer up there — never mind — “whosoever.” Well, that seems to me like God.

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” — Acts 16:31

Now that is a reasonable answer. And what is belief? It is trust, that kind of trust that commits the whole case to another. Thousands are trusting Christ now. Many of them you know and they are the best people you know. It is reasonable, therefore, to trust One who has never been false to the trust reposed in Him, and it is reasonable because He cannot, even with His divine power, save those who will not trust Him.

“In whom we trust that he will yet deliver us; “

—2 Corinthians 1:10

“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” — 2 Corinthians 1:5

05 MAN, A THREE-FOLD BEING

MAN, A THREE-FOLD BEING

“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:23

WE live in the psychological age. Man, wearying at last of barren philosophies, each of which but devours the others, has turned away from the always futile attempt to harmonize the facts of being with the facts of the universe, and is trying to find out what manner of creature he is. The philosophies failed because they left God out. Science will fail because it leaves out the supernatural, and the new science of psychology is in utter confusion because it leaves out the Biblical account of man. In truth the Bible contains a perfect philosophy and a no less perfect psychology. What is man? The new psychology answers, “Body and two kinds of mind, conscious and subconscious.” Theology answers, “Body and soul, or spirit,” making soul and spirit to be “in all essential respects identical,” as a great Protestant theologian says. But the Bible answers that man is spirit, soul and body; and the Bible will by no means agree that spirit and soul are in any essential respect identical. The Bible calls these invisible parts of man by different names, psyche or soul, pneuma or spirit, and the Bible pierces “even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.”

— Hebrews 4:12

Briefly, the Scriptures attribute to the soul the emotions, affections, desires, appetites and the will of man. To the spirit, — the capacity to know, to reason, to remember. And these are so connected with the body that they are never to be permanently separated. Man may and does exist out of the body, — but the divine purpose is to unite again in resurrection all human souls and spirits and their mortal bodies. The Christian at the resurrection receives his body purified from all that makes it often a burden and always a care.

“It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.”

— 1 Corinthians 15:42-44

What must be grasped here is the preservation of identity. “It is sown—it is raised.” These bodies of ours are an integral part of our deathless personality — spirit, soul and body — intellectual, affectional, physical. Such is man, a tri-personality as made in the image of Him who is triune. Through the body man has world-consciousness; through the soul self-consciousness; through the spirit, God-consciousness. Proverbs calls the human spirit “the candle of the Lord/” —Proverbs 20:27 because capable of being lighted from the touch of the divine intelligence.

It follows that man may habitually live in either of these parts of his tri-personality, or in two, or in all of them. It is, perhaps, the most obvious fact of human existence that the enormous majority of

men and women live in and for the physical part of their being. Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, pointed to this fact. He found the face of humanity covered with the mask of anxiety, of care, of apprehension. Over the face that God meant to be open, serene, beautiful, the centuries had written the wrinkles of care, of pre-occupation, of anxiety. And all about what? Food and raiment! And these things, in his rebuke, stand for the life of the body, the life of the senses. To live, to eat and to drink, to adorn the body and wrap the physical life in luxury — this He found both base and foolish. It was and is to lose the true perspective, to hopelessly confuse values. At the end of all our superficial reasoning and futile excuse it remains that to live for the senses is to descend in the scale of being. All civilizations have perished because wealth and power gave scope to the physical pleasures of man.

Rome begins with the two babes suckled by a wolf, and ends in imperial orgies where boundless wealth and power have laid the whole world under contribution to sensual pleasure. The product of the life of the senses is not a man, but an animal. Small wonder that men, minded to do nobler things, have gone to the other extreme, finding in the body the real enemy of the soul, and in hard asceticism the true philosophy of life. Over against the palace they have put the cell of the anchorite; a crust against the banquet; the hair shirt for the silken robe; the self-inflicted tortures of the flagellants for pampered passion.

Between stoicism and epicureanism stands Christ accepting neither, rejecting both. As against the stoics, he stands for development, not repression. As against the epicureans, he stands for the rule of the spirit of man over his body, instead of the rule of the body of man over the spirit. Jesus Christ's first ministry was to the bodies of men. Disease, a physical consequence of sin in the world, was banished by His healing touch and word. He twice fed multitudes by His creative power, and He turned water into wine for the wedding feast. He did not find evil in food and raiment, but only in making them the chief concern of life. After His resurrection His own hands, sorely torn with cruel spikes, prepared breakfast for His hungry disciples. At the opposite extreme, some men and a few women live the life of the intellect. To acquire knowledge, to stimulate the creative forces of the spirit, to rule or rise by superior acumen and the play of trained faculties — these give the true use of life, as they think. To this end everything in life is subordinated. They live in disregard or defiance of every legitimate demand of the senses, and rule their emotions with relentless authority. The product is not a man, but a thinking machine. In religion they are ecclesiastics or theologians — never Christians.

Another great company of men and women live the life of the emotions. They are swayed by their likes and dislikes, are unduly cast down or unduly exalted. Blown about by every wind of doctrine, they are unstable as water. Capable of great things in their best moments, they are incapable of anything at their worst. They are not men, but children.

What, now, is the Christian doctrine? The answer will show that in Christ, His work and teaching, will be found the only true solution of the problem of right living for the three-fold being — man. And the first factor of the problem is the fact that in neither spirit, soul nor body is man in his normal state. His intellect is perverted by pride and ambition.

“Ye shall be as gods, knowing” — Genesis 3:3 was Satan's first appeal to the spirit of man. By that sin he fell.

“I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God:” — Isaiah 14:13 was Satan’s impious boast while yet the “son of the morning!” — Isaiah 14:12 The spirit of man by which God, who is a spirit, seeks entrance into the sphere of man’s life, is barred to him by intellectual arrogance and pride.

“The world by wisdom knew not God”—/ Corinthians 1:21 is the divine verdict upon the final result of the intellectual activity of man.

“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,”

— Romans 1:22 Christ found the intellect of man sunken in the sin of pride. The soul of man, the sphere of his affections, emotions and will, was and is, if possible, in worse case. Man, through his soul, ought to love God supremely. Instead, he loves self, loves sin. His will ought to be as sensitive to the movement of the divine will as the magnetic needle is to the magnetic current. Instead, his will is set to get his own way, to achieve the things which he desires. This is why so much is said in Scripture about the soul of man. It is through loving the wrong things that man has gone wrong.

“As he thinketh in his heart, so is he:” — Proverbs 23:7 In the last analysis the desires rule the man. When Christ takes captive the heart, he is sure of his ultimate victory over the spirit and the body. And the body of man is what sin has made it. The home, and servant of the spirit and the soul, it has obeyed sin in the lusts thereof. Doomed to die, though the spirit and the soul cannot, the body is filled with the seeds of disease, the heritage of weakness, suffering and decay.

Jesus Christ begins by making this problem of man’s degradation of spirit, soul and body through sin, His own especial and exclusive problem. The only help He has from man in redeeming man is that man’s intellect devises the cross, man’s perverted soul hates goodness so much that it dooms incarnate goodness to the death of the cross, and man’s body furnishes the hands which nail Him to the cross. All else Christ does. The blood which flows from the wounds inflicted by man atones for all man’s sin, and purchases his complete redemption — spirit, soul and body. When this redemption is accepted by the individual, the processes begin which culminate in holiness. And holiness is simply “wholeness” — the restoration of perfect symmetry to the three-fold being of man. And the model and exemplar of the holy, or “whole,” man is Jesus Christ. In Him was a human spirit perfectly interpenetrated by, and perfectly responsive to, the divine Spirit. The result was the most marvelous intellectual manifestation in human history.

“Never man spake like this man.” — John 7:46

Transparently simple, and utterly devoid of literary artifice, His words have transformed human standards, and created a new and wonderful literature. In Him was an emotional and volitional life perfectly normal and perfectly beautiful. He was the exact opposite of the stoical ideal. Perhaps the best vision of the whole heart life and outward life of Christ may be gained by contrast — He was the precise antithesis of a Puritan. All that a Puritan was, except reverence and morality, He was not. All that a Puritan was not, He was.

He entered humanity as a pure stream enters a foul pool, cleansing it, but also renewing it. He put honor upon all the primal instincts and passions of man, while insisting that their only true development lay along the lines of purity and holiness. And His redemption brings the whole being

into balanced symmetry and beauty.

06 THE UNRECOGNIZED CHRIST

THE UNRECOGNIZED CHRIST “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” — John 1:10 THAT was nothing new. The world has never known its prophets, its seers, the men by whom its life has been guided, endowed, enriched. The unrecognized Christ was only a kind of final and unanswerable proof of the invincible grossness, stupidity and unspirituality of that great aggregation of humans which we call the world. What moves us to a deeper wonder is that Christ, after nearly 2,000 years, during which time He has reconstructed society, imposed upon even the world itself an absolutely new ethical standard and created a new type of character, should still be the unrecognized Christ. The sensation of one exhibition at the Royal Academy in London was Goethe’s picture bearing no name, but only the motto, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?”

— Lamentations 1:12 The picture, now well-known through reproductions, represents the altar which Paul found at Athens with the inscription, *Votum Deo Ignoto*, “To the unknown God”; only now Christ, wearing the crown of thorns and piteously bowed in prayer, is bound to that altar. The altar stands in the midst of the passing throng — the scientist with his test tube, the man of the turf with his whip and racing list, the society beauty, tempting in her rich robes, the vacuous-faced clubman, the newsboy shouting his papers, the laborer with his pick, the ecclesiastic in his vestments, the churchman and the dissenter in heated discussion, the officer in smart uniform, and all in absolute unconsciousness of the august and pathetic figure bound to the altar with its agnostic inscription, “*Votum Deo Ignoto*.”

It is a picture of an awful fact. Christ is in the world, — “and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.” — John 1:10 To assert the presence of Jesus Christ in the world of today is not to appeal to faith. It is an appeal to observation. It is an appeal to human history for the last twenty centuries. Anno Domini is not an arbitrary date-point fixed by scientific consent for convenience. Demonstrably the world, in the year one of this era, began to be a different world. Modern society, in the large sense of that word, is not an evolution out of B. C. When Christ came the old civilizations were worn out. Liberty was dead in Rome, in Athens. The gods were dead. There may well have been more than fancy in the legend mentioned by Plutarch that at the hour of our Saviour’s agony rowers on the sea heard a cry, “Great Pan is dead,” and that the oracles ceased. And that dismal cry rose slowly and sank slowly through the air,

Full of spirit’s melancholy And eternity’s despair!

And they heard the words it said —

Pan is dead — Great Pan is dead —

Pan, Pan is dead.

Elizabeth B. Browning Of a truth the oracles had ceased. In Rome, the augurs were laughing in each other’s faces. The philosophers, those poor human attempts to solve the mystery of life, were

spent forces. Pontius Pilate did not wait for an answer to his contemptuous question, “What is truth?” — John 18:38 The quest of truth, even, was given up, and that is the last sign of despair. The world of power for which Rome stood, and the world of culture for which Greece stood, were alike sunken in immeasurable corruption. Nor these only. Judaism, the testing of man not by power nor by philosophy, but under the revealed will of God, had perished in formalism, as heathen culture had perished in sensualism. Jesus Christ called Judaism a “whited sepulchre.” — Matthew 23:27 The strict religionists of Palestine were the wall in the way of the gospel. It was revealed religion, frozen into a heartless form, that demanded the crucifixion of Christ. The world was hopeless. Every avenue had been tried. There was no thoroughfare. Power had failed, culture had failed, religion as a system of human obedience had failed. There was another word, but the world had filled it with false and base meanings. It was the word love. There was a new center, but the world had missed it. It was God. The old dead world had confused love with lust, God with matter. Worst of all, perhaps, the old dead world had no certain word about the hereafter.

Then Jesus Christ came and with Him the forces which have remade and are remaking the world. He enthroned a personal God at the center and made all life accountable to Him. He did not ask men to elect Jehovah God, but revealed Him as from everlasting to everlasting God, whether men liked to have it so or not. He made men see that they were in God’s universe, and that they could not get out — that some time, somewhere, they must give an account of themselves to God. And wherever that conviction comes, the conviction of sin leaps into awful life. If God is, then I am undone. Against that conclusion all argumentation is mere trifling, unworthy a rational being. And, with that clew, the riddle of the world, as it is, begins to be read. It is perceived that the real malady is sin. The world is not right with God.

Jesus Christ gives the eternal God a name. His name is Love. He has another name — Light. Light reveals that Love may heal. In the cross Christ fixes the measure of divine love.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” — John 3:16 A perishing world need not perish; a dying world may have everlasting life. That opens the limitless future. Eternity begins to take on new meanings. Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Man is not the creature of a day; man is not a brother to the beasts. Life has a limitless perspective, and clear on to the endless end, God, eternal Love, is man’s father and friend, if man will have it so.

Atoning for man’s sin by the blood of the cross, coming again from the dead in eternal triumph over the grave, Jesus Christ begins to carry the salvation of the cross into all the world. It is nothing less than the remaking of the world. Note the means. He begins by exalting the value of the individual man. It is the fulfillment of that old cry of the prophet:

“I will make a man more precious than fine gold;

even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.” — Isaiah 13:12 The old dead world did not think much of a man. This present world has not yet come to anything like the divine estimate of the value of a man. Men themselves hold themselves cheap, selling out manhood for money and pleasure or ambition, but in so far as the individual has come to have sacredness it is due to the reconstruction of the world by Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ put the family, not the State, at the foundation of all social order. In the old dead world the State was the unit. The individual, the

family were subordinated to the State. Under the new ideal human relationships came instantly to have sacredness. Home came to have a new meaning, wife to be a title of honor above which there is no other. The child became in its trustfulness and simplicity the model of the heavenly character, and under the especial protection of God, the object of tender care. Jesus gave the world a new ideal of character in the beatitudes, and in the graces of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. And for the realization of those graces He brought within the reach of the simple faith of the simplest child of Adam a wholly new life-principle.

Beyond doubt the fact that by faith in Jesus Christ, through the new birth, man becomes possessed of the divine nature is the last of all the truths of revelation to get itself believed. Inveterately we persist in thinking of Christ as bringing to man a new rule of life, rather than a new life. Without this new life, imparted through the new birth, the new ethic and the new character would both be impossible of realization. And man received heaven as a home rather than as a court. We go on, I know, thinking of heaven as a kind of greater, purer, holier Olympus, but it is in spite of, not because of Christ's teaching. To him heaven is the home of the family of God. The children of that family were all born into it through the new birth. They all have been made partakers of their heavenly father's nature. And for near two thousand years now Jesus Christ has been at work through these tremendous agencies in the remaking of the individual and of humanity. And yet He is today, as He was 2,000 years ago in Galilee and Judea, the Unrecognized Christ. To Him is due the glory of every condition which makes life endurable for humanity today. No man would willingly live and rear a family in any part of the earth, however beautiful or fertile, where Jesus Christ is unknown, unhonored. Every distinctive blessing of life is His gift. He made the wonderful universe in which we live; to Him we owe the sanctity of home, the honor of woman, the sacredness of the individual as against the tyranny of the one or of the many. To Him is due the new ethic which is grounded in mercy, and from which has sprung every orphanage, every hospital, every institution for the ministry of mercy to the unfortunate, the suffering, the needy, that exists on earth today. And yet millions who live by Him, without the least of whose mercies life would lose all desirableness, who breathe the air, drink the water, and eat the substance of His creation, go on in lives which practically ignore Him. This would be pathetic enough, were this all. Were there no other consequence of thus ignoring the Christ from whom every blessing of life proceeds than deterioration of character such as follows habitual ingratitude, it would be bad enough. When it is remembered that deliverance from the power of sin and the guilt of sin, that membership in the family of God and eternal felicity turn absolutely upon the personal recognition of Jesus Christ in the sense of a joyous personal trust and adoring worship, then indeed the fact of the Unrecognized Christ becomes inexpressibly tragic. But

“this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.” — John 6:40

07 IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

TODAY we are to ask the Bible to answer the deep question, “What is the true meaning of life?” I shall not insult your intelligence by one word of argument as to the importance of that question. You and I are conscious that we are living. We know that the mysterious and wonderful thing which we call life is passing rapidly away. What a mystery life is — and one which science has not in the least helped us to solve. It is today the same inscrutable mystery it was centuries ago. That its issues are tremendously important, we know, and we ask what is the meaning, the true meaning, including, of course, the true purpose and object of life. As a truth about which our thought may crystallize, and which I believe opens essentially the heart of the question, I have chosen for a text:

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.”— Romans 14:7 In other words, it is impossible for us to isolate ourselves from humanity and from God. We can not do it. Now, I want to plead, first of all, in considering this question of the true meaning of life, for a frank recognition of this fact. No life has found its true meaning until the fact is frankly recognized that the chief value of that life is due to the investment which others have made in it. Your life is valuable to you, it is precious, in the measure in which others have made investments in it. The problem that is before us is not a problem which can be considered without reference to past, present or future. Think of the tremendous investment that others have made in your life and mine. For us, mothers have suffered and prayed. For us, fathers have toiled. Teachers have patiently invested years of effort to win us from ignorance into knowledge. All this has been done that our lives might have some kind of value; and the first right thought of life is that we recognize that that which gives our lives chiefest worth has been invested in us by others. My friends, you and I are the heirs of the ages. For you and me Moses wrote and David sang and the seers prophesied. For you and me, Homer chanted his deathless lays, and a thousand men of genius have toiled and thought and suffered, that you and I might be what we are today. We boast of our liberty; we are proud of being Americans; proud of having a government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” Did you or I ever do anything much that we might be free today — free to say the thing we believed; free to come and go, free to live out our lives? Columbus crossed the stormy seas, our fathers followed him, and in their toil and pain and self-denial wrought out this new empire for man.

“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.” — Romans 14:7 Can you dispense with all this increment of the thought and toil and suffering and sacrifice of the ages and go back to savagery? You cannot do it if you would, and would not do it if you could. But how lightly you and I have been using this marvelous thing of life, as if it were only our own! The second proposition is that no life has found its true meaning which does not take account of two worlds. The life that now is and that which is to come. Is it a credit to anyone whose head is gray, that he begins to think of the other life? I would like to reach those whose heads are not gray, and plead with them to think while it is time, to redeem life from unbelief and baseness and selfishness and narrowness into

faith and rightness and nobility, to think of life as belonging to two worlds now. Two worlds, this one so brief, the other unending! What may be in store for us yonder? That is the question which lifts the temporary, the transitory, into eternal consequence and moment. What have I done today means something for me through all eternity. I have not begun to face the problem of life until I have seen that.

Then, I want to say that no life has found its true meaning which is not right with God. That is one of the last things we think of. By what strange involution of reason have men come to think that the principal business of life is to do approximately the right thing by our fellow man? Such a life leaves out of the problem its mightiest factor — the final, determining factor of all life — God.

Let us think about this for a moment. We were speaking of investments making life precious and valuable. Dear friends, the investment of the ages in you and in me, the heirship which the poorest child born in civilization has by the very fact of being born, is but the smallest part, after all, of the investment which God Himself has made in your life and mine. In the first place, He gives that wonderful thing which we use lightly and think so ignobly about — life. How can a life be right which is out of harmony with its Creator? Science tells us, — modern science, and so far I agree with it wholly, — that the problem of life is being in harmony with environment. That is right. What is the environment of every human being? God.

“For in him we live, and move, and have our being:” — Acts 17:28

According to science itself, then, no life can be right, no life can, in the best sense, be happy, no life can have any well-grounded hope of happiness in the future, which is inharmonious with God. How many things should move us to get right with God! We are in His universe, we can not get out of it. For weal or woe, for ever and ever, you and I must live within its utmost rim.

How many motives He has given us to make life right with Himself! Think of gratitude. We rightly call ingratitude the basest act of man. There is something about ingratitude — there is something about the man who can receive kindnesses and favors without being moved to gratitude in return, that marks a kind of incurable baseness of nature. You and I have lived on God's bounty all our lives and perhaps we have never said with David, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?—Psalms 116:13 And remember the answer: “I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” — Psalms 116:13

It is all we can do. Gratitude should move every one of us to get right with God. Prudence should move us to get right with God. Reason alone tells us, — and with this the Bible is in harmony, as it is everywhere and in everything with the highest reason — that there can be no enduring happiness in a life which is out of harmony with God. And we all want to be happy, do we not?

Now, the very foundation thought concerning the problem of life is the thought of its being linked with all other life. Take, for instance, the matter of influence. I am living, let me say, without Christ in the world. By as much as I am an honorable, a kindly, a worthy man, I am imperilling the eternal welfare of all who look up to me. If my life is a linked life, linked with other lives, what right have I to live one minute when my influence may leave a blot on another life? And the second thought, remember, is that we must take account of life as belonging to two worlds, this and the next. Can there be any more incredible folly than for us to live perilously on the verge of eternity, as we know

every one of us does live, without being able to count tomorrow as ours, and to take all the chances of the unending days of the life beyond? Ought we not to be glad that God has made the issue between Himself and humanity so simple? What must we do to get right with God? What must we — all out of harmony in our selfishness, with His unselfishness, in our hatred, with His love, in our sins, with His holiness — what must we do to come into harmony with Him, to have our life beat in time with the life of the eternal? He makes one simple, definite proposition to us, and it is wrapped up, not in doctrine, but in a person. His one proposition is Jesus Christ.

All life turns, in the last analysis, on the right answer to that question, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?” — Matthew 27:22

Pilate’s question. Right with God, we are right with humanity. Right with God, through Jesus Christ, we are right for the next world as well as for this.

All the problems of life, the whole meaning of life, centers on that one thing — what is Christ to me and what am I to Him? I cannot go back to the law — it only curses me, for I have broken it. I cannot begin today, if it were possible for me to do so, to live so that every act of my life shall be pleasing to a holy God, for first of all I have no power to do it, and secondly, there is my record up to today. What can make me right with God? To do the thing He has commanded me — believe on Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Trust Him. Give myself away to Him. Put my whole case into His hands. Let Him take this life, so full of evil, and put the evil out of it. Let Him take this life so full of weakness and fill it with strength. Let Him take this life so selfish and self-centered, and let it flow out in all its breadth to humanity. Let Him make it over. Let Him purify it. Let Him solve all its problems. Let Jesus Christ fill it.

08 “BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH”

“BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH”

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:”
—Ephesians 2:8

I PREFER the rendering in the Revised Version. As slight as the change is, it is of very great moment, as a little reflection will show.

“For by grace have ye been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves;
it is the gift of God:” — Ephesians 2:8

There is a vast significance in this change of tense. The Ephesian saints were not being saved, nor to be saved, but they were saved. That was the great message they got in this letter; and if there had been nothing else to give joy to their hearts, that alone should have filled them to overflowing. You see this, I am sure. Suppose you were sailing from one of our eastern seaports, that your destination was the other side of the stormy ocean, and you could be assured upon authority beyond question that your vessel should come into port. What a comfort it would be to you when you encountered the storms! When your ship, tossed here and there and beaten upon by the resistless waves, seemed as if it must surely go to the bottom, you would stay your hearts upon the promise that notwithstanding the storm, you should come safely into port. The apostle did not say what trials they should pass through, nor from what trials they should be spared; he did not say what tears should come to their eyes, nor what joy to their hearts, but he said they were saved. These things might rend them asunder at times, might almost overwhelm them, but they were saved, and, being saved, knew that after the storm of life was over, they were sure to anchor in the port of heaven.

Let us look at the passage itself. We have here, as you see, two wonderful things. First, a wonderful result; secondly, the wonderful means by which that result is accomplished. The wonderful result is salvation.

“By grace have ye been saved.” — Ephesians 2:8 My friends, we have grown so familiar with that thought, that all wonder, strangeness and joy have gone out of it. I stand in amazement at my own apathy, at my own lack of emotion, at my own ability to speak in calm and measured words about so great a thing as salvation, accomplished for a doomed soul. Familiarity has done this for us. We count it a common thing. We are scarcely interested in it. Now and again people wonder why one who preaches does not choose the deeper things of God, why he is always talking about so familiar a thing as salvation.

I remember talking some years ago with a bank teller, and I asked him how it seemed to him to be handling vast sums of money all of the time. “Why,” said he, “I never think of this coin and these notes as money, but only as so many figures upon a piece of paper.” So, familiarity with salvation may make it seem to us as but a plan — words upon a piece of paper. A friend was telling me, that

when visiting the home of a very wealthy man on the New England coast, he saw in one of the most beautiful rooms of the house, displayed among costly things from over the sea — rare pictures and works of art — a common life preserver. “It seems to me,” he ventured to say to his host, “a strange fancy of yours to hang up that ordinary life preserver among all these rare and beautiful things.” “That,” was the reply, “is where you make a mistake. That is not an ordinary life preserver, it is a very extraordinary life preserver; it kept me alive four days at sea.” Dear friends, when we think of salvation not as a place, but as that mighty transaction which gave us life, which keeps us alive and is to keep us alive, we shall get back the joy of it, and the wonder of it, and it will never become a common thing to us. The fact is, that to many of you, salvation never seemed a very wonderful or joyful thing. Your conversion perhaps was a very listless affair; so much so, that it has hardly left a trace in your memory; you do not know just when you were converted. It was a sort of sauntering out of darkness into light, and done in a very listless kind of way. May God send conviction in these days! David said:

“The pains of hell gat hold upon me:” — Psalms 116:3 And we should not wonder, therefore, when David came out of the pains of hell, that he began to talk about the joy of his salvation. Someone has said that the reason Mr. Moody preached the gospel with such power was that God had permitted him to look into hell and up into heaven.

Salvation is not a common thing. Think what it is to be saved. It means deliverance from an awful doom. I do not know how awful, but I know some things about it because the Bible tells us some things about it. I know it is separation from God. It is separation from the good. I know that the Bible exhausts the resources of language to pen the horrors and woes, condensed into that little word which we spell with four English letters — lost. It is darkness, it is death, it is fire, it is the undying worm — and all these for eternity. Now, it is salvation from that. Is that a light thing? Is that a thing to be indifferent about? Is that a thing to get tired of preaching about?

Then, on the positive side of it, it means pardon full and free; everything forgiven, everything forgotten; the slate wiped clean, not one trace of our sins even in the memory of God; not one transgression left, everything blotted out and gone. You know the promise:

“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions,” — Isaiah 44:22 When a thick cloud is blotted out, is there any scar left upon the surface of the sky? Is there any trace showing where the cloud was? No, it is gone completely, and the blue is there just as blue as it ever was, just as clean as it ever was. That is in salvation.

. But salvation is more than that. The great thing in salvation is, after all, that it brings us into harmony with God; it sets us right with Him. Did you ever think of it? it is not pardon which saves. The pardon removes penalty and makes salvation possible. It would not be a kindness to set free all the convicts in the penitentiary today. It would merely be giving them an opportunity to commit new crimes, to load their souls with new guilt. But if one should go down to that sad place proclaiming pardon, and then put within each who accepted it a new heart, a heart that naturally and spontaneously of itself and without effort, loved honesty, virtue and right dealing, it would be a grand thing to turn all the convicts out of the penitentiary. That is precisely what salvation does.

Skeptics ask why God does not save them if He wishes to. If God were to bring all unbelievers into heaven at their death, they would not be happy there; they would simply spoil heaven, and make it

what this earth is. Salvation is reconciliation to God, loving what God loves, hating what God hates, and desiring, even against one's self, that God's will may be done. This is the larger part of salvation.

I read a story about two excursions that went out of the harbor of Buffalo, New York. One carried a crowd of men going to a prize fight; the other carried a Sunday School picnic. It happened that one out of each of these crowds got on the wrong boat. A prize fighter got on the boat that carried the Sunday School children, and a deacon got on the boat that carried the prize fighters; and probably the two unhappiest men on Lake Erie that day were those two men, simply because they were out of their right environment. The prize fighter was utterly miserable; and the deacon — you may imagine his feelings as he journeyed over the waters of Lake Erie with that swearing, hoodlum set.

Salvation is not a question of locality; it is not a question of surroundings; it is a question of being made right with God. That salvation does, and that is the larger part of salvation. Think of it, "By grace have ye been saved" — Ephesians 2:8 made right with God, got a new heart. Salvation means becoming a child of God, coming into the family of God, sitting down at the table of God, as an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. And it means eternal rest and peace and joy; and the eternal begins now.

We have the wonderful means of salvation set forth in this text and that in two words, "grace" and "faith." Let us look at these words.

"By grace have ye been saved through faith;" — Ephesians 2:8 Not by faith through grace. Faith does not save; grace saves through faith. Grace the divine side, faith the human side. These two things must come together to produce salvation. Faith here, grace there. When faith and grace meet the man is saved. He is not being saved, nor to be saved, but he is saved. When his faith meets God's grace, the deed is done.

"Grace" — what is grace? There have been a great many definitions of grace — some have been helpful, some not. There is a story of a little girl who said, when asked what grace was: "Please, sir, it is getting everything for nothing." That is very good, but grace is more than that. If the little girl had said: "It is one who deserves everything bad, getting everything good for nothing," it would have been nearer a definition of grace.

Grace is more than mercy; grace is more than love; grace is the largest word in the Bible. It is the greatest word, the most inclusive word, and holds in its contents more than any other word of human speech. Imagine a criminal guilty of having robbed his best friend. And will you just let me say, dear friends, that the most moral and respectable and decent man and woman in this audience has done that. No unbeliever here or anywhere else ever had so good a friend as God — never. For whatever we may have done or left undone, we have simply lived upon His grace up to this day — we have breathed it, eaten it, slept on it. We would not have been here but for His grace; and it is He whom we have robbed of the affection that is His right due; robbed of the service that belongs to Him; robbed of fellowship; robbed of all that might give Him joy and requite His kindness. Imagine, I say, a criminal who had robbed his best friend and now stood before his judge. If the friend whom he had injured were to plead with the judge to have mercy on him, that would be wonderful, would it not? That would be marvelous kindness. If the wronged one were to come and plead with the judge for the ingrate standing there in his guilt, that would be wonderful.

But grace does more than that. And if the wronged one were to love the wretch who had wronged him, really love him, that would be even more wonderful. But grace is more than that. To get a true illustration of grace, you must have the wronged one coming to the judge and saying, "Let the sentence fall on me; I do not ask that this righteous law shall be set at naught, and treated as a thing to be set at naught; the law is right. But let it sheathe its word in my breast, and let him go free." That is grace, dear friends, that is grace.

"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree"— 1 Peter 2:24 All the waves and billows of God's wrath went over Him whom we have wronged.

"By grace have ye been saved through faith;"— Ephesians 2:8

What is faith? Grace reaches the sinner through faith; it is the channel. So much is evident on the very surface of it. It is not saving in itself, but only instrumentally. Some people have tried to make out that there is such a thing in Scripture as a faith character, that God so approves of the faith principle, that for the sake of the rightness of a heart which is exercising faith, He pardons. The Bible knows nothing of that. The Bible is not a book of dreams. It is not a book of indefinite theologies. The Bible is a plain straightforward book, one that any wayfaring man may read and know; and it never speaks of faith character, or any other character as the ground of salvation. Faith is the channel through which grace comes. But what is faith? A skeptical physician asked that question of a Christian patient. He said: "I could never understand saving faith. I believe in God and I suppose I believe in Jesus Christ — I am not conscious of any doubts. I believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and I believe in the Bible, yet I am not saved. What is the matter with me?" "Well," said the patient, "a day or two ago I believed in you, I believed in you as a very skillful physician: I believed that you would be able to heal me if I should get sick. Then I realized that I was sick, and I sent for you and put myself in your hands to be healed. In other words I trusted you. For two days now I have been taking some mysterious stuff out of a bottle. I don't know what it is, I don't understand it, but I am trusting you." Now, whenever you turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and say, "Lord Jesus, Christianity seems to me to be full of mysteries. I do not understand them, but I believe Thou art trustworthy and I trust Thee; I commit myself to Thee." That is faith. A very simple thing, is it not? The faith of the patient did not heal him; it was the remedy that healed him; but the faith took the remedy. Saving faith is the faith that takes Christ to save. But does not the text say:

"not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" — Ephesians 2:8 and are you asking, What is it, this "gift of God?" There are three things, grace, faith, salvation, and these are all the gift of God. But here is the significant fact, dear friends, here begins your responsibility: of this wonderful trio — grace, faith, salvation — you have already received the gift of faith. Now you are saying: "If I have faith, if already God has given me faith, why am I not saved?" Because you have not used it rightly — that is all.

Faith! Why, you do not go an hour of the day without faith; you could not live tomorrow without faith. You have faith in the banks; you have faith in the railroads; faith in your fellow man; faith in the family tie; faith in the honor of your husband or your wife; faith all around; faith in every thing but the Christ who alone is worthy to be trusted. We trust everything that changes, everything that disappoints, everything that fails, and refuse to trust Him who never fails and never disappoints. But we can not stand up before Him and say we have not the power to do it, because we are

exercising faith in all kinds of inferior things every day of our lives, and because we have but to take that same faith and lift it up till it is fixed upon Him, and we have formed the bridge over which that marvelous grace comes, and grace brings salvation.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” — Titus 2:11 says Paul, and it comes over the bridge of faith.

I remember some years ago when the Southern Hotel in St. Louis was destroyed by fire, there was an inquiry made by the authorities into the cause of the disaster. Some of the servants of the hotel who had been rescued from the topmost story, right under the roof, by the heroism of an Irish fireman, were giving their testimony, and a question was asked of one of these servant girls: “How were you saved from this fire?” “Why,” she said, “Mr. O’Toole, the fireman, broke into the room and said: ‘Maggie, let me take you down the ladder,’ and I let him. That is the way I was saved.”

Dear friends, do not make difficulties about these things where there are no difficulties. Faith is a gift and you have it.. Grace is a gift and you may have it; and when you get it you will get salvation with it. That is the simplicity that is in Christ; that is the blessed gospel of God’s free grace. But it is all a gift; it is not for sale. God is not trading in this matter of salvation; He is not giving a little salvation for a little goodness, and a little more salvation for a little more goodness. There is no trading; it is a free gift.

There was a poor woman whose little child was sick. She lived near Windsor Castle and could look over into the palace gardens and see the grapes growing there. She thought how good it would be if she could have a few of those grapes for her little fevered child. So she took a shilling and went into the Queen’s garden and said to the gardener; “I want to buy a shilling’s worth of those grapes.” “Do you know,” he replied, “those grapes belong to the Queen and the Queen does not sell grapes?” It happened that just then one of the Queen’s children was standing by, and he said, “My good woman, my mother does not sell grapes, but she will give you just as many as you need.”

Well, God is not selling salvation. It is a gift or nothing, and it is for you today. What are you going to do with it? In His name, I ask you what are you going to do about it? What are you going to do with the grace of God before the close of this sermon, and it is nearly done? I have no warrant from my Master to give you one hour. You do not need a minute. People talk about “thinking it over;” you have thought it over all your lives. You need to act. Will you trust Him, this Jesus who offers you eternal salvation through grace?

“not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” — John 14:27

09 BARABBAS OR CHRIST

BARABBAS OR CHRIST

“And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.” — Luke 23:25 THIS text refers to the man Barabbas, of whom we know no more than is contained in the Biblical story. He swings for one awful moment into the light, is for that moment a silent figure on the stage of the most impressive and significant tragedy in the history of the universe; an unspeaking actor, muffled and sinister; murderer, robber, brute; an unheeded pawn in the game of ecclesiastical bigots and supple politicians in which the stake was the life of the Son of God, — the amazed beneficiary of Christ’s death. Then he passes, and we hear of him no more.

Tradition, of course, has been busy with his name. His unsought connection with the central event of all history is too dramatic and suggestive to permit Barabbas to escape the myth-maker. And, indeed, there is nothing unlikely in the traditions. They all make him to have become a disciple of the divine Man who died for him — the severest of penitents; dwelling in deserts and caves; bathed in unceasing tears; forgiven, but never able to forgive himself that the adorable Christ should have died on his, Barabbas’, cross. Let us hope that so it was. Did I say just now that Barabbas “passes”? No, we pass; Barabbas remains. The men, good and bad, who come into the old Bible story never pass. Not without purpose are they there; never, so long as men sin or repent, bless or curse, weep or laugh, win or lose in the tragical battle we call life, will those Bible personages lose significance. And none of them tells the story of the cross like Barabbas; no, not even Peter and James and John — not even Mary of Bethany, the most truly spiritual of all those who gathered about Jesus — not even Mary knows the depths of the meaning of the cross like Barabbas. Paul knows the theology of the cross, and its great ethical meanings, better than Barabbas; but no man who ever lived, except Barabbas, saw Jesus die on a cross that had been made, not for Jesus, but for him. Indeed, if you and I are to understand the central significance of the cross we must look through Barabbas’ eyes. Let us try to do that.

Barabbas was condemned to die. No one has ever questioned the justice of his sentence. Perhaps his mother, waiting outside there for the dawn of the morning — her boy’s last morning — has been telling the bystanders how sweet a baby he was; what a likely lad, brave and enterprising. But even she did not say that he was innocent. He was a rebel against the law, a robber, a murderer. And so are we all. We have broken a more just, a better law than that of Rome; we have robbed God of our love and service; and we have murdered our own innocence. Macbeth had but murdered sleep; we have slain white innocence. And the outraged law had laid strong hands on Barabbas, and he lay bound under sentence of death. Like us, he was not awaiting trial, but execution. He was not under probation to see if he would be good, but under doom because he had proven to be bad. Like us, he was “condemned already,” — John 3:18

Just before Barabbas, as his only prospect, indeed, was the awful death of crucifixion. He knew what that meant. Long hours of unspeakable agony; the hands and feet torn by great spikes; the

wrist and shoulder joints dislocated by the dragging down of the body; each quivering nerve a separate torture through tension; a burning, unquenchable thirst; and, all around, a jeering, taunting mob. All the horizon of his life narrowed down to that. The only question was — when? Even that began to be answered. The jailors prepared three crosses. Ah! He well knew the three sockets cut in the hard rock out there at the place called Golgotha, the Place of the Skull. With the same thirst for blood that has made us seek to witness executions, he had often watched, out there, the agonies of crucified men. Was one of the three crosses for him? The very thought gave him a sense of suffocation, and of something clutching at his throat. Then he was told. Yes, he was to suffer in the morning. Two malefactors were to die with him, but he, as the greater criminal, was to have the place of eminence, was to have the middle cross. He experienced a moment of virile pride. That was true to nature. You never heard robbers boast of their greater exploits, you say; you do not associate with that kind of people. Are you sure? Have you never heard men boast of the greater acumen which enabled them to win in the game called “business” while others lost to them? Have you never heard a “gentleman” boast of the number of drinks which he could take unmoved? Have you never heard the same kind of “gentleman” boast of favors which meant blight and nameless infamy, the ruin of purity, the shame of homes? Sin is not a nice thing, whether in Barabbas or in us. It is low, mean, cowardly and vile, — but sinners are apt to take a strange pride in it. The night fell — Barabbas’ last night on earth. But it was a disturbed night. Even in the prison it was perceived that something unusual was occurring. Confused noises, outcries, the tramping of feet, penetrated the thick walls. Barabbas dumbly wondered what it all meant. Perhaps it was another insurrection such as he, poor fool, raised against the majesty of inflexible law. But the night wore on, and at last it was daylight — the light of Barabbas’ last day. And now he heard footsteps, the key ground in the lock, his prison door swung open; but, just as he summoned all his brute fortitude for the awful ordeal before him, he heard the joyful words:

“Go free, Barabbas! Another takes your place. Another is to die between the two malefactors!” As Barabbas emerged into the free, glorious sunshine the crowd was already surging out toward the Place of the Skull. And then, if not before, the desire must have arisen to know who had been condemned to die in his place. One can easily imagine how Barabbas followed the throng, striving eagerly to see the man who was to die for him. Perhaps it was not until the sound of the hammer, driving the spikes into the hands and feet of Jesus, had ceased, and the cross — Barabbas’ cross — had been upreared, bearing its awful burden, that Barabbas saw the man who was dying in his place. We may well believe that, moved by that strange, irresistible drawing of which Jesus spoke when he said:

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” — John 12:32

Barabbas pressed his way through the howling mob until he stood, looking up into the face of Jesus. Barabbas knew Him, of course. His substitute in agony there was the new Teacher out of Galilee. It must have seemed a strange thing to Barabbas that Jesus, of all men, should be there on a cross. Again and again, no doubt, Barabbas had been of the throng which pressed about Jesus, and hung upon His words. Even the dead heart of the robber had been stirred by those words. Jesus did not exhort people to go to feasts, and perform religious ceremonies, but to believe in Him and to be merciful and gentle and loving. In particular, perhaps, Barabbas remembered one day when the new Teacher seemed especially moved. The good, religious people, the influential preachers of the day, had brought against Jesus the damning accusation

that He associated with sinners — in fact, that He went so far as to eat with them. Then Barabbas and the other bystanders saw in the sweet face of the new prophet something they had never before seen in any human face; they saw the wreath of perfect love. And Jesus had told two stories which Barabbas had never forgotten. The first was about a sheep which had strayed away. The shepherd had ninety and nine good, docile, obedient sheep left, but, putting them into the fold in the wilderness, he went after his sheep that was lost. And when he had found his sheep he brought it tenderly home on his shoulders, and made great rejoicing. And the Teacher said:

“there is joy in the presence of the angels of God” Luke 15:10 when just one sinner was brought back, as that sheep had been. That was new doctrine. Barabbas glanced at the good, religious men, — the men who prayed often on the corners of the streets thanking God that they were not as other men, — and saw their brows darken. ‘Their doctrine was that the angels rejoiced when they saw Pharisees performing religious ceremonies.

There was another story about a woman losing one piece of silver and sweeping the house till she found it, and Barabbas understood that Jesus was looking for sinners, bad people, as the woman looked for her silver.

Yes, Barabbas knew the man who was suffering there on his, Barabbas’, cross. He was a sinless man. Everybody agreed to that. True, the big preachers accused Him of being a Sabbath breaker; but everybody knew that He was holy. Why should such a Being be dying there a death of shame on Barabbas’ cross? Even the august sufferer seemed to feel that, for out of darkness he cried:

“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — Matthew 27:46 It is easy to see that Barabbas had no need to be a theologian to form a good working theory of the atonement.

He knew that he was a guilty wretch, under the righteous condemnation of the law. And in both these respects Barabbas was a representative of all men.

“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.” Romans 3:10 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” — Galatians 3:10

Barabbas knew that the Sufferer before him had done no sin. He knew that Jesus was, for him, a true substitute. Christ was verily and actually dying in his place and stead; an innocent and holy Being bearing the very penalty which the law had justly decreed to him, Barabbas. Whoever, in the coming ages, might question whether Christ’s death was vicarious and substitutional, he could never question it.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” — 2 Corinthians 5:21

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:” — Galatians 3:13

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” — 1 Peter 2:22-24

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh; but quickened by the Spirit:”—1 Peter 3:18

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity for us all.” — Isaiah 53:5-6

Barabbas knew that he had done nothing whatever to merit the marvelous interposition of that substitutional death. Whatever may have been back of it, it reached him as an act of pure grace.

“Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee.

Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.” Psalms 69:19-20 “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:4-9

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” — 2 Timothy 1:9 “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;” — Titus 1:2 “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” — Romans 4:4-5

Barabbas knew that Christ's death for him was perfectly efficacious. There was, therefore, nothing for him to add to it. Just because Christ was dying he was living. The only question before Pilate was, whether Christ should die or Barabbas. When it was decided that Christ should die Barabbas was set free.

Whether Barabbas became the disciple of Jesus who died in his place we do not know. What is more important for us, is to decide, each for himself, that we shall be His disciples.

10 THE DEMON OF WORRY

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“Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”— Matthew 6:31 “Take therefore no thought for the morrow:” — Matthew 6:34

SOME of the things that Jesus Christ found in the world seem to have caused Him surprise. We are told that He marveled because of unbelief. That any one should doubt God caused the Son of God not indignation so much as astonishment. He felt, in the face of distrust of divine veracity or of the divine goodness, an emotion of simple amazement. And another fact of the life men live on the earth appears to have struck Him as foolish and unreasonable — the fact that the race of men is an anxious, a worried race. In the Sermon on the Mount He deals with this fact of worry. He gives to it more space than to adultery or murder. I should not conclude from that, that in the divine estimation worry is a graver sin than adultery or murder, but only that it is far more prevalent.

Wherever Christ looked He saw the unmistakable traces of anxiety. All faces bore that sinister mark. The Sermon on the Mount is the constitution of the kingdom of heaven on earth and that kingdom excludes worry. God Himself could not make an anxious world happy. Let us see how Jesus Christ proposes to banish worry from his world. First of all, he teaches us that we worry about the wrong things.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?” — Matthew 6:25 In the last analysis we shall find, if we make that analysis fearlessly, that our worry is not about mere food and mere raiment, but about superfluous food and superfluous raiment, and our Lord would call us back to the consciousness that life itself is an infinitely larger thing than the externals of life. The men and women who have touched this life of humanity powerfully and helpfully have always been such as brought the facts of life into the right perspective, counting life too high and beautiful a thing to waste itself in overmuch thought about its mere incidents. Are we thinking thus nobly about life and life’s meanings? Have we thought about life itself, the wonder of it, the deeper meanings of it, the measureless possibilities of even one day of it? Do we habitually think of life as a trust rather than a possession? Do we think of sometime giving an account of our administration of that trust? Do we think of the tremendous investment which God and humanity, and even the mere creature world, has made and is constantly making, just that we may have life?

Then, too, Christ puts over against our causes of anxiety the fatherhood of God.

“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” — Matthew 6:26

“And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?” — Matthew 6:28-30 The Christian is not an orphan in an unfriendly universe. He is a child of the God who feeds the birds and clothes the flowers, making each the subject of His solicitude. It has been estimated, taking as a basis the quantity known to be necessary for their sustenance, that no millionaire on earth could feed God's birds one day. But God feeds them every day, and is no whit poorer at night. “Now,” says Christ, in effect, “that is what the Christian's Father does for flowers and birds. Will He not do as much for His dear children?” The argument is unanswerable. And it covers the very causes of that anxiety which is whitening the heads and prematurely furrowing the faces of God's children in the world. It is no wonder that men have imagined a multitude of invisible spirits at work upon the human countenance from the cradle to the grave, spirits of light and spirits of darkness, spirits angelic and spirits from the pit; that with viewless gravers they patiently inscribe the lines which mark every thought and action. Of course the deeper and even more awful truth is that human thoughts and actions are self-recording, and that, struggle against it as we may, that record is wrought into the substance of the human face.

O, the records that faces bear! As our eyes grow wise to see, what confessions, fain hidden, stand out from the faces of the crowd! And no demon drives his pitiless graver deeper, nor with more certain stroke, than the hateful demon worry. And the lines he makes are ignoble lines; lines in which he who runs may read the story of happiness of homes eaten away by little and little as with a biting acid; of home made hateful to husband and children; of love worn to the breaking point — and all about things that pass and perish with the day; things of no vital moment; things upon which neither the true happiness nor honor nor usefulness of life depend. O, the pity of it. O, the miserable shame of it, that on a face made beautiful by God there should be ignoble worry marks!

Suppose such an one had trusted God about all those causes of anxiety. Suppose such an one had said: “My Father feeds the birds; He clothes the flowers; He will assuredly feed me and mine; He will clothe us.” Ah, the happy spirits with the other gravers would have written on that face other lines — lines of serenity, lines of happy trust, lines which would have made the face a benediction and a blessed memory.

Thirdly, Christ reminds the anxious one of earth that, after all, worry does no good.

“Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?” — Matthew 6:27 The waste of it! The uselessness of it! All the worry that ever got itself accomplished in this weary, worrying world; all the sleepless nights, all the burdened days; all the joyless, mirthless, peace-destroying, health-destroying, happiness-destroying, lovedestroying hours that men and women have ever in all earth's centuries given to worry, never wrought one good thing. It was all evil and only evil. It shut out the face of God, the loveliness of nature, the joy of love, the compensations of life. It poisoned the peace of others and cast its hateful shadow over other lives. The very point of the sin of worry, the very reason why it is the basest, most cowardly of sins, is that it darkens the lives we are most responsible to bless — and all for no good, but only to blight and wrong. The amazing thing about it is that no one is convicted of this mean sin! Good people live in it, and with no sense

of the outrage which it involves against the love of a kind, heavenly Father and against the rights of others! A Christian man will not scruple to bring to his home the petty worries and passing anxieties of the day. Christian women, — women whose lives are pure, who scorn scandal, who devote life and strength unsparingly to the service of husband and children, will yet shamelessly poison the peace of home by the sin of worry, and with no apparent sense of the guilt of it! It is one of the mysteries of human nature.

“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” — Matthew 6:34

11 PRAYER

PRAYER

“And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray,” — Luke 11:1 THE Lord’s Prayer is not a form, but a model which our Lord gave to his disciples. It is a prayer of the kingdom; a prayer suited to the disciples at that time, when the Lord was preaching the kingdom as “at hand,” and not the gospel of the grace of God, which tells of a crucified Christ and pardon for sin through him. Its abiding value lies in the fact that it is a model and not a form. One of our Lord’s disciples, evidently speaking for all of them, had said, “Lord, teach us to pray,” — Luke 11:1 and the Lord’s Prayer is part of his answer. Notice, first of all, the singularity of this disciple’s petition. These men were Jews, and as Jews had been brought up to pray. They had always prayed. Furthermore, they had been, many of them, John’s disciples, and one of the things, it appears, that John taught his disciples was to pray. But here there is a desire unsatisfied. These disciples, who were brought up to pray and who had been in a kind of preliminary school of prayer, still felt that they did not know how to pray. It is a good sign when a Christian can no longer be satisfied with religious forms; he is ready for realities. There is a tremendous contrast between praying and saying prayers. The first testimony which God ever bore to the apostle Paul after his conversion was:

“behold, he prayeth,”—Acts 9:11

Why, Paul was not only an intensely religious man, but an Oriental. All Orientals pray. In that land today a muezzin from the minaret of the mosque calls the faithful to prayer. “Come to prayer; prayer is good; prayer is good; come to prayer.” Wherever a Mohammedan is, he spreads his prayer-carpet; — it may be in the street, but he kneels, and turns his face toward Mecca and prays, — prays until the perspiration pours from his face, all unconscious of passers-by. So Paul had been saying prayers all his life, and yet one day he met Jesus on the Damascus road, and began for the first time to pray. From that moment form became intolerable to him, except as it clothed spiritual realities.

Notice again, that it was the praying of our Lord Jesus, which suggested to His disciples their need of instruction in the art of prayer.

“And it came to pass that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray,” — Luke 11:1

I do not know what it was in Jesus’ praying that suddenly brought home to these watching disciples the consciousness that they needed to be taught to pray. Whether it was the expression in the face of our Lord, of a radiant, triumphant trust in the Father to whom He prayed, whether it was a ring of certainty that God heard Him and would answer His prayer, whether there was an accent of reality in it all, so that it seemed to those disciples clear that their Lord was not engaged in a religious exercise, but was getting something from God, that moved them to ask this question, I do not know. But something in His praying stirred them. Have you thought of the prayer-life of

Jesus? Here was a perfectly sinless man — tempted in all points like as we are, apart from indwelling sin — the Son of God, incarnate as Mary's son, walking the pathway of dependence as we must here, never helping Himself by His own almightiness, casting Himself in absolute human dependence upon the sustaining power and guiding wisdom of His father in heaven. It is an inevitable sequence of taking the place of dependence before God. If I am self-confident, if I have a kind of spiritual arrogance and believe that I am sufficient unto myself, I shall not pray much; that is one thing that cuts the nerve of prayer; and another is that benumbing doubt as to whether it does any good. If we want to see the life of prayer exemplified we turn to the earth-life of the Lord Jesus. We read that when some crisis of His life was coming he continued all night in prayer to God. And remember, it was praying; it was real praying, all night. He was praying when He was transfigured. Why is not transformation into the likeness of Christ more rapidly progressing in us? We do not pray enough.

“And as he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered,” — Luke 9:29 My friends, if our faces were turned upward more I am persuaded there would be on them some of that shining glory that the face of Moses caught when he was on the mount with God. How much Jesus prayed! He prayed in Gethsemane, He prayed at Calvary — prayer was His vital breath. Prayer is “the Christian's vital breath.” We can have no strong life without prayer, and the more prayer the stronger the life.

“Lord, teach us to pray,” — Luke 11:1

You see, there was the sense of need even in that petition. The trouble with us is that we think we could pray if we would; if we only had a mind to pray; if we only determined to pray. But no, we need to be taught to pray. Let us get down out of our self-satisfaction, and our experience, and our spiritual pride and confess that we do not even know how to pray. Then let us enter the school of Christ and I am sure He will teach us some precious lessons. How does He begin to teach us to pray?

“When ye pray, say, Our Father” — Luke 11:2 That is Jesus Christ's philosophy of prayer. The Christian is not an orphan. Goldwin Smith said that the worst consequence of atheism was to leave man orphaned in a vast vortex of blind force. How true that is! Every one of us who stops to think, feels that his life is played in upon by mysterious forces — waves and billows of influence that arise outside himself and come from he knows not where. Possibly some wicked ancestor lives in him, and all the turbulence of a life which was lived centuries ago is reproduced in him today. Let us then learn this first lesson in Christ's school of prayer; it is that prayer is asking a Father for something. He bases prayer on relationship and prayer is just going to the Father with a child's need. See how he dwells upon this:

“If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?”

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father” — Luke 11:11-13 That is the true and whole philosophy of prayer. But how many inadequate and foolish philosophies there are! One tells us that God is a God of law; another that He has enacted certain great laws of nature which govern the condition of human life in His universe, and if we learn those laws and live in accordance with them, we shall then live

happy lives. That is true, of course. But Christ's answer is that God is something more than a decree maker, something more than the Creator and Ruler of the universe. Over and above all that is the fatherhood of God. He says in effect, "This Father of yours does not make decrees and laws, but He is a Father, and His fatherhood dominates His decree making." God is first of all a Father.

Secondly, Christ gave His disciples a model of prayer. And what does the model teach us? That true prayer is worshipful:

"Hallowed be thy name." — Luke 11:2 I say "Our Father," and then I remember that it is "Our Father which art in heaven," — Luke 11:2 The God of all creation. Our Father, but God. "Hallowed be thy name." — Luke 11:2 The model puts God first:

"Thy kingdom come." — Luke 11:2 And I say, "Lord, here is this desire of my heart, which may be I have asked in ignorance; if it is not, after all, the right thing, if it comes in the way of the kingdom, then answer, 'no.' The kingdom first." And then what we need presented briefly. Prayer brings us right into that presence. I am in temptation, I need help. I am in danger, I need succor. I am in weakness, I need strength. My business is in difficulties and seems to be going wrong, and I need my Father's wisdom in my business. And so with any need — whatever it may be. That is the teaching of this model prayer. First, worship. God tranquilizes our souls in the presence of our Father. Then the coming kingdom. If the coming of that kingdom means that He has got to say "No" to me this day, well, then, still I must pray, "Thy kingdom come." — Luke 11:2 and then my need: "Meet it, Lord!" That is the essential teaching of the Lord's Prayer.

Lastly, does not our Lord teach us that prayer should be largely intercessory? How gently He teaches! He tells us this parable about the man who goes to his friend and tells him of the need of his other friend who is on a journey.

"And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee.

I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." — Luke 11:5-8

Pray for others. Andrew Murray has a phrase: "Trust for yourself, Pray for others." Do you suppose that when Christ prayed all night He was going over His own case with His heavenly Father? I think He may have spent two hours on Peter and half an hour on John, and so on. I think He was praying for Israel. I think He was praying for the whole round world. Intercessory prayer! And the blessed simplicity of it all! A friend of yours comes to you and needs something that you have not, and you go to your Father and get it for him. Pray. Pray. That is what our Lord, in effect, says, "Pray." Get a need on your heart and then go to your Father about it. That is prayer. Stay with Him until you have an answer.

"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." — Luke 11:9-10 That is prayer.

12 WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

“But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?” — Luke 10:29 A LAWYER, a teacher of Biblical law, one whose office it was to read and expound the Scriptures to the people, stood up to question Jesus. Pie addressed him respectfully, calling him “Master.” but he was not a sincere inquirer, for we are told that his question was intended to “tempt” the Lord. Either this lawyer supposed that he could worst Jesus in an argument, or he hoped to “catch him in his words” — Mark 12:13 to draw out of Him some expression which might be turned against Him with the people. But whatever his motive, his question was certainly one of tremendous importance:

“Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” — Luke 10:23 The question classifies the man. He was a legalist, a man who conceives of eternal life as an inheritance — something to be received at some future time, as the fitting reward of the good, never dreaming that it is God’s free and immediate gift to the hopelessly bad. He was a type of millions who, after twenty centuries, do not yet understand the gospel. Christ, taking him upon his own ground of doing, puts before him God’s only standard — the law.

“What is written in the law? How readest thou?” — Luke 10:26 The question thus turned upon himself, the teacher of the law answers in the words of Scripture:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.” — Luke 10:27 From the point of view of salvation by goodness, this answer is perfect, and Jesus commends it:

“Thou hast answered right!” — Luke 10:28 But Jesus did not stop there. Men are not saved, even under grace, by right answers to questions. The scribes could tell the wise men where the Messiah should be born, but their own feet never trod one step of the road that led from Jerusalem down to the humble manger at Bethlehem. An orthodox creed, desirable as it is to have creeds orthodox, never saved a soul. We may believe implicitly every word of the soundest confession of faith ever written, and be lost. But no soul ever trusted the Lord Jesus Christ, though ever so feebly, and was lost. Christ therefore adds one short sentence to his commendation of the lawyer’s reply. A very little addition it is, but it seems to produce a profound effect:

“This do, and thou shalt live.” — Luke 10:28

Law is something to be done, not talked about. If a soul seeks salvation by good works, the works must be performed. And this is why the law can only condemn; for, besides Jesus, no man ever kept the law.

It is manifest that the lawyer felt the force of Christ’s quiet words, for his next question betrayed his uneasiness. He completely abandoned the command about loving God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, and was seriously doubtful whether he had loved his neighbor as himself. Had

he been as anxious for his neighbor's health and temporal prosperity and good name as for his own? Certainly not, and yet this was the standard of the law. And this must be a love of deeds, not merely of words, nor of sentiment. He must have labored as diligently to clothe and feed his needy neighbor and to educate his neighbor's children and provide him and them with rational and innocent pleasures as to procure these things for himself and his own. Two roads now lay open before him. He might fall at Jesus' feet confessing his sinfulness and plead for mercy, or he might attempt to justify himself. He chose the latter, making the fatal mistake of leaving God out of his scheme.

"But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." — Luke 10:29-35

What words! They are nineteen hundred years old now, but custom has never staled their sweetness. They strike a note never before heard in ethics — the note of universality; of the solidarity of humanity. What a picture to unroll to this proud, self-satisfied moralist! He had imagined that his neighbors were his wife and children, his dependent relatives, his associates in business, his employer and social friends. The "neighborhood" to him had been his own immediate environment. He had been honest, generous and kindly; scrupulous in the discharge of every obligation, a constant and zealous attendant upon his own synagogue services; conscientious in the performance of all the observances of respectable, moral, well-dressed, well-to-do religionists. He had what he conceived to be a righteous hatred of all Samaritans, a prosperous man's contempt for all shiftless, improvident people, and a moral, law abiding man's contempt for "sinners," — criminals. These had been his ideas. But he looked down the Jericho road and saw a nameless wretch, stripped of his clothing, lying by the wayside in a half-dying state. Farther along the road he saw the receding back of a priest whom he venerated, and of a Levite whom he respected. Evidently they had considered that the man by the side of the road had no claims upon them. And then he saw a hated Samaritan, kneeling by the side, and with his own hands ministering to the needs of the bleeding victim of the thieves, and upon his own beast carrying him to a place of rest and security.

I do not know that it was so, but I feel sure there was a pause, perhaps a long one, after the last words of that parable. The lawyer saw what was coming. This, then, was the answer to his question:

"Who is my neighbour?" — Luke 10:29

Jesus meant to say that the bleeding wretch down there among the jagged rocks and under the hot sun of the cursed Jericho road, was "his neighbour." The man was not his relation, he was not a member of his synagogue, was not even of the same race. He might be a very bad man, he

might have brought on his misfortunes by his own carelessness or improvidence. It did not appear that the Samaritan inquired into these things, even. This also was clear to the lawyer: The Jericho road did not end at Jericho; it passed the frontier of Judea, it went into all the world. And by the side of it lay all the helpless, all the suffering, all the ignorant, all the degraded, all the vile. That awful Jericho road ran in front of every leper's hut, of every criminal's dungeon, every orphan's cheerless home. By its side he saw the drunkard and the harlot, and it did not matter that the drunkard might be a king, or the harlot a queen. The Jericho road was lined with palaces as well as hovels. Wherever in this world sin had brought shame or suffering or sorrow, there ran the Jericho road. And the meaning of this Galilean was, that all of these sufferers were his "neighbors." If that were so, then the meaning of the law must be that he, if he expected to win heaven on the ground of merit —of doing—must love all these miserables! He must feel toward each sufferer precisely as he would feel toward himself, if in like case? Precisely. That is the law. And an instant's reflection convinces that it must be so. For God loves them all — loves them so unutterably that

"he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." — John 3:16

If I demand entrance to heaven on the ground of character, it must be heavenly character. To love God with our whole soul, and to love our neighbor as ourselves, are requirements most obviously righteous, for God is entirely lovable, and our neighbors are at least as lovable as ourselves. But who can stand the test? And lest there should be any doubt in that lawyer's mind, or in ours, Jesus put one last question:

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him." — Luke 10:36-37 It was the one answer possible.

It is no part of my purpose to enter into the detail of the symbolism of this beautiful parable. Let us look, rather, at the great outstanding fact. Jesus is the Good Samaritan. The law tells man what he ought to do, but can not give him power to do it. It shows him what he ought to be, and by contrast, what he is not. The priest could have presented an offering for the man by the wayside, if only the man could have gone up to Jerusalem. But he was half dead and could not stir. There is no remedy in the Mosaic economy for a bleeding, helpless wretch by the wayside. Neither can the law make the priests love that wretch. Each of us is the man that fell among thieves; we all travel the Jericho road, and the nameless Samaritan, bending over us with the oil of healing and the wine of joy, brings us grace, not law. And in this grace, see three wonderful elements. First, God's grace in Christ Jesus comes to the sinner where he is. We have not to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down; He is here to seek and to save us, and He comes all the way. The sinner has not even to lift himself upon his elbow. Nay, he has not to lift so much as his eyes to heaven. The Lord Jesus Christ comes; He comes to the self-righteous Pharisee in the pew and the drunkard in the gutter, — Christ, with tender compassion, bends over him just there in the mire where he is. Second, God's grace in Christ Jesus ministers salvation to the sinner just as he is. If he has faith to turn from his sins and to receive salvation as a free gift, the Good Samaritan, bending so patiently over him, will impart eternal life, through the new birth, at once. And this Good Samaritan, Christ Jesus, keeps those whom He saves. The Samaritan sets men upon his own beast. Just as the shepherd in the parable, when he finds the sheep that was lost, does not drive it to the fold with blows, nor

even lead it thither, but “layethiton his shoulders,” — Luke 15:5 so does God’s grace in Christ Jesus finish the cure it begins. Even at the inn, the Good Samaritan pays all the charge.

13 THE GOD OF JACOB

THE GOD OF JACOB

“Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob” — Psalms 146:5

“Moreover he said, I am... the God of Jacob.” Exodus 3:6

LET us consider, first of all, the tremendous significance of the fact that such a Being as Jehovah will call himself the God of Jacob. We know who Jacob was. He was the grandson of Abraham. We know more than that; we know what Jacob was. Jacob was a crafty, grasping and unscrupulous man, a man of the world; a man with an intense desire for the things of the world; and a peculiarly ignoble and base man in his method of attaining his desires; as we should say, a thoroughly dishonorable man. He was a man, therefore, for whom, naturally and rightly, we have feelings only of reprobation and condemnation.

Instinctively, we make excuses for those sins and faults of character which spring out of impulse, and have their occasion in a passing momentary temptation. We are acquainted with ourselves well enough, at least, to know that we also are compassed with infirmity, and that we too are constantly falling before the power of temptation. Therefore, when we hear of some man who has fallen into sin as the result of some sudden assailing of temptation, which finds him weak because unwatchful, there arises in our hearts — if they are noble hearts — a feeling of compassion and pity. We are quite prepared to take our place by his side for a moment, and to confess that we too, under like circumstances, might have fallen as he fell. But for another kind of character we have scant pity. There is a cold, calculating, crafty, base, avaricious, grasping, subterranean type of character for which we feel an aversion — a settled aversion and dislike — without the thought of pity. We do not go very far in our experience of character before we find out, that while the outbreaking sinner, of strong passions and weak power of resistance, may be won — perhaps easily — by the engine of love to better things, the cold, crafty, scheming character is one almost impossible to move towards anything high and noble. Now Jacob was all of this. He mingled it with his faith. There was in him an element of faith, genuine so far as it went, which enabled him to lay hold of a promise of God, but with it there was also this other thing, which led him to seek the attainment of the thing promised by unscrupulous and unworthy means. That was Jacob. A typical mean man, yet God calls Himself “the God of Jacob.” — Exodus 3:6 Now think of God. How shall we speak of Him?

He is absolutely holy — a holiness that makes sin hateful to Him, so that sin is the one thing that He (perfect love) hates with a perfect hatred. And this is what it comes to, this text of ours. It links together absolute perfection, untainted and untaintable holiness, and the meanest natural character described in all the Bible — Jacob. Almighty God takes his stand as it were, by the side of that mean scamp, and says to all the world — and not at all apologetically — “I am his God,”

“I am ... the God of Jacob.” — Exodus 3:6

I have no doubt that Abraham would have been ashamed of that grandson of his. Though not by any means a perfect character himself, there was in Abraham a largeness, nobility and breadth of character, that would have made the grasping meanness and unscrupulousness of his grandson peculiarly hateful and distasteful to him. We may believe, it would have been with no little shame that Abraham would have said: "Yes, he is my grandson." But Almighty God, without apology and without shame, says: "I am his God."

"I am . . . the God of Jacob." — Exodus 3:6

Now I ask you — you believers, who like Jacob have true faith, like Jacob have grievous faults — to look with me for a little time at this thought of the revelation of the Holy Jehovah as one who takes up the Jacobs of this world and avouches Himself to be their God; gets alongside of them and does not disown them; stands between them and the doom they deserve, and transforms and glorifies them. First of all, consider what a hope it opens to a world full of sinners.

"I am . . . the God of Jacob." — Exodus 3:6

Ah! then the most discouraged may say: "There may be room in God's heart forme" It is true, we may turn this another way. Some may say: "I thank you for nothing,—I am no Jacob. Jacob went in by the window always when the door was wide open. I do not; I go in by the door, never by the window." Well, all honor to them. It is commendable in them. But if they are not Jacobs, they are some other kind of sinners. They, like all of us, need a God, who will come down perhaps a little this side of Jacob. So there is in this thing a mighty hope. Why cannot sinners get hold of it? Cannot they realize that this God against whom we all have sinned and who cannot possibly approve perhaps by far the greater part of that which makes up the history of our lives, has come down in the person of Jesus Christ and said before the universe, "I, the God of Jacob, am your God: My blood atones for your sins; My shield covers you."

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" — Romans 8:33 Do you not see the point of encouragement? If we really want a sinner's God, we have Him in the God of Jacob. The difficulty comes in just there. How we do shrink from having this "sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves," —2 Corinthians 1:9

Oh, how we would like to get up a little higher and lay hold of the God of Daniel, or of Abraham, or the God of Paul, but not the God of Jacob! Beloved, as sinners it is Jacob's God we need, the God who let down the ladder to rascally Jacob as he, fugitive from justice, lay dreaming at Bethel.

Now, singularly enough, this way God has of taking up with all sorts of low company is exceedingly offensive to a great many goodish people. They don't like it; they want Him to be more respectable. One great objection to the reception of Jesus Christ when here upon earth, the charge made against Him by the respectable people, was that He associated with exceedingly low-down people:

"This man receiveth sinners," — Luke 15:2 Bad enough indeed, but there was something worse:

"and eateth with them." — Luke 15:2

I can well imagine with what a snap that would come from the mouth of a Pharisee. "Certainly," he would say, "he is a very compassionate being, and perhaps we could get over his tender way with

repentant, believing sinners, but he goes beyond the bounds of reasonable sympathy and actually eats with them.” The other day, in the city of Toronto, I saw in a window a picture, underneath which were the words: “The Doctor.” It was a simple picture, but it moved me deeply. It represented the interior of a poor dwelling — a mere hut. Upon a tumbled pallet-bed lay a sick child. By the side of the bed sat the doctor with a strong, thoughtful, intellectual face, his eyes fixed earnestly and benevolently upon the fevered child. I stood a long time by that window and looked at that picture. I had a good many thoughts — the scene stirred me. I thought, of course, upon the very surface of it, what a noble profession is that of medicine. I thought what a grand and knightly thing it is, that this man, schooled in all that may be known of the human body and of the remedies with which God has strewn this earth for the healing of that body, should be so interested in that poor sick child. There was nothing in that room the doctor wanted. There was no money there for him — there was no comfort there for him. No, but that which was writing deep lines of thought upon his noble face was the suffering of that child — the child that was nothing to him, except as its racked little body was full of pain. That pain cried out to the doctor, cried out to the physician in him, and he was there with all the resources of his skill and of his great informed brain, the servant of that little heap of anguish. Did that doctor, or does any doctor, approve of the pain which he sees in suffering humanity? Does he make light of it or condone it? Why, he hates it. His very business is to banish it and bring back vigor and health to the frame again. He is happy once more when he has triumphed over the disease and put it away. The whole glory of his knighthood comes in just there.

Then my thoughts went away to God — to the God of Jacob. When I see Almighty God come down to the side of a scheming scamp like that man Jacob and say to the whole universe: “Hands off! this is my man. I am his God” — I know it is the very wrong in him that stirs the God-heart and brings Him down there. He cannot bear not to be there because the poor man, though such a scamp, trusts Him. He must get by his side. The divine compulsion of love brings God there to say in the face of all the little Pharisees on earth: “Yes. I am his God,” and He gets hold of that scamp remedially.

Let us realize this: it is our guilt, it is our moral disease that brings Jacob’s God down here savingly, ‘ by the blood of the cross — helpfully, remedially. Have you ever thought that a physician comes to have a far deeper interest in sick people than in those who are in health? It is true. I have often thought of my own doctor in this city. I meet him many times when I am in perfect health — and I never meet him that I do not get a brother’s greeting from him — but let something go wrong with this body of mine, let a call bring him to my bedside, and he is all interested in me at once. I would not say that he loves me more then, but the fact that something has gone wrong with me stirs the physician and he is more interested in me than when I am in health.

Let us not be surprised then, dear friends, when we find the Lord Jesus saying:

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” — Luke 3:32

It is just His way of saying: “Stand aside, good, correct people who feel no need of me—let me get to these Jacobs and Rahabs and Peters and Pauls who do need me.” That is the God of Jacob. Are we not now ready to see what David means when he says:

“Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob” — Psalms 146:5

There is nothing more intensely interesting in Scripture than God's dealing with that man Jacob. Take up your Bibles and go through the history of Jacob with that clew, that God is dealing with him remedially; that He has avouched Himself to be that man's God because the man has laid hold on Him by faith, although it may be a very imperfect faith. You will find that dealing to fall into three parts. First of all, God lets Jacob learn by bitter experience, the deep truth of the words:

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." — Galatians 6:9

Think of the trouble Jacob had! Years afterwards, when he was right with God, he said in the presence of a heathen king:

"few and evil have the days of the years of my life been," — Genesis 47:9

God taught that scheming man that all his craft and skill would bring him deeper and deeper into sorrow, and Jacob had to drink the cup his own hands had mixed. It was one trick bringing him into trouble and another one plunging him deeper into it, until God at last intervenes. There had been enough of that remedy and God orders him back to Bethel. Then He began to touch Jacob's heart by mighty deliverances, and at last they two came together in one final wrestle and God was too strong for him, and the man in darkness, feeling at last his utter weakness, exclaims, clinging to God:

"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." — Genesis 32:26 And then Jacob hears those words of such infinite meaning:

"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel:

for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men,

and hast prevailed." — Genesis 32:28 And presently we see him who was aforesaid an ignoble trickster, now a patriarch, and at peace with God, stand before the mighty Rameses and bless him.

Friends, with this clew, the whole Bible becomes a clinic! Every diversity of defect comes into view and is cured. Look at God's dealing with self-righteous Job, and how, purified by his suffering, Job comes out into the place where he too can bless others. I like to think of God's dealing with Peter, who was so impulsive and rash and headstrong and full of self-confidence. Do you remember the first interview that Jesus had with Peter? He said:

"Thou art Simon the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone." — John 1:42

"I take you now, a poor lump of flesh, full of impulse, partly good and partly evil, but when I have done with you, Peter, you shall be a rock man and not a lump of flesh." And so He takes Paul — "the tiger of the Sanhedrin" — and makes him the writer of the 13th Chapter of I Corinthians, the apotheosis of love. Dear friends, God does not approve bad characters in His children.

Lastly, we shall miss very much of this thought of Jehovah as the God of Jacob, if we forget that another stood before Jacob in the line of privilege. That was Esau. But God is never called "the God of Esau." In all the outlines of natural character, Esau was a kindlier and nobler man than Jacob. What was the difference? How does it happen that God is never called the God of Esau,

but is called the God of the meaner brother, Jacob? Because Esau despised his birthright. He preferred the satisfaction of a passing appetite to that other thing which seemed desirable, but so far off. Esau sold his opportunity for a mess of pottage, and Jacob, who, mean as he was, believed in the birthright and the God of the birthright, bought it. Jacob, “supplanter” as he was, trusted and believed. Esau, a better man, distrusted and disbelieved. My friends, how is it with you? Have you the God of Jacob, who takes up sinners as they are, saves them where they are, and then transforms the Jacobs into Israels? Is this God of Jacob who at last brings us into perfect conformity to the perfect One — your God? If He is, I congratulate you. Poor creature as I am, I felicitate myself that Jacob’s God is my God. But if He is not your God, will you not have Him on even terms with Jacob? Will you not have Him just by faith?

“Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob.” — Psalms 146:5

14 SONG OR ECHO—WHICH?

SONG OR ECHO—WHICH?

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” — John 18:34

PONTIUS PILATE, in many respects one of the most interesting men of human history, has just asked Jesus Christ a question.

“Art thou the King of the Jews?” — John 18:33 The text is Christ’s answer:

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” — John 18:34

“Did the question come out of your soul, or out of your mouth? Have you caught up the phrase, ‘King of the Jews,’ from the man in the street, or are you really wondering who may be the rightful occupant of a throne of which you know yourself to be a mere usurper? Above all, are you prepared to form real convictions, and to act on them at any cost? Is this a song, “Hosanna to the Son of David:” — Matthew 21:9 which is struggling for utterance, or are you a mere echo man?”

Something like this I think was in our Lord’s mind. Jesus Christ has no answer for academic questions. When the disciples asked Him, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” — Luke 13:23

He answered, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” — Luke 13:24 A great many men are interested in purely curious or speculative questions in the sphere of religion who have scant interest in the “strait gate.” Christ is interested in the gate, and in persuading men to enter it. It is this insistence of Christ on the actual, the ascertainable, the essential, which has always attracted strong, virile, authentic souls. He is no philosopher with a theory, no attitudinizer with a pretty ceremonial, but the Truth and the Light. And there is nothing so pitiless as light. It will have the facts. Afterward mercy comes, but facts first. Mercy is not a divine expedient which ignores or affects not to see the slum, but destroys and then rebuilds it; mercy takes note of the miasma and then drains the swamp. When Pilate asked his careless hearsay questions, Christ was on His way to a very real cross, and had no mind for mere wordplay and phrase-mongering. That cross, within an hour, was to become the central fact in the history of the world; from it was to date a new ethic, a new glory on human life, a new-born measure of love, and by it every soul thereafter born into this world must at last be judged. It was no time for unrealities and empty phrases. The cause of Christ in the world today is weakened because His church — by which word I always mean the whole body of believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, and not a sect or denomination — has turned aside to give elaborate answers to all kinds of speculative questions, and so to create and maintain a hearsay and traditional faith.

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” — John 18:34

I want to press Christ’s question first of all upon my unbelieving readers. Do not imagine that all of the traditional, hearsay, second-hand thinking on religious matters is to be found amongst church members. On the contrary. The last thirty years have been terrible for hearsay Christians. The very

foundations have been searched. From the side of science, from the side of historical investigation, from the side of the new method of literary analysis, from the side of philosophical speculation, everything most venerable has been challenged. The old apologetics, the old cosmogony, have been tested. The storms have beaten upon the Bible and have not spared one sacred head. It has been a time when God has permitted the shaking of all the traditional things, that the things which cannot be shaken might remain. But how is it in the sphere, not of faith, but of doubt? You are not a Christian, you say, because you have doubts. You call them "honest" doubts. About the Bible, about hell, about the true conditions of salvation you have "honest" doubts. Now in all truth:

"Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" — John 18:34 Did it come out of your own agony of striving to find a way out of sin into victory, out of unrest into peace? Or did you get it from the writings of an infidel like Robert Ingersoll? You think there are contradictions in the Bible. Did you ever find any? When you did find something which presented a difficulty did you honestly seek help from some one whom you believed to be expert in such matters, as you did with your other difficulties? Are you satisfied to go on through life in that way, passing on second hand sneers at everything that is venerable? There has not been uttered a new argument against Christ in 1,700 years.

"Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" — John 18:34 But our Lord's question should narrowly search those of us who suppose ourselves to be Christians. Do we say this thing of ourselves, or because another said it before us? Christianity is a religion in which faith is alone the condition of life. Manifestly, therefore, the possession of faith is the all-important matter. How much of that which we say we believe do we really believe? I am not speaking now to conscious hypocrites, men who have put on a cloak of profession for a reason. I think there are very few conscious hypocrites in human life, either in or out of the churches. The point is that just as an unbeliever may take his doubt from the lips of another, so we may easily live in a second-hand, hearsay faith.

Against this danger Christ uttered His most solemn warnings.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you:" — Matthew 7:21-23

How much would our creed lose in bulk, if we honestly eliminated the articles concerning which we have no real convictions? How much would it be diminished if we submitted it to the test of performance? We have all heard the story of the little girl who told the visiting minister that her mother, lately come to that place, had her religion in her trunk. Christ, so far as I have read his words, does not contemplate filling heaven with people whose religion is in their trunks.

There can be no more salutary thing than for a Christian to ask himself the great epochal question of Christ's, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself?" — John 18:34

Now, happily, faith in Jesus Christ, because it is trust in a person and not in a form of words, is a matter of personal consciousness. I know whether I am trusting Christ or not. I may think small things of my faith, and wish it bulked larger, but the real point is, not what I think of my faith, but what I think of Jesus Christ. Do I really trust to Him my whole case before God?. Do I really trust Him to work transformingly in my life? Have I ever really had a transaction with Him about my sins? These are vital questions, and every man may answer them quietly, reverently, in his own soul. One who can say “yes” to these questions is on the foundation, and the construction of a vital creed will not be difficult. A Christian finds no difficulty in believing whatever Christ believed, because He believed it; and whatever He taught, because He taught it, and whatever His apostles taught, because He sent them and authenticated them.

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself?” — John 18:34

There is another place in the Christian life where hearsay works havoc. It is the place of profession, of the spoken word, of personal testimony. And the havoc is wrought, not to the souls of bystanders, half so much as to the soul of the utterer. No more lethal habit can find place in the Christian life than the habit of passing on the pious platitudes and current phrases, which, on the lips of the first utterer, stood for deep spiritual verities.

Henry Drummond gave a definition of cant which is among the very few of his sayings that I would willingly see live. He said: “There is a young man’s experience, and there is an old woman’s experience; when a young man talks like an old woman, that is cant.” And of the many odious and detestable things on this earth, cant, religious cant, is the most odious and detestable.

It seems a pity to say it, but the hymnology of the church is the occasion of more insincere speech than all other occasions combined. Hymns were, for the most part, written by men and women who were most saintly souls, and they express the highest aspirations, and the very deepest devotedness. When we are really attuned to those lofty strains of praise and consecration, they are inexpressibly uplifting and helpful. But to sing, while gazing curiously about in a church, is to desecrate the holiest protestations. Of late years there has come into use the expression, “the simple life.” The old meaning of the word “simple” is “undesigning, artless, sincere.” Thus used, it exactly expresses the kind of Christians Jesus Christ wishes us to be. But despite this simplicity we must be strong in our convictions — not reeds “shaken with the wind,” — Matthew 11:7 nor easily led away by deceitful sophistry —

“enticing words of man’s wisdom,” — 1 Corinthians 2:4 Let us “say things of ourselves” —

“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” — 1 Corinthians 2:12 and “Thanksbeto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” — 1 Corinthians 15:57

15 DID JESUS RISE?

DID JESUS RISE?

“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” — Acts 2:32 NO one can read with attention the last chapters of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles or the Epistles, without a profound conviction that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was to the first witnesses to Christianity, a fact in which they had an undoubted belief, a joyous and triumphant confidence. Was that belief grounded upon adequate testimony? Were those men constrained to it by irresistible and overwhelming evidence, or were they deceived by supposed visions and unverified “materializations”?

One of the greatest of the Chief Justices of England, himself a professed deist, said: “The resurrection of Jesus Christ rests upon a basis of testimony greater and more indisputable than sustains any other fact of ancient history.” Let us review that body of proof. It has been preserved to us in every essential.

We should note, first of all, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was announced in the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the coming of the Messiah. The 16th Psalm is quoted in the second chapter of Acts: 26, 27 as applying to Christ.

“My flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” — Psalms 16:9-10 Indeed, the Jewish people had always interpreted it of Messiah, nor could it apply to any other.

Furthermore, Christ Himself had repeatedly foretold His own resurrection. He had fearlessly staked the authority of His gospel, and the authenticity of His claims to the faith and obedience of the world, upon His physical resurrection.

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body.” — John 2:19-21 This was made one of the grounds of Christ’s accusation before the Sanhedrin. More than once, without the use of inference, He had explicitly announced His resurrection.

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day.” — Matthew 16:21

“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” — Matthew 12:40

“Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, . . . — Luke 18:31 “And they shall scourge him and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.” — Luke 18:33 But prediction is not proof of the fact predicted, and we turn to the proof of the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was attested by many witnesses and their testimony meets the most exacting demands of the law of evidence. The witnesses knew Him personally. They were His most intimate friends. They knew His stature, the color of His eyes, the tones of His voice. One of them, Mary of Magdala, incredulous as to the fact of Jesus rising again, and who did not in the dimness of her tears recognize Him by His general appearance, knew Him at once when He spoke. Three of the witnesses, Peter, James and John, were with Jesus in all the crises of His life after they became His disciples. It was therefore impossible that they could have been deceived. If Jesus did not rise, they deliberately fabricated the report that He had. But that theory falls to the ground the moment we consider two collateral facts: they were the holiest of men of whom the world bears any record; they lost all that men hold dear — country, the religion of their fathers; they incurred a relentless persecution which brought them into ceaseless suffering and at last to cruel deaths. They could not have been deceived, and they attested to the sincerity of their convictions by their sufferings and by martyrdom.

These men were incredulous and hard to convince. Perhaps the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ never met a more inveterate skepticism than just there, in the circle of the apostles and first believers. The artless narrative discloses that incredulity with an almost childish naivete. The women who went to the tomb, so far from expecting a resurrection, were considering how they might roll away the stone which made secure the body of Christ. The angelic appearance frightened without convincing them. When they told what they had seen to the apostles and other disciples, “their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.” — Luke 24:11 When Jesus appeared in the midst of the disciples, they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit. Even after He had shown them His hands and His feet, and offered His body to a tactual examination, they “believed not for joy, and wondered;” — Luke 24:41 until He actually ate before them. Each reappearance was marked by similar evidences of unbelief. It seems as if nothing could overcome their incredulity. Thomas would not believe on the testimony of the other disciples, but demanded and received such evidences of his Lord’s bodily resurrection as brought him to his knees in the adoring exclamation:

“My Lord and my God.” — John 20:28 The witnesses were numerous. It is of course conceivable that ignorant fishermen, even though belonging to the least superstitious of all the peoples of the earth, might have been the victims of an hallucination; but it is inconceivable that so many men of that non-superstitious race could have been so deceived. The hypothesis that they were, makes a greater demand on faith than the fact of the resurrection itself.

Paul sums up the matter, in this aspect of it:

“He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also.” — 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 The tests, as has already been suggested, were such as to exclude the possibility of deception. Jesus talked with His friends; He ate before them; they handled Him, in proof that He was a body of flesh and bones — not a phantasm or so-called “materialization,” in a garden outside His tomb, in an upper chamber before the whole discipleship, on a mountain side,

in Galilee, by a lake on the shore of which He had Himself prepared for His disciples a breakfast of fishes broiled on living coals — these are the tests. To attempt to account for them on the theory of phantasm is an insult, not alone to the intelligence of the witnesses, but to our own intelligence. Any theory which makes a greater demand upon credulity than the fact sought to be proved, is, ipso facto, to be rejected.

These witnesses, His closest friends, men of the highest character, numerous, themselves incredulous, were furnished with tests which put out of court the theory of deception or phantasm.

If their conviction of the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ had rested on a single appearance, there might be left in the candid mind a residue of doubt, notwithstanding the great number of the witnesses who have testified. But when to all this overwhelming body of proof it is added that the appearances of the risen Lord were numerous, it is hard to see how a candid mind can still hold a rational doubt. It is evident that by sheer dint of frequency, if in no other way, the incredulity with which the disciples at first received the fact of the resurrection, had wholly disappeared. After the first excitement had subsided, giving way to a sober faith in an evident fact, Christ continued with His friends for forty days, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:” — Acts 1:3

How complete the certainty of His resurrection had become, is evidenced not only by the clear ring of their testimony after His departure, but by the composure of their fellowship with Christ during the forty days.

“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the

Holy Ghost not many days hence.” — Acts 1:3-5

“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea; and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up: and a cloud received him out of their sight.” — Acts 1:8-9 The witnesses to the fact of the resurrection testified at once and publicly. If they had kept silence concerning it, only committing their evidence to writing, which writing was not allowed to see the light till that generation had passed from the sphere of life, then, indeed, we might doubt proof so clouded with suspicion. But these holy men gave their testimony with the utmost simplicity.

“We are his witnesses of these things;” — Acts 5:32 said Peter in the presence of a great multitude in Jerusalem, where all those things were done, and that within fifty days of the event. All of the men and women concerned in the tremendous drama of the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ were still living and were there. That was the time and place to disprove the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If it had been done, Christianity as a religion would have passed into the Jewish *acta sanctorum*. But that disproof was never offered. The only answer to the triumphant proclamation of the resurrection was persecution — the invariable answer of bigotry and superstition.

It remains to note the tremendous evidential value of the conversion of the apostle Paul. By any standard, Paul was the most considerable man of his age. All the other personages of that time have passed into an obscurity which would be absolute were not some of them remembered because of some immense infamy, or because for a moment they crossed the path of Paul. He alone stands out, — the supreme man of his day. Great in intellect, great in scope of vision, great in moral eminence, he was also one of the most highly trained men of his or any other time. And that man, a contemporary of Christ and of the witnesses to Christ's resurrection, a foremost opponent of them and of the gospel, was convinced by first hand proof — offered by living men — that Jesus rose from the dead. No ingenuity or sophistry can set aside that fact. To believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ becomes therefore a rational act. Paul asks:

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?” — Acts 26:8 And what it is rational to believe, it is irrational to doubt or disbelieve.

Other and confirmatory proof abounds. The very presence in history of the Christian church from the apostolic time proves the truth of the resurrection. Nothing is clearer than that the first disciples had given it all up. But God had, as Peter says:

“Begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” — 1 Peter 1:3

Yes, the Christ “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree” — 1 Peter 2:24 did rise again.

“Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen;” — Mark 16:6 and that fact establishes the authority of His gospel and compels candid hearts to bow at His feet. For by His resurrection Christ overcame death and opened for us the gate to everlasting life.

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” — / Corinthians 15:55

16 THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE

BEYOND all question Christianity, whether as a salvation or as a system of faith and morals, is inseparable from the Bible. From the very beginning of our Lord's public ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth this place of the authority of the Holy Scriptures was assumed as fundamental to the Christian religion.

I do not know that the Christian doctrine of the Bible is anywhere more compactly expressed than in the words of Paul:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." — 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Christianity does not hold an abstract theory about the Bible, but rather a living and working faith in it as an instrument in the divine purpose, for the accomplishment of great and blessed results in salvation, life, and service. There is no such thing in all the Bible as an abstract doctrine, — something which is to be held head-wise and not heart-wise, as a mere matter of opinion and controversy, instead of action and life. These are great and serious demands. We are living our one only earthly life, and we cannot afford to be the victims of mere tradition or of a mere philosophy. We are glad and confident, therefore, that the great facts — historical and verifiable facts — which form the substance of the Christian faith, and out of which its doctrines grow, were not transacted in a corner. Submitting to the authority of the Bible, we are not unable to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

XTow, as briefly as may be in a subject of this kind, I am going to state the grounds upon which we believers hold to the divine origin and authority of the Bible. If the book is God's book, it is authoritative, and we may proceed to develop its teachings with the assurance that God is back of them; that they are revelations of His will and wisdom — hence, to be implicitly received and believed and obeyed.

The first of these in the Biblical order is the Bible account of the origin of the material universe, and that affirmation, simple, sublime, and perfectly adequate, is that God made it,

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—Genesis 1:1 and the majestic story proceeds without ever falling below the sublime keynote which opens it. This cosmogony, or account of the origin of the universe, is absolutely unique. It is not merely the best of many other like theories, but it stands alone. There is none other like it in any respect whatever. The cosmogonies of even the most intellectual of the races, Greeks, Hindoos, Chinese, are childish and inadequate in comparison with this. In India, the theory that the earth rests upon an elephant, and he upon a tortoise, is not a child's story to amuse the infant mind. The Bible cosmogony was written by one whose education and environment we know all about. That education was entirely

Egyptian, but there is nothing in the least like this cosmogony in all the records of the thought and learning of Egypt. The Genesis story of creation came by revelation. Either this, or Moses invented it, and that is a more unbelievable proposition than that it came from God, because the development of the human mind proceeds in an orderly way, step by step, and while a great genius may take many of those steps and go far in advance of those who have gone before him, he moves out in the same direction nevertheless. He may be accounted for. Previous to his time, thought and investigation had broken the soil and planted the seed which blossomed into fullness when the great man appeared. There had been Scottish legend writers before Sir Walter Scott; wandering minstrels before Homer; play-writers before Shakespeare; sculptors before Phidias; evolutionists before Darwin. But there was nothing back of Moses which pointed in his direction, — absolutely nothing.

Now, that cosmogony must be accounted for: there it is in the Bible. But there is no way of accounting for it other than the Christian way, namely, that Moses received it by revelation from God.

The Bible contains a continuous history of events occurring during four thousand and more years of time.

Canon Farrar has said — and the statement stands without disproof today — that “in all that history, there has never been pointed out one clear and demonstrable error.” That, my dear friends, is not true of any other history in any other book. I know that every now and then — with great flourish of trumpets — an announcement is made that an error has been found in the historical part of the Bible. For example, some time ago, it was announced confidently that the Bible account of Nimrod was an historical absurdity. That was the precise statement made by Professor Driver of Oxford. “The Bible his'tory of Nimrod, said he, “is an historical absurdity.” Now Professor Driver was a very famous man, and in certain quarters where scholarship, so-called, ranks above “thus saith the Lord” — there was great consternation. You know there are always people — preachers, too — who are frightened by every assault which is made upon the Bible if it comes from a man with a goodly number of capital letters attached to his name. If he is a D.D. and an LL.D. F.R.S. and says there is an error in the Bible, they are ready to concede it. Now, since Professor Driver was delivered of this Nimrod dictum, Professor Sayce, also of Oxford, has gone down into the hear neighborhood of the Nimrod country, and has written from Assouan in these words, “I have found Nimrod in the cuneiform inscriptions. His full name was NagiMurada, the Kassu, and he was the Babylonian contemporary of the father of the Assyrian king who restored Nineveh and founded Calah about fifty years before the Exodus. So Moses was right after all.”

Professor Driver confidently announced, as being himself the highest authority, that the story of Nimrod was an historical absurdity; but the first expert who went down into that country and began to dig found an inscription which told the story of Nimrod and confirms Moses. The last fifty years have been notable for the frequency with which the spade has confirmed Moses. The “Christian” remarked upon this last confirmation, that it might be just as well, as Moses has always proven to be right, to assume that he is right, when seeming error is reported. At the present moment, unbelief is asserting that the Babylonian records contain something which might have been suggestive of the Ten Commandments; but place side by side the Babylonian creeds and this great utterance of God and you perceive contrast, not similarity. Now where does this book, alone

among all human histories, get this unique infallibility? I submit that the most reasonable answer is that it is derived from an infallible God.

The Bible contains a code of ethics absolutely unique among human writings — the Ten Commandments.

After centuries of human thought about duty toward God and man, that law remains the only perfect code ever written — no one questions that. Now where did Moses get that law? This Moses must have been a very wonderful man, if out of his own mind he wrote not only the only accurate and adequate cosmogony, and the only absolutely truthful and reliable history ever penned, but also the only perfect code of ethics known to man. Did he get all this out of his Egyptian learning? Now, in the providence of God, Egyptian learning was carved in imperishable granite, or kept for modern discovery in sarcophagi and tombs. In our day that literature has been recovered letter by letter, and there is not in all the Egyptian wisdom one trace of the Ten Commandments. Where did Moses get that law? Our explanation is that he got it from God. He says God gave him these words, and we believe it. Could that code be duplicated out of the lore of any of the other races, we would be forced to the conclusion either that God had made independent revelations here and there, or that all writings claiming to record revelations from God were, after all, but the product of transcendent human ability. But there is nothing like it anywhere else — nothing. It stands alone. Still less can any Babylonian writing be thought of. The mark of God upon it is its solitariness and its perfection. Man never makes a perfect thing. Through the microscope the finest needle looks like a jagged crowbar, but under the microscope a bee's sting looks as finished and perfect as when viewed by the eye alone.

We believe the Bible because it contains a doctrine of sin and retribution which commends itself alike to the reason and the conscience. In this respect also, the Bible stands alone. All false religions connect sin with failure in some ritual observance. The Bible rests its doctrine of sin upon the eternal principles of right and wrong; and when those principles are stated in the moral law, conscience answers: "Amen, that is right. I ought to have no other God before Thee; I ought not make to myself a graven image and fall down and worship it." And so on down through the great ten words from Mt. Sinai, the conscience answers "Amen" to every one of them. The doctrine of the Bible concerning sin and the consequences of sin, commends itself to reason, and no other system ever produced among men concerning sin and its consequences, does commend itself to reason or to conscience.

Were I to go to a Hindoo or a Mohammedan and say that I felt myself a sinner before God, what would he tell me? He would tell me to make a pilgrimage to a certain shrine, to say so many prayers, to whirl until I fell unconscious to the ground, to fast, and to perform all kinds of outward observances. But could I feel that there was anything in such actions which would in any adequate way meet the demands of God's justice? No one could feel it. But turn to that old, old Bible. You will find a doctrine of sin, of retribution and of redemption, which perfectly satisfies heart and mind. We can say nothing against it. We may refuse it, but we cannot belittle it, and no rational being does. Now, where, three thousand years ago, did the men of the Bible get this doctrine? They got it from God.

The Bible contains hundreds of prophetic utterances. These prophecies were given so long before the events toward which they pointed had transpired, it is impossible to say the coming event was

near enough to cast its shadow before and suggest the prophecy itself. Sometimes there is a gathering of portents in the political sky, or in international affairs; we often see premonitions of coming economic storms, social upheaval and the like, and we predict that in a few years there will be hard times, or a revolution, or a change in party domination. We are not prophets because we predict these things; we see the signs of them. We reason from things which are occurring and predict others, which are their natural consequences. But if you turn to the prophecies of the Bible, you find they anticipate events by hundreds and sometimes by thousands of years. They speak of things when there is no sign of them, when on the other hand every sign seems to make them impossible, yet these ancient prophecies in the slow rolling of the years have received in hundreds of cases a literal and exact fulfillment.

Another thing: These prophecies are so minute and specific they exclude the theory that some occurrence in the history of the world, resembling somewhat the thing predicted, has been assumed to be a fulfillment. They are so specific, so minute, that when we find a fulfillment which answers to the prophecy made hundreds of years before, just as the printed page answers to the type, we are compelled to ask: "How does this happen?" Now, why is it that these things are found in no other book but the Bible? There can be but one answer — because God gave these prophecies as the authentication and proof that this book was not the work of man but came from Himself.

We believe the Scriptures because they paint a picture of God Himself, majestic, perfect in the balancing of His attributes, — yet withal so holy, so loving, that when the character of God as developed in the Bible comes to be perceived by candid human minds, they are filled with trustful adoration; and realizing that God hates sin with a perfect hatred and that they themselves are sinners, they yet feel that by some strange paradox God is the best friend a sinner can have.

If you turn to the account which all false religions give of their gods, you realize how utterly impossible it is to compare them with Jehovah and Jesus.

All these gods of false religions are bestial and cruel: deified lusts. And when I say this, I am not speaking of the gods of the heathen of Africa but of the cultured heathen of Athens and the Ganges. Just at the summit of their intellectual development, these races form a conception of deity which is simply man in his worst character, pluralized and lifted up into the potency of gods. But all the time, the Hebrew penmen unfold the revelation of a God who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, filling all things yet transcending all things; so great, the clouds are the dust of his feet, yet merciful and patient, loving and tender. This doctrine of God is consistently one, straight through Scripture. The Bible was more than two thousand years in the making; many writers in many ages were employed upon it; yet the Biblical doctrine of God is developed without fracture or inconsistency. Moses' God is Isaiah's, and Isaiah's God is the God of Paul. Can any theory but that of inspiration account for this? Where did these writers of ancient time, these prophets, get an identical conception of God? They got it from God. The influence of this book has been just as unique as everything else about it. The better Mohammedan or Hindoo a man is, the worse he is. But the nearer a man comes to being a Bible Christian the better he is. We all know that; and of all the books produced by man and called sacred and religious, this is true alone of the Bible.

The Bible meets exactly every human need. Had I an intricate-looking key and there were before me a long row of doors fitted with locks and I tried my key in one and another of the keyholes until I

found that the key turned freely and unlocked one door, I would know I had found the lock for which the key was made.

Friends, this blessed old Bible fits every ward of the complex human heart. It holds the combination of this intricate and mysterious thing which we call man. Open the Bible, and you may find out more about yourself than you could find by self-study during all the years of the longest life. It tells the truth about humanity; it gives infallible and righteous guidance through life, and it meets the questionings of your soul as you stand upon the verge of life and ask, — “Is this all? Have I nothing at last but the memory of a pilgrimage of temptations and trials and disappointments with a few fleeting and transitory joys? Have I the power to project my mind over into the beyond, and is there no beyond?” To all these questions, the false religions have no answer. But come to the Bible and there is the open door into heaven or the open door into hell. This book is not antiquated; it fits the modern heart just as truly as it fitted the hearts of patriarchs on the plains of Mesopotamia. There is not today a book so modern: open it anywhere and it tells the modern man all about himself. In all the development of civilization, there has never come to lie in the pathway of man a temptation which the Bible does not anticipate, and for which it does not provide a safeguard. There has never come to any man a condition for which that Bible has not a promise, yet modern society is complex and highly organized, while the Bible was chiefly written by men living under the simple and changeless circumstances of the east.

We have to account for these things and we account for them by saying that God gave the book, and that is simpler and more credible than any other theory which has been suggested for these phenomena.

Then we believe it because it has found its echo in human experience.

We come to the Bible and we find there the story of salvation and we believe it and enter into peace and unspeakable joy. We come to the promises of that book and find them adapted to our need. We receive them and step out upon them and plead them in prayer to God, and the answer comes according to the promise. In the experience of the wisest and best and saintliest men and women this earth has ever seen, the Bible has verified itself and they know it to be inspired, not alone by such reasons as I have feebly attempted to give, but by a direct and personal experience of its truth. We believe it, because followed faithfully and believed sincerely it has formed the most beneficent, the saintliest characters, this world has ever seen. Among all books, it alone has had that influence.

I gave much of my earlier life to the study of the two greatest of merely human writers, Homer and Shakespeare, and while my understanding undoubtedly profited by that study and I found keen intellectual delight in it, these books held no rebuke for my sins, nor any power to lift me above them. But when I came to the Bible and received its statements and received Him concerning whom, after all, the whole book is written, I entered into peace and joy and power. The Bible led me to Jesus, and Jesus transformed my life.

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”—Psalms ng:n For all who have received Jesus Christ as divine

Saviour and Lord there exists, in His testimony to the inspiration of Scripture, an immovable and unanswerable ground of belief. Jesus knew whether the Bible was inspired and whether Moses

wrote the Pentateuch, and he confirmed it from lid to lid. As He took it up in His daily teachings, Jesus seemed to select, for special sanction, those things which most stagger faith. He confirmed the authority, accuracy and inspiration of the Bible, He who knew the writers and was Himself in very deed the Author of the Book.

“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” — 2 Peter 1:21 Except as so moved, they did not speak.

It is a human book because the Holy Ghost spake to men through Jesus. It is easily conceivable that God might have revealed all the truth contained in the Bible through angels; but, had He done so, the Bible would lack that human element which brings it so peculiarly close to human life in all its phases.. Theology has so persistently put the emphasis on the divineness of Scripture that its sweet humanness is in danger of being forgotten or ignored. Precisely the same mistake was made in respect of the doctrine of Christ's person. For centuries Protestant theology so dwelt upon His Deity, that it came largely to be forgotten that He was also perfectly human. The penalties of forgetting or ignoring the humanity of Scripture are many, but perhaps the chiefest of them is the tendency to make the Bible a kind of fetish — a sort of inferior deity, to be itself an object of worship. The truth is that the written Word and the incarnate Word have this in common, — both are divine and both are human.

I ask you to think with me about its humanity. When Pilate brought forth Jesus and said:

“Behold the man!” — John 19:5 he builded wiser than he knew, for Jesus is “theman” — the only perfect human being the world ever knew since the fall. All the rest of us are, in measure, dehumanized by sin. In the same way, the Bible is the only perfectly human book. All other books, even the best, fail at some point of perfect humanity. Shakespeare has been called the “high priest of humanity”; but, no, Jesus Christ is the high priest of humanity, and the Bible unfolds him from God to man, through man. Then, the Bible is human because it is given to man through man. I mean that, save a few reported words of angels and of God, every truth the Bible contains has first been wrought into a human consciousness. I am far from saying that the holy men who wrote the words of Scripture always understood the full purport of these words, but even when they did not, they were exercised about them.

Paul describes the whole process of revelation when he tells us that the things unseen by eye, unheard by ear, unimagined by man, were revealed by the Holy Spirit, and then communicated in spirit-given words. And it is beautiful to see how the holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, were usually just average men. Moses and David were shepherds when God called them. Elijah was a rough mountaineer, Amos a herdsman, Matthew, John and Peter were fishermen. Someone has said that God loves the common people. The very Son of God Himself was a carpenter. In its humanity, the Bible is the people's book, not the book of scholars and experts, and the people understand it. The Bible story is intensely human. It does not describe the conversations of angels, nor report their conversations among themselves. There are but the briefest glimpses of heaven. It is the book of God's interests in, and relations with humanity. The tremendous story of creation is swiftly sketched in two brief chapters, that the revealing Spirit may come to the story of a man and a woman, and their children; and, from Genesis to Revelation, we are always in human scenes, and busied with the life stories of other men and women and children. So resolutely is this so, that the heart burning to find out God, and what He is like, can do

so only by patiently studying His ways with humanity. The man who turns with weariness or dislike from the study of man, will never find God. He will be like the preacher who lived up in the steeple to be nearer God, only to find out when too late that God had been down below with his people all the time.

Vast bodies of revealed truth reach us only in the terms of human experience. The man has been made to be and to feel what he writes. The fifty-first Psalm, for example, is not an essay on repentance; it is a broken-hearted man repenting.

“Have mercy upon me, . . . blot out my transgressions,” — Psalms 51:1 are his desolate cries; but the fifty-first Psalm holds, nevertheless, the whole doctrine of repentance. The seventh chapter of Romans is not a treatise on the two natures of the believer, but Paul’s touching testimony of how the Spirit-born nature and the Adam-born nature struggled within him, until rent and exhausted, he must cry, “Owretched man that I am!” — Romans 7:24 In like manner, the Psalms of David are wrung out of his inner anguish, or sent forth from his inner triumphs like the victor shout of a king.

Again, the Bible is the most human of books in the way it establishes and makes sacred human relationships. Marriage, parenthood, friendship — all sweet human ties find in Scripture their sanction and safeguard. It is the Bible that tells of a God who has “set the solitary in families”; it is the Bible that tells how the Son of God began His great ministry by adding to the joy of a marriage feast; and how He was found in the homes of the people. Every wife, every child is sacred in the teachings of this humanity loving book. Take away the Bible, and you remove from human relationships their sanctity and sanction. This is why when the home is rent or desolated, we instinctively turn to Scripture for help. In like manner, the Bible is the most intensely sympathetic of books. It reveals a God who considers our frame, that we are dust; and a Christ, who was in all points, save inner sin, tempted like us, and who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. We turn away instinctively from the best meant words of human sympathy to the infinite consolations of that human book. We do not wonder that the little imprisoned Princess dying alone in Carisbrooke Castle, opened her Bible and pillowed her dying head upon the words,

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;” — Psalms 23:4

Lastly, the Bible is the most human of books because it reveals the essential humanity of God. Now, if there is a theologian reading this, he is making a mental note; he is saying that I am anthropomorphic in my conception of God. Well, I am. That is a large word, but it only means “manlike.” The Bible tells me that God made man in His own image, after His likeness. I think it reverent to infer that God accomplished His purpose, and so, that man — normal man, unfallen, sinless man — is really like God. It may be objected that the contention is academic and abstract because we do not know what unfallen, sinless man is like. But the glory of the incarnation is that it sets before humanity just that very glorious spectacle, an unfallen, sinless man — Jesus Christ. And we are told that He, in His incarnation, is the brightness of God’s glory, and the express image of His person. God, then, is like Christ, and Christ is like God, nay more, Christ is God. What is God, the unseen God, like? He is like Jesus of Nazareth. What is sinless, unfallen man like? Like that same Jesus of Nazareth. The humanity of our blessed Lord was not something which hindered Him from revealing God, it was the very means of that revelation.

Here then, my dear friends, is this most human book. It condemns unsparingly the sin and the sins which have dehumanized you. But it tells you of the divine-human Christ, who died for those very sins. It will laugh with your joy and weep with your sorrow. It holds the only true, because the only human, philosophy of life. It interprets your deepest longing, justifies your highest aspiration, and interprets the mystery of death. Beyond death, it lifts the veil of eternal things, and shows you the eternal home. Study the Bible, believe it, cherish it, obey it, venerate it, love it, — it is Truth itself — God's book.

“Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.” — Psalms 119:2

17 QUO VADIS?

QUO VADIS?

WHITHER goest thou?—The question of direction is everything in human life. The old legend has it that Peter, fleeing from martyrdom in Rome, having safely made his way out of the city, met the Lord Jesus going toward Rome. In astonishment he asked, “Quo vadis, Domine?” — “Lord, whither goest Thou?” “Back to Rome to be crucified again in thy stead,” was the answer; whereat Peter, shamed into heroism, went back to death.

Though unhistoric, the story holds a profound truth. It expresses the essential distinction between the human and the divine theory of life. The question of direction — that is the vital question. Life is like the ladder that fleeing Jacob saw, the bottom of which was on earth and the top in heaven. Call it a stair to make it level to our modern use. It helps us to see that the question of direction is everything and it helps us to see also how we deceive ourselves.

Two men are on that ladder of life. One is well up toward the top. He is clean in his life, self-disciplined, holds a high and exacting ethical standard, is kindly, dutiful, reverential, a valuable asset in the sum of the riches of any society. But his foot rests lightly on the next step below. He had not quite taken that step; he may easily reconsider and, turning about, plant that foot on the next step above. Or, he may actually have taken the first downward step. He is still so well aloft that, to those below, that first step down passed unnoticed. He may think little of it himself. It is only that he has compromised with the keen edge of his best convictions.

Men pass that fateful first compromise with scant notice or none. How differently the angels must regard it. They know that the question of direction is the mighty question. They are not much impressed by the sophisms which justified the change of direction. It is a remark, at least as old as Bacon, that “There is no cause so bad that an argument may not be made in behalf of it.”

All the world has observed how corporations constantly do things that the stockholders as individuals would never do. An agent of a great league for the defence of what is called the “Christian Sabbath,” told me the most generous contributor to its funds was an eminent railroad man, whose railway trains ran steadily all day Sunday, compelling his employees to do the very thing he, as an individual, was paying an eloquent agent to persuade other workingmen not to do. It is easily seen that this man was an arrant hypocrite; what we do not see is the way in which we fool ourselves into base compromises. In some way, though higher up the ladder, we may yet have taken the first downward step. But away below us is a fellow man. He is weak of will, badly born, morbid, abnormal in many ways. In him burn the baleful fires of inherited appetites. That first glass of wine, which to you was normally distasteful, so that you had to acquire a liking for it, was nectar to him. He is shifty, weakly vain, irresolute. But he has had a vision of Christ. In some poor dim sense, the eternal verities have become real to him. He has faced about, and though still far below you on the ladder on which character is developed, and with a still imperfect sense of the ideals which to you are commonplaces, he is facing up and you are facing down. Some day you

two will stand for a moment on the same step, and then you will see him no more, for your face is set downward and his has already caught the supernal gleams.

Toward heaven or toward hell? This question of direction is the vital, the determining question. Lacordaire said: "We need a divine revelation to tell us of the divine love, but not to tell us that for eternal sin there must, in any moral universe, be an eternal hell; as for eternal love there must be an eternal heaven." The honest observation of life teaches every one of us that sin, loved and persisted in, ends badly here in this world. It is idle and irrational trifling to pretend that it can end otherwise in the prolongation of life elsewhere. I long ago ceased to argue the question of the existence of hell. Sin, loved, persisted in, makes hell here and now; makes home hell; makes the heart hell. The man who thinks he believes that the incident of death, which affects a change of place but not of nature, will reverse the eternal laws of cause and effect, has placed himself outside the region where profitable discussion is carried on. The essence of sin is self-will in a low level, regardless of the rights of God or man — and that is hell anywhere. In like manner, the fact of heaven authenticates itself in any reflecting mind. We look about us; we see the godly and the good; we observe that the genuinely godly are the good, — the terms are indistinguishable; and we notice that as much of heaven as we ever see here, we see in the tranquillity, the gentleness, the blessed helpfulness of the lives of the godly and the good. So much of heaven as touches our poor lives, touches us through them; and we know — with a knowledge past all power of the sophist to disturb — that somewhere in the vast universe which God has made, there must be a heaven for the godly and the good. When the merely morally good claim that heaven, we know that there is a fatal defect in their title. Matthew Arnold was a man of excellent morals, but when he died, a gentle lady, who knew him well, said: "Arnold wouldnotlikeGod." What reason indeed have we for supposing that people who do not like God in this life, will like Him in the next? Many a well built ship has gone crashing upon the rocks of a lee shore, not because it was a bad ship, but because it was not headed in the right direction.

Now in this vital matter of direction heavenward or helward, God has made it possible for every human being to know with absolute clearness whither he is bound. The whole question of human destiny, complete in its details, is one of perfect simplicity in its essence. Human destiny turns on one question:

"What think ye of Christ?" — Matthew 22:42 "But as many as received him, to them gave

he power to become the sons of God," — John 1:12 This is not arbitrarily so, but of necessity. I will try to show you this. The phenomenon of the Christ is explicable in but one way:

"That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself," — 2 Corinthians 5:19 The Godhead of Christ is the only rational explanation of His perfect sinlessness, His perfect wisdom. No other perfect character has ever appeared among men, nor have the greatest masters of the creative imagination ever put a perfect character into literature. But this wonder becomes perfectly reasonable when we say "that God was in Christ." — 2 Corinthians 5:19 But why should such a thing as the incarnation come to be? Again no other answer but the inspired one is conceivable:

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." — 2 Corinthians 5:19

Surely the world needs such a reconciliation, and how else could it be effected? To be reconciled to God it is essential that the world, which has lost the knowledge of God, should again see Him;

and God, who is a Spirit, could come into the vision of men in no other way but by living among them a human life. And so the question of eternal direction is of necessity determined by the individual attitude towards Christ. The sinner humbly conscious of his unworthiness, who receives Christ as Saviour, master, friend, though still most imperfect, has chosen the heavenly things. He belongs to Christ, is in Christ's kingdom and under Christ's healing. His name is in the Lamb's book of life. He is one of the joint heirs. He is the Father's son. His way heavenward may be with many a stumble, he may even wander far, but he has a Shepherd who goes "after that which is lost, until he find it." — Luke 15:4 And it is incontestable that the men and women who have met God in Jesus Christ, are — speaking in the large and by immense majorities — the greatest of all visible forces working for righteousness in the practical affairs of this present world. Eliminate from the influences which make for social order, for clean living, for sanctity of the home, for kindness and helpfulness, the Christians of any community and what would remain? We will not say that nothing would remain. The Christian cause is frequently weakened by overstatement. Good citizens there are and many honest men, who are not Christians. Alas, also, many who are professing Christians, and in the judgment of charity really Christians, do not count in the battle for the best. To these I would say, There are two possible theories of life. We may say of each day as it comes: "This is my own, I may do with it what I will, so only that I do not use it to the detriment of my fellow man." That is one theory of life. It is the usual theory. The every day lives of the millions are lived by it. Shakespeare puts it into the mouth of one of his most entertaining characters: "The world is my oyster." Life may be blamelessly lived by it, if our idea of blameless living is only not to do harm. But there is another theory. It says: "Life is a trust. Not one of these wonderful things that we call minutes belongs to me in the sense of exclusive use. I am one of millions. I am my brother's keeper and my brother is my keeper. I want it so, and am glad we are members one of another. All about me are human hearts less blessed, less favored than mine. I am a Christian, therefore I may draw from the divine abundance and pour it into these maimed, incomplete, shadowed lives about me." That is Christ's theory. In its deepest essence the other is the devil's theory. Quo Vadis?

18 THE TEST OF TRUE SPIRITUALITY

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TWO Epistles are notable for the severity of their tests of Christian profession — James and I John. James is concerned with the reality of the professor's faith, John with the reality of the believer's experience, that is, of any pretensions which he may set up to spirituality of life. The key phrase of James is: "Yea, a man may say,"— ; the key phrase of this aspect of I John is: "If we say" or

"He that saith." Profession is easy, but false profession is supremely dangerous. The man who is living in sin and unbelief, and knows it, is fairly open to the gospel appeal; but the man who in self-deception answers the gospel appeal by saying: "But I am a Christian," is in the most dangerous place conceivable.

If one be a Christian, there is always the grave danger of living in mere positional truth on the one hand, or of assuming a false spirituality on the other. In the first case one would resemble a noble who should exalt his mere patent of nobility while living most ignobly. In the second case, one falls into the snare of spiritual pride based on some supposed experience or attainment.

James exposes a false or mistaken profession of faith; John a spurious spirituality. This exposure John effects by seven tests applied to profession. Let us look at these. The first applies to the profession of fellowship with God.

"If we say that we have fellowship with him," — 1 John 1:6 The test is severe but simple. To such a profession he says in effect, "Where do you walk?" The "walk" is the daily life. Now, says John, there are two places and but two where a believer may walk — darkness and light. Light is where God is and what God is:

"in him is no darkness at all." — 1 John 1:5

Observe it is not how we walk, but where we walk. David, in the fifty-first Psalm, all broken and crushed with the sense of his sin, is in the very whitest of the light, for he is saying:

"Have mercy upon me, O God," — Psalms 51:1

He is saying:

"Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." — Psalms 51:2

He is saying:

"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and donethisevil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." — Psalms 51:4 In the light, though, his whole talk is of his sins.

Now see a man in darkness — a good, moral man too, and a believer in God:

“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God,

I thank thee, that I am not as other men” — Luke 18:11 That man in the very act of prayer is in thick darkness. To walk in the light is not to walk sinlessly, but it is to bring the sin instantly to God. It is not to serve perfectly, but it is to bring the imperfection to Him. It is to live the daily life in His presence. Now, if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and have two lives, a religious life for Him and a secular life for ourselves, we walk in darkness, and our profession of fellowship is a lie, John says.

John’s second test strikes down at one blow the most subtle of the errors into which men have fallen concerning this most vital subject of holiness — the notion that by regeneration, or by “the baptism with the Spirit” or by the “baptism with fire,” or some other experience, the old Adamic nature has been eradicated, so that such an one no longer has sin as an indwelling fact. As to this John’s word is clear:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” — 1 John 1:9

Note carefully, John does not say that those who make that profession are not saved. What he says is they are deceived, because they are not judging the matter by revealed truth, but by some supposed experience of feeling. The underlying rule here is one which if duly heeded will save the child of God from every excess of fanaticism. It is — Judge experience by the Word, not the Word by experience,

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” — Hebrews 4:12

Beloved, the old nature unchanged and unchangeable is within; all victory lies in the recognition of that fact, and then in self-distrustful resort to the provision of grace for that fact — the indwelling Spirit. So long as we walk in the Spirit we do not “fulfil the lust of the flesh.” — Galatians 5:16

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” — Galatians 5:17

How subversive of this constant watchfulness, how sure to end — as all experience shows — in humiliating defeat, is the notion that the flesh has been eradicated.

And, as closely connected with that error, is the one to which John opposes his third test, the error of sinless perfection in the flesh.

“If we say that we have not sinned,” — 1 John 1:10

Mark well, this message is to the little children of the Father. We have not here a word to the selfrighteous sinner but to the presumptuous child of God. And it is not, “If we say that we have not sinned in the past it is a present word, a word for every moment of our lives. If we say right in the midst of our best prayer, of our purest aspiration, that “We have not sinned” —

What?

“We make him a liar,” — 1 John 1:10 Are we ready for that? Do we want to do that? But how can a little child of the Father possibly find himself in such a case? For the old reason — inattention to the Word:

“His word is not in us.” — 1 John 1:10 when we say such things. And His Word is uncompromising about sins. His grace has made a way of forgiveness and cleansing for confessing children who sin, but that Word will never permit us to lower the standard as to what sin is. Have we forgotten that an offering was provided for sin? Have we forgotten that in His eyes, the very heavens are not clean? No, we need this humbling Word, this searching test. The fourth test applies to profession of a different kind, to the claim to intimate acquaintanceship with God.

“he that saith, I know him,” — 1 John 2:4

Bear with a cautionary word. Knowing about God is one thing: knowing God is quite another. Job’s confession illustrates this:

“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear:” — Job 42:5 and upon the hearing there had come to Job a true faith, a faith which had withstood tremendous shocks. Well, we all begin there. Our saving faith is based on testimony. But Job goes on:

“but now mine eye seeth thee.” — Job 42:5 A very different matter. Are we then content to remain with a hearsay knowledge of God? By no means. In the 17th chapter of John, our Lord tells us that the ultimate end of the gift of eternal life is that we may know Him. He is our Father, and can our hearts rest with anything short of that personal knowledge of Him of which John speaks? At this point, John’s test of spirituality is not to discourage a true knowledge of God, but to expose a false assumption of such knowledge. What is that test?

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar,” — 1 John 2:4 Does John mean to put us back under law? Not at all. He speaks in his characteristic way, meaning he who is living outside the known will of God, and says “I know God,” is a liar. It is not sinless obedience, but it is a heart set to live in the known will of God. Such a one will have many a failure, but, though often stumbling, he will keep on. The needle in the compass is often deflected by influences about it — it trembles and is unquiet, but it resumes its steady alignment with the object of its devotion. Now a life aligned to the will of God, is in the way to know God. It is not an arbitrary requirement. In no other way, to no other man, can God reveal Himself. Paul’s prayer for the Colossians runs along that road:

“That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; . . . increasing in the knowledge of God;” — Colossians 1:9-10 John’s fifth test of the profession of spirituality of life, also applies to the walk.

“He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk,
even as he walked.” — 1 John 2:6

Upon a superficial view, this seems most discouraging. What is it “to abide” in Him? Many earnest souls have known much distress just here. They have been told that “to abide” in Him means to be always occupied with Him. Now I make bold to say, this is an unattainable counsel of perfection.

We are in the world, and however sedulous we may be to keep the world out of us, we are charged with engrossing duties calling for the utmost concentration of mind, heart and hand. We cannot be in conscious constant occupation with Him. I do not so understand that great word. For a moment think of that other phrase — “in Him.” What does that mean? Ephesians explains it. “In Christ Jesus” is the sphere of the Christian’s life. That is where grace has put him. We have not to concern ourselves about getting that place: we are there. Now, what is “abiding in Him?” Why, simply having nothing apart from Him, living in the sphere of the things which interest Christ; bringing Him into the sphere of all our necessary occupations, joys and innocent pleasures down here; having no business in which He is not senior Partner; no wedding feast or other feast at which He is not chief Guest, no failures which are not brought to Christ for forgiveness and cleansing.

What is John’s test of such a life? In degree, though not as perfectly, it will be a walk even as He walked. It will lead along the same road; it will encounter the same trials, enlist the same sympathies. Apply the test; it is easy, if humbling.

“He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother,
is in darkness even until now.” — 1 John 2:9

God is love as surely as God is light. The light and the love are one. Then, how impossible to walk with God — for that is to walk in the light — and have hatred for one of the other of God’s children. Remember, John speaks in an absolute way of these things. It is not what we may call our feeling for our brother, “dislike” or “instinctive aversion” or “annoyance” — John has one name for the insincere evasions — hate. That is John’s word.

Think of this. Is there some brother against whom we have taken up a breath of accusation which we have whispered about to his detriment? Is there one whose ways annoy us so that we avoid him? Is there one whose habits, though within his liberty in Jesus* Christ, do not happen to be the habits in which we have been more narrowly reared and against which we whisper? My friends, till we are cleansed in the laver, till our feet have been in His blessed hand, let us not talk of walking in the light. So we come to John’s final test:

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” — 1 John 4:20 With John, “love” is more than sentiment, more than a feeling. It is a principle which moves the hand and opens the purse. If I am not my brother’s keeper, if I am not, in the measure of my power, my brother’s providence — wisdom for his folly, a hiding place for his shame, open-handed for his need, wet eyed for his sorrow, glad in his joy, — oh, then let me at least spare him the insincerity of my profession, “I love God.”

19 SERVING CHRIST

SERVING CHRIST

After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples.

Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him (for he was naked) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.

Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.

Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord.

Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee?

Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?

Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.” — John 21:1-25 THE twenty-first chapter of John is not so much an epilogue of the Gospel, — although it is that, — as an introduction to the Book of Acts, which gives the essential facts concerning right Christian service in this dispensation. It is a chapter which has to do with service — service to the risen Lord, and with suffering as well. This once seen, we ask if there is any single word or phrase that will give a keynote to the new discipleship? I think we shall find it in the phrase, “If I will.” — John 21:22 And I believe the words “If I will” give the keynote to the whole chapter considered as conditioning the service of the Christian to the risen Lord. The central condition of that service is hearty acceptance of the will of Christ over the service of His saints, a will which extends to the minutest detail of that service, leaving absolutely nothing to choice, inclination or self-will. As illustrating that service, we have in this chapter six wonderful pictures, each distinct, each drawn by the Master’s hand, and each having a wonderful teaching. The first of these is a picture of service in self-will, and its results. It is in the first three verses.

“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.” — John 21:3

Now, if Peter knew anything he knew he was a servant of the risen Lord. Already the risen Christ had appeared twice to his disciples. Already He had breathed on them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost:” — John 20:22 so that from that moment, those disciples were indwelt by the Spirit and therefore had spiritual discernment and were in a position to be taught the things concerning the kingdom. The Lord had been with them, teaching them of this higher service; He had not appointed any meeting like this by the lake. He had told them to tarry in Jerusalem, but the one thing that the natural man, the flesh, can not do is to keep quiet. We can not wait for some clear word from the Lord. The Master had appeared and told them wonderful things, and then He had disappeared again. As the hours went by, possibly the days, no new word came from the Master. Peter became restless. Naturally he thought of his old trade:

“I go a fishing.” — John 21:3

Mere waiting for orders is intolerable. So he goes fishing. And immediately we see one result of that kind of activity; we see human leadership in place of divine leadership. The others — perhaps the kind of men who are easily led, and are uncomfortable unless they have a leader — immediately said, “We also go with thee.” — John 21:3

Ah, how Christ’s service is marred by strong-willed men; men who will not wait for a word of direction, nor a suggestion from the mighty Master, but serve in self-will. Note the result. All of

these men were fishermen who knew the waters of that lake perfectly, and they went out and fished all night but, — “caught nothing.”

Then very gently came the test. These things are always tested. In the morning the Lord is there on the bank. Remember, He has purchased these men with His blood; they have no right to any independent service; they ought to have changed selfwill for His will. The Master who has bought them, and who is entitled to every activity of their lives, stands on the shore and asks, “Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.” — John 21:5 That is the outcome of choosing our way and place in service. Is not this the easy, natural, unforced explanation of the lack of fruitfulness in so much of so-called Christian activity?

But, we say, we are not told to be successful; we are told only to be faithful. There is a little grain of truth in that, and yet I never find Jesus commending fruitless service. I find Him saying,

“I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,

andthatyour fruit should remain:”— John 15:16

If there is no result whatever from patient and long continued service, there is something wrong about it somewhere. God means that we shall have fruit for our toil. We say, “O, it is a time of seed-sowing, and the harvest will come after a time,” and we let ourselves down easily and make no searching examination into the cause of our failure. Faithfulness is a great virtue, but it is a greater thing to start right, and to be sure that we have the “I will” of the Lord before we undertake anything for Him. For our second picture we have Christ-directed service and its results. The moment He tells these fishermen, who knew all about fishing, where to cast the net, the net is full! I need not comment on that.

“Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.” — John 21:6

O, the blessedness of Christ-directed service! He does not mean that we shall have no result from our prayers and our toil; and if we see no result, one fair presumption is, that we may be doing something which we have chosen to do ourselves and not something which the Lord gave us to do. That full net is a wonderful picture.

Now we come to our third picture; —the breakfast by the lakeside, where the laborers and the Lord feast together. The legend written under this picture is: “The risen Christ supplies the needs of His servants.”

They had caught nothing that night, yet Jesus, knowing their need beforehand, with hands that had been pierced for them, had prepared breakfast for them there on the shore of the lake. It was He who said, “Comeanddine.” — John 21:12

They had been serving in self-will, yet the grace of the Lord would not leave them breakfastless. He loved them. He meant to show them the right path of service. How I wish we could get that thoroughly settled as servants of the Lord — that the Lord is enough for all the needs of His servants. We do not need any source of supply, even in material things, beside the Lord. O, that we had faith to absolutely trust Him, and then leave it to Him to minister to our need in whatever way He pleases!

Let us pass on to our fourth picture — our risen Master’s colloquy with Peter.

We cannot misread the legend beneath this picture. It is: “Love of Christ the only right motive.” Note in passing an important subtitle to this picture. It is: “The risen Christ chooses whom He will to serve Him.” But that is but a detail of the picture, the central meaning of which is that love of Himself is the only motive which gives to service a value in the eyes of the Lord. Three times our Lord asks Peter if he loves Him, and in answer to Peter’s confession that he does love Him, and that the Lord knows that he loves Him, the Lord thrice commissions Peter for service.

“Lovest thou me? Feed my lambs.” — John 21:15 “Feed my sheep.” — John 21:16-17

Think a little of this. We sometimes pray that we may have a love for souls; we even pray that we may have “a great burden” for souls. I have known young people, who are preparing for missionary work, to pray that they might have a great love for the people in Africa, or whatever the chosen field might be. But Peter is not asked if he loves the lambs and if he loves the sheep. You can see how that motive would break down. The question is, “Lovest thou me?” — John 21:16

Then feed “my lambs,” “my sheep.” And any other motive in service is not, with Christ, a sufficient motive.

How many of us, I wonder, are serving out of mere denominational loyalty and zeal, or out of our deep interest in some organization in which we are officers or members? I believe there is great need for deep heart-searching just at this point. Is the central motive of our service personal love for Him? And is this the one test which we propose to ourselves every day in our service? And now we stand before the fifth picture. Again the central figures are the risen Christ and Peter. But now the Lord is speaking, not of Peter’s service, but of its end in martyrdom. What is it called? “The risen Christ apportioned suffering and death.”

I do not believe that servants of the Lord die accidentally. I do not believe that death “happens” to a child of God.

“When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. —John 21:18

None of us would choose suffering; none of us would choose a martyr’s death; and yet Peter, willful as he was, cowardly as he had been, would yield himself to that.

“This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.” — John 21:19 And now one last picture in this wonderful gallery: Service is personal.

Peter would like to have made it, so to speak, a fellowship matter, a corporate matter. Seeing John, he said, “Lord, and what shall this man do?” — John 21:21 And in effect the Lord replied, “Peter, that is none of your business” —

“If I will that he tarry,” — John 21:22 if I will that he catch fish, if I will that he tend sheep and lambs, if I will that he suffer, if I will that he die —

“what is that to thee? follow thou me.” — John 21:22 So with all service. We are not to take our word of command at second or third hand. Oh, let us get into right personal touch with Him! There

is a strange, sweet liberty in this kind of service. Christ will choose His own servants, very strangely sometimes, and the motive in service that is pleasing to Him is love for Him. Yet can we rest under all the trials that come, in the consciousness that our sufferings, even our very death in the path of obedience, are appointed for us by Him and are not accidents — that, like John, we are immortal until our work is done.

20 OUT OF BONDAGE

OUT OF BONDAGE “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” — John 8:36 THE most widespread and universal of the delusions current among men is the notion that they are free. No imputation is more quickly, more vehemently resented than the imputation of slavery, of bondage. There are no free men. Millions, thank God, are in the process of emancipation, but none are yet completely emancipated. Paul told the Roman chief captain that he was born free. In the limited sense in which he used the word it was true; Paul was born a Roman citizen. But in every other important sense the words were not true, as Paul would have been the first to admit. Like all of us, Paul inherited chains. For centuries that mysterious force, heredity, had been silently, invisibly, preparing bonds for him — bonds for spirit, soul, body. Every soul born into the world is born into an invisible net which the centuries have been weaving for him. Its meshes are race predisposition, race habit, family habit, family sin, family religion.

Think of the men to whom Christ was talking when He uttered the words of our text:

“We be Abraham’s seed and were never in bondage to anyman:” — John 8:33

They spoke honestly enough, as we do when we boast of our freedom, but at that moment they were in political, intellectual and religious bondage. Politically, they were under bondage to an assortment of despots from Caesar down to Herod and Pilate. Morally, they were the slaves of race pride, of prejudice, of ignorance, of habit, of sin, of self-will. Religiously, they were the slaves of traditionalism, of bigotry, of formalism. Is our case better? Very slightly. Theoretically, we are free politically. Actually, we are the slaves of party, of the caucus, of the bosses and the trusts. The very minute I give over into the hands of a convention the right to formulate my political creed I am no longer absolutely free. When I allow a habit to dominate my life, I am no longer free. When I allow pride, or vanity, or ambition, or pleasure to control my life, I am the basest of slaves. The very fact that I do not, can not, cease from sin proclaims me a slave. Jesus Christ came into a world of slaves.

It is interesting to note that His first formal announcement of His mission on earth touched life at that very point. In the synagogue at Nazareth there was handed to Him the book of the Prophet Isaiah, and he found the place where it was written:

“The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach . . .

deliverance to the captives,” — Luke 4:18

Jesus Christ has, indeed, a various work in the world, and He touches human life at every point of humanity’s need, but we single out for our meditation this morning Christ the Emancipator.

He begins with our slavery to sin. Here He encounters an initial difficulty. The man whom He would set free is not only a slave, but a condemned slave. He is a slave, exposed for sale, but with a halter around his neck. Who will redeem him? Nay, rather, who can redeem him? Not his brother man, for he, too, is a slave with a halter around his own neck. What is the price of this slave — of

that one? One price for all. Whoever will redeem these slaves must die in their stead. And, obviously, only one who has never sinned, and who is himself perfectly free, can be accepted. Only one being has ever appeared who met these necessary conditions — Jesus Christ. And to pay that price is the very business that brought Jesus Christ to this earth. At the cost of His own life, of His own unimaginable suffering, He pays the last demand of a holy law and redeems from death the slaves of sin. Are they free? From the curse of the law, yes. From the habit of sin, no. Then begin those great redemptive processes which work in the sphere of the inner life, the object of which is the transformation of character and complete deliverance from the domination of sin. Let us trace the method of that deliverance.

It begins with the complete removal of threat, of fear. The believer is told that he is not under law, that is, a system of probation to see if he can work out a righteousness for himself, but under grace, that is, a system of divine inworking which produces the very righteousness which the law required, but which man never achieved. The believer is assured that Christ has given to him eternal life, and that he shall never perish; that no man is able to pluck him out of the omnipotent hand which holds him; that He who began a good work in him will perfect it till the day of Christ. As for his sins, they are blotted out, cast behind God's back, buried in the depths of the sea, forgiven and forgotten. And this is a necessary first work, for no man is really free who is under the bondage of fear.

Grace imparts to the believer the indwelling Holy Spirit. The nature that was open to every assault from without, and a slave to every vile impulse from within, is now garrisoned by omnipotence. In the power of that indwelling One, the believer is made free from the monstrous necessity of sinning under which every unredeemed life groans. No Christian needs to sin. If he yields to solicitations from without, or the more subtle suggestions from within, it is because he deliberately or carelessly wills it so. The Spirit is there to break the power of sin.

Grace puts the renewed life under the stimulus and inspiration of great relationships. The believer is not merely a pardoned criminal, he is a child and son of God; and that by a new birth which is as actual in the sphere of the spiritual, as his natural birth was in the sphere of the physical. He is a son of God, not by some far-off fact of creation, but by the immediate and personal fact of a divine begetting. He no longer traces his descent from God through Adam, but is, as Adam was, a son of God with no intervening ancestor. This, the believer is told, brings him into the wonderful privileges of access to the Father, and of fellowship with Him. Christ is not ashamed to call him "brother," — Matthew 12:50 he is raised to joint heirship with Christ in all things, and is to share the power and glory of Christ in the coming kingdom.

Grace confers upon the believer the great office of priest and king. As priest, he is set free from the ancient formalism in the worship of God "to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," — Hebrews 10:19 and offering, without regard to time or place, "spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." — 2 Peter 2:5 His worship, freed from ceremonialism, is a son's adoration of a Father who is infinite in holiness and benevolence and power, but who is none the less a Father because He is God. And this office of priest carries of necessity the privilege of intercession. The believer-priest prays for those outside the family of God who do not pray for themselves. He is the "daysman" and "remembrancer" before his Father.

Grace tells the believer that he is as vitally united to Christ as the members of his own body are united to him.

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,” 1 Corinthians 12:13 “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” 1 Corinthians 6:17 And this gives him the only right conception of what true liberty really is. It is not anarchy, which is the mere riot of self-will, but it is to be so joined to God the Father; so vitally one with Christ the Son; so yielding to the gentle sway of the Holy Spirit, that the human will is blended into the divine will, and so made one with the absolutely free and sovereign will of God Himself. God does as He wills, but God always wills to do that which is at once absolutely right and absolutely benevolent. In all this there is no subversion of the believer’s individuality, but the lifting of that individuality to the divine level of a passionate love of all that is highest. It is obedience, but obedience under the new covenant, where the law is written in the heart, like mother-love. A mother finds her truest joy in obedience to that imperative, born into her deepest being with the birth of her child. No honest man feels the constraint of the laws against theft. He is not honest because of something printed in a statute book, but because of something printed on his heart. He would still be honest if the statute were repealed. Therefore, he is perfectly free. Without that interior work, no external thing done to a man makes or can make him free. Executive clemency, extended to a convicted criminal, does not make him a free man. He is still the slave of his criminal desires. But if he falls in love with honesty and uprightness and integrity, then he is free. All this transformation, grace works in the redeemed heart.

Then grace works transformingly by the power of new and exalted ideals. The whole conception of life is changed. Under the old bondage, life was conceived of as a possession which man might rightly use for himself; under the new ideal life is precious, because it may be used for the blessing of others. The new man in Christ has accepted as the new ideal of his new life Christ’s law of sacrifice. He heartily adopts Christ’s formulae:

“The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew 16:25

“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” — John 12:24

Such an ideal, heartily accepted, under the conviction that so only may life be nobly lived, is of itself a complete disentrancement from the old slavery to self. Pursued, though with a failure, and with steps which often halt, such an ideal is a transformation. The man who accepts it, has issued to the universe his declaration of independence. He is free from the old appeals and solicitations which had power over him because they seemed to promise something toward the old monstrous ministry to the god self. No longer desiring self-exaltation, the bribe has ceased to appeal. Its presentment only causes pain to the heart that has fallen in love with humility.

Then grace allures and charms with the vision of eternal things. Paul divides all things into two categories, things seen and things unseen. He declares that the seen things have the fatal defect of being temporary, while the unseen things have the infinite value of eternal endurance. The problem of the Christian life, therefore, is based upon the fact that so long as the Christian lives in

this world he is, so to speak, two trees — the old tree of the flesh, and the new tree of the divine nature implanted by the new birth; and the problem itself is, how to keep barren the old tree and to make fruitful the new tree. This problem is solved by walking in the Spirit.

“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit,

and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” — Galatians 5:16 The sap of the new tree is the Holy Spirit indwelling in the believer.

“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water

springing up into everlasting life.” — John 4:14

It is the truth implied in the parable of the vine and the branches. The vine is Christ, the branches are believers, and the unseen Renewer of vigor and growth is the Spirit. It is difficult to conceive how radical is the revolution in the life which is wrought by the simple recognition of the Spirit's indwelling. His presence, thus acknowledged, gives the keynote of the life. If some greatly honored and beloved friend enters our homes as a guest, the whole life of the home, so long as the guest remains, is keyed to the fact of his presence. All merely personal preferences are for the time subordinated to the known tastes and preferences of the guest. Inevitably, then, the recognition of the Spirit's indwelling must be followed by loving response to His wishes.

We learn, perhaps with amazement, that God the Spirit will take possession of no more of our lives than is willingly abandoned to Him. He is the divine courtesy, the divine delicacy, impersonated. He comes as Christ's personal representative, whose first and greatest function is to make Christ real to us; to actualize to us all that we have and are in Christ. Has Christ been to us an abstraction, a name, even though our faith in Him has been true? Then the Spirit will make Him the personal Christ, the present Christ. Has the divine Fatherhood been to us but a juiceless doctrine, a mere phrase? Then the Spirit will make that Fatherhood more real to us than that of an earthly parent. He will cry in our hearts, “Abba, Father,” — Mark 14:36 till our whole being shall respond. Has our prayer life been cold and formal? The indwelling Spirit will form within our hearts petitions that shall be fragrant with faith, and warm with desire. Has our worship been a thing of forms and times, a Sunday performance, mostly intermitted during the week, so that we have come to call our meeting house a “house of worship,” forgetting the word of Him who said:

“the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.” — John 4:21 “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” — John 4:24 The Spirit comes to light in our hearts the pure flame of adoration, wonder, love and praise — a flame that will make every day and every house one of worship. But most of all He comes to subdue and conquer the old self-life which has dominated us and brought us into captivity to the law of sin.

We make wonderful discoveries as we go on walking in the Spirit. We come upon new and humbling revelations of our own evil, but along with these, such experiences of the sanctifying and delivering power of the Spirit as lead us constantly in the triumph of Jesus Christ. Believing this, the new man in Christ sits lightly to things seen. They become mere accidents of life, not its substance. Of this world's goods he may have much, and he is glad because they can be used to enrich other lives; or he may gather little and is glad, because he has not the responsibility of the

right use of great possessions. His true inheritance is in heaven. There he has riches untold. That is his home. There, he will always have his great place of identity with Christ in the glory, a son of God to whom the very angels are now, and ever will be, the servants.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” — Galatians 5:1

21 THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:”¹ Timothy 3:16 THAT is, in Christianity, which is the divine method for the production of godliness, or godlikeness, the transformation of man into the image of God, there are mysteries — supernatural things — miraculous things. And not only mysteries, but great mysteries, and so evidently is that true that it is without controversy — it is not open to question: “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness:”¹ Timothy 3:16 The apostle immediately enumerates six of these mysteries, not as exhausting the number by any means, but as illustrating his proposition that in Christianity there are mysteries.

First of all, he instances the incarnation:

“God was manifest in the flesh,” — 1 Timothy 3:16

Truly here is a mystery — nay, two of them, for God is a mystery and man is a mystery and the incarnation combines them both.

“justified in the Spirit,” — 1 Timothy 3:16 first in His baptism, and again when, by the Spirit, He was raised from the dead, after bearing the sin of His people.

“seen of angels,” — 1 Timothy 3:16

Outside of the ordinary sight of man are intelligences, spiritual beings, angels. These are linked to this God man, this divine One.

“preached unto the Gentiles,” — 1 Timothy 3:16

It seems a strange thing that this should be counted among the mysteries, and yet to one instructed in Old Testament truth, it is a great mystery.

“believed on in the world,” — 1 Timothy 3:16 Another one of the mysteries of godliness, “received up into glory,” — 1 Timothy 3:16

— the crowning miracle of His resurrection and ascension into heaven. So that just illustratively, and as bringing out his thought, the apostle mentions six of these great mysteries which stand connected with godliness.

There is a tendency in our day to rest the defence of Christianity upon the superiority of its ethics, upon the moral beauty of it as a preceptive system. It was this fear of the miraculous, this lack of faith boldly to proclaim the mysteries and supernatural in the religion of Jesus Christ, which was the root-idea of a Parliament of Religions at the Chicago World’s Fair. The thought was not that we should demonstrate to the adherents of the false faiths the divine origin of ours by means of its supernaturalism, but that we should demonstrate that our ethical system was, on the whole, superior to theirs. Beyond all question there is in that superiority an unanswerable argument. But, after all, there is nothing more supernatural in Christianity than its ethics. We do not escape the

miraculous, or marvelous, or mysterious in Christianity by exalting the preceptive teachings of the Word of God, for the absolutely unique character of those teachings immediately raises the question of origin.

Compared with this body of precept all the codes of all the philosophies are imperfect — not to say defiled by obvious imperfections. Take, for instance, the Ten Commandments. You may rest their vindication upon their rightness. Every one admits that it is right to do those things which are commanded and wrong to do those things which are forbidden. But that very perfection suggests the inquiry: “Whence came that law?” So, by whatever road we approach the subject, we get back, after all, to the supernatural, to the mysterious. . It is an inescapable element of the Christian faith.

Turn to the Acts of the Apostles. Trace the history of the first putting forth of this gospel of Jesus Christ. You find the constant insistence upon the marvelous and mysterious in it as the unanswerable proof that it came from God. The great burden of the apostolic preaching was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was a recent event. The witnesses of His resurrection to the number of about five hundred were still living. The whole matter was one open to inquiry and susceptible of ordinary investigation. And the first preachers went everywhere, resting the authority of the gospel which they preached upon that stupendous miracle — the resurrection. But all the mysteries were preached. There was no apology for these things; nay, they were insisted upon; the weight of the argument is upon them. The advance and maintenance of the gospel was made to depend upon the supernatural in the faith, upon the great body of mystery which it holds. Everywhere the incarnation, resurrection, the second advent of Jesus Christ, the existence and presence of angels, were the every-day testimony of the apostolic church. They gloried in these truths, they were not afraid of them, and they did not apologize for them.

Since, then, these great mysteries inhere in the Christian faith, we shall do well to consider what they are and why they are there.

First of all, we ought to expect it to be so. If God is at work for the saving of men; if the gospel is what the apostle Paul said it was — and he gave that as his reason for not being ashamed of it —

“the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”;—Romans 1:16 if the very essence of Christianity is that men are saved, not by conformity to ethical precepts, but by a great God-wrought work; then, just because God is doing it, there must be a measure of mystery in it. It would not be God’s work if there were not mystery in its processes.

God’s work in creation is full of mystery. We do not refuse to believe the great patent and obtrusive facts of creation because we are unable to explain them. The very commonest phenomenon, that of life — so common that we cannot live (with our senses at all exercised) through one day without observing it again and again — whether in the tiny blade of grass or in the men and women about us, is a mystery which has never been solved. Today it is as great a mystery as it was in the very dawn of creation; no one knows anything about it except the fact of it. But we do not refuse to credit the fact, because unable to explain the process. We do not recoil from the material universe of God and refuse to believe in it because we cannot explain its mystery. Wherever we find God’s work, we find the miraculous and mysterious. If God is at work, this is inevitable.

Now, if this is true of God’s work in creation, it must be true of God’s work in redemption, and that simply because it is the Incomprehensible who is at work. Therefore when we come upon a

miracle, we do not apologize for it, we do not retire it into the background of our testimony and make as little of it as possible, but we exult in it and proclaim it. We glory in the fact that this Christianity of ours presents mysteries which are, at present, insoluble — into the processes of which the mind cannot penetrate. We point to that as God's very sign manual and authentication of the system. If that were wanting we should reject the system as evidently man-made. A God whose being and processes I could understand, would be of precisely my girth and stature — no more. So this fact that there are mysteries in Christianity is our boast. It is the unanswerable proof to our minds that God, indeed, is the Author of this religion.

If we examine the natural religions — the manmade religions — we do not find this mystery. We find a vast number of fables, it is true, but we are easily led to see (even the enlightened votaries of these religions acknowledge this) that they are old wives' tales and mere childish traditions. Not so if we turn to the mysteries of the Christian faith, for we ourselves are the subjects of them in large part and are seeing the effects and results of them every day in our own experiences. For some of the very profoundest of these mysteries are perpetually renewed, continually reenacted. Regeneration, answered prayer, the hand of God in human affairs — these are the mysteries in which we live and move and have our being. It is not a question of historical signs and wonders merely; it is a question of a living experience with a living God whose dealings perpetually transcend the reach of our comprehension. In the second place, in every one of these mysteries there are two elements. There is the fact, which is always simple, historical, obvious, reasonable; and there is the explanation of that fact, which eludes our discernment. There lies the baffling, the mystery. What is done is evident. How it came to be done is the thing we do not understand. The process is not explained. Therein lies the element of mystery in this faith of ours.

Take for an illustration the first of the mysteries enumerated by Paul in our text — the incarnation. The Scriptures state the fact of the incarnation in the simplest terms:

“God was manifest in the flesh” —1 Timothy 3:16 “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,” — John 1:14 As a fact, therefore, it offers itself to human observation and verification. So we look at Jesus —

“manifest in the flesh” —1 Timothy 3:16 therefore human, and immediately observation confirms the fact. How perfectly human, how entirely human He is! There is a birth; there is a cradle; there are swaddling clothes; there is a nursing mother; there is growth; there is the obedience of a child; and there is, finally, the taking up of a great mission — a man goes out among his fellow men, weeps when they weep, rejoices when they rejoice, is weary like other men, and at last dies.

Yet this man is just as evidently doing things which only God can do. He makes it evident that He is omniscient and omnipotent. He knows what is going on at a distance. He creates. He commands nature and she obeys. He heals incurable diseases and He raises the dead. The fact of the incarnation is confirmed — we see the man, and we see God. But — and here is the mystery — when we would go behind the fact and ask: “How can that be? How is it that God can be incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth?” we get no answer. A fact, then, is given, which is verifiable, simple, obvious, and it is the fact which is presented for our faith, and not the process, not the method. This is true of all these mysteries. Take for another illustration, regeneration:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again” — John 3:3 Instantly we are ready with the question of Nicodemus:

“How can a man be born when he is old?” — John 3:4

What is the answer? Is there an unveiling of that mysterious process by which the Spirit of God, acting upon the Word, imparts the divine life, — creates a new man within a living man? Not at all; not the smallest syllable of explanation of the process. What then are we told?

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” — John 3:14-15 And then we look away to Christ crucified; we see Him bearing “our sins in his own body on the tree” — 1 Peter 2:24 and we say with Paul:

“who loved me, and gave himself for me.” — Galatians 2:20

Lo! the mystery is enacted and we are born again — but our senses are not quick enough to surprise God in the process. Here for our faith is a fact, Jesus hanging upon the Cross. The cross has an historical place: it is a fact in the world’s history, — just as real a fact as the battle of Waterloo, — and that fact is presented for our belief, not the explanation of the fact. But the result of faith in the fact of the cross is another fact — and this too is verifiable. We see men full of all kinds of evil, transformed in life, and we see, too, that the change is first of all within. The changed outward life is the spontaneous, joyous outworking of a wholly new inner life, so that it is natural, so to speak, for these things to come forth. We see, then, the result. We are not taken into the mystery of the process.

Take prayer, — the most familiar of the experiences of a Christian. There, also, you have a very simple fact, and a mystery very profound. A child of God lifts up his voice and heart to God. Does he see God? Not at all. So far as outward observation goes, he is talking into the air. He may not be talking audibly at all; perhaps the anguish is too great to put into words and his groans ascend to the throne of God. Does he see God? No. But presently something happens and it is the very thing he asked for.

Only yesterday I called upon a friend who for weary months has been suffering and is now facing a surgical operation that may be fatal, as she well knows. She was telling me of her experience. She has already undergone one exceedingly perilous and painful operation. Her testimony was that two weeks before it was to be performed she was filled with the torment of fear. She said with a sweet humility, “I didn’t know how to pray, but I asked God to take that fear away, and — would you believe it, He did.” So it is with the providences of life. Prosperity comes to one, losses to another. One pathway seems to be strewn with roses, another is paved with thorns. Why? I do not know: it is a mystery. But as I stand before it, baffled and perplexed, I hear the words of the Lord Jesus:

“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.” — John 13:7

How strange, how inexplicable is the providence of death! How strange some deaths! How sorely puzzled I was when that young missionary, dear Clarence Wilbur, was taken in the morning of his beautiful manhood from the very forefront of the fight down there in dark Central America, a noble soldier of Jesus Christ stricken down dead! Why was I not taken? Why not some of us who seem

to be doing so little for the Lord? Why should he be taken? I do not know. I have no solution to offer.

I think of dear Mrs. Dillon, another missionary, heroine in Jesus Christ, taken from her husband, from her children, and from her work in that same dark land. In the mysteries of godliness, the human side is always simple, reasonable and right. It commends itself to the judgment and to the conscience and to the heart of man, invariably. Judgment says, it is wise to trust Christ; conscience affirms that it is right to trust Christ; the unquiet heart knows it can never rest until it trusts Christ. But connected with this simple, reasonable and right thing which man is to do, there is a great category of strange and marvelous and unexplained things, which God will do, but that is God's part of it. We go stumbling over that which God reserves to Himself, and we are unable to find one single, unreasonable requirement — staggering, puzzling requirement — laid upon us.

This, then, is what it comes to: God offers facts to human faith — verifiable facts, and facts for the truth of which, before He demands faith, He invariably offers proof. Jesus Christ said:

“believe me for the very works’ sake” — John 14:11 abundant proof concerning that which is asked of you and of me—faith for that which God reserves to Himself. It is beautiful to see how Paul, for instance, and all men of faith of the Bible, humbly took this place. They confessed themselves to be beginners in the school of God.

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.”1 Corinthians 13:9 says the great apostle.

“For now we see through a glass, darkly;”1 Corinthians 13:12 Does Paul stumble therefore? Not at all. With quiet assurance, he stands before this partial knowledge, this clouded mirror, and answers:

“But when that which is perfect is come,

then that which is in part shall be done away.” — 1 Corinthians 13:10 “but then shall I know even as also I am known.”1 Corinthians 13:12

Meantime he trusted that the Almighty was taking care of the mysteries. Is this difficult, dear friends? Can we not trust and patiently wait? We are in the kindergarten now; perhaps we could not understand the method of the mysteries, even if it were told us ever so plainly.

Let this suffice — we shall know hereafter.

22 GLORYING IN THE CROSS

GLORYING IN THE CROSS

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” — Galatians 6:14 THE first part of this text has become one of the commonplaces of our Christian vocabulary. We quote it in our prayers.

“God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” — Galatians 6:14

Why bring God into a meaningless prayer? God has long ago forbidden that we should glory save in the cross: it is we who persist in glorying in almost everything else.

I have heard Christians glory in fine church buildings; I have heard them glory in their denominations, their numbers, their wealth, their riches; and I have heard them glory in church choirs — especially in church choirs. Last summer, going to preach in a city church, I was received by a courteous officer who said: “We are congratulating ourselves on hearing you today, and we are congratulating you on hearing our choir.” I heard the choir, sitting within three feet of them, but I could not distinguish ten words of what they sang. I have heard Christians glory in their preacher. Now, it is right and scriptural for Christians to esteem faithful ministers of the Word for their work’s sake; that is one thing. But to boast in their gifts is quite another. We need to hear again Paul’s almost contemptuous —

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed.” — 1 Corinthians 3:5

I have heard Christians glory in the amount of money they gave or spent on ecclesiastical adornments; I have even heard them glory in church organs.

Think what Paul might have gloried in. He might have gloried in his descent from Abraham, one of the kingliest men in history; he might have gloried in the long line of law-givers, prophets, priests and kings, whose goodness and genius shed luster on the Jewish nation and brought blessing to the world. He might have gloried in his flawless morality; in his piety; in his zeal; in his superbly trained powers; in his matchless success. But what Paul did glory in was the cross. The cross has come to be a symbol to be venerated, even by those who never come to saving terms with the Crucified. A man once went to Talleyrand and told him he had invented a new religion. Talleyrand answered: “I am a busy man: go and get yourself crucified for your new religion, get yourself raised from the dead; then come back here and I will listen to you.” But in the year 65 of this era the cross was not a venerated symbol. To the man of that day it meant just what a gallows means to the man of this day. Paul, however, one of the foremost men of that or any other time, gloried in setting forth a cross as the symbol of that to which he gladly devoted his very life. Why? What did Paul find in the cross to glory in? We shall find a full answer to that question without going outside this very Epistle. But let us look first at the latter clause. Of what world is Paul speaking when he says:

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” — Galatians 6:14

One of the chief infelicities of our common version of the Bible is that it translates many Greek words by one English word, “world.” Sometimes “world” means that part of the earth over which the Roman power spread its sway. Sometimes it means the mass of human beings on the earth. Sometimes it means that elaborate world-system of power, riches, pleasure and vanity, which seems so alluring to all of us, but which was organized by Satan and of which he is “god” and “prince.” But in Paul’s writings it often means ceremonial and external religion. A religion which consists of ceremonies, synagogue going, rites, ordinances and the like, and which expressed itself inside the fold of Christian profession in Paul’s time, by the demand that converts should be circumcised. Such religionists were a party in the professing church. This was the “world” to which Paul was crucified. The context shows this. The ceremonialists had a symbol; — the knife of the circumcisers. Paul had a symbol;—the cross of Christ. It was, needless to say, no question of what the ancient rite of circumcision might justly mean to an Israelite. Paul’s sole contention was, that in the light of the cross, circumcision had lost all meaning. But the ceremonialists had a seeming advantage. They would say: “We are not like Paul with his easy believe and be saved’ religion.” They required something arduous and difficult. And Paul’s answer was that his gospel also required something so arduous and so difficult, their circumcision was absolutely nothing in comparison with it. That his gospel required the awful death of the Son of God; and from man a humbling that left him not even circumcision to glory in. The knife of the circumcisers has indeed long been sheathed, — it finds no place in modern religious discussion; but it still stands as a symbol of works without faith — futile. So Paul had nothing of himself in which to glory, but nothing could hinder his glorying in the cross. Paul gloried in the cross, first because there the Son of God “gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us

from this present evil world” — Galatians 1:4 In that cross Paul saw God Himself take up the whole question of our sins and so deal with them that now he could fling out his triumphant challenge to the universe:

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”Romans 8:33 Is not that something to glory about?

Paul gloried in the cross because he had died there with Christ.

“I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live;” — Galatians 2:20 The law in slaying Christ there had slain Paul.

“For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” — Galatians 2:19 Henceforth he was become dead to the law. The law having slain him had exhausted its demand.

“The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth”Romans 7:1 but no longer. Now Paul could do what he never could do under the law; he could “live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” — Galatians 2:20 So he will glory in the cross that set him free.

Paul would glory in the cross because there Christ had redeemed him from the curse of the law, at the awful cost of being made a curse for him.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:” — Galatians 3:13

He had been “of the works of the law” — Galatians 3:10 and the law had cursed him; but Christ had come and lifted that dreadful curse from Paul, that Paul might be redeemed. That cross was at once the manifestation and the measure of the personal love of Christ for him, Paul —

“Who loved me, and gave himself for me.” — Galatians 2:20

Here, friends, is something wonderful, and I would that we might all enter into it. It is even more wonderful than the cloud into which Moses entered on Sinai. It is that Christ in His death not only saw and loved us all, but He saw and loved each of us. This is distinctly stated by Isaiah:

“When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed” — Isaiah 53:10 “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:” — Isaiah 53:11 The death pangs of Christ were the birth pangs of the new creation each member of which is born separately and redeemed separately. Of that compensatory vision each of us may say: “He saw me, and gave Himself for me.”

Paul glorified in the cross because by it he was redeemed from “under the law,” that he might receive the placing as a son.

“To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” — Galatians 4:5 The cross did not redeem Paul from the curse of the law only to leave him still under that which had cursed him, and must continue righteously to curse all who are under it:

“as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” — Galatians 3:10

Paul gloried in the cross because it made possible — next to deliverance from the curse — his mightiest blessing: the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts” — Galatians 4:6

Paul well knew that through the holy atoning blood, and that only, could he ever have received the Spirit. What a new reason for glorying in the cross. And finally Paul would glory in the cross because it made an end of things between him and the world.

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” — Galatians 6:14

Friends, here is something searching. It is one thing to glory in the cross because by it we are become dead to the law; but are we as ready to exult in that same cross because by it we are become dead to the world and the world dead to us? To Paul, the cross stood not only between him and the wrath of God, but between him and this great world-system of ambition, greed, and pleasure.

There is a closing word at once austere and difficult.

“From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” — Galatians 6:17 The Greek for “marks” is “stigmata.” What does this mean? We may not dogmatize. Two interpretations are suggested. Paul had, like his Master, been cruelly scourged. Doubtless his

body, like Christ's sacred body, bore the marks of the scourge. In this sense the apostle bore the stigmata of Christ. But from earliest ages it has been believed that also upon Paul's flesh had been supernaturally imprinted the scars of the nails. There seems no room for historic doubt that St. Francis of Assisi, whom even Protestants have called "the' Christliest man since Paul," also received the stigmata. It is a very, very sacred, a very tender subject. The Cross is the throne of truth. Upon it Jesus completed, by the shedding of His precious blood, the work of our redemption, through which, from being the children of wrath, we are become the children of a loving and eternal Father. And whatever, in the divine will, it is given us to bear, let us not refuse it as did Simon the Cyrenian — let us glory in the Cross of Christ.

23 THE HEAVENLY PATTERN

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“See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” — Hebrews 8:5

WE have in the book of Exodus the account of VV that visit which Moses paid to Jehovah Himself in the excellent glory above Mount Sinai — a visit lasting forty days and forty nights, during which time Moses received from God most explicit instructions concerning a tabernacle which he was to make for the particular dwelling place of Jehovah among his people. And not only did he receive instructions, as we might say, specifications, concerning the structure of that building, but he also saw the heavenly things, the heavenly purpose, the great truths of which that building, when it should be finished, would be but a type, a kind of parable in gold and linen and brass and silver. In other words, Moses was invited up into the presence of God and into the vision of the heavenly things in order that he might reproduce in type the things which he had seen. Again and again was given to him the solemn exhortation:

“See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” — Hebrews 8:5

Nothing, absolutely nothing was left to Moses' originality or initiative. A perfect plan was given to him and the most elaborate and detailed instructions as to execution of the plan, and his responsibility began and ended with strict and implicit obedience to the instructions which he had received. And my purpose is to try and draw from that event, to which our text refers, its central and permanent truth, — that Moses was commissioned to build something on earth that should be exactly like something in heaven.

Just so, we are set in the world to have visions, to go up into the mount, to see, in the presence of God, the divine truth concerning human life, and then to work it out into character and conduct. I think it may be said without exaggeration, without qualification, that in a very real, thorough, broad sense, this sums up the thought of Christian living and of the purpose of God in our redemption.

Now I believe it may help a little, if we think upon that singular building which Moses was commissioned to build. What may we learn from the tabernacle in the wilderness that shall help us in reproducing, in character and conduct, heavenly things? The commission to Moses was that it was to be beautiful. The life that you and I are commissioned to live, and the character you and I are under responsibility to form, must then be, first of all, beautiful.

There have been many ideals of character and each of them, no doubt, so formed under Christian influence that they contain important elements of truth. The Puritan character was, in many respects, most admirable. It had in it elements of strength, of sincerity, of simplicity, of great loyalty to God and of obedience to what they understood to be the will of God. No fragmentary form of character could be more noble than the Puritan ideal; and yet, as we look closely at that ideal, and

as we measure it up against Christ, we begin to see that it is lacking precisely in this element of beauty. I might go on and refer to other ideals of character which have been formed by the people of God, but let us rather pass by all these incomplete and unsymmetrical visions of life and think of Jesus Christ. In Him there is nothing lacking, nothing in excess. Jesus Christ was perfectly strong. No Puritan was ever such a rock-man as He, and yet there was nothing hard or repelling in Christ's firmness; it was clothed in gentleness, and because He was supremely strong, He could be supremely gentle, patient, and sympathetic. In everything God makes there is first of all order, then comes symmetry. You remember in the 21st chapter of Revelation the description of the heavenly Jerusalem and its proportions; the breadth and the length and the height of it were equal. That is God's idea of symmetry. First of all, then, that tabernacle was beautiful, and it was beautiful because there was an ordered harmony in it. Everything was beautiful. And if we are reproducing the heavenly character here, then will, according to the prayer of the Psalmist, "the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us:" — Psalms 90:17

I should say the second characteristic which we need to notice in the tabernacle built by Moses was its costliness. It was not a cheap thing which Moses built. God did not propose that the building in which His glory was in a very particular and local way to be manifested — and in itself a type of the costliest of all costly offerings, Jesus Christ — should be without cost. Everything in it was of the most precious materials. The very boards were overlaid with gold, solid gold. The seven-branched candlestick was of gold. There was embroidery of purple and scarlet and red and blue with costliest work. The Holy Spirit endowed the craftsmen with more than earthly wisdom and skill that they might carve and embroider and engrave the beautiful details of that edifice. Splendid jewels flashed from the breast-plate of the high priest and glittered upon his shoulders. Infinite skill of weaving and carving went into it. The first thought was beauty then, and the second, costliness. So these lives of ours will be heavenly in proportion as cost has gone into them. First of all, the unspeakable, the holy, the immeasurable gift and cost of our redemption. The costliest gift that heaven had was given for us, and we shall never come to the acme of Christian character and life without sacrifice — the best and costliest we have to give. It costs the renunciation of the lesser that we may have the greater, that we may grasp the choicest things and build them into character. The third striking characteristic of the tabernacle that I should like to mention is that its beauty was chiefly inward. All the glory of the gold, and all the beauty of the engravers' and weavers' and embroiderers' art was covered from outward observation. Christ was like that. He was not a man of marvelous beauty of visage and outward splendor of appearance:

"When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." — Isaiah 53:2

Here, eminently, is a lesson for our day. The great temptation is to make religion a matter of externalities alone; but to be rather than to do, is the central thought of God with regard to the character of His people; to be beautiful within.

There is the danger of hypocrisy, the danger that we shall seem to be more devoted, more consecrated, more engaged with the things of God than we really are; and if I read aright the mind of Christ, there is nothing for which He feels such an aversion as for hypocrisy. And the essence of hypocrisy is trying to seem to be a little sweeter, a little better, a little more devoted than we really are. When Moses came down from his forty days' visit with Jehovah, he had caught the very radiance of God's glory, but "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone" — Exodus 34:29

There is nothing more odious than self-conscious piety. And the tabernacle was not a very great or imposing structure. The smallest chapel in St. Peter's at Rome would hold it. Does the application not make itself? We are not called so much to be and do something great or imposing, as to beautify our place in life. You and I are not very important individuals; we are called to build the tabernacle of character in the lowly walks of life, — we are not filling very exalted stations. We are likely to be called upon to build just along some dusty highway, where the great mass of men must walk and suffer and serve, than to build it upon some heaven-kissed peak where the whole world shall see it. In modern life there is a great desire to be conspicuous. It influences us like a vice. We want to be known. We want to be pillars. But, have you ever thought that the chinking stones are just as essential in the temple which God is building, as the great massive columns that rest upon them, but which all men can see? What does it matter, after all, for a few brief years, where we are or what work we are engaged in, if only it be we are like Christ as we move among men.

Lastly I want to remark upon our supreme danger. It is that we shall change the plan. The repeated exhortation to Moses was, —

“See, saith he, that thou make all things according

to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” — Hebrews 8:5

Just because of the danger that Moses would forget it and change it later on. So there is danger, that as we recede from the place of vision, and as the vision itself becomes dulled in our memories, we shall build lesser, baser things than the vision demands. And perhaps the place at which failure enters is at that point where we want to substitute brass for gold, even wood for brass. And especially too, when Christian ideals are lowered by the infusion of pagan ideals;—heathen philosophies in the pulpit, and pretty little formulas for Christian living that might have come bodily out of any pagan religion. The danger is that we shall build less of gold, and fine linen, and purple and scarlet and blue; that we shall put paste jewels into the breast-plate of the high priest; that we shall forget, in the little things, to make life and character according to the pattern that was shown to us by Christ.

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands” — Hebrews 9:11 it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true: but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:” — Hebrews 9:23-24

24 COMPENSATING VISIONS

COMPENSATING VISIONS

“When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed . . . He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied:”— Isaiah 53:10-11 THE fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is one of the prophetic foreviews of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It should be studied with the twenty-second Psalm. The latter is descriptive.

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

I may tell all my bones; they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” — Psalms 22:14-18 A marvelous description of death by crucifixion. The profuse sweat of intense physical agony, the dislocation (of shoulders and pelvis), heart failure, thirst, the pierced hands and feet, semi-nudity and hurt modesty —all these accompanying agonies of that most agonizing death are set forth with literal exactness. Even the desolate cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” — Psalms 22:1 is given. What a proof to any candid mind of the inspiration of the Bible! How should David foresee these things. Crucifixion was a mode of execution wholly unknown to ancient Israel. It was a Roman invention of later date. The answer is that David was an inspired man. But if the twenty-second Psalm is a description of the death of Jesus Christ written a thousand years before the event, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a doctrinal explanation of the crucifixion written 700 years before the event. When we have read David’s wonderful vision of the cross we are moved to ask with the divine Sufferer Himself, “Why?” Why was such a Being forsaken to such a death? Isaiah answers the question: Jesus Christ suffered vicariously. He who had never sinned was forsaken that we who have sinned might not be forsaken.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: . . . But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” — Isaiah 53:4-6 “for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” — Isaiah 53:8 And absolutely no other explanation consistent with the goodness of God can be given. Whatever any other man has suffered was but “buffeting for his faults,” who deserved, in strict justice, far more. But Jesus Christ had no faults. He had always perfectly loved, perfectly obeyed God. Such a Being, in a morally governed universe, could only suffer for others. And since, as Plato said, “Sin and suffering are riveted together,” whoever would ‘bear our sins,’ must of necessity take our place in suffering. But while He, as our Substitute, must suffer in our stead, the compassion of His father could and did light up that awful darkness with the vision of the

results of so great suffering. Christ, in other words, was given to see that His pains were birth pangs; that His agonies were not merely a doing right by the moral order of the universe, an awful but perfect vindication of the holy law, a final demonstration of His own horror of sin and of God's necessary hatred of it — not merely thus were His sufferings to be interpreted; but that those very sufferings were truly material, the “travail” out of which was being born the new creation — this He was permitted to see. Who can estimate the enormous joy of that vision?

“He shall see his seed,” — Isaiah 53:10 “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” — Isaiah 53:11 The “corn of wheat” — John 12:24 had indeed come to the moment of death, but in the very act of dissolution He felt Himself passing into countless corns of wheat. If a grain of actual wheat were conscious of itself, could feel all our human drawing back from death, but could just at the moment of ceasing to be, find its consciousness reborn into the hope of the new powerful upspringing life of the blade forcing itself upward toward the light and downward into the warm soft soil, — if this, I say, could be, it is easy to see that the new joy of the new life would swallow up the transitory pain of death. Just so, Isaiah tells us, Jesus Christ saw the myriads of the redeemed all born again into the very divine life which was, for three days and nights, to forsake His torn and agonized body. Think what Jesus saw as He hung there in the darkness.

He saw every individual who would be saved through His death. Paul said:

“who loved me, and gave himself for me.” — Galatians 2:20 And if Paul, then each of us. Does this seem hard of belief? Why, even finite creatures, men and women, by thousands, have testified that in the act of drowning, every act of their lives passed before them in an instant of time! And He who hung dying on the cross was the God-man. To His human consciousness, His human capacity, must be added the divine consciousness — the divine capacity.

He saw a little group of fishermen, who, for the most part were Galileans, uncouth of speech, untaught in the wisdom of the world, inelegant and poor, invade in His name the Greek world of culture and the Roman world of power. He saw hell moved to its depths, and the whole power of Rome, ten times in two centuries, launched against an ever-growing but always small and obscure band of believers. He saw them in the arena, in prisons, in slave pens and catacombs; and He saw them, pale with 200 years of suffering, mount the throne of the Caesars.

He saw the dawn across the long night of centuries. He saw the world acknowledge His ethic. He saw hospitals and orphanages and schools. He saw woman no longer the slave of man. He saw childhood made sacred. Across the long conflict of good and evil He saw His own second coming in glory, and the earth, so long drenched with blood and tears, swing into the peace and blessing of the millennium. And He saw till God had wiped away all tears from all faces, till there was “no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying,” — Revelation 21:4

He saw

“a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” — Revelation 21:4 and He saw His servants, reigning “forever and ever.” — Revelation 22:5 His was the triumph of joy over pain. When the vision was at its climax He said, “It is finished; and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” — John 19:30 This is what the writer of Hebrews means when he says that Jesus “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,

despising the shame” — Hebrews 12:2 Have we not here a divine law? Is the compensatory vision of Jesus Christ a solitary instance? By no means. Undoubtedly the crucifixion vision vouchsafed to the dying Lord was unique in its extent and power. But it was after all but the highest, most sublime instance of a great principle of the divine dealing. When Moses was about to die he

“went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.”—Deuteronomy 34:1-3

What did that mean? It meant that Moses was permitted to see that in behalf of which he had labored and suffered. As his eye swept that matchless panorama of verdure and fruitfulness, the blue of distant mountains, whose clefts in the afternoon sun seemed inlaid with sapphire and emerald, as he saw the flashing of distant waters and the waving of tall trees, we may well believe that his great heart beat high, even though its beatings were soon to be stilled under the kiss of God; and that as he turned to see the desert of the wanderings, and recalled all its weariness and pain, Moses murmured: “The least of yonder glories is compensation for it all.” When Paul was “ready to be offered”—11 Timothy 4:6 and knew that the time of departing was near, he sang his swan song of triumph.

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day:”—2 Timothy 4:7-8.

He thought of the years of storm and stress since he met Jesus on his way to Damascus. He said:

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.” — 2 Corinthians 11:24-25

“In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” — 2 Corinthians 11:27 But one gleam of the jewels of that crown, one look into the deep eyes of the blessed Lord, one tone of His voice as He said, “Well done, Paul; well done, valiant soldier, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,” more than paid for it all.

We have these balancings of glory against pain. Where do we find them? In the promises of God. You who are weary of heart look up!

“It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer we shall also reign with him” — 2 Timothy 2:11-12

25 BUSY ABOUT THE WRONG THING

BUSY ABOUT THE WRONG THING “And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone” — 1 Kings 20:40 THE text is part of a little parable, spoken by an unnamed prophet to King Ahab.

“Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.” — 1 Kings 20:39-40

Given a man to keep, he had lost the man. And he had lost him because he was too busy to keep him. Evidently the servant considered that an excuse. Had he been idle, then indeed the loss of the man would have been an unpardonable offence. Justly enough, the king found that but an aggravation of the fault. If one to whom we had entrusted millions should lose them, would we not find it a poor excuse that he had been busy picking up pennies which he had dropped?

Now let us leave King Ahab and the nameless prophet, and come down the centuries to ourselves for an application. It is an easy application to make, for we too have been given a man to keep and our most pressing danger is that we shall lose that man, just because we are too busy to keep him. The battle is the battle of life, the man is ourself, and the peril of loss lurks in the engrossing, absorbing character of modern life. Never in all the history of the world was the battle of life so bitter, so merciless, so ruthless as now. It is not without an instinctive sense of fitness that the common speech of the day calls the chief business men “captains of industry.” Business is organized on a vast scale; the unit counts for nothing — the mass for everything. The hours of the day are not enough for toil, business burns up the nights as well. God’s rest day is ruthlessly appropriated; men are worn out, burnt out rather, and left behind without thought or mercy. And instinctively we feel that we must keep up with the rush or be trampled underfoot. Lately a famous cartoonist drew a caricature of himself, in which unwittingly he characterized us all. He represented himself grimly walking on a treadmill. Behind him were sharp spikes which effectually forbade a pause. Before him — as a wisp of straw is dangled before a horse to lure him to a ceaseless task — hung a dollar mark, the goal of his weary tramp; a tramp that never ceased, a goal never reached. What an amiable satire on modern business life! With a very slight change, it might be made to apply with equal point to modern social life. What is it but the ceaseless round of the treadmill? Before the man the elusive dollar, — before his wife an equally elusive phantom, pleasure. And in this two-fold pursuit more men and women are lost than in crime or debauchery. Crime appeals to the social pervert, debauchery to the social degenerate; but on the treadmill called “business,” and on the treadmill called “society,” more manhood and womanhood is lost than all the churches are saving. The man given us to keep is the man whom each of us calls “myself.” When the battle is over, when at last for each of us the tramp of the treadmill ceases, when we are lifted from the wheel and another takes our place — to be in turn worn out and cast aside — the one demand made upon each of us will be for the man who was given us to keep. Not — “What money did you gather? Not — “What fame did you achieve?” Not —

“What space did you occupy in the social papers?”

But, “What man are you?” And it never will do to reply: “Lord, as thy servant was busy here and there” — 1 Kings 20:40 the manhood, the womanhood dwindled; the soul shriveled to the inconceivably mean measure of that which I pursued: Lord,—

“as thy servant was busy here and there” — 1 Kings 20:40 “the man, the woman Thou gavest me to keep was gone.”

If, anticipating the day, yet future, thank God, when the Lord of life will demand of us the man He gave us to keep, we were to stop today and make that demand of ourselves, what answer could we give? Where is the boy He gave us to keep? As each of us remembers himself in boyhood, I am sure some accusing sense must come over us all of foul wrong done to the boy. Might I not have done better by that little fellow who was then that strange being whom I now call “myself”? Thirty years elapsed between the surrender at Appomattox and my next visit to Richmond. I arrived early in the morning of a summer day and walked over to the Capitol square. The larger facts were unchanged. There was the old Capitol, under whose roof I had heard Yancey and Hunter and Stephens and a host of the giants of that day. The great trees were still there and across the square the executive mansion of Virginia, in whose doorway I had for the first time seen Robert E. Lee. All that came easily back. But where was the boy in Confederate butternut, who had seen it all? My answer was the foolish one of the prophet’s parable:

“As thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone.” — 1 Kings 20:40 And I felt with a sudden sternness, that were another to deal now by my boy as I had dealt by that war time boy “myself,” I should hold him to a strict accounting.

What have we — pursuing still that self-judgment of which I have spoken — done with the young man who was given us to keep? Have we lost him too, in being busy? Is this careworn, bowed man of today — worn and bowed in the petty, contemptible strife for dollars and place and position — what we have made of him? Happy indeed, if we have not made him into a cruel and selfish monster.

You remember Andrew Lang’s verses on three portraits of Prince Charlie, the last of the Stuarts:

1731 Beautiful face of a child, Lighted with laughter and glee, Mirthful, and tender, and wild, My heart is heavy for thee!

1744 Beautiful face of a youth, As an eagle poised to fly forth To the old land loyal of truth, To the hills and the sounds of the North:

Fair face, daring and proud, Lo! the shadow of doom, even now, The fate of thy line, like a cloud, Rests on the grace of thy brow!

1773 Cruel and angry face, Hateful and heavy with wine, Where are the gladness, the grace, The beauty, the mirth that were thine?

Ah, my Prince, it were well —

Hadst thou to the gods been dear,— To have fallen where Keppoch fell, With the war-pipe loud in thine ear! To have died with never a stain On the fair White Rose of Renown, To have fallen,

fighting in vain, For, thy father, thy faith, and thy crown!

No, we cannot accuse ourselves of idleness, but we may have been busy about the wrong thing. We have been given a man to keep and if we have lost him, all our achievements, however splendid, are worse than useless.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” — Mark 8:36

There are three important senses in which, in the rush and preoccupation of our modern life, we are in danger of losing the man given us to keep. And first I place the eternal sense. For this man given us to keep, whom each of us calls “myself” is an immortal being. He is a special creation of God. An animal as to his body, he is “theopneustos” — God-breathed — as to his essential being. He is the “offspring” of the Eternal Father. He lives in a universe the final basis of which is moral and spiritual, not material. He cannot escape from that universe if he would. He must meet God, and must meet Him on the one single issue — his personal treatment of the Son of God.

Furthermore, this man who was given us to keep is the raw material out of which the renewing spirit makes sons of God by the marvel of the new birth. That is the true destiny of the man given us to keep. Made a little lower than the angels, his destiny, in the divine plan, and the divine desire, is far above the angels in an eternal oneness with God Himself. For that reason he has been made capable of infinite perfection, infinite bliss. At God’s right hand — where the man given us to keep belongs — are pleasures forevermore. Pleasures of the senses purified from sin; pleasures of the intellect, emancipated from fleshly limitations; pleasures of the soul beyond description or conception. But along with this infinite capacity of enjoyment, the man given us to keep has an infinite capacity of suffering. If he turns from the felicities of manhood made holy, he must endure the woes of manhood made devilish. It is for you and me to say which of these eternal destinies, the man given us to keep shall have. What have we chosen?

We may lose the man given us to keep in an important personal sense. He is susceptible of all but illimitable development. He has an intellectual capacity to receive knowledge, to reason upon that knowledge, to light the flame of imagination, to commune with the sages and the seers, to enter — humbly it may be, and at their feet — the society of thinkers, poets, of statesmen and philanthropists who have enlarged the empire of the mind and filled it with the most intellectual delights. The man given us to keep has an emotional nature capable of love, of friendship, of the holy family relationships. He may live in spheres of love or hate. He may love nobly or ignobly. He may fill this capacity of his with heaven or hell. What have we done with him? Have we taught him to live greatly, even though obscurely; or to live basely, even though conspicuously? Have we made of him a wise man or a fool? Have you noticed that the man whom Jesus Christ called a fool was a most successful man, as the world counts success? He was a man who had much goods, enough for many years, laid up; but he was a fool because he invited his soul to live on these things.

Finally there is another sense in which we may lose the man given us to keep. We may teach him to center his life energies and capacities upon himself, and so, whatever we may have taught him to call himself, make of him a pagan. For just as truly as Jesus Christ brought a new life into the world and opened the door of it to all who will trust Him, just as surely did He bring a new

philosophy of life. Before Christ, religion consisted in certain sacrifices and in personal affection for God. Life then was hoarded. But the religion which Jesus Christ declares to be “pure” is —

“To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”
— James 1:27 Have we made the man, given us to keep, clean, brave and knightly in all unselfish service? Have we developed him along all the lines of his varied capacity? Above all, have we brought him into right relations with Jesus Christ?

26 JOY

JOY “That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” John 17:13

IT is not uncharitable to say that many people in this world are content if they be merry; they seek nothing higher from life than such a surface stirring of their shallow nature as pleasure brings. If they may put far from them the burden and sorrow and care of this world, and forget its griefs in passing jest, they are content. Better than this, and the pursuit I would fain believe of a far greater number, is happiness. Happiness is an infinitely higher thing than pleasure. That it is the desire of God His children should be happy, is a fact to which page after page of the Bible bears witness: —

“That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” John 17:13 But our text holds something which is better even than happiness — and that is joyousness. I find it is not easy, at least for me, to define precisely what joyfulness, in the Scriptural sense of the word, is. Perhaps it might be defined as happiness overflowing, happiness militant and aggressive; happiness going out and beyond itself, too full to be used up in mere personal satisfaction, an overabundance of happiness; happiness alive and aglow; happiness reaching out and desiring to shine beyond the limits of one’s own soul.

It may help us at the beginning to fix in our minds three things which stand over against sorrow or pain: pleasure, existing for and ending upon self; happiness, a deeper, nobler thing; and joyousness, which is the overflowing of happiness. If happiness might be compared to a tranquil lake embosomed in protecting hills, joyousness would be like a mighty river ‘flowing out.

“That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” John 17:13

We have here two simple ideas: Jesus Christ filled with joy — ourselves privileged to partake of that joy until we are filled with it.

Now we do not habitually think of Jesus Christ as joyful. Long before His manifestation, the prophet Isaiah had said of Him that He would be “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:” Isaiah 53:3 and so it was. But observe, “a man of sorrows,” not of melancholy. We cannot think of Jesus Christ as moping through life; we cannot think of Him as turning fretfully toward His burden; as thinking of His wrongs, of His throne denied Him, of His people rejecting Him, and of His poverty and humiliation in a world which He had made. We have a very poor conception indeed of the character of Jesus Christ, if we think it was these things which made Him “a man of sorrows.”

Yet He was a “man of sorrows.” He said in Gethsemane:

“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” — Matthew 26:38 But habitually He speaks of His joyfulness. This is the paradox of Christ’s life.

“A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;” — Isaiah 53:3 yet bearing those sorrows upon a flood-tide, as it were, of a mighty joy. And the joy was more than the sorrow. An exultant and joyful

man of sorrows — let us try to understand this paradox. Have you ever noticed that the nearer Jesus came to the cross, the more He spoke of His joy? You do not find Him testifying much of His joyfulness in the earlier part of His ministry, and I believe not once in that which is called “the year of public favor,” when the multitudes thronged Him and it seemed as if the nation were really turning to the long expected Messiah. But as Jesus went on, drawing ever nearer to Calvary, as the burden of the shame and sin and sorrow of the world began to gather in awful darkness over Him, observe how He speaks more and more of His joyfulness; and in the closing admonitions and instructions in the latter chapters of John’s Gospel, there is a constant reference to the deep joy which filled Jesus. Just when the sorrow is becoming deepest, the joyfulness seems to rise above it and triumph over it. If we ponder that, and connect it with the prophet’s explanation of the sorrows of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:” — Isaiah 53:4 I think we shall be upon the very verge of solving the paradox. In other words — and is it not very simple — Jesus found His supreme joy in bearing the sorrow of others. He was not joyful in spite of having the privilege of getting underneath the sorrow and burden and guilt of the world, but He was joyful because of this privilege. It was the great fountain head of His joy, the very source of it. He found His joy in the cross.

We can conceive of that, I think, if we are willing to separate ourselves for a moment from that shrinking which we all feel at the thought of pain and sorrow, and get upon the nobler side of our own souls. We can understand that such a Being as Jesus would rejoice with joy unspeakable, that He could do that thing. We can understand how, when looking down on this world with its sin and misery and want and woe and mountainous iniquity, there would be ever in His heart the exultant joy of knowing that it was He who, in due time, should come down here and get underneath all that unspeakable guilt, and bear it away from man up to the cross. Just as Jean Valjean was happy under the cart. It hurt him, but he lifted it away from the old man who was being crushed by it. There was joy in doing it, a joy in getting underneath it, a joy in the very pain which it cost to do it.

“But I have a baptism to be baptized with;

and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” — Luke 12:50

Put over against this the introspective self pity, which keeps us forever occupied with our own little round of common sorrows and infirmities, such as belong to the life here, and such as one would say ought to be manfully borne. My friends, farther than the east is from the west or the brightest sunlight from the darkness of midnight, is this Christ temper of soul from the pettiness of a self-centered life. The joy of vicarious suffering, the joy of getting underneath all that was bearing down the heart of humanity and lifting it helpfully away, — this was the joy of the Lord.

You know how very easily this truth finds illustration. Surely Winkelried must have felt something of that joy when he gathered the spears of the enemy into his own bosom, that he might break the hostile line and make way for liberty. There must have been in his heart an ineffable joy as he felt those spears crushing into it and his life going out. It was a joyful thing so to die.

There was another source of the joy of the Lord. He rejoiced in the will of God. Will you consider that for a moment? What a joyful thing it is not to be left alone in this world! What a joyful thing to

know that one is not the sport of circumstances nor of accident; not in a world where things are suffered to take their course; not orphaned amidst all these destructive forces that move in upon us, as children of God in this world; to know in short, that over all there is the resistless will of God. Things are not happening to the children of God. We are moving upon an appointed course, and the joys and sorrows of our life are all appointed and portioned out, moulding and shaping us for better things. We have our rejoicing, not in the pain, not in the deprivation, not in the disappointment, but in the great overmastering will which has sent these things.

Then again, what a joy the Lord found in His mission of salvation.

“How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.” — Matthew 18:12-13 The joy of being a Saviour! Dear friends, how great a thing it is to have one soul saved, to have hell closed and glory opened forever to one more immortal soul! Jesus rejoicing over one sheep, and the angels rejoicing with Him! This was the joy of the Lord Jesus. Isaiah brings it out:

“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:” — Isaiah 53:11 The joy of coming underneath human guilt as well as sorrow and pain and burden, and bearing that guilt away vicariously, that is the supreme joy of the Lord, — the joy of suffering that others might not suffer. I think that pilot who kept his burning boat against the shore until every passenger was safe, though his own hands were burning to a crisp as he held the wheel, must have known a joy greater than the pain. This is a very high kind of joy. I think that captain who stood upon the deck of his sinking ship, and gave his place in the last boat to a poor stowaway who had no kind of claim upon him, and saw the stowaway pass on into safety, while he went down with his ship, must have drunk deeply of this joy of suffering. Paul was in the very fellowship of this compensating joy when he wrote:

“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:” — Colossians 1:24

If He suffered the others were spared; there was joy in that. But this joy of vicarious suffering is not the only source of the joy of the Lord. There are passages in which others are indicated.

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes:” — Luke 10:21 Do you know what that meant? Jesus had sent out the seventy to announce the kingdom as at hand; to go everywhere, into all the villages and sound the glad tidings, that at last Israel's King had come, and that the kingdom was ready. And they returned filled with pride and gratification that the demons had been subject to them. They had not made one convert! The mission to Israel was an absolute failure — Jesus saw that. The thing was hid from the rulers, was hid from the nation, and was revealed to a few fishermen and tax-gatherers and converted harlots. In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit! Why? Hear His own words:

“for so it seemed good in thy sight.” — Luke 10:21 In the Hebrews we are told of another source of joy which sustained our Lord in the supreme agony on the cross.

“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,” — Hebrews 12:2 The joy of final consummation; the joy in anticipation of the fruition of all His suffering, when He should see and eternally enjoy the results of it; the joy of putting away the sins of men, of transforming them into His own image, and of sharing with them the eternal felicities. All this was with Him helpfully in the supreme hour. That is what we need to see. Beyond question we do not live enough in the inspiration of the compensations and balancing of heaven.

Turn now for a moment to the other thought — the human side of joy.

“That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” — John 17:13

What does the Lord mean, that we shall have His joy? How shall we have the joy of the Lord? Evidently, dear friends, it is an arduous matter; it is a call to unselfish heights. If we are to share the joy of the Lord, we must be willing to share that out of which sprang His joy. We must rejoice if we can bear away some sorrow from another heart, some burden from another life. We must learn to rejoice, as we never yet have learned to rejoice, in the salvation of the lost. We read that there “is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” — Luke 15:10

Sometimes we “get up” a revival, and after it is over and we are asked concerning the success of the meeting, answer that it was a disappointment, only (say) ten converted. We must get out of that, and like the angels of God rejoice “over one sinner that repenteth.” — Luke 15:10

Then we must turn our thoughts more towards the future, towards the heavenly rest, the heavenly activities and the eternal joys which are there. I repeat it is a trumpet call. It costs something to have the joy of the Lord. Salvation, with its joy, is a free gift, but the joy of the Lord is to be had only by entering into fellowship with the Lord in His path; to be, in the measure of our capacity, Christ’s in the world; to get with Him into the joy of suffering; the joy of the great sweet will of God; the expectation of the things to come.

It was a great thing for humanity when that strange being, Peter the Hermit, went through Europe preaching the crusades. It was a call to barons and knights to cease their petty neighborhood wars; their pompous and empty way of life; their tilting at wooden blocks in the castle yard; their feasting in castle halls; and to go forth and do an unselfish thing — to rescue an empty tomb. It was the letting in of the light. It was the lifting of men out of their narrowness and mean conception of life. Is there not a perpetual crusade being preached from the blessed Word, calling us up out of the petty things in which our lives are being frittered away; a crusade which calls us to go out upon Christ’s own great enterprise of salvation into the uttermost parts of the earth? There is something in this that ought to lay hold of the nobler side of us — that ought to have power to redeem us from small and ignoble things, that ought to lift us into that clear, pure atmosphere of suffering. Yes, but also of the unspeakable joy of the Lord, a “joy no man taketh from you.” — John 16:22

27 THE LOVELINESS OF CHRIST

THE LOVELINESS OF CHRIST “Yea, he is altogether lovely.” — Song of Solomon 5:16

JESUS CHRIST is the only being of whom, without gross flattery, it could be asserted, “He is altogether lovely.” All other greatness has been marred by littleness, all other wisdom has been flawed by folly, all other goodness has been tainted by imperfection.

It seems to me, this loveliness of Christ consists first of all in His perfect humanity. Understand me, I do not now mean that He was a perfect human, but that He was perfectly human. In everything but our sins, and our evil natures, he is one with us. He grew in stature, and in grace. He labored, and wept, and prayed, and loved. He was tempted in all points as we are — sin apart. With Thomas, we confess him Lord and God; we adore and revere Him. But, beloved, there is no other who establishes with us such intimacy, who comes so close to these human hearts of ours; no one in the universe of whom we are so little afraid. He enters as simply and naturally into our twentieth century lives as if He had been reared in the same street. He is not one of the ancients. How wholesomely and genuinely human He is. Martha scolds Him; John, who has seen Him raise the dead, still the tempest and talk with Moses and Elijah on the Mount, does not hesitate to make a pillow of His breast at supper. Peter will not let Him wash his feet, but afterwards wants His head and hands included in the ablution. They ask Him foolish questions, and rebuke Him, and venerate and adore Him all in a breath; and He calls them by their first name, and tells them to fear not, and assures them of His love. In all this He seems to me altogether lovely. His perfection does not glitter, it glows. The saintliness of Jesus is so warm and human it attracts and inspires. We find in it nothing austere and inaccessible, like a statue in a niche. The beauty of His holiness reminds one rather of a rose, or a bank of violets.

O, my readers, I protest with all my mind against the cold abstraction which mysticism and theology have made and labeled “Jesus.” The real Jesus — He of Nazareth and of the glory — is so perfectly holy that He does not need to insist upon it. Our little righteousnesses are so puny that they must be obtruded, and coddled, and accentuated by Pharisaical drawings away of the skirts, and the setting up of little standards of differences between sinner and sinner. Jesus receives sinners and eats with them — all kinds of sinners. Nicodemus, the moral, religious sinner, and Mary of Magdala, “out of whom went seven devils” — Luke 8:2 the shocking kind of sinner. He comes into sinful lives as a bright, clear stream enters a stagnant pool. The stream is not afraid of contamination, but its sweet energy cleanses the pool.

I remark again, and as connected with this, that His sympathy is altogether lovely. He is always being “moved with compassion.” — Matthew 9:36 The multitude without a shepherd, the sorrowing widow of Nain, the little dead child of the ruler, the demoniac of Gadara, the hungry five thousand — whatever suffers touches Jesus. His very wrath against the scribes and Pharisees is but the excess of His sympathy for those who suffer under their hard self-righteousness. Did you ever find Jesus looking for “deserving poor?” He “healed all that were sick.” — Matthew 8:16 And what grace in His sympathy! Why did He touch that poor leper? He could have healed him with a word

as He did the nobleman's son. Why, for years the wretch had been an outcast, cut off from kin, dehumanized. He had lost the sense of being a man. It was defilement to approach him. Well, the touch of Jesus made him human again. A Christian woman, laboring among the moral lepers of London, found a poor street girl desperately ill in a bare, cold room. With her own hands she ministered to her, changing her bed linen, procuring medicines, nourishing food, a fire, and making the poor place as bright and cheery as possible. Then she said, "May I pray with you?" "No," said the girl, "you don't care for me; you are doing this to get to heaven." Many days passed, the Christian woman unwearily kind, the sinful girl hard and bitter. At last the Christian said: "My dear, you are nearly well now, and I shall not come again, but as it is my last visit, I want you to let me kiss you," and the pure lips that had known only prayers and holy words met the lips defiled by oaths and by unholy caresses — and then, my friends, the hard heart broke. That was Christ's way. Can you fancy Him calling a convention of pharisees to discuss methods of reaching the "masses"? And that leads me to remark that His humility was altogether lovely, and He, the only one who ever had the choice of how and where He should be born, entered this life as one of "the masses." With a gesture he could have caused to rise about that birth couch the walls of a palace filled with every luxury, but He chose a stable for a birth chamber and a manger for a cradle.

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." — Matthew 8:20

During all His public ministry he had not where to lay His head. Why? That the poorest wretch on earth might feel that God could really sympathize with him. The other day I received a letter from a poor prodigal who, when he wrote, had been two days without food or bed. "At night," he says, "I think that my Lord, too, 'hath not where to lay his head.'" — Matthew 8:20 What meekness, what lowliness!

"I am among you as he that serveth." — Luke 22:27 "After that he . . .

began to wash the disciples' feet." — John 13:3 "When he was reviled, he reviled not again." — 1 Peter 2:23 "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." — Isaiah 53:7 Can you think of Jesus posing and demanding His rights? But it is in His way with sinners that the supreme loveliness of Jesus is most sweetly shown. How gentle He is, yet how faithful; how considerate, how respectful! Nicodemus, candid and sincere, but proud of his position as a master in Israel, and timid lest he should imperil it, comes "to Jesus by night." — John 7:50

Before he departs, Nicodemus has learned his utter ignorance of the first step toward the kingdom, and goes away to think over the personal application of "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." — John 3:19 But he has not heard one harsh word, one utterance that can wound his self respect.

Follow Jesus to Jacob's well at high noon and hear His conversation with the woman of Samaria. How patiently He unfolds the deepest truths, how gently yet faithfully He presses the great ulcer of sin which is eating away her soul. He could not be more respectful to Mary of Bethany. When He speaks to the silent, despairing woman taken in adultery after her accusers have gone out one by one, He uses the same word for "woman" as that with which He addresses His own mother from the cross. It is as if He said, "Madame."

“Woman, . . . hath no man condemned thee?” — John 8:10

Even in the agonies of death Jesus could hear the cry of despairing faith. When conquerors return from far wars in strange lands they bring their chiefest captive as a trophy. It was enough for Christ to take back to heaven the soul of a thief.

Yea, he is altogether lovely. And now I have left myself no time to speak of his loveliness, of his gentle dignity, of his virile manliness, of his perfect courage. There is in Jesus a perfect equipoise of various perfections. All the elements of perfect character are in lovely balance. His gentleness is never weak. His courage is never brutal. My friends, you may study these things for yourselves. Follow Him through all the scenes of outrage and insult on the night and morning of His arrest and trial. Behold him before the high priest, before Herod, before Pilate. See Him browbeaten, bullied, scourged, smitten upon the face, spit upon, mocked. Now His inherent greatness comes out. Not once does He lose His self-poise, His high dignity.

Let us follow Him still further. Go with the jeering crowd without the gate; see Him stretched upon the great rough cross and hear the dreadful sound of the sledge as the spikes are forced through His hands and feet. As the yelling mob falls back, see the cross, bearing this gentlest, sweetest, bravest, loveliest man, upreared until it falls into its socket in the rock.

“And sitting down, they watched him there;” — Matthew 27:36

You watch, too. Hear Jesus ask the Father to forgive His murderers, hear all the cries from the cross. Is He not altogether lovely? What does it all mean?

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,” — 1 Peter 2:24 “And by him all that believe are justified from all things.” — Acts 13:39 “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.” — John 6:47 I close with a word of personal testimony, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend.” — Song of Solomon 5:16 Will you not accept Him as your Saviour, and Beloved, and Friend — this gentle, lovely Jesus?

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” — Acts 4:12

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