

winner, and object of love, went straight to Christ's heart. His perfect manhood was perfectly compassionate. One great glory of this miracle is its spontaneousness. Neither request nor faith precedes it. None of the three recorded raisings from the dead was in answer to prayers, or belief in his power. They were spontaneous outbursts of a heart of pity and love. But if there was no prayer, there was sorrow and there was need. And sorrow which he could soothe, and need which he could supply, never made their moan in his hearing in vain. Most of his miracles had some measure of faith in some persons concerned as a condition of the exercise of his power. But that was a condition, established for our sakes, not for his. Still at times, unasked, untrusting, he feels the impulse of pity, which is love turned toward misery, and the impulse moves his all-powerful will. While in most cases, Jesus is still found of those who seek him; yet his pity is still extended to those who seek him not.

THE TRUE CONSOLER.

Very beautiful is it that the soothing words, "Weep not," are said before the miracle, as if Christ would not wait even for a moment before seeking to calm the sorrow. Words that are powerless on other lips, and only make tears run faster, are of sovereign power when Christ speaks them. Nothing is emptier than the usual well-meant attempts to comfort the sorrowing. What is the use of telling not to weep, when all the cause of weeping still remains. But if we know that he is with us in trouble, and if we can hear his whisper of comfort, the sharpness of the pain is lulled, though the wound remain. He comforted the widowed heart by the utterance of his sympathy before he gave her back her dead, and therein he reveals himself to all as the consoler even of sorrows that will last as long as life.

Our Saviour's "Weep not," is not a rebuke, but a specimen of his continual work, and a prophecy of the time when there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying.

THE DIVINE ACT.

Christ's look and words to the mother showed his heart, and so the bearers halt in silent obedience and expectation. Jesus spoke true words: "Young man, arise." As if waking from sleep, the young man sat up. Bewildered, he looked about on the crowd. He began to speak, some confused exclamations likely. And then he was restored to his mother. Oh, how that host thine intellect once more! Not only compassion for the mother, but good to the son, prompted this miracle. It may be the restoration of his bodily life, was the beginning of his spiritual life and a new era in his personal history.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The whole incident, continues MacLaren, may be regarded as a revelation of Christ's power, or as a revelation of death's impotence. Christ stands forth as the Prince and Giver of life. His word is enough. The dead man heard and obeyed. The ease with which the miracle is done contrasts with the effort of Elijah, Elisha in their similar acts. The significance of this act is, that Christ is "Lord both of the dead and the living." It is prophetic, too, for it foreshadows the day when they that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. The miracle also teaches the impotence of death, which is but his servant, and vanishes at his bidding. It shows the partial effect of death, as affecting not the soul, but the body. It shows that when a man dies, it does not end, but that personality, consciousness, and all that make the man, are wholly unaffected thereby. "He gave him to his mother." Who can imagine that happy reunion!

May we not venture to see in Christ's action here some dim forecast of the future, when, amid the joy of heaven, we too may hope to be reunited to our dear ones.

"Whom we have loved long since,
And lost awhile."

Surely he who brought this young man back from the dead to soothe a widow's sorrow, and found joy in giving him back to a mother's arms, will do the like with us, and let lonely and yearning hearts clasp again their beloved.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

You will find six distinct thoughts in the six sections of the above exposition. Interest six members of the League in developing these sections. Thus have six members of one, to "take up" the topic this week. This Lord of Life, is he the source of our spiritual life? Oh, the power of having such a Christ on our side!

MAY 8—"THE PENALTIES OF UNBELIEF."

Luke 11, 33-36; John 3, 17-21; Mark 3, 20-30.

The penalty of unbelief in man toward Christ is similar to the penalty of the flower that refuses the sun—death. There are three extracts from Scripture in the topic selections. The first, Luke 11, 33-36, gives one penalty of unbelief—The going out of the light. The second, John 3, 17-21, points out that the love of darkness takes the place of the love of the light. And the third, Mark 3, 20-30, indicates the awful penalty of the departure of the Holy Spirit. Any one of these three penalties might furnish the subject of an evening's study in the League. But we will select the last one for treatment, being the ground of much confusion and controversy—The Sin against the Holy Spirit.

WHAT IS THIS SIN?

What is this sin for which, at least in the present world, there is no provision for forgiveness. It is that wilful ignorance which refuses to be taught, that love of darkness that refuses to admit the light even when the sun is shining in the sky. They saw the light, and knew that it was the light; and yet they loved the darkness more than the light. Like the servants in the parable, they said, "This is the heir. Let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours." It was only necessary to reject him in order to kill him—one meant the other. Jesus knowing their thought, and knowing, too, the moral condition from which their thoughts sprang, warned them with piercing point and plainness. They were deliberately sinning against light, against conscience, against all that was true and right and good; in short, they were speaking against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of all truth and goodness; and so long as they did that there was no hope for them.

TWO PHASES.

There are two phases which the penalty of this sin assumes. 1. The Spirit offers to draw men, they will not follow. He repeats his friendly counsels again and again. But sensual passions or earthly attachments absorb the accents of his kindly voice, until at length it dies away and is heard no more. It is not so much that a man is too slothful, or too negligent, or even too earthly-minded, that he is in danger of fatally sinning against the Holy Ghost. It is because he is opposed to the renovating power of the divine spirit. It is because he rebels against the reign of grace and holiness in his heart. It is because he cannot endure the unrivalled supremacy of a spiritual principle bearing down on the sinful tendencies of the soul, and

bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2. The second phase of this penalty of unbelief is hardness and impenitence of the soul which accompanies and follows it. There is only one way in which a sinner can effectually close the avenues of reconciliation against himself, and that way is putting himself out of the reach of repentance, by resisting the entreaties of the Spirit, till they are finally withdrawn, by tampering with conscience till her energies are paralyzed, and he sinks into profound indifference, and spiritual lethargy.

COMMON SENSE.

So far, then, from giving us a dark mystical saying that the human mind could not easily understand, our Lord declared a commonsense truth that appeals to the most ordinary mind. He simply stated a moral truism as one might infer from the casual and unemphatic manner of his remarks. And the truism is, that, since salvation is necessarily of the will, if men will not be saved, they cannot be saved—that is the whole of it. If men will not yield to the divine Spirit, which it moves and stirs within them, they cannot be redeemed and renewed by that gracious spirit. Under whatever dispensation they live, they are self-excluded from the kingdom of heaven by their own sin. By their own unbelief, by the open wilful departure from "the light that lighteth every man coming into the world."

UNPARDONABLE.

No sin can be pardoned so long as it is persisted in. All will agree with that. But this sin against the Holy Spirit in its scriptural form appears to stand by itself. It is such an aggravated sin, such a heinous crime against the Spirit of the true and living God, indicates such a rebellious stab of mind and confirmed opposition of soul to God and truth, that there is no chance of turning. Still, the darkest clouds are sometimes tinged with a bright and beautiful radiance. The contemplation of a sin which is pronounced to be unpardonable is certainly very solemn. Yet when taken in its proper connections, it needs to alarm only the wilful and determined transgressor. On the other hand, the subject shows in the strongest light, the rich and abounding mercy of God. It shows, says one, us an Almighty Sovereign holding out a sceptre of peace, till the revolting rebel will no longer deign even to cast a look upon it. It discloses to us a parent pleading with undutiful children, till his voice dies away in the distance of their determined and fatal wanderings. Here is consolation—if one still has desire to accept the Saviour and follow him, he may be assured that this great sin is not laid at his door.

POINTS FOR THE PRESIDENT.

A most solemn and important subject is this. Prepare yourself, as you always should, by prayer and self-examination, to profitably lead the meeting. Hand out some such questions as these, a week in advance, to be answered by members of the League: "What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?" "Why is it said to be unpardonable?" "What personal dangers are involved in our Lord's warning?" "How may I know that I have not committed this great sin?" "What are other penalties of unbelief?" Light on all these questions will be found in the foregoing exposition.

For the Scripture topics, our Bible-study text-book, "Studies in the Life of Christ," will be found a great help. It can be secured in cloth binding for 75 cents, postpaid, and in paper cover for 50 cents, by applying to A. C. Crews, Wesley Buildings, Toronto.