

of the kingdom. He revealed God the Father, whom men could trust and lovingly obey. He showed that all the work of life was noble—that men were brothers and should love each other, and that to give the life in self-sacrifice was the truest way of saving it. Then Religion began to move—it was felt to be an active force—it was influencing minds and hearts—it went to the door of the soul and knocked: when admitted in, it cast out devils, and kindled new joys. In the words Jesus Christ spoke—in the deeds He did—in the religion he lived—there was a new and amazing energy; it went among people as light shooting into chaos. The Spirit of the Word shone through the letter, and the worship, which had been empty, was filled with an infinite meaning. The Kingdom of Heaven became a living thing—an energy—a spiritual force.

And then this was seen, a portion—a large portion—of the people refusing to acknowledge and embrace the new force. They had no inclination to move—didn't want to see the old order of things disturbed—were satisfied to have the letter without the spirit, and the worship without the truth. Their creeds were venerable, and therefore good; the notions they held had been long of forming, and not to be abandoned hastily. This new force went clashing against their old ideas, their interests, their faiths and practices, and they doubted it, and hated it, and then tried to crush it. They wouldn't yield to it; wouldn't be borne along by it; wouldn't take thought or sentiment from it. They preferred the old silence to the new voice, the old sepulchre and the dry bones to the new temple and life. They stood in the midst of motion, but would not move. They could but be in the stream, and feel the force of its flow; but they moored the boat to their own grey rocks.

But it was not so with all. There were those who at once felt the new force, and yielded to it. They were the earnest men; men quick to see and to decide; men who could run some risk and venture something in the great concerns of life; men who refused to be held by chains of tradition to a useless past; men who knew that "a living dog is better than a dead lion"—that inward faith is better than outward form; and those men strongly seized hold of the new force, taking strength from it, and giving strength to it. I am often amazed at the energy of those first Christians; at the magnificent daring they displayed by embracing the new faith, knowing but a little and trusting largely. I am amazed at the decision with which they left their earthly all, and gave themselves to know and serve the truth. They did this because they were earnest men; the new force of the Kingdom caused a new force in themselves; with energy they seized on motion.

Now, there are two general ideas arising out of this, which I shall dwell upon briefly; the first has regard to the Kingdom, and the second to those who feel its power.

1. Christianity is in truth the working power of the world; it supplies the impulse to all true and ennobling action. I believe that men for the most part are idle naturally, and will only work when compelled. Slavery had its root and its reason in that. Men found that labour was needful to life, and, when possible, they made others labour that they might live. In all the old world dynasties' work was considered ignoble; it was called by ugly names; they saw in it nothing but the imposition of a long drawn out curse. Even Christian people maintain that old and barbarous idea. We feel that all the work we do is proof that a curse has passed upon the race; we think that by reason of man's sin the earth has turned niggard, and will only yield her stores to the violent struggling of starving people. Yet, in our better moments, we know that the power of work is the sign of our manhood, and that the working nations of the earth are they who become most prosperous and most happy. Where there is no religion, or where religion has become corrupted—only form and sound and emptiness—people have no growth, no power of expansion, and the nation soon falls to pieces. The same is true of the individual man; in Christ he finds his truest energy. I know that some men get impulse from ambition merely; they have a low and vulgar desire to be rich for the sake of riches, or famous for the glory of it. And sometimes the impulse lasts long; keeps chill blood warm; quickens the brain, and nerves the hands. But, as a rule, it has a short breath, and dies young. And it always ends in disappointment—blank, sheer, dreary disappointment. The shout of hopefulness dies off in a sigh of weariness. The true and lasting impulse is to be found in religion alone. Let a young man start his work in the world with this living force in his mind and in his heart, and his life must be great and noble and satisfactory to himself. I do not mean to say that he will make no mistakes; that he will get no suffering and no sorrow; but I do mean to say that work will be a pleasure to him, because he has high motives to it, etc.

I am sure many of you have need of this reminder, that religion is an energy, a vital force. You have got to think of it rather as repose and rest, etc. But the Church is God's great workshop, etc.

2. Religion is energy—motion; but we are not to regard it as a dull force, acting like the law of gravitation, always in the same way. And it is not the motion of machinery going, spinning away at the same rate, whatever may happen around. There are times when it gets energized—times when it rolls greater waves in on the shores of human life. Religion has its times of revival; for religion as a force is influenced, strengthened or enfeebled, by the condition of men. You see it in the time of Christ. Men were roused by John the Baptist to an unusual earnestness. From all classes of society the cry went out: "What shall we do?"—and then religion became a power. The earnest among them took the encrusting forms away, and piety came forth a gracious and a helpful spirit. It has its times and its seasons. You will find it in the history of the Church universal. By a great shock, by a rending and a revolution, a new stage is marked in the progress of the Church. Such was the Reformation, etc.

It is the same in the history of individual Churches. There are times of revival. A church doesn't go on always doing the same amount of work, etc. But a new era dawns.

It is the same in the history of individual Christian men. They are born of the Holy Ghost; they know that they are sons of God; but they have to turn to the ordinary work of the world, and they get absorbed in it, and their minds get full of worldly thoughts. They are just decent church-going Christians. The Kingdom of Heaven is within them, but it has ceased to exercise much influence upon their feelings or their conduct. And then a shock comes. They

get a new conception of duty—a new idea and conviction as to the nature of truth—a new thought as to the meaning of life.

Now, how does this energizing of the Kingdom of Heaven affect men? Jesus Christ says, only the energetic, only the men of impulse lay hold of it strongly. It is an old and well-known story—the majority of people live standing still, and do not care to move at all. You and I, from our own experience, know how stiff men get in their habits—how rheumatic in all the bones and joints of their moral system. They grow old, and hard, and dry, and stereotyped. Others seem to get sordid in all their aims; they seem incapable of appreciating any motives which are drawn from the unseen and the future, but are bound down to earth and time. Others are afraid to risk anything, even to venture a little for a chance of gaining much. Can you remember any progressive, any upward movement in our own time, which has not met with the most obstinate resistance from the major portion of the people. When some man, gifted above his fellows, has seen some political truth more clearly than they do; has seen some way of healing a national disease, or securing a nation's prosperity, be it by free trade, or the education of the people, he has had to struggle against prejudice, and interest, and ignorance, and wear his life away in the endeavor to do them good. The men of force see it, or partly see it. They do not see the whole or any part of it clearly, perhaps; but they have energy; they don't mind if they blunder on their way to a great achievement; they will dare a dangerous way to find a safe and quiet resting-place; they can sacrifice things dear to themselves for the sake of things that shall be dear to the world by-and-by, and they lay hold strongly, even violently, upon the new thought, the new truth, or new conception of it, ready to count all else but loss if they may but win the pearl of great price.

You see that in the history of the Church. When Luther found some forgotten truths in the neglected Bible; truths of freedom for the conscience from the degrading tyranny of the priesthood; truths that would give light to the mind and new life to the heart, he set himself with magnificent zeal to promulgate them among the people, running off into extremes and exaggerations in order to arouse interest. And you would have thought his task an easy one. Surely the people were tired of the oppression under which they had groaned so long. Surely they would welcome the bright, fresh morning. But, no; as in the ancient story, they piled Pelion on Ossa, Olympus on Pelion, to keep out the glad light of day! And when the sun rose in spite of it, and shed its beauty abroad—rose and looked over the piled-up mountains, sending its rays down the slanting sides to the feet of the people, even then they shut their eyes, and the moral darkness would not comprehend the light. Luther's life was a labour; an agony of conflict against the base interests of the clerical caste, and against the prejudices and habits of a whole continent of people. But not of all the people. Some there were who felt the new force, and yielded to it. It came with fresh revelations to the soul, and they rejoiced. The Kingdom of Heaven had become a force, and with force they laid hold of it.

It was the same when the time came for men to revolt from Calvinism. Calvinism as a creed and a system was great and grand—so great and so grand that no man of ordinary veneration will speak lightly of it. Calvinism was the Noah's ark that with its living freight outrode the deluge. But men made a mistake that Noah didn't make—when the water had subsided—instead of leaving it on Arrarat and going forth to possess a new world, they made of it a house to live in always. And there they are now, high and dry on the summit of the hill, grim guardians of a rotten wreck. I do not mean to say that Calvinism is become a useless thing. There are some portions of it that will never pass from the mind and heart of man. But then there are some portions of every phase of religion that are good, and at no time in the history of religion has there been a complete creation. Jesus Christ took the old system, the grand old idea, and gave it energy—made it a living force. The Protestant Church was but the Romish Church energized—more light—more freedom—juster conceptions of truth and of duty—more life for the soul and beauty for the conduct. And that is how God works with men. There is constant progression, passing of familiar landmarks, and entering on fresh fields of thought and labour. We have not yet reached the nightless world—the perfect knowledge and the fulness of joy: there will yet be rising and setting of sun—morning, noon and night—summer and winter: there will yet come voices from earth and sky. Christ has many things to say to the world, and the world cannot bear it yet. And this will happen, which has happened—times of refreshing will come, and many will not be refreshed. Religion will put out new strength, and only the earnest, the men of force, will lay hold of it, and find a truer life in God.

Now, brethren, the teaching for us as a people seems to be this,—be ready for those times and those seasons, etc.

But there is a teaching for each individual, man and woman here. The kingdom of God is within you. It came you scarce know how. But there was a revelation to the soul—a shock, and you broke into the silent sea of the spiritual. You were brought into conscious communion with God through faith in Jesus Christ. With a willing heart you devoted yourselves to His service. And since then many a time the kingdom within you has been energized. I mean that at times there came upon you the feeling that you were not living as you ought—you felt a strange new force in mind and heart, and you were ashamed of your sin. Did you improve those moments? did you lay hold of the new force? It may be that the present is such a moment. Since you have been here, memories of bygone days have come back to the mind—you have remembered old and unpaid vows to God: a desire has crept into your mind to be better, and to win God's well-done upon your work. Some new view of truth perhaps, or some fresh glimpse of the beauty of holiness. The kingdom is energized within you. Lay hold of the force—lay hold of it strongly. Confess your sins—have faith in Jesus Christ and be borne along by this living impulse to truer living and richer experiences. Aye, richer experiences—for, believe me, if you want joy, true joy, you must seek it in that self-surrender to God. No doubt there is joy in the success of earthly schemes. There is joy when the palm is satiated with gold. There is joy for him who waits on fortune when his gaining brings a prize. There is delight in feasting on the bounties of earth, the garment in which God veils the brightness of His face: in being filled with the loveliness of flowers, the songs of birds, the hum