

an earnest searching for rest and peace, with some indistinct knowledge of the way in which it was to be found, but not a sufficient knowledge to lead them directly to the foot of the cross? Various were the attempts they made to find that resting-place which they sought, and many were the guides that offered assistance. Ambition approached with armed tread, and, pointing to kingdoms to be won and crowns to be plucked from the brows of neighboring kings, confidently promised that greatness and power would confer happiness. And the nations followed in her tread, and won the kingdoms and wore the crowns, but found them unfitted for soothing the feverish brain and filling the aching void in the spirit. Sensuality approached to guide them onwards to the land of delights, but no sooner did they reach forth the hand to grasp the fruit than they found it to be as the apples of Sodom—dust and ashes. Pleasure came with her giddy train, singing their songs and dancing their dances—leading the nations onwards in a giddy whirl, careless whither and regardless of consequences; but they soon made the discovery that such pleasure was not deserving the name, being short-lived and evanescent as the mists of morning. Philosophy advanced with calm brow and wise look, pointing upwards to the heights of science, and beckoning the people to follow her up above the turmoil of the swarming multitude busy with their little cares and anxieties—earthly pleasures and indulgences, and promising, as a reward, happiness and peace. And still they followed their guide, and still they were not satisfied, for they found not what they earnestly sought; and still they groped in the dark, cold region of doubt and speculation. And at length, as a child groping in darkness, they held out their hands until a Merciful One came to their relief, and as many as knew Him exclaimed, 'This is He for whom we looked—“my Lord and my God;” and He took them by the hand and led them forth to His own glorious light and rest and joy. Truly He was the desire of the nations, inasmuch as they required His aid.

But, thirdly, our Lord might well be called the desire of the nations, because He had in Himself everything calculated to complete the happiness of those who knew Him. Every excellence dwelt in Him. From Him all might receive strength, grace, and, finally, glory. Whatever of good the nations blindly sought after, in Him and in Him alone was that excellency to be found, and found in such abundant measure as to gratify their every want. Long and zealously did the people strive, through their highest representatives—their philosophers and moralists—to draw a picture of the ideal man, decked in moral beauty, free from human vices, and beyond the control of human passions and human weakness and sin. But did not such a man at length appear in the person of the

Lord Jesus? Go back to His life of surpassing holiness, and His teaching of surpassing wisdom, and endeavor to realize, in thought, a life more sublime—an ideal more perfect! Is wisdom a virtue?—where could it be more perfectly displayed than in the conduct and public ministry of our blessed Redeemer? He had thrown aside the superficial teaching and the selfish maxims of His contemporaries. He tore away the flimsy covering that Scribes and Pharisees threw around the external conduct, that He might engraft truth and holiness on the inner life. That dishonesty that may lurk under a sanctimonious exterior—that holiness that consists in mere ritualism to be put off and on like a garment, He denounced and exposed. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Such were the words of more than earthly wisdom by which He was wont to teach.

Yet extraordinary wisdom is not the only trait of character which we may reasonably expect to find in the perfect or ideal man. Such wisdom, in the worldly or earthly sense, may be combined with much that is not noble. Mere intellectual greatness does not, in itself, constitute the great man. Mere knowledge, while it amasses power to the possessor, does not, of necessity, gain for him the good will and affections of others. But “the desire of all nations” has in Himself the embodiment of every virtue and of all excellency. Witness His calm patience under the insults and persecution to which He was incessantly exposed. Note His forbearance with the weaknesses, the follies and the selfishness of His disciples. Observe His readiness to excuse their conduct when the hour of His sorrier trial had arrived. Witness Him, when on Calvary’s cross draining the bitter dregs of the cup of suffering, turning calmly round and pointing the beloved disciple to the weeping Mary, for even at such an hour He thought of others, and strove to mitigate their sorrows. Let the sublime life of our Lord be read to any who can understand it—let it be under the burning sun of an African sky, or in the frozen regions of the North; let the hearers be from any or from all nations under heaven, and each and all, if they understand it aright, must pronounce it essentially lovely. Thus has it been found in the evangelization of the heathen world: Jesus has been the Saviour to meet their wants—the Saviour whom they could wish to serve, and in whose service they might expect happiness. Truly, in this sense, was He “the desire of all nations.”

One of the chief sources whence sprung the sorrowful wail and deep regret of heathen moralists and philosophers with reference to man’s happiness and destiny, may be traced to their sense of the unstable nature of all human enjoyment and happiness. Ever and anon they were startled with the conscious-