

hat ordinary gifts which are fit for ordinary work are the most useful.

But the Apostle here goes further than that. He says: "True, there are some extraordinary gifts; but then they are only peculiar—they are not great, for they are not immortal. They shine for a day, and then die out. All cannot be prophets, because all cannot have the gift of prophecy; all cannot speak with tongues, or teach, and what does it matter? Those things are short lived, the best and most enduring of them; but there are great imperishable things, which have their centre in God; their stretch is eternal, and they may be made the base of all life." So that this is the teaching—that on a lower level men are marked off and distinguished by a peculiarity of gifts—but higher up they become equal—or, to put it in another way—the greatest, the sublimest gifts and forces of life are just those which are universal, immortal, and within the reach of all.

The teaching is very plain. At the time of the establishment of Christianity God was giving special gifts to special men. It was necessary. The Jews required a sign—the Greeks sought after wisdom—Christianity had to establish a footing on the earth, and that could only be done effectually by the showing of signs and wonders. The early days of preaching were full of marvel, and the marvel was often the first impulse that led the way to the cross. But there was a class of men in the church who got dissatisfied with that state of things—a kind of spiritual democracy which began to clamor for a levelling up process that should make all men equal. Why should not all be as eloquent as Apollos? why should not all teach and heal like Paul? And Paul gives them answer: "Well, every one of you seek those things which you admire so much; try and prophecy; try and teach; try to work miracles of healing. Whatever you think is best that covet earnestly; but remember, those are not the highest and best gifts—they are abnormal—they are short-lived—they are the thundering storm—very grand—but men do not live by storm; they live by the calm air—these things may shake the Church, but they do not make it—they produce wonder—they command attention, but they do not make character

—the greatest, grandest forces in the world are those common, ordinary things—faith, hope and charity—and he is the greatest, grandest, because the most useful, who has grown up into the possession of them."

I think we should remember, in this age of restlessness and dissatisfaction that God's greatest gifts to men, and consequently, the sublimest forces that enter into life to bless and beautify and exalt it, are not the extraordinary, but the ordinary and commonplace, and that on the highest and furthest advanced plains of human experience all men are equal. Equality in all things is simply impossible. Society could never exist if all men were put upon a dead level. Dreamers have long enough, and often enough, dreamt about it, and have sometimes tried to make their thought a thing doing mischief to themselves and to others. Utopia is in dream-land, but not upon the earth, and never will be there. As long as the world endures there will be rich and poor, gifted and commonplace, prophets and teachers, and a people. What is called wealth, or poverty, must always be a thing of degree and comparison, and is oftener decided by the state of the mind than by the state of the exchequer. What is poverty to one man would be riches to another; and what some of you count wealth, some other would count actual and crushing destruction. The truth is, that either extreme of extraordinary wealth, or of extraordinary poverty—is anything but a blessing to society. A very poor man is a public burden, and so is a very rich man. We have to send fire to warm the one, his region of frost and snow; we have to send ice to keep the other alive under the sweltering sun. In the commercial world you may see a man now and then who makes a great fortune in a brief period. He is a phenomenal man—he has reaped the trade somewhat in a particular direction—but he has done trade no general and lasting good. Commerce is not helped most by the extraordinary, but by the ordinary—by the vast multitudes who plod year in and year out; by the men who live out of it and not much besides. One gives it a sudden pull, and it may jerk it forward a little—but it has to depend for constant motion upon the toll