

Sermons

Preached in the Jarvis Street
Baptist Church
Toronto

By B. D. Thomas

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Sermons preached in the Jarvis

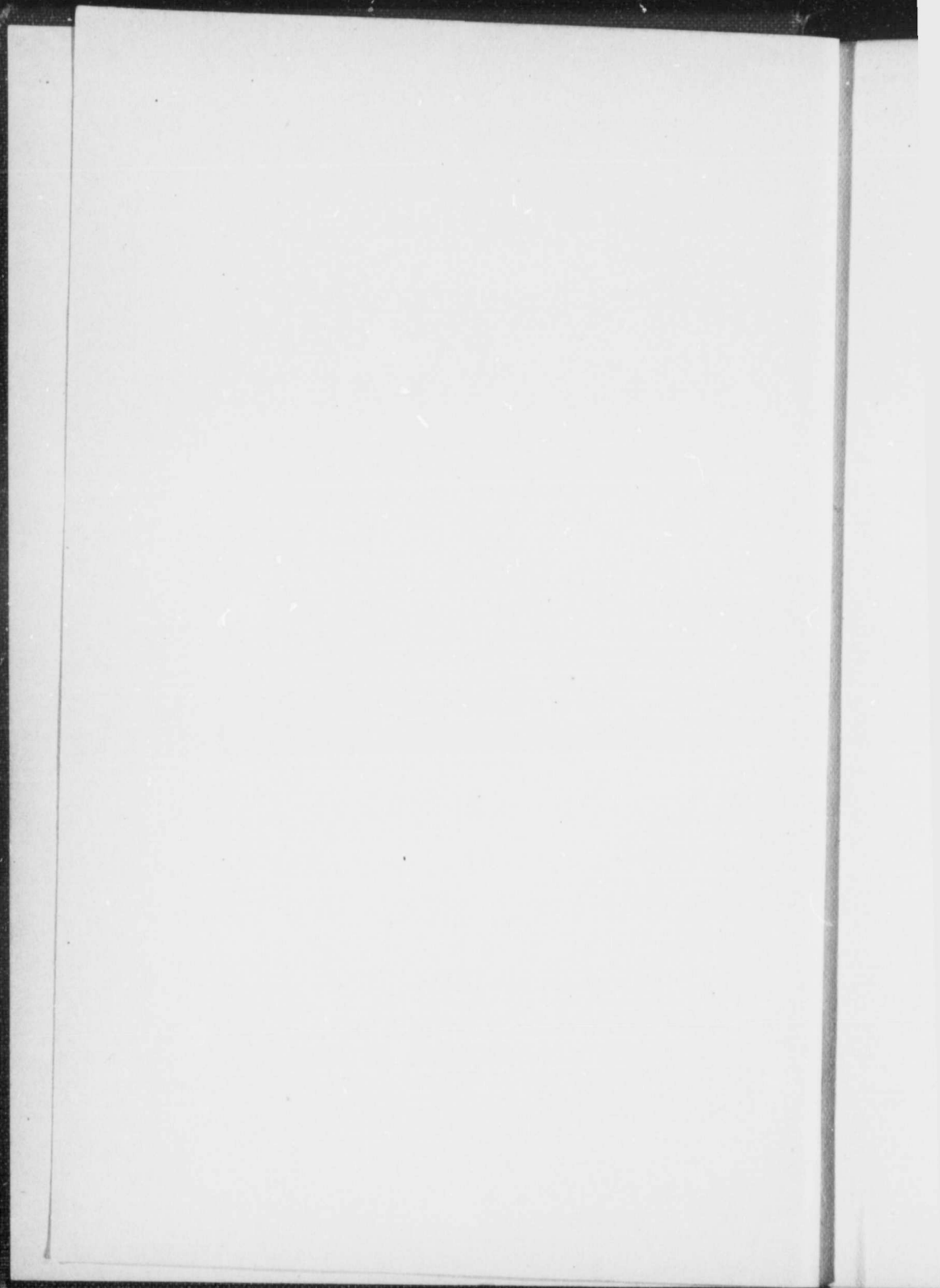
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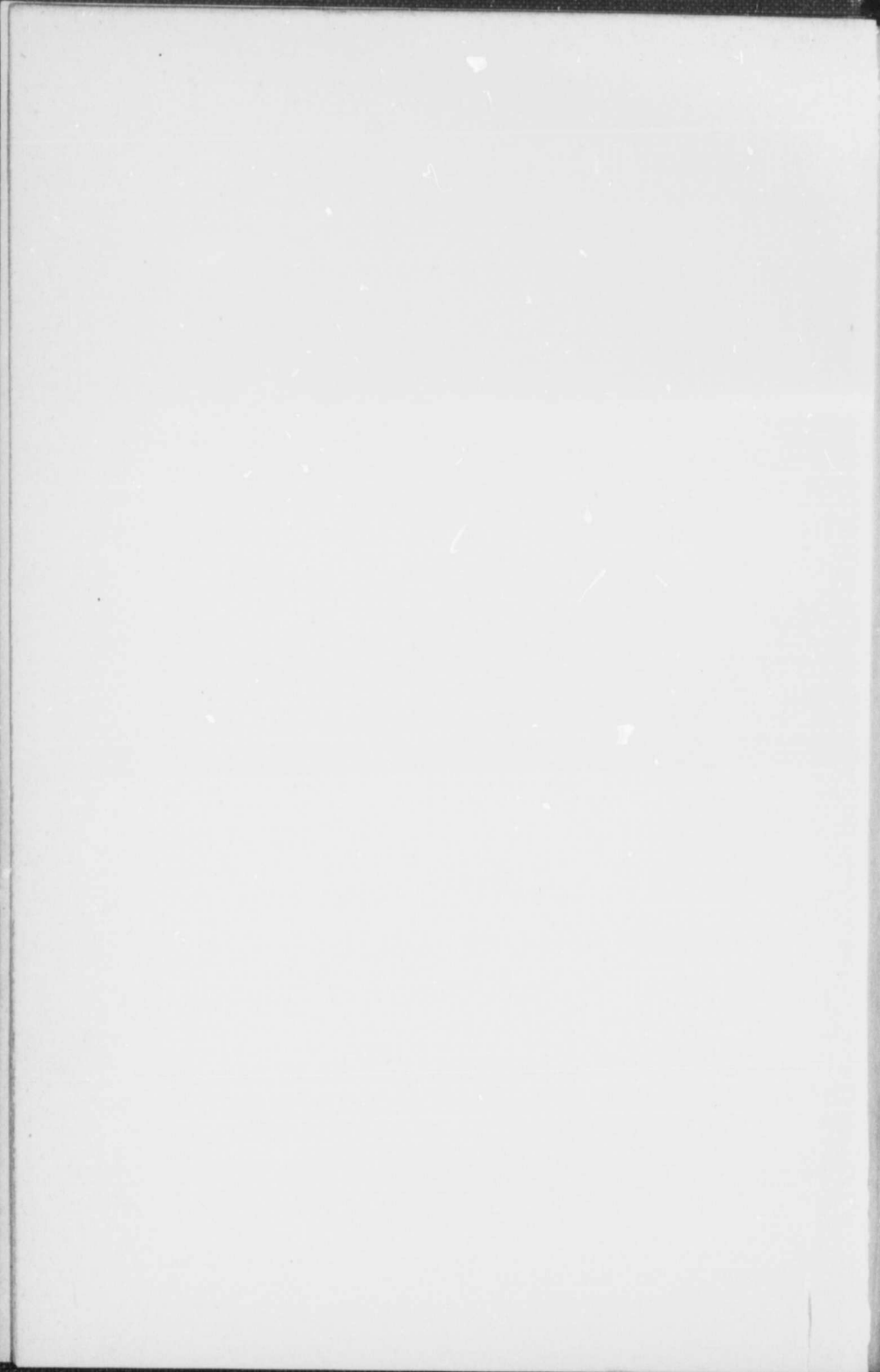


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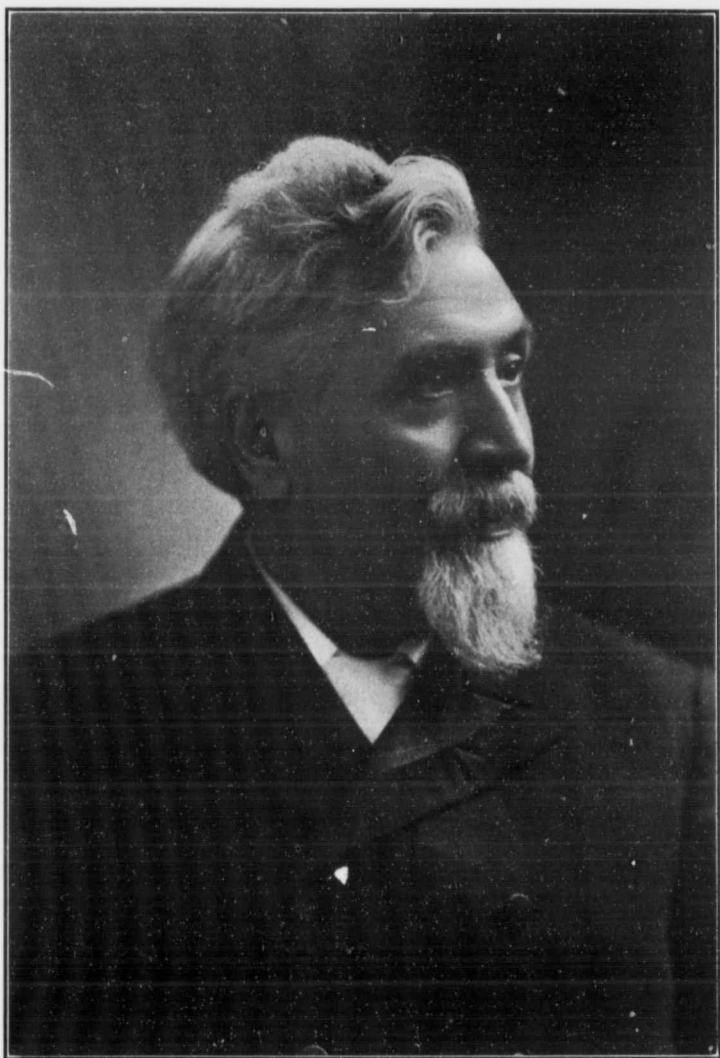
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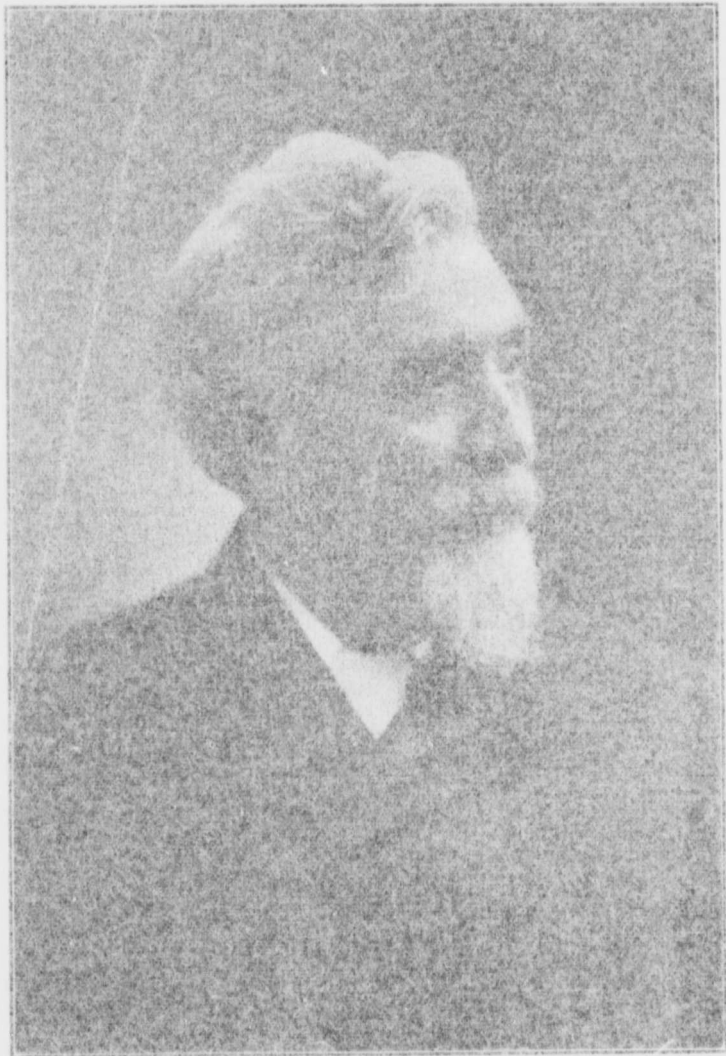
SERMONS

Preached in the Jarvis
Street Baptist Church,
Toronto

BY
B. D. THOMAS



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1884



Yours very Sincerely
B. D. Thomas

SERMONS

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Street Baptist Church,
Toronto

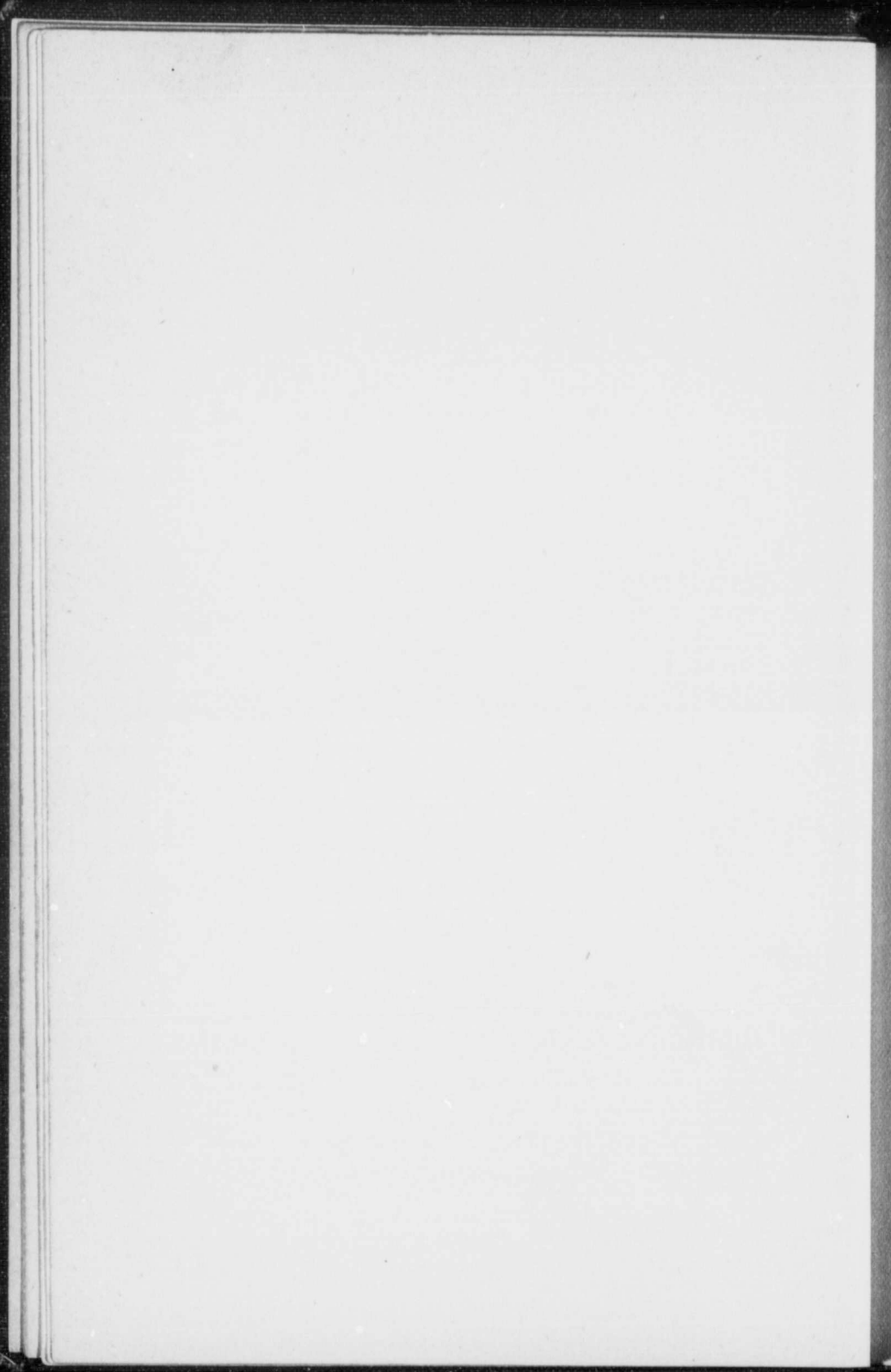
BY
B. D. THOMAS

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TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1911

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I.

THE SECRET OF THE DIVINE SILENCE.

“We shall all be changed.”—I COR. xv. 51.

MATHESON, in his “Moments on the Mount,” represents this passage as a key to the divine silence. This accords so thoroughly with my own views, that I have been tempted to develop the conception. We are not enlightened in regard to a great many subjects, because we are not capable of being. We are hemmed in by limitations which render vision of higher attainments and experiences impossible. There is nothing for which the Word of God is more distinguished than its silence. Upon some subjects concerning which there exists the greatest curiosity very little is said. We are constantly asking questions which are not answered. It is remarkable when you come to think of it, how little is revealed about the great beyond toward which we are being borne so rapidly. The future stands enveloped in an obscurity which we cannot penetrate. We may speculate as much as we please, but there is little about it that we can really know. Other teachers have been explicit, minute, have

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even indulged in elaborate detail, but Christ has only given us a few hints on this matter concerning which we are most solicitous to be informed. Swedenborg and others have written whole books descriptive of heaven, but all that Christ has said about it could be compassed in a single paragraph. One of the most thoroughly instructed and clearest visioned of the apostles exclaimed, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Enough has been said to allay fear, to inspire confidence, to awaken anticipation, but that is about all. If the most advanced theologian were asked, "What is heaven?" he would have to answer, "I do not know." "What is the nature of its enjoyments?" he would still have to plead his ignorance. "How are its inhabitants employed?" The answer would still be without definiteness. In fact, the Word of God does not furnish the information that would justify positive statement in regard to any of these questions. It is true that it speaks of many mansions, of an unbroken service of song, of a tearless and a nightless world, but all these are symbolic representations of ideal conditions. Now, why this reticence about the future world? If anywhere information should be explicit, surely it should be in that Book which professes to teach us how to prepare for it. If any one should speak clearly and unmistakably in regard to that life which is to come, it is He to whom we are indebted for its very existence.

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Our text furnishes a philosophic reason for this perplexing reticence. We are not in the condition to receive such information. The most perfect delineation would be without effect while we are in the flesh. The key to the whole mystery lies in the fact that before we reach heaven "we shall be changed." Here we have, then, the secret of the divine silence—

I. IN REGARD TO THE LIFE OF HEAVEN.

What do we know about it? What can we know about it? The life with which we are familiar is physical. What a spiritual body is like we know not. What the immortal shall experience when the bondage of the flesh is broken and the conditions of being are all adapted to its needs and aspirations is something which we can only dimly conjecture. We have thought often and long upon this subject, but "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." It is a condition and experience which we cannot even idealize. We must be changed before we can understand language that describes it. The apostle Paul was caught up into the third heaven and saw things unutterable. He knew not whether he was in the body or out of it. Certain it is that he did not indulge in any descriptions of what he had seen, and the probabilities are that he knew they would not be appreciated. Just imagine a beautifully painted butterfly seeking to tell a caterpillar of the exuberant delight of floating

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in the sunshine, sweeping through the fragrant fields and efflorescent gardens, and quaffing all the sweetness of the summer air. How utterly futile it would be. But not more so than for a spiritually embodied soul to communicate to the sons of earth the glories of the skies. There is a little creature that moves actively in the water, sometimes rising to the surface and dipping in the upper air, and then descending into the deep again. By and by it begins to gather wings. There is a longing in the little palpitating nature to explore the ethereal realms, of which mere glimpses have been caught, and eventually it comes up to the surface and returns no more. It rises into the air and sweeps through the open heavens, luxuriating in a life which was hitherto entirely unknown. Now, suppose its associates in that sluggish stream were to hold a congress to discuss its destiny, what could they say? What could they think? Of what value would their speculations be? We are all very much like these short-sighted insects. Our capabilities are circumscribed. We have room to move about in a laborious sort of way, but we cannot go very far nor very swiftly. We sometimes get to the surface and catch glimpses of a higher, larger life. Now and again our companions rise to descend no more. In some instances our hearts are very much affected by the separation, and we wonder where they are gone—wonder that they never return to us—wonder what that life

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is like upon which they have entered. But all thought and conjecture and speculation are vain. We can never know until we are changed. In reading Drummond's description of the inhabitants of Central Africa, I could not but feel how utterly impossible it would be to make even their chiefs understand descriptions of civilized life. And if such a thing is conceivable in the same world, in the same nature, with the same physical surroundings, we can readily understand the impossibility that exists in regard to our comprehension of the nature and quality of the life of heaven. We must be changed first.

The secret of the divine silence—

II. IN REGARD TO THE PURSUITS OF HEAVEN.

We would like to know what are to be the employments of the future? We are well assured we shall not be idle. Heaven is a scene of activity. The language of Scripture is very clear, so far as that is concerned, but how shall our time be occupied? In what particular lines of service and pursuit shall we move? The thought of singing without cessation is not a pleasant anticipation, nor is it scripturally well founded, save only as symbolizing a condition of exalted blessedness. Serving God day and night in His temple suggests only that the service will be continuous and worshipful. In no passage is there any representation of its real character. I have had an idea that in our spiritual

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bodies there will be an activity and usefulness that we can now but dimly conjecture, that we shall have elasticity and celerity of thought, that we shall traverse from star to star and from planet to planet with far greater ease than we now pass from one street into another, that we shall be God's swift-winged messengers, performing ministries of joy and gladness and blessing toward the intelligences of the universe. But all this is conjecture. We cannot really know while we are in the flesh. We could not understand if a full and accurate description were given what the work of heaven is like. It might be of a nature so foreign to our present ideals as to be incomprehensible, just as the feats of the arithmetician or philosopher are incomprehensible to the unlettered rustic, or as the wide-reaching activities of manhood are incomprehensible to childhood, or as the achievements of the angels transcend all human understanding.

You do not reveal to the child the duties and responsibilities of manhood. You may tell him that he should be in earnest preparation for an honorable and useful future, but you would not think of going into detail in regard to what would inevitably enter into it of toil and study. The little boy at his father's knee is too much absorbed in play to think of study and work and care and responsibility. The parent is silent upon many things that bear upon his child's future, simply because he must be really changed to understand

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them. It is even so with God. He "hath many things to tell us, but we cannot bear them now."

It is a very gracious thing that the future is veiled from our too eager peering. Would it have been well, think you, for that young man who sat at the feet of Gamaliel to have seen clearly what awaited him of responsibility and duty; to have seen the long journeyings, the sufferings, stripes, imprisonments and death, that he was to endure in the service of the crucified Nazarene? How he would have scorned the thought of such a possibility. He would have repudiated it as an absurdity; *he*, a follower of Jesus Christ; *he*, identified with the despised sect of the Nazarenes. Sooner might the sun be darkened at mid-day. Such an intimation made to the youthful Saul would have been without any profitable effect. It would only have aroused the worst passions of his nature. He must be changed before such a possibility could be even approximately understood.

If the refined and scholarly young graduate of Harvard, Adoniram Judson, had had revealed to him his future toils and sacrifices as a missionary, at the time when his mind was agitated with sceptical doubts and his heart was estranged from the truth, he would probably have laughed at it as a fantastic delusion. A revolution must take place in his soul before he can understand the possibility of such a service.

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If the future were this moment unveiled, if we were permitted to see ourselves engaged in its activities, if we could follow our own glorified spirits in imagination as they did the will of the Eternal, it is more than probable that we would be anything but fascinated with the contemplation. The work would be so strange, and the performance of it so ethereal, that we would probably shrink from the thought of ever entering upon it. We shall only appreciate the real glory of that service when we are changed.

The secret of the divine silence—

III. IN REGARD TO THE SOCIETY OF HEAVEN.

Here again but little is said. That they might "be with Me where I am," is perhaps the most expressive utterance in regard to it. Paul says, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Heaven is where Christ is, where God unveils the radiance of His glory, where angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim have their habitation. It is a scene of celestial and divine society. It is possible, even in this life, to come into sympathetic fellowship with the inhabitants of the invisible world, but there is a gulf fixed between ourselves and them as far as direct knowledge and inter-communication is concerned. We have never seen an angel ; we know nothing of the angelic life. If one of these bright sons of the morning were to reveal himself we would likely fall down before

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him as dead men. It is probable that the angelic nature is too spiritual for us to have any real affinity with it. We would be repelled by its very purity as bad men are repelled by those who are comparatively good. We would not care to dwell in a world of angels. We would feel terribly strange and out of place. We could not know them nor have fellowship with them. We would not be able to endure the contact. To be prepared for that we must be changed. And if this be the case with regard to angels, what shall be said of archangels and cherubim; and if this be the case with respect to the created, what shall be said of the Creator? We can never look into the unveiled glory of deity until we have been changed.

The Scriptures would have been more minute and explicit in their teaching upon this subject if it were not in the nature of things beyond our comprehension. Our introduction into the real knowledge of celestial society cannot take place until we are changed. It would be scarcely less possible for the irrational to come into affinity of knowledge and sympathy with the rational than for the rational to come into affinity of knowledge and sympathy with the celestial and the divine, without this change concerning which we are assured. We shall have a nature that will enable us to feel at home in heaven, that will enable us to associate with angels and with God without consciousness of shrinking or of shame.

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We shall learn more of celestial and heavenly society in one hour after our spiritual graduation than in a lifetime of study and conjecture while in the flesh. We must be changed before such knowledge can come within the realm of possibility.

The secret of the divine silence—

IV. IN REGARD TO THE JOYS OF HEAVEN.

There is very little said about them in the Book, which is our only source of information. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." "They shall eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." "There shall be no more pain, nor tears, nor sorrow." "They shall drink of the rivers of God's pleasures." These, and such as these, are the assurances that fall upon our souls in regard to the experiences of the glorified. They are very precious and suggestive. But they are for the most part figurative, indicating a condition of perennial blessedness. Their real nature is not revealed, simply because it cannot be. The pleasures that are experienced at God's right hand are not such as we, in the crudity of our material conceptions, can understand.

There are two great changes which are absolutely essential to spiritual knowledge and attainment. The one is at the entrance into the divine life, the other is at the entrance into the eternal state. The one is regeneration, the other is glorification.

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Without the former we cannot enter into the kingdom of God ; without the latter we cannot enter into heaven. The one is the matriculation, the other is the graduation. The former is the birth of the soul, the other is its full enfranchisement. You must have a change of heart before you can know Christ, or discern spiritual things, or live a Christian life. You must have a change of nature before you can see the unveiled glory of the Deity, associate with angels, and engage in the activities of the heavenly state. If you have experienced the one, you will most certainly experience the other. If you have been born again, you will be changed into the divine likeness. If you have been justified, you will certainly be glorified. God will not fail to complete that which He hath begun.

It is a vain expectation to anticipate heaven if you have not experienced the first change to which I have referred. An unregenerate man would be out of place in celestial society. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. The student must matriculate before he can graduate. You must have life before you can grow. You must have the Christ nature before you can have the Christ character ; you must have the Christ character before you can have the Christ likeness ; and you must have the Christ likeness before you can be an inhabitant of the world of light.

When "we are changed" the clouds will all be dispersed ; the mysteries that overhang the future

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will vanish like the mists of a summer's morning. All crudities of thought and judgment will give place to perspicuity and certainty. We shall "see as we are seen," and "know as we are known," and dwell in the effulgence of God's all-revealing presence when we "shall have been changed."

II.

THE WORDY EGOTIST.

“Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”—JOB xxxviii. 2.

THIS is an inquiry of startling significance. It broke in upon a discussion which had been long continued and unprofitable. Job had been the victim of the most heartless misrepresentations, and he sought to defend his position and integrity by argument. It would seem that the issue of the controversy was unfavorable to the man of God. He had been dealing with questions that were too high for him. It would have been better for himself and for the honor of his Lord if he had left the criticisms of his professed friends unanswered. God now comes in to settle the dispute and to set the controversy at rest. He introduces Himself in the pageantry of the storm and speaks out of the whirlwind. “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?”

The question is a pertinent one as addressed to large classes of easily recognized individuals in our own day. I desire to regard it—

THE WORDY EGOTIST.

I. AS IT APPLIES TO THOSE WHO PRESUME
TO KNOW THE UNKNOWNABLE.

There are not a few people in the world who lay the flattering unction to their souls that what they do not know is not worth knowing. They have condensed the mighty ocean of the Divine Revelation into their own little reservoirs. They have gathered all the refulgent beams of truth into the narrow lenses of their microscopic vision. They have fathomed the depths and scaled the heights of that wonderful record in which God has embodied His wisdom and declared His will, and they utter their dictum in regard to it with all the sublime egotism of infallibility. These self-constituted apostles of wisdom obscure and mystify the greatest truths of revelation by words without knowledge. If there was reason why the Almighty should address Job in this manner when he was seeking to the best of his ability to vindicate the divine righteousness and to uphold the fundamental principles of the divine government, surely there is reason why the question should ring out on the ears of those who impeach the wisdom and criticise the work of God with their unguarded speech.

Men of scholarly attainments and speculative predispositions are elaborating systems and building theories upon what they assure us are ascertained facts. We are by no means insensible to the value of their achievements. As far as their work is thorough and along legitimate lines it is to

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be appreciated and admired. But when they put on their priestly robes and presume to be oracular on questions that are not determinable by any mere scientific methods—when they assume to speak with infallible authority of God and truth, of life, and destiny, we are disposed to indulge in the inquiry, “Who are ye that darken counsel by words without knowledge?”

There are, of course, doctrines, wide ranges of truth, which should be positively understood, firmly believed, and tenaciously maintained. There are “things which are revealed,” which not to understand involves culpability for which there can be no excuse. There are parts of the great deep of revelation which afford sure footing, and into which we are invited to walk with firm and unfaltering tread. We would not put a premium on ignorance : there is a great deal too much of it. There is a wide sweep of divine verities concerning which there should be clearly defined conviction. We should leave nothing undiscovered that comes within the range of human vision and experience. But we should never forget that there are secret things which belong to God alone—that there are depths profound that we cannot fathom and heights sublime that are lost in “the glory that excelleth.”

Those who assume a wisdom that is superhuman—who venture to answer questions which God hath left unanswered, and propound philosophies for which there is no foundation save in their own

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efflorescent imaginations, are certainly "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." I would regard this inquiry—

II. AS ADDRESSED TO THOSE WHO PRESUME TO EXPLAIN THE UNEXPLAINABLE.

It is the prerogative of all rational intelligences to inquire into the principles that underlie the divine administration. There is no part of the divine working which they are not at liberty to explore. This is one of the most commendable exercises in which we could be engaged. To study the mighty and magnificent achievements of the Eternal; to consider the heavens with their shining stars and the fields with their blooming flowers, and the mountains with their wealth of minerals, and the ocean with its wondrous varieties of teeming life—all this is our privilege and obligation. We should also inquire diligently into God's law and government both in Nature and in grace. We cannot know too much in these exalted realms.

But it must not be supposed that we can ever fully know or ever absolutely understand all that comes within the purview of our mental vision. Man is not the measure of the universe, and certainly the mere understanding is not the measure of the man. There are things which human eye cannot see, which human reason cannot comprehend, which human philosophy cannot explain. There are deep, profound, eternal

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mysteries—which were meant to be mysteries—which could not be other than mysteries to the finite understanding. It would be well if this fact were more generally appreciated. It would preserve us from being inflicted with a vast amount of confusing and beclouding speech.

We are not competent to pronounce upon the divine procedure. The loftiest wisdom is ignorance in the presence of God's inimitable activities. "He plants His footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm." His throne is in the heavens and His administration reacheth to the very confines of the universe. There is no standpoint of observation from which a mortal man can survey the illimitable domains of the Eternal. There are no appliances by means of which he can reach certainty in regard to the most ordinary expressions of infinite power. It is superlative folly to attempt by searching to find out God, or to propound a philosophy by which He shall be understood. He is too infinitely great to come within the grasp of finite comprehension. He is enveloped in light inaccessible. "None can find Him out unto perfection."

To all who talk learnedly and with a show of superior knowledge about the deep, hidden and unrevealed things of God, the question comes, "Who are ye that darken counsel by words without knowledge." "Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?"

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“With whom took He counsel and who instructed Him? and taught Him knowledge and showed to Him the way of understanding?”

There is nothing that men more need to know than their limitations. The bane of much of the world's wisdom lies in the fact that the boundaries of knowledge have not been recognized. Much of what is known as rationalistic scepticism is based upon the assumption that human intelligence is all-comprehending and infallible, that there is nothing in the administration of this mighty universe which may not be understood—that what cannot be subjected to scientific analysis or mathematical demonstration cannot be authoritative. What utter imbecility this is? Oh, ye vain apostles of human wisdom, what is there that you do understand? Can you explain the simplest forms of life? Can you tell us how the tiniest flower transmutes the properties of earth and air into beauty and fragrance? Can you elucidate to us the mysteries of growth, of generation, of existence? Can you explain that great force that holds the universe together in a sublime unity? What do you really know about that subtle energy that has become so valuable in the economies of modern life, furnishing us with light and heat and power? What about that living principle that dwells within each one of us giving fire to the eye, elasticity to the body, vigor to the intellect? You profess to base your faith upon knowledge, and yet what is there that you really

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do know? You do not understand the mystery enfolded in the commonest objects around you, and yet you assume to know God and to measure His achievements and pronounce upon His infinite designs. The absurdity of such a position is only paralleled by its audacity. Methinks I hear a voice speaking out of the whirlwind to all such assumptious mortals, "Who are ye that darken counsel by words without knowledge."

We shall consider this inquiry again—

III. AS IT APPLIES TO THOSE WHO PRESUME TO OBSCURE THE AUTHORITATIVELY REVEALED.

I say authoritatively revealed as applied to the Christian religion, not primarily, because its essential principles are recorded in the Bible, but because the experience of Christian men and women in all ages has given them unqualified confirmation. The Bible professes to do certain things for those who accept and apply its teaching, and the supreme question is, Has it made its professions good? If a medicine has healed me, it makes very little difference who compounded it. If a chart has guided me over unknown seas to the desired haven, it has established its claim to my confidence. If a theory has proved the correctness of its fundamental principles by its practical utility and serviceableness, there is no reason why we should pour contempt upon it. This is the rational ground on which the Bible rests its authority. "If any man

THE WORDY EGOTIST.

will do His will he shall know of the doctrine." What matters it to me who wrote the Book—how it was compiled—whether there were two Isaiahs or fifty. The question paramount to me is, Is it true? Does it do what it says it would? Does it speak to my soul's need as no other book ever did or could? Do its prescriptions for the maladies of life meet the emergencies to which they are applied? These are the questions that I want to be sure about. Has the Bible come with regenerative potency into human life? Has it changed the face of society? Has it done for men and women in every degree of moral helplessness and degradation what it said it would? This is the crux of the whole argument—the final word in the controversy. Let infidels and sceptics say what they may, the fact of the beneficent potency of the Bible stands out on the page of history with incontrovertible luminosity. It must have come from heaven, for its fruits are heavenly. If it be a fabrication, then an imposture has done more for the world than all its combined wisdom, and learning, and philosophy. If such a supposition were entertainable, it would be a miracle of the most overwhelming and stupendous character. To attempt to weaken or invalidate the authority of the Book without recognizing this fundamental principle is manifestly to "darken counsel by words without knowledge."

This inquiry may further be regarded—

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IV. AS IT APPLIES TO THOSE WHO ORIGINATE DIFFICULTIES FROM THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES TO IMPEDE THEIR SPIRITUAL INTERESTS.

We are familiar with their strange and untenable sophistries. They conjure up this or that doctrinal perplexity and use it to their own destruction. They permit themselves to remain in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity, because they do not understand the problem of the origin of evil. They remain, so to speak, in the burning house until they know all about the cause of the fire that is threatening to consume them. They rack their brains about divine sovereignty and human free agency with their seeming antagonisms, and permit a thousand other polemical mysteries to keep their starving souls outside the home of warmth and plenty. Speak to them about their souls' salvation—about the importance and urgency of the gospel message—about the palpable un wisdom of permitting anything to interfere with their eternal interests, and they immediately proceed "to darken counsel by words without knowledge."

My friend, what have you to do with religious controversy if your soul is not saved? What matters it to you what this or that doctrine may signify if you have not entered into life? The matter of first concern to you is not election, or perseverance, or aught else but salvation. Do not darken counsel by words without knowledge. There

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is but one thing for you to do—but one business concerning which you should be alive, and anxious—but one interest that should absorb your thought, and that is the salvation of your soul. It will be time enough for you to determine all the knotty and mysterious points of theology when you have made your own calling and election sure. The drowning man who refuses to be rescued until he has decided as to the quality of the hand that is stretched out to him, or until he knows all about the causes that led to his imperilled condition, deserves to be left to his fate. Away with all vain and frivolous trifling when there is so much at stake. The man who darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge when the soul is hanging in the balances is a hopeless imbecile.

We shall regard this inquiry once more—

V. AS IT APPLIES TO THOSE WHO PRESUME TO OBTRUDE THEIR OWN PREJUDICES OR PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS INTO THE PLACE OF THE DIVINE TESTIMONY.

There is a great deal of this done. Not a little of the authoritative teaching of the inspired Word is set aside because it does not exactly chime in with human taste or notion. There is a disposition to accept what is congenial and reject what is not—to exercise the prerogative of changing or modifying the divine commands to suit convenience or prejudice or social conditions. What is this but

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darkening counsel by words without knowledge? I need not suggest the grievous sinfulness of such behavior. To tamper with the divine authority, to change or modify the divine teaching, to obtrude opinions, or judgments, or personal preferences into the place of God's positive commands, is "to darken counsel by words without knowledge."

The only rational way of dealing with the Word of God is to put it to the test of experience—to do what it says. If its divine authority has been assured, then wisdom knows no other course. If it tells you that salvation is in Christ and only in Christ, accept the declaration as authoritative. If it tells you that you are justified by faith, do not attempt to twist the doctrine so as to make it mean something altogether different. If it gives you a command, be it what it may, do not feel at liberty to change or modify it at pleasure, and incur the peril and the guilt it certainly must involve.

My brother, is it not wiser to receive counsel than to darken it? What unutterable folly it must be to put forth your ignorance in opposition to God's wisdom. When He speaks should you not listen? Should you not seek to understand? Should you not be willing to obey? Would you be blatant in the presence of a recognized master in philosophy?—in the presence of an authority in any department of knowledge?—and yet will you babble forth your crudities in the presence of infinite wisdom? Is it

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not wiser to come into God's presence as a little child than as a would-be philosopher? Has He not something to say to you that is worth hearing? When He speaks should you not eagerly listen to what He says? Whatever you do, do not invalidate His great message to your soul by words without knowledge.

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III.

GOD'S PURPOSE IN MAN'S CREATION.

"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels ; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. . . . But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus."—HEBREWS ii. 7-9.

ONE of the greatest studies of mankind is man. He is the problem of problems. He is the enigma in the presence of which whole generations have stood in unsatisfied investigation. Books have been written and theories propounded bearing upon his descent, his nature, his history and his destiny. Of all the subjects that have pressed themselves upon the intelligence of the race, there is not one so irresistibly interesting and at the same time so unutterably profound. It occupies nearly the whole field of literature. "The burden of history is what man has been ; of law what he does ; of physiology what he is ; of ethics what he ought to be ; of revelation what he shall be." He is a strange compound of strength and weakness ; of intelligence and ignorance ; of majesty and meanness ; of glory and shame. He towers above all the forms of life by which he is surrounded, and not infre-

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quently sinks so low as to become the contempt of his own kin. "How poor, how rich, how abject, how august, how complicate, how wonderful is man?" Our text represents him as he *was, is, should be, and shall be.*

Let us consider then—

I. WHAT MAN WAS.

"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." That is what he was.

Like a mighty city fallen and desolate, almost buried beneath the accumulated *débris* of the centuries, we have but to turn up the subsoil of his being to discover indications of a splendor of power, of thought, of aspiration and of attainment in which he was wont in the golden days of his purity to rejoice. Dull and lustreless though he often appears, there are aspects of his being that flash with the radiations of divinity.

We cannot study the history of the race with its wars and conquests—with its ambitions and hates—with its magnificence and meanness; despoiling countries and building up thrones; terrible in power and infamous in achievement without realizing that we are contemplating a splendid ruin, a stupendous and melancholy reminiscence of what man must have been in his original estate.

And this fact is still more vividly impressed upon

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the mind when we come to study his achievements. What is there that he has not wrought? What realm of mystery has he not penetrated? What secret territory has he not explored? He has comprehended the vastness of the heavens and fixed its gallaxies of stars and planets and constellations in the embrace of definite thought. He has penetrated the bowels of the earth and made it yield its treasures for his comfort and enrichment. He has drawn aside the veil that concealed the subtle forces of the universe, and experimented upon them with an intelligence that borders on the supernatural. He has solved the most intricate problems and subdued to his will the invisible agencies that surround him. We have ceased to wonder at his achievements, so rich, and vast, and purposeful have they become.

And the question very naturally suggests itself, whence came he, that he should be able to accomplish results so altogether transcendent—that he should stand forth so majestically in the midst of life? This is no earth-born creature surely. He must have had a descent more royal than his present condition and surroundings could suggest. He must be the son of a king. His origin must have been celestial. We would have naturally and irresistibly come to such conclusion even had there been no revelation.

The Word of God takes up all our thoughts, all our deep impressions and glowing fancies concerning this enigmatical and perplexing creature, and

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crystallizes them into a sentence: "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet." He was born a sovereign. He came forth from the hand of the Eternal, stamped with the divine likeness, splendid in all the attributes of intelligence and power. His supremacy was absolute. He had but to command and all nature was ready to obey. The forces and agencies of the universe within the limits of his wide domain bowed to his sceptre. He knew no disability. He feared no foe. He experienced no infirmity. He was the reflection of God's character, and the expression, as far as a human being could be, of His omnipotence. As the light radiates the whole mass of the crystal, suffusing it with its luminous beams, so was the first man permeated, filled, energized, and glorified in every faculty, and feeling, and power with the divine. He could do all things, for God was in him. He could command all forces, for the inspiration of the Almighty was upon him. He could penetrate all mysteries, for the divine light shone full and clear into his inmost being. Such was man when he came forth from the Creator's hand.

II. WHAT MAN IS.

The contrast is depressing beyond the power of language to express. However flattering the pic-

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ture when drawn by a friendly hand, it can hardly be said to suggest the magnificent original. Were we to take the noblest outgrowth of the centuries; were we to gather all that is fair and strong in character; all that is rich and regnant in thought; all that is fascinating in feeling and commanding in activity, and blend them into one idealized personality, it would still fall immeasurably short of the original pattern. And when we turn to the great aggregate of humanity the disparity is appalling. The dark lines of guilt; the deep furrows of discontent; and the terrible storm clouds of unrighteous passion, how painfully conspicuous they are. Corruption, frivolity, cruelty, meanness; every form and variety of degrading exhibition deface the glory of the human countenance. All the refining influences of the ages have failed to make the world morally attractive. It would be impossible for human voice or pen to depict the depths into which humanity has fallen. In the most enlightened city of modern times there were revelations made a few years ago that shocked the moral sense of the whole civilized world. It would only need the lifting of a thin veil of concealment to make every great city on either continent present features too dark and hideous for decency to gaze upon. The crown has fallen from the brow of humanity and men have become, instead of sovereigns, slaves; instead of masters, serfs; instead of princes, beggars. Man lost his moral equilibrium

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and all was lost. He failed to rule his own spirit and all right to rule was wrested from him. He was a sovereign, but he is now a slave. His achievements, his successes, his attainments, his discoveries, all the effulgences that gather around him are but unconscious struggles to regain his forfeited inheritance.

III. WHAT MAN SHOULD BE.

“Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor. . . . Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” This was God’s purpose in his creation. He endowed him with qualities of heart and intellect that fitted him for the occupancy of his sublime estate. He enthroned him that he might rule. He placed the sceptre in his hand that he might exercise the prerogatives of sovereignty. There is no reason save in his own sin for his degradation and despoilment.† I may not be able to explain the doctrine of the fall so as to satisfy the sceptical and unbelieving, but of this I am assured, that all the elements of defeat and misery that it has occasioned have been introduced into human life in controvention of the purpose of the infinitely wise and holy God. What I see in me and around me is the result of a moral revolution—of the wilful infringement of some high and holy law.

See that splendid pedestal of alabaster or marble carved by the hand of some great master, lying

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half buried amongst the weeds and refuse. It is surely not where it was intended to be. The designer of that costly piece of artistic workmanship had some higher use for it than that. Some unusual convulsion must have unsettled it or some gross vandalism must have expended its fury in its displacement. It is manifestly where it was never intended to be. And when we look at man in his present condition and surroundings, the same conviction forces itself irresistibly upon us. The great Designer's purpose concerning him has been in some way cruelly interfered with. He was manifestly created for a more distinguished destiny. He has ambitions that are illimitable; hopes that grasp the eternities; a consciousness of powers and possibilities that never have been and that never can be realized amid the inimical conditions of his present sphere. What can it all mean but this—that he has fallen beneath his destiny; that he has swung off from the true orbit of his being; that he has in some mysterious way been diverted from the grandeur of the divine purpose in his creation and endowment? He has a more or less vivid consciousness of his despoilment. The blood of his lost royalty courses through his veins, and he cannot be at rest. His rightful place is not in slavery but in sovereignty, ruling his passions, his appetites, his circumstances and his environment with an absolute and benignant sway. This was God's intention when He laid the stamp of His image upon him

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and marked out the boundaries of his estate. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels. Thou crownedst him with glory and honor. Thou didst place all things in subjection under his feet."

IV. WHAT MAN SHALL BE.

"But now we see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus." The purpose of the infinite God must stand in its integrity. His beneficent and glorious designs are yet to be consummated. Man's lost dominion is to be restored. His lost dignity is to be re-established. His lost power is to be regained. His lost glory is to be re-inherited. God's plan in regard to him was interrupted only for a moment. Amid the very ruins of the fall there flashed the light of hope and the promise of victory. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." There is a future for redeemed humanity that shall outshine the past as the noon-day does the morning. The defeat of Eden shall be forgotten in the triumph of Calvary. The momentary advantage gained by Satan over man shall work out for his blood-bought progeny "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The golden age of humanity is not in the past but in the future. God shall yet make the glory of His power and the majesty of His strength to shine forth in the fulfilment of His purpose. Satan with all his hosts shall yet behold the nature which they despoiled, exalted and enthroned.

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Our minds are too feeble to grasp the unutterable significance of the anticipation. Our very imaginations recoil before the suffusions of its glory. We can only venture with our trembling feet to stand upon some distant view-point, for we are but children and are in the flesh. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

But although we cannot mount even with wing of eager thought into the full radiance of this entrancing revelation, we may gather some of the scattered coruscations that fall upon our quiet pathway as we march along. Some things seem very clear even to our ignorance. We can see in every sweep of human genius through the expansive and inviting realms of discovery and achievement; in every triumph of mechanical ingenuity—in every masterpiece of art—in every literary production of soul-captivating power—in every embodiment of human thought that has in it qualities that defy the ravages of time—suggestive hints, to say the least, as to the possibilities of manhood in the process of its everlasting unfoldment.

But we need not rest in the outer court of analogies and suggestions, even though they be sustained by the deepest convictions of the soul. There is a clearer testimony. The Word of God is explicit and authoritative in regard to the future destiny of the redeemed. Passages that sound strangely on

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our ears because of their incredibility to a feeble faith are common on the sacred page. We do not presume to understand them. We leave it to those who have a deeper insight into unseen realities to speak with certainty about the specific features of the future. All we know is that redeemed man is to have his lost dominion restored. What that includes eternity only can reveal. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus." And what more need any of us see to be assured? The man Christ Jesus, who is also God manifested in the flesh, is the type and prophecy of our exaltation. If we are to be like Him we are to be enthroned. He was, while on the earth, the Master of life. He rebuked the winds and the seas, and they obeyed Him. Diseases and devils fled at His word. He is now exalted above all principalities and power, and might and dominion. "The government is upon His shoulder." "He holdeth the stars in His right hand," and all forces, and laws, all creatures, and powers gather in glad and grateful allegiance at His feet. "Ye see Jesus crowned with glory and honor." That is *your* destiny. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne."

We can understand but little of what these majestic assurances mean, but it is enough to satisfy the loftiest outreach of expectation and to fill the whole horizon of vision with delight. "It doth

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not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him." "We shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness." "The upright shall have dominion in the morning."

And now, what shall I say to those of you who do not appreciate the high and glorious destiny made possible to you in Jesus Christ? What can I say? It would be more befitting the circumstances, perhaps, that I should weep over your insensibility and blindness. To think of what you are forfeiting! To think of the doom that you are laying up for yourselves! To think of the unutterable folly and inexcusable perversity of it all!

My last word to you this morning is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The way to the crown is only by the cross. You must "be quickened together with Christ" if you would be raised up together with Him into the heavenlies of power and blessing.

May God grant us all, by faith in the one sacrifice and mediation of the man Christ Jesus, to rise out of defeat into victory—out of limitation into liberty—out of weakness into power—out of serfdom into sovereignty.

IV.

THE FAR-SIGHTEDNESS OF LOVE.

“When he was a great way off his father saw him.”—LUKE
xv. 20.

- ✓ It must be admitted in looking at these words in this incomparable parable that they reveal a truth which is not commonly accepted. It is generally supposed that God is seated in enthroned majesty above this world and above all worlds, and that He must be placated by a long series of prostrating acts of humiliation before there can be the least hope of pardon and restoration. So deeply rooted is this conception that we have given it embodiment in our own treatment of those who have gone astray. We have not learned the alphabet of that infinite grace which our text sets forth.
- ✓ We say, let us see what these professions of penitence mean—let us put this miserable prodigal who has disgraced his father's name and outraged his father's love, who has squandered his substance and wasted his patrimony, into some sort of purgatorial fire. Let us at least keep him outside our fellowship and sympathy until there has been burned into him a sense of his outrageous behavior, until

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his guilt has scorched him into sensibility, until his agony of soul has made him eat the dust of humiliation. We must not think of opening the palace gates to his reception and welcome until there has been the most searching investigation into the genuineness of his repentance. It would be an offence to the elder brother which would be justly resented if he were treated with the cordiality of welcome and the joy of brotherly recognition until he had absolved himself from the last stain of his infamous conduct.

It is pitiful to hear the ungenerous and selfish utterances that too often fall from the lips of professed sainthood in view of some of the most striking and impressive miracles of saving grace.

The man who has directed his steps homeward, who has become disgusted with the swine troughs, who has been driven by stress of circumstances to make resolves for a better and a purer life, is, even in his rags and ere he has washed off the stains of his pollution, an object of the divine interest. He may seem little better than a slouching vagabond, yet if his face be turned toward his Father's house the eye of infinite love penetrates through all the distance and the darkness, and recognizes him as a son. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him."

We are led in the consideration of this remarkable utterance to observe—

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I. THAT LOVE HAS AN EYE THAT SEES THE
CONSUMMATE IN THE EMBRYONIC.

Mere knowledge is based on evidence. We know that spring has come by the almanac or by the outbursting forms of life and beauty that greet us in field and forest. We would not dream of associating spring and summer with the cold, bleak days of December or of January. And yet if we could see far enough we might well do so. In the very heart of nature's manifold sleeping life the movement toward spring and summer has already begun. It is feeble indeed. To the mere, physical perception it is not discernible. If there had not been springs and summers to furnish data for faith and hope to build their anticipations upon, the sterility of winter would be depressing. Not a glimmer of promise would relieve the darkness. Not a germ of vital purposefulness would gladden the most eager peering. But to the eye of God from which nothing is hidden, May nestles in the bosom of December and June smiles and blooms and sings beneath the leaden skies and snow-clad desolations of January. He sees the end from the beginning, beholds the blossom in the seed, the lily in the bulb, the bloom and fruitage of paradise in the invisible energies of chaotic night.

▮ The huge stones that are being quarried from the gnarled bosom of the rock and piled up in heterogeneous heaps for transportation, are not suggestive of anything in particular to the ordinary

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observer, but the architect under whose direction the work is done sees in them mansions, palaces, cathedrals as the case might be—sees in them splendid creations of artistic execution that shall command the admiration of enthusiastic onlookers through coming ages. In the ungainly block of granite in which the ordinary vision discerns naught but what is common and uninteresting, Michael Angelo sees a form that shall ravish the heart of all future generations. These are the eyes of Omniscience and of Genius. They see far, even into the invisible and unrevealed. But I want more particularly to speak of another eye that has a far-reaching vision. I want to speak of the eye of love. We have not adequately measured its capacity. We have seen it sometimes in human relations, when we were astonished at its penetration, when we have stood incredulous in view of its marvellous far-sightedness. It is only in God, however, that it finds embodiment and exemplification which are perfect, in which the vision fails not however great the distance. "When he was a great way off his father saw him."

Imperfectly though the clearest vision of human love can compare with the divine, the faculty is one of the distinguishing features of the soul's nobility—one of the most unmistakable marks of its high and heavenly descent. "Love is of God. He that loveth is born of God, for God is love."

What an eye love has! It can sweep over

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immeasurable distances. It can penetrate through the densest clouds of darkness. It can visualize the invisible.

The boys that rend the air with their shouts of merriment as they indulge in some favorite sport, may be regarded by the ordinary observer without the slightest interest other than that inspired by their hilarity or skill, but each one of them to the vision of love is a revelation of hope and possibility reaching into the sublime. There are eyes that see the invisible suggestions of promise in the boyish soul. The mother stands at the pearly gateways of the opening life like an angel prophetess reading in the mystic deeps the auguries of hope. She is looking with eager, anxious quest for those qualities which her love has happily divined. She sees the subtle fibres struggling beneath an exterior that is mockingly discouraging. Her faith is not staggered by the most positive contradictions. She sees the invisible and believes in it. She sees the nobility and grandeur that shall rise out of chaos and confusion, and not infrequently her faith is crowned with gratifying fruition. Some of the most distinguished characters this world has ever known have been rescued from the jaws of hell, and sent with exultant tread on the shining pathway toward the skies by a mother's love.

One of the foremost qualifications for efficiency in any department of Christian service is the eye to

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see the consummate in the embryonic. If we judge by appearances we shall fail. If we must have expressed virtues to call forth our interest and enthusiasm we shall find it impossible to engage in many lines of Christian activity at all. If we cannot see the gold beneath every form of worthless encrustation we shall lack the necessary enthusiasm. If the pearl does not glitter before the vision of our faith as we look down through the troubled waters of a besotted life, we shall never be the honored instruments in finding it. The vision of love is essential to all great and high achievement. "Man is of more value than choice gold," and that does not mean simply the sage, the philosopher, the saint, but the drunkard, the libertine, the sinner of deepest dye. What we need in all our work for God is the eye that sees afar off—the eye that can see in the ragged, begrimed, travel-stained penitent the possible son of the living God. "When he was yet a long way off the father saw him."

Observe—

II. THAT LOVE HAS AN EYE THAT SEES THE PERFECT IN THE INCOMPLETE.

It not merely sees the possible, the desirable, the gratifying, but the perfect. The horticulturist is careful of the small shoot that he has borne from a rare garden across the Atlantic, for it contains the silken fibres of a life that is destined to become

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a tree of fairest form and richest foliage. The careful florist keeps the bulb of the rare exotic from exposure to the severities of winter. He realizes how precious it is in the light of its perfected unfolding. It is not mere life that it represents, but life after a superb pattern—a thing of real and exquisite beauty. The true mother as she presses her babe to her loving bosom has regard to the sainthood that lies hidden in the immortal germ. She sees him in the "vision of her faith," as Selby says, "standing in touch with the fierce white throne of God." It is related that when Origen was a baby in his cradle, his father would often uncover the bosom of the sleeping child and reverently imprint a kiss upon it, saying, "This shall become the temple of the Holy Ghost."

A friend of mine in Philadelphia, a man of splendid qualities of heart and head, of superabounding richness of nature—bright, impassioned, noble, generous—swung off from the Christian faith and became an infidel. He was so pronounced in his irreligion that his old friends shunned him on the street. He was given up for lost. At the mention of his name good men shook their heads as if to say there is no hope of him. He "has made a covenant with hell," and the less said about him or to him the better. But there was one man who held on to him with the grip of an unshaken faith. Although years went by without any change of attitude, he believed in his return from his apostasy.

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He never met him but what he told him what he thought. He never ceased to call him brother. He had been his pastor, and he held on to him through all the dark and dreary years with unshaken confidence as to the issue. The time came when that man renounced his infidelity and became a burning and a shining light, missing no opportunity to make amends for the mischief he had done, pouring out his wealth with a liberal hand, and using his experience gained on the barren mountains of unbelief to build up the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many a time did I hear him say, with tears streaming from his eyes, "I owe my salvation from the darkness and horrors of my great delusion and wickedness to that one man's faith in me." He saw him "afar off." He saw the saint in the infidel.

Is not this the secret of that imperial influence which radiates from Jesus Christ? His sympathy reaching down into the withered wastes of guilt awakens in the most wretched and fallen, longings after the Father's house. If Jesus Christ had not believed in us—had not sent messages of hope into our desolated and deluded hearts—had not embraced us in the vision of His love, we would have died beside the swine troughs. As the sunshine comes to meet the rootlets and the seedlings in the bosom of the earth; as it sees them, so to speak, from the heights and goes forth to bid them welcome and to give them the needed energy and stimulus to rise to their ideal perfection, so Jesus

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Christ, the great Sun of Righteousness, saw us when we were afar off, sent down His gracious beams into the darkness and helplessness wherein we lay, said to us with loving persuasiveness, "Come forth, put on your beautiful garments. Arise, shine, for your light is come." Oh, yes. He saw us afar off with the eye of love, and He came all the way on wings of love to make our return to Him possible, to put the nerve, and strength, and ambition of a new life into us. Love goes as far as she sees, and makes the object of her interest perfect as the ideal which her affection depicts. When infinite love sees the perfect in the incomplete, the saint in the sinner, it is no mere illusion.

Observe once more—

III. THAT LOVE HAS AN EYE THAT SEES THE
DIVINE IN THE HUMAN.

This may be regarded as repetitious. You may say, "What can go beyond the perfect? The perfect includes in it all that can be aspired after or attained. Let me reach that and I shall be for ever satisfied." But are there not gradations of quality? Is there not one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, and doth not one star differ from another star in glory? There are bodies terrestrial and bodies celestial, but the glory of the terrestrial is one and the glory of the celestial is another. The life of the cherubim is perfect, but it compares not with the life of the

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Son who is the express image of the invisible God. Oh, no ; it is not repetitious to add this last head to my discourse—*that love sees the divine in the human*. It is a real advance. It is the crowning capital of the temple. It means much to say that “love sees the perfect in the incomplete,” but it means vastly more to say that it sees the divine in the human. That means being perfect after a regal fashion—perfect as God is perfect—a being clothed with the divine quality. We were originally made in the likeness of God. What man lost in Eden was the divineness of his nature, the stamp of deity upon his soul. What is restored to us in Christ is that same likeness, only after a more glorious and enduring type. What infinite love sees in the returning and repenting sinner, however degraded he may have been, is a divine man—a man after the Christly pattern—not merely perfect, but fashioned after the similitude of the highest life in the universe. This is a marvellous truth. Who can think of it without enthusiasm? Beneath the filth and rags of an abject prodigalism divine love sees a quality of being more ineffable than that of angel, archangel, cherub or seraph. When we try to grasp the unutterable revelation we profoundly sympathize with a great soul of this generation when he says, “I want to be read by one who can see beneath the facts, who can discern the meridian in the dawn and the land of promise in the desert sand. I want to be photo-

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graphed not as I am, but as I shall be. I want to be taken in the light of to-morrow, in the light of my coming possibilities. I want to have imputed to me the beauty which shall be mine when the day-star shall rise in my heart. I want to be judged by Him who can see the rose in the bud—who can detect the music and dancing in the place where men feed swine. My brother is too short-sighted for that. I must arise and go to my Father.”

All there is of value in life is not seen. The measurement that confines itself to deeds and achievements is never absolutely correct. Mathematics may be conclusive in the realm of abstract thinking, but it utterly fails when applied to life. It is not quantity but quality, not deeds but ideals, that are of largest value in this high realm. The man who seemingly fails may be more successful than he who has won the plaudits of the universal church. God looks not at the outward appearance but at the heart. Brilliant successes may count for ignominious failures in the adjudication of the skies. There are poets that have never found adequate vehicles for the expression of their golden fancies; artists who have never been able to transmit their conceptions to the glowing canvas; philanthropists who have been cabined and confined by circumstances. There is more goodness, beauty, melody and magnificence in human lives than the world has ever seen or heard. God looks

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upon the essential quality, from which all that is divine and glorious emanates. He smells the fragrance that has never had a chance to express itself and hears the music imprisoned in the soul. To Him, as an eminent divine remarks, "the ideal is the real ; the intentional, the actual."

Not on the Vulgar mass
Called work must sentence pass.
Things done that took the eye and had the price ;
O'er which from level stand
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice :

But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb.
So passed in making up the main account ;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his worth, yet swelled the man's
account.

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act ;
Fancies that broke through language and escaped ;
All I could never be
All men ignored in me ;
That I was worth to God whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

V.

THE ARISTOCRACY OF THE KINGDOM.

“But Jesus called them unto Him and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister.”—MATTHEW xx. 25, 26.

THE mother of Zebedee's children was a very human sort of woman. She wanted her boys to have the chief places in the kingdom which she expected Christ was about to establish. I do not know that her desire was so atrociously selfish and vain as some commentators would have us believe. It did certainly savor a little of that sort of thing, but it must be remembered that they were her boys, and that in the vision of love they were equal to the demands of any position to which they might be called. If the programme of the future was to be according to her thinking, there is no very strong reason why a loving and ambitious mother should not have taken time by the forelock in the interests of her sons, especially in view of the fact that they were already devoted followers of the Lord.

She was, however, very far astray in her conception of the nature of the kingdom. To correct this false

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impression and to widen the horizon of vision generally among His followers, in this regard, He uttered the words of our text, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, but it should not be so among you, but he that will be great among you let him be your minister."

Our Lord in these passages emphasizes the difference between the two kingdoms. He would have them understand that He had not come to assume a material throne, and to wield a material sceptre, and to surround Himself with the ordinary accompaniments of earthly sovereignty. His kingdom was to be a spiritual one. He was not going to deliver Israel with the sword, and to attain supremacy by methods which appealed to the sensuous apprehensions of men. He was going to proceed upon a policy of administration that was altogether new and unique. He was going to conquer by methods that were ignored and despised. He was going to reverse all the conditions of achievements and success. "You are not," as if He should have said, "to look for results along worldly lines or according to human ideals, but in a completely opposite direction."

The kingdom of Christ in its principles, in its development, in its distinguishing characteristics is antipodal to the kingdoms of the world. The kingdoms of the world are carnal, His is spiritual. The kingdoms of the world are built up and sustained by

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the exercise of power—aggressive, assertive, commanding power—embodying itself in armies and fortifications and all variety of material equipment. The kingdom of Christ is built upon principles of enduring love, by the exercise of the passive virtues, by the imperial influence that finds its most perfect exemplification in the cross of Calvary.

If you would understand Christianity, just take the world's conception of a successful, honorable, victorious life, and reverse it—turn it upside down. This may be a little startling to those who are so completely enamored of the world's exhibitions and ideals as to be carried captive by them. I certainly do think that the conformity of Christ's followers to the methods, fashions, emptinesses and absurdities of the world is a horrible betrayal of Him. The kiss of Judas was not more false and offensive than is that of those who violate all the principles of the kingdom in the spirit and habits of their lives.

The particular contrast emphasized in our text is that of ARISTOCRACY. Who are the aristocracy of the world? The rich, the socially distinguished, those who have pushed their way up into places of prominence and influence. They are not a privileged class in this country as in the old. They are not by right of ancestral relationship invested with privileges and prerogatives that are exceptional. The aristocracy of this country, for the most part, are those who have made money, or whose parents

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have made money, and are thus enabled to indulge in extravagances and eccentricities that are not within the possibility of the multitude. That is about the only characterizing distinction that I can discover. The aristocracy of our Lord's time had more power, and exercised it, but the conceptions of life have not changed with changing time. The aristocracy even in this age and land assume superiority over their fellows, and often superciliously look down upon them.

Our Lord says to His followers, "But it should not be so amongst you. Whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister," or in other words, the aristocracy in my kingdom are those who serve.

This is not by any means a generally accepted truth. It may be all very well in theory, but in actual practice the proud heart rebels against it. It is a radical reversal of the world's conception. The world says *he* is the great man who rules. Christ says *he* is the great man who serves. The world points to the throne, to the giddy heights of power or influence. Christ points to unselfish ministry as the distinguishing insignia of the aristocratic quality.

The great Master did not teach what He did not practise. He embodied the type of heaven's nobility in His own inimitable career. The "gentleman of fashion" shrivels in His presence into a pretentious effigy of callow emptiness. He did not

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assume virtues and elegances but incarnated them. He was natural, unassuming, approachable, and yet there was a quality in Him that caused sham, and hypocrisy, iniquity and lewdness, meanness and insincerity to hide their heads. He was gentle, courteous, considerate, sympathetic, and yet so imperial in His integrity and purity that scribes and Pharisees, the social *elite* of their day, cowered in His presence. He did not keep aloof from the great, needy, agonizing multitude, however ill-considered and degraded, but there was an unknown quantity in Him which they never failed to recognize. Like the sunbeam He went down into the most nauseous depths with His healing life, but remained Himself immaculately pure ; He carried with Him into the very heart of the world the vital qualities of a true refinement and nobility ; He set the fashion of a perfect manhood and of a perfect manner of life for all the ages. In no single instance did He fail to adorn the doctrine which He enunciated ; His self-restraint, when treated by unmannerly opponents ; His delicacy of feeling, when dealing with the out-cast and fallen ; His exquisite sympathy in the presence of bereavement and sorrow ; His sublime condescension to men and women of the lowest estate ; His self-sacrifice, culminating in the cross—all these supernal qualities interblended like the colors of the rainbow in His incomparable personality. He was "God's true gentleman," the one immaculate type of heaven's aristocracy. It was

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no deviation from the royal road along which Christ was pursuing His own onward way for Him to say, "Whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister."

It is not easy to rise to the full significance and grandeur of such teaching. It seems in the light of the world's philosophy and practice to be not a little absurd. And yet there are some striking illustrations of it which could not fail to command respect. See that young mother, who but the other day was full of the gaieties and frivolities of life, who was almost selfish in her indulgences; but look at her now, sitting by that cradle or carrying to and fro that precious little life that God has given her. How absolutely self-forgetful she is! How completely has she left the world behind her, and given herself up to the ministry of affection. It is her joy, her aliment, her very life. Nothing could tempt her away from that little helpless thing that frets, and whines, and taxes all her energies. No one will presume to question the exceeding beauty of such conduct. How uninteresting and even despicable does a life of fashionable indulgence, or mere pleasure-seeking seem in the comparison! What, in truth, are the qualities that command the respect and homage of all thoughtful men? Who is the most royal spirit you have ever known? Your mother. Why, think you? Is it because she was beautiful or wise above all other women? Nay, but because she knew

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how to minister; because she carried burdens which would make any one but a mother stagger and faint. If there is any real aristocracy on earth you are sure that your mother ought to belong to it. You can understand the teaching of our text more easily in the light of an illustration like that than you could under any other circumstances. "Whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister."

It is the men and women who forget themselves in their devotion to some great cause; who give their lives with a disinterested philanthropy in the interest of their fellows; who respond to the appeal of the weak or unfortunate, not because there is anything to gain by it, but because their hearts are generous and sympathetic. It is such men and women that are the true aristocracy of the world. They have heaven's coronet on their brows because they have heaven's spirit in their hearts.

You cannot think of John Howard giving his life to visiting the lazar houses and prisons of Europe that he might seek to make the condition of those who were confined in them less utterly deplorable without recognizing his nobility. You cannot think of Livingstone penetrating the heart of Africa, exposing himself to the ravages of disease and the treachery of savages, divesting himself of the comforts and companionship of civilized life that he might bring the light of hope into the desolating darkness, without feeling that he was

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worthy of a place of distinction among the aristocrats of the world. You cannot think of Carey going out to India and burying himself there, as seed is buried in the ground, to produce a harvest of souls redeemed, without feeling that the world's conception of greatness and nobility pales beside such an exhibition. You cannot think of the great army of men and women who considered not themselves, who sacrificed their worldly interests, who gave time and thought and all-consuming enthusiasm to bring blessings to their kind, without recognizing their distinguishing supremacy. The real princes of the earth, the only aristocracy that is worthy of consideration and respect, are just such men and women. Goodness is greatness, and servanthip mastership in this high realm. No man can be enthroned in the world's homage, or in God's heaven, who does not in some way become his brother's benefactor.

In Christ's kingdom this is the law of advancement and distinction. The prince is a pigmy if he be without qualities of helpfulness. The mightiest soul that breathes has no recognition if he be mean and selfish. Love must have the supreme place. Sympathy for human woe, and pain, and ignorance must sway the soul. Reason and affection must dwell close beside conscience, "and be bound up with it in one powerful personality, as light and heat blend in each beam of the all-maturing sun." No one has the credentials of the kingdom who is

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not aflame with zeal for righteousness and with enthusiasm for humanity.

The aristocracy of the world is hemmed in by barriers of assumptious limitation, but the aristocracy of God's kingdom is open to all who will earnestly aspire toward it. If you have been born from above, you cannot live on the lower levels of mediocrity and uselessness. You must be a prince or a nobleman, and the pathway to such distinction is within the possibility of the most humble. "Whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister."

This mother wanted her sons to sit the one on the right hand and the other on the left of the Lord in His kingdom. I do not know but that even this was possible, only in a different sense from that which she imagined. The more true, and brave, and unselfish we are in our ministries of love and service, the nearer we shall be to our great Lord, and the more surely shall we enjoy the honors of His kingdom.

I have known ministers who took pride in the fact that they had aristocratic congregations to preach to. Well might they if they were of the type mentioned in the text. Such a congregation would verily be a company of the *elite*. All believers are of royal blood, and when they act worthy of their heaven-born quality they cannot fail to be sublime.

And now, what about ourselves? Have we been

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raised to the peerage of the kingdom? Most of the real kings of human life are uncrowned, and its finest aristocracy are not clothed in silks and broad-cloth. How is it with us? Have we learned to serve? Have we come into sympathetic touch with the agonizing needs of the world? Have we been born of the Spirit into the aristocracy of service? If this is not the case, our profession counts for nothing, our religion is a sham. The teaching of our text bears emphatic witness to this fact, and the pronouncements of the judgment will confirm it. "Whosoever will be great among you let him be your minister." "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."

VI.

THE STRONG STAFF AND THE BEAUTIFUL ROD.*

“How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!”
—JER. xlviii. 17.

IT will not be deemed out of place, I feel sure, if I refer to-night to an event, the intelligence of which came upon the membership of this church, as well as upon myself, with startling impressiveness. I refer to the drowning of Alexander Grant. Other pastors have spoken of it in eloquent and fitting words, but I had not the opportunity at the time. It was well, perhaps, that I had not. I can speak after the interval of weeks more calmly and dispassionately. It was to me, as I doubt not to many others throughout this province, a bereavement that was near and personal. It cast a shadow upon the opening days of my vacation, from which I found it almost impossible to emerge. The occurrence was so unexpected, so startling, so mockingly mysterious, that for a time I could only look out into the darkness with a dazed consciousness that not a star was shining. I tried to be alone

* This sermon is inserted in this volume to keep in memory one of the brightest and most useful young ministers of this generation.

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with my own thoughts for a while, but the sorrow of others whom I knew and loved became so vividly real to me that I could not endure it. I wandered aimlessly to the shores of the great ocean, near which I had a temporary residence, but every wave as it broke seemed to bear upon its heaving bosom an emphasized reiteration of the telegram I had just received, "Aleck drowned in the Nepigon!"

When I had calmed myself sufficiently to think, the past came in upon me with crowding reminiscences. I saw him as the central figure of many a delightful fellowship. I remembered with almost supernatural realism the weeks we spent together, with a few other congenial friends, on that very river, seven years ago. I saw him in all the moods through which he passed under the exciting and exhilarating, and sometimes depressing, influences of that memorable trip. I heard the intonations of his voice as they had fallen upon my ears. I heard him shout and laugh, and sing and pray. I recalled the time when for three weeks meetings were held in this church, under the auspices of the young people, and he preached every night with marvelous incisiveness of thought and speech. I remembered his prayers, or, I might say, his prolonged agonizings, at the throne of grace for souls, and for the glory of the one great name. I recalled our last meeting together in London, sitting around the bountiful table of a mutual friend, and spending the hours till midnight, for the most part listening to

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his charming descriptions of experiences and adventure. The thought that he was no more within reach of earthly touch or human recognition oppressed me. The words of our text were, I think, the first—certainly the first drawn from the sacred Scriptures—through which my feelings found audible expression, “How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod !”

The text is not inappropriate. It is suggestive of two features in Alexander Grant’s mental and spiritual make-up. There was strength in him which we all recognized and rejoiced in, and there was beauty in him also to those who came near enough to understand his quality. He was a staff upon which men and women, in large numbers, were wont to lean for instruction and guidance, sympathy and help, and he was at the same time a beautiful rod which, while it wielded authority, elicited admiration. He drew toward him old and young by the manly vigor of his thought and character, and he held most of them in personal relations of affection by the finer qualities of his heart. He was a tower of strength, within the ægis of whose personality men under the stress and strain of human conflict loved to linger, and he was also, where he was fully known and understood, as magnetic as he was stalwart. He was what this Scripture represents, to as large an extent as most men that I have known, “ a strong staff, and a beautiful rod.”

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If I make use of the text in developing my thought this evening, I will have to confine myself to just two points—strength and beauty. I do not see, however, that I need a wider range. They comprehend all that can or need be said about our departed friend. I know of few finer epitaphs than this to inscribe upon the memorial tablet of our souls as we think and speak of him to-night, “He was a strong staff, and a beautiful rod.”

And now let us proceed to justify the use of this striking imagery.

I. THE STRONG STAFF.

That is what is used by the traveller as he climbs the mountain steeps, or by the fatigued and wearied man as he pursues his way toward some distant point of interest, or by old age in its tottering efforts to move around the house, or to get to the church where it loves to sit beneath the Gospel's joyful sound. It is necessary that the staff be strong when it is to be leaned upon with all one's weight of confidence.

There are some men like that. They get underneath their fellows with sustaining and upholding helpfulness. They are freely used to strengthen faith, to nerve the arm that falters and the heart that quails. They help their brothers bear their burdens and achieve their victories. They assume responsibilities with instant readiness, and are never happier than when men and women are aided by

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them in the struggle to overcome the difficulties that beset their pilgrim way, and are enabled by the support they furnish to stand on higher altitudes of vision.

Our departed friend was of this number of God-honored and God-gifted men. Many gathered around him for counsel and support, for inspiration and encouragement. He was universally recognized as a man who could lead the hosts of God to victory.

Whatever work Alexander Grant engaged in was gripped with a vigorous hand. He thought about it and prayed over it until it grew into an importance never dreamed of by the superficial and the time-serving. When Superintendent of Home Missions, that department of missionary enterprise soon became the greatest thing in our denominational purview. It was so impressed upon us by his glowing representations of its transcendent claims, and of the momentous issues dependent upon it, that we began to catch the enthusiasm, and to have higher ideals in regard to it ourselves. When he removed to the North-West the centre of his universe was changed from Ontario to Manitoba, and there grew before his imagination, and upon his heart, such a sense of the needs of that great country that there was not anywhere on this round earth a work that compared with it. And what is more, he was fast making the denomination think as he did about it. He had a power

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of impressing himself and the cause which he espoused upon his brethren, which was rare. He could carry a convention, almost against its sober judgment, when he was in the vein. He was certainly a very exceptional man. The clearness of his thinking, the homely appositeness of his illustrations, the rugged vigor of his oratory, impressed themselves upon all who came beneath his influence. There was not a man of his age in the Canadian pulpit who stood higher in the estimation of his brethren. In many respects he was absolutely incomparable. He was cast in a mould which was used but once. He was pre-eminently original. There was but one Alexander Grant. We do not expect to see the quality reproduced, nor even successfully imitated.

That he had weaknesses and faults his most enthusiastic admirers would readily acknowledge, but his virtues and excellencies so irradiated and relieved them that they were ever regarded with consideration.

He was an enthusiast of the first water. His ambition brooked not superior excellence or skill. What he did was so well done that he never shrank from coming into competition with the most formidable antagonists. In polemical discussion, in forceful oratory, in handling a gun, or in casting a fly, he was such an expert that few would care to test their proficiency with him. He was sensitive even to a fault when he had to take second place.

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Nothing irritated him more than the dust of his competitor. He loved to be foremost in the race, and his Celtic blood got to the boiling point when he was compelled to acknowledge a defeat. It is but just to say that in all my knowledge of him the instances were very rare in which his genius and his skill did not appear to admirable advantage.

He was distinguished for his rugged naturalness. He had little regard for niceties of speech or elegances of manner. Cosmetics of every sort were to him but the decoration of fools. He would rather be himself than be mistaken for an archangel. He was a solid boulder hewn from nature's quarry that asserted its value, not by the exquisiteness of the sculptor's handiwork, but by the quality of the strata which differentiated him from his brethren.

He had the instincts of an old Hebrew prophet—he was a seer. The Bible was to him an open book. He felt its mysteries as every earnest thinker must, but he revelled in its stupendous revelations as a strong swimmer does in the congenial tide. The doctrines of grace so buttressed him that he stood four-square to every wind that blew. His convictions went down to the granite foundations of the faith and entwined themselves around the adamantine boulders of the everlasting covenant. He despised the preaching that was sentimental and apologetic. It was a tonic to weak faith and a

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rebuke to all sceptical and rationalistic tendencies to come beneath his influence and ministry.

With these memories of a personality so unique and rare, is it surprising that we should give expression to our grief in the language of this graphic imagery, "How is the strong staff broken"?

II. THE BEAUTIFUL ROD.

There are not a few, perhaps, who would find it difficult to recognize the appositeness of this part of the imagery as applied to Alexander Grant. They would readily admit the idea of strength as being well and wisely chosen but not the idea of beauty. I believe myself that it required a knowledge of him which was somewhat intimate to be impressed with the appropriateness of the comparison. Large-hearted though he was, he did not admit the multitude who gathered around him to the innermost circles of his being. There were in him elements of repulsion as well as of attraction. The door of his heart did not swing from the outside, inviting an indiscriminate entrance. The palace was regal enough to offer its hospitalities to all comers, but there were apartments exquisitely furnished and generously supplied with the rarest affluences of affection, to which only the few could freely find their way. No one knew Alexander Grant to whom the password of personal friendship did not give the *entrée* into his inmost confidence—

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who were not permitted to roam at will through all the unique chambers of his soul. To have known him as a man, a preacher, a citizen, an organizer of wide-reaching Christian activities is a privilege to be gratefully remembered, but to have known him as a friend, to have felt the charm of that rare self-hood that came to the surface when friendship revelled in delicious undisguise and all the avenues of the soul were thrown open to the most wilful and capricious intimacies, is something to be remembered with the tenderest affection.

How well do I recall the time when the spell of his personality first stole in upon my affections. I had been wont to regard him as an egotist and a cynic. I had no desire to court intimacy with him. The opportunity came, however, without being sought, and it served to revolutionize my conceptions in regard to him. We were thrown together in the delightful informalities of a fishing camp. As we lay beneath the canvas listening to the birds sing in marvellous concert before beginning the work of the day, or gathered around the camp fire to discuss politics or divinity, according to the mood, or tested each other's skill in the expert achievements of our favorite sport, or talked of the great themes which gather in harmonious grandeur around the cross, or united in reverent worship under the infinite blue—for we indulged in each as opportunity offered—chords were struck which awakened responsive echoes, and our hearts were

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thenceforward welded into a brotherhood which death has only glorified.

Alexander Grant had a head that was exquisitely poised and a brain that was marvellously fecundant, but the greatest thing about him was his heart; that was a great deep. Too many of those who make strong assumptions of friendship are like the little bay on which I have been during the past weeks seeking recreation; they are dependent on the tides, they are treacherous at best. You have got to be familiar with the channels and keep in them with assiduous care, for when the tide happens to be out they are full of shallows. Alexander Grant was more like the great sea in the depth and fulness of his affection. The keel never struck the sand, nor grazed a hidden rock, nor became enveloped in an insidious whirlpool. There was room in that heart of his for all the wide-sweeping excursions of friendship. You knew where you were when sailing on those waters. You could spread your canvas to the strongest breezes without fear of a capsizing. That is what his friendship was to those who came into the circle of his confidence. Those who knew him, as I think I did, could no more suspect treachery, or fraud, or dissimulation in aught that he did or said, than they could impurity in a sunbeam or feebleness in a seraph's wing.

These reminiscences go far to justify the use I have made of this text, in which beauty as well as strength is figured forth. These near views which

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all did not enjoy, revealed him at his best. There were gems hidden beneath that rocky surface of character and beneath those craggy eccentricities (mockingly prominent at times) which were fit to adorn the crown of royalty. The lament is surely fitting as we think of him to-night, "How is the strong staff broken and the beautiful rod!"

III. THE STRONG STAFF AND THE BEAUTIFUL ROD BROKEN.

There comes the mystery of this event. We have all felt it. This man of youthful vigor, with all the best years of his life unlived; this man of burning zeal and ardent enthusiasm; this man of great purposes and high and holy aims, cut down; the strength and beauty, at one sudden moment, whelmed beneath the current. It is this that has perplexed us, and thrown contempt upon our poor philosophies: "How is the strong staff *broken* and the beautiful rod!"

There are instances when death does not surprise us. When the staff has become weak with age, or usage; when the processes of decay have done their work; when all its fibrous strength has failed; we do not wonder that the staff should break beneath the weight that even a child might put upon it. The surprise comes when the strong staff and the rod that is green with the beauty of its elastic life are broken.

There is a reason for it all which we may not yet

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fully see. There are no mistakes in the administration of the perfect One. God acts with sovereign independence, to show us how resourceful He is. He may summon hence His most useful servants by what seems to us an untimely call, that, in the language of Paul, the excellency of the power might be seen to be of Him alone, and not of men at all. He can do without the best of us. He can, if need be, dispense with the services of a Moses, an Elijah, a John the Baptist, a Paul, and that at a time when they may seem indispensable to the very existence of His cause. Under no circumstances are we to overestimate the value of a man. God could raise up out of the refuse of humanity, that we despise, those who, under His regenerating and sanctifying touch, would become princes in His kingdom. We are wont to say, when great men fall, what will become of the cause? But as long as God liveth, such solicitude is impious. The cause upon which He has set the seal of His covenant shall not suffer loss, whatever may befall. The servant, at best, is only a staff cut out of the common hedge of humanity. "The excellency of the power is of God." Be not dismayed, O Church of God, though the strong staves and the beautiful rods be broken with alarming frequency. God has a mighty forest of them at command, which He can make equally efficient and beautiful. "Our trust is in the Lord, in whom is everlasting strength."

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There is one urgent message which this event brings to all of us to-night—brings to the young and strong as well as the middle-aged and the old. It may be put in one sentence: *The time is short!* If you mean to do anything that is to tell beneficently on human destinies, do it, do it quickly, do it now. If you mean to brighten the pathway along which you walk so that others less privileged shall rejoice that they ever knew you, and revere your memory when you are gone, let the fire of holy zeal be kindled without delay. If you mean to soothe the sorrowing heart, or pour oil of consolation into wounds that are bleeding, do not leave the blessed ministry until some future time—a more convenient season. You are standing on the verge of eternity this very moment. A single instant may place you beyond the possibility of aught that can follow you with grateful benedictions into the eternal future.

This message comes with emphasized solemnity to those of us who are in the ministry. God help us to be strong, and true, and brave, and beautiful as well, with all the adorning and glorifying graces of a divine consecration, that when the time of breaking comes the lament of the text may not be altogether inappropriate to our poor lives.

Farewell, my Brother! We shall not see thy face nor hear thy familiar voice in the old scenes of earthly convocation, but we shall see thee yonder. Thou art not gone out into the darkness,

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but into the clearer light. Thou hast not ended thy career. Thy real life, that for which thou hast been in preparation, is yet to come. All hail, my Brother! The strong staff and the beautiful rod, instead of being broken, has only been transfigured and glorified.

VII.

THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH.*

“And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.”—PSALM lxxxvii. 5.

THE Church is God's institution on the earth. Her history is unparalleled and sublime. Having her foundations in the holy mountains, she has withstood the shocks of time and remained immovable amid the upheavals of successive centuries. Her walls are not granite, and yet they have stood when granite has crumbled. Her towers are not adamant, and yet they have resisted the besiegements of age. Kings have risen up against her, but she has lived to see them buried and forgotten. Hell has resisted her influence, but her triumph has been signal and complete. While many of her imperial enemies are nothing to-day but names on the historic records of the world, and their kingdoms nothing but instances of the instability of all human power and glory, she continues to be the greatest and grandest of realities.

The Church of God, by which, of course, I mean the universal body of believers, united by faith in Jesus Christ, has not only maintained an inde-

* This sermon was published twenty-five years ago, and is inserted in this volume at the request of friends.

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pendent existence, but has been throughout the ages an aggressive and regenerating power. She has not only conserved and fostered her own inherent vitality, but has sent out a healing overflow upon the wild and arid wastes of life. Like the fecundant Nile she has overswelled the limits of her narrow bed and caused whole empires to rise from desolations overspread with impurity and ignorance into fragrant gardens of civilized activity. She may be regarded as holding the same relation to the mental and the moral life of the world that the ocean does to the material. Every green meadow of civilized existence, every broad forest of sturdy manhood, every fair garden of fragrant virtues owe most of their distinguishing characteristics to her vitalizing influence. Regarded, therefore, simply as a civilizing agency, the Church of God is worthy of angelic eulogy. Her influence has been in the highest degree beneficent. But she is immeasurably more than this. The Psalmist, from the supreme height of prophetic vision, catches the splendor of her true renown. He discerns not the secondary and incidental for the glory of that which is primal and supreme. "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her."

I observe then—

I. THAT THE GREATEST GLORY OF THE CHURCH CONSISTS IN HER BEING THE BIRTH-PLACE OF SOULS.

Not that she has organized great movements of

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beneficence and utility, not that she has established institutions of education and philanthropy, not that she has given tone and quality to the literature and civilization of the world, but that "this and that man was born in her." This is the distinction of the Church.

Other institutions have produced scholars and statesmen, philosophers and artists; other institutions have developed magnificent specimens of intellectual manhood; other institutions have blessed the world with men who have shed lustre on their age by their brilliant achievements and philanthropic lives.

But the Church has done vastly more than this. She has reached down by the energy of her God-given enthusiasm into the depths of moral degradation and ruin, and produced not cultured natures merely, but new creations; not refined exteriors, but regenerated lives.

When systems of philosophy and codes of law have utterly and ignominiously failed to arrest the progress of iniquity, the religion of Christ has triumphed. The schools of Ephesus or of Jerusalem may have produced a Saul of Tarsus, sagacious, quick-witted, profound, who dignified the most furious and malignant passions with the hallowed name of religion, but it required the grace of God to make that same Saul an apostle and a martyr. The schools of Oxford or of Cambridge, of Harvard or Yale, of Montreal or Toronto, may produce men

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of finest scholarship, but it requires the school of Christ, the Church of the living God, to produce men in whom the highest principles of character are realized. The Christian is the highest style of man, and he cannot be developed by the most approved appliances of scholarly invention, nor by any of the manifold influences that are held in estimation by a mere human philosophy. One poor soul redeemed and lifted out of the slough of sin into a life of holy purpose and achievement is more wonderful and glorious in the sight of angels and of God than the most brilliant poet or artist, or historian, or philosopher that ever lived. A sinner saved is the grandest moral achievement in the universe, and this is the distinguishing glory of the Church, that "this and that man was born in her."

The Church is not glorified by crowds. There is a self-complacent satisfaction which is sometimes experienced when the courts of Zion are thronged with eager multitudes. We often say in our ignorance, What a prosperous community that is! How highly blessed in having such a ministry! whereas, all the while it may be a scene of utter barrenness unworthy of the exalted name by which it is distinguished. A church (I care not what her wealth or influence or numbers) is a failure unless souls are born in her, unless she walk the earth, so to speak, under the profound impulse of a divine unction and in the enthusiasm of conscious power,

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unless she can cast out the demons that infest society and quicken dead souls into an immortal being by the supernatural energies of her God-given life. This is her glory and her praise, that "this and that man was born in her."

This fact is not without a very significant bearing on our Christian activities.

I. *If the Greatest Glory of the Church consists in her being the Birthplace of Souls, then this should be the Supreme Aim of the Gospel Ministry,*

To prostitute the pulpit to any other end than this, to make it the Thermopylæ for intellectual display or rhetorical effect, to use it for mercenary or ambitious designs, or to employ it as an arena for personal exhibition, must be an impertinence for which a parallel could scarcely be produced. To have no higher aim in our ministrations than to gratify and amuse, or to seek to have the interest of our audiences culminate in admiration of ourselves, is an exhibition at which angels well might weep.

"What, will a man play tricks,—shall he indulge
A silly fond conceit of his fair fame
And just proportions, fashionable mein
And pretty face in presence of his God?
Or will he seek to dazzle me with tropes
As with a diamond on his lily hand
When I am hungry for the bread of life?
He mocks his Maker, prostitutes and shames
His noble office and instead of truth,
Displaying his own beauty, starves his flock."

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The one dominating, controlling, all-subduing purpose of the ministerial life should be the *salvation of souls*. This should be ever nearest to our hearts and foremost in our lives. It should be intensified by fervent prayer into a sublime passion, captivating every thought and energy into its holy service. If the text be true, then the sermon that is not full of Christ and that is not burdened with solicitude for souls is a lamentable sham.

The supreme object of the Gospel ministry is not to please and gratify the multitude, not to draw crowds of curious hearers, not to give the Church with which we may chance to be connected a popular celebrity, but to reach the hearts and influence the lives of men for God and heaven. This, however, is not the only inference that I would draw from the general principle stated. I would observe again—

2. If the Greatest Glory of the Church consists in her being the Birthplace of Souls, then this should be the Supreme Aim of all Religious Effort.

It must be admitted that there is a great deal of activity in the Church which is not even remotely connected with her real life. What a small proportion of our aggregate membership are fully alive to their spiritual obligations and responsibilities! What we have most to lament is not the worldliness of the world, but the worldliness of the Church; not the wickedness without, but the heartlessness within; not the scepticism of the masses, but the

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scepticism of our own hearts. The most urgent need of the hour is a church emancipated from the thrall and bondage of the world and sin—a pure church, a living church, an aggressive church, a church baptized in the spirit and power of the Master's consecration.

Atmospheric conditions determine the perpetuity of certain qualities of vegetable growths. What is superabundant and luxuriant in the tropics would speedily become extinct if subjected to the severities of a bleak northern clime. It is even so in the Church. A great deal depends upon the warmth and glow of her spiritual experiences as to the existence and perpetuity of the highest forms of life. If her heart is cold and her life is formal, neither the flowers of Paradise nor the grapes of Eshcol will be found even in her best cultivated vineyards. But if, on the other hand, she dwell beneath the perennial glow of heaven's effulgent beams, her very paths will drop fatness and all her gardens and orchards will be abounding with celestial fruitage.

We are responsible in no small degree for our sterility and barrenness. We permit the oxygen to be extracted from the atmosphere of our spiritual living, and then wonder that we should convulsively gasp for breath. We drink of the poisoned springs of unbelief, and then express surprise that the energies of our moral manhood should collapse. We permit ourselves to be despoiled of the fine gold

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of spiritual principles, and then flaunt our poverty before the world as a condition for which we are not responsible. We stand in the "way of sinners and sit in the seat of the scornful," and then complain that we are not "as trees planted by the rivers of waters." We violate every condition of spiritual growth and prosperity, and then ask with supercilious imbecility, "Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious?"

O Church of God, when wilt thou learn the first principles of that royal life into which thou hast been introduced? When wilt thou rise to the dignity and supremacy of thy divine prerogatives in Jesus Christ? How long wilt thou languish beside the dewless mounds of the wilderness when the land in all its rich sufficiencies is thine? How long wilt thou cower and shrink before thine enemies while "the Lord of hosts and the God of battles" bids thee go forward?

"Awake, awake, put on thy strength; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem the holy city. Shake thyself from the dust. Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion. Then shall the Gentiles see thy righteousness and all kings thy glory. And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."

Let the Church of Jesus Christ shake herself

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from the entrapments that too often keep her in the dust, let her realize her strength, let the spirit of life, of love, of zeal, of power, of consecration and enthusiasm possess her soul, and "nations shall be born in a day and Zion shall be a wonder and a praise, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

II. THAT THE DISTINGUISHING RENOWN OF THE CHURCH IS DEPENDENT UPON THE INDIVIDUAL RESPLENDENCE OF HER MEMBERS.

"This and that man." This is a truth which needs to be emphasized. Many Christians seem strangely oblivious of their individual obligation and responsibility. They imagine that connection with the Church is all-sufficient to preserve them from the consequent penalties of disobedience. They think themselves remarkably consistent and exemplary if they attend the services of the sanctuary with tolerable regularity and contribute generously towards the various enterprises of the Church. But these good people are laboring under a sad delusion if they suppose that their church connection and respectability are sufficient to veil their real characters. God individualizes men. It is not as nations, nor as communities, nor as churches, that He regards them. His balances are for individuals and they are infallible. It is "this and that man." You are as much alone in His all-seeing vision as if there were no one in this wide universe but your-

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self. You may be jostled by the multitude. You may live and move amid the surging currents of the world's busy life. You may enter into the church, and, as the little rivulet merges into the river, you may lose all sense of personal responsibility toward God and your fellowmen. But you are alone for all that. You are separated, singled out, individualized. You cannot lose yourself in the crowd. You cannot be merged in the great stream of contemporary society. You not only form a part of the great aggregate of humanity, but you stand forth in God's vision as if there were none other but yourself with all the obligations and responsibilities of individual thought, motive and action resting upon you.

This is an age of associations. Most of the work of our churches is done by societies, committees and boards. This is perhaps unavoidable in the present state of society. It will be readily acknowledged, however, that Christian work has been too exclusively directed into these stereotyped channels. There are few things more needed at the present time in all our churches than spontaneous and intelligent individual exertion. More than gifts of money, or rules or speeches, or resolutions or organization, we need a revival of personal agency—the touch of the hand—the glance of the eye—the tone of the voice—the glowing sympathy of loving hearts charged with all healing influences—to sow the desolate wildernesses of life with the "good

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seeds of the kingdom." It is the hand-to-hand, face-to-face, heart-to-heart contact that tells most mightily in this great conflict with sin and hell. You can't save the world through committees. You can't get out of the responsibility of Christian service by a system of delegation. God wants not your money ; that is comparatively a trivial matter. He wants you—your love, your allegiance, your faith, your devotion, your personal consecration in the interest of His great cause. If you "yield not yourself as a living sacrifice upon His altar," you may keep your oblations for they are of little worth. Remember then, dear friends, that with God it is not this or that organization, or this or that church, but "this and that man."

The text represents the true celebrity of the Church as consisting in the individual resplendence of her members. Not that she has achieved great victories, or permeated society with the beneficent influences of her royal life, but that "this and that man was born in her."

This is the pride and boast of institutions and countries. Oxford and Cambridge think a great deal more of their brilliant sons than they do of their vast endowments. If it were asked the leading members of their respective faculties, "Wherein is your chief renown?" they would refer you to the folios of the dead and the proud positions of the living, and say, "This and that man was born in her."

Greece and Rome have been rendered famous by

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the men to whom they have given birth. What would Greece be to this generation were it not that such men as Socrates and Plato, Demosthenes and Aristotle were born there? And Rome has come down to us through the ages with a lustre that has been reflected upon her in the same way. Her Cicero, her Brutus, her Cæsar, her Virgil—she has been rendered famous because “this and that man was born in her.”

Ask England what she regards as her distinguishing renown, and she will answer, “Not my territories upon which the sun doth never set, not the breadth and freedom of my government, not even the beneficent and philanthropic institutions of the land, but my splendid galaxy of sons.” Her glory is and ever will be, that “this and that man was born in her.” These are the brilliants that shine with lustrous beauty in her crown, that constrain the whole civilized world to do her homage. Whatever changes the revolution of the centuries may effect, even though the star of that mighty empire wane, even though she become in the distant future like many other great nationalities, nothing but a name, yet will her glory be undimmed. Her Shakespeare, her Milton, her Bunyan, her Wesley, her Gladstone, her Spurgeon, and a host of others great and good as they, will preserve her from extinction and perpetuate her renown from age to age. Yes, the pride and glory of England is, and ever will be, that “this and that man was born in her.”

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And what is the boast and glory of America? Is it the breadth and grandeur of her institutions? It must be admitted that there is much in these to call forth pride and gratitude. But I venture the assertion that above them all she glories in her noble sons. Many of them were men of fervid patriotism and thrilling eloquence. She owes her present proud position to the wisdom and valor which they displayed. Some of them have shed lustre upon the civilization of the world, and whatever else she may regard with conscious exultation, she will glory in the fact that "this and that man was born in her."

We are not insensible of the many features of interest and attraction that Canada presents. If boasting were not a vain and fulsome thing, we might indulge ourselves in like manner, for ours is a goodly land. But above the social, physical, educational and religious advantages that we enjoy, we would boast in the strong and true and stalwart men who have done so much to make this country what it is.

And this is likewise the distinguishing renown of the Church. She, too, has had her heroes. The loftiest genius, the most brilliant eloquence and the most finished scholarship have flourished beneath the shadow of her influence. From that hoary age when the Jewish shepherd, equipped in all the lore of Egypt, and inspired with revelations

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from on high, first taught the chosen seed how in the beginning the heavens and the earth rose out of chaos, to that when the son of Jesse, the shepherd king of Israel, breathed forth his soul in sublime and seraphic poetry to God; from that far distant time when Isaiah, the king of bards, and the prince of Hebrew prophets, spoke, to that when John the Baptist wielded the Master's wand and with stern majesty aroused the Jewish nation from its moral turpitude; from those eventful years when Paul, the epic hero of the Christian Church, performed those matchless deeds of spiritual prowess, to those when Augustine convinced and Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed, subdued the multitudes to tears and penitence; from those beclouded times when Luther dared confront the world and hell for God, to those when Whitefield swayed the human heart at will, and Wesley gathered in the willing souls to fellowship and service; what a brilliant company of master-spirits have appeared upon the scene! What an army of noble, heroic, princely men do we behold! Many of them have been the acknowledged masters of the world. Their words have been the law and life of nations, and their living, inspiring, burning thoughts have had much to do in moulding the habits and developing the sentiments of society in every age. Well might the Church boast in the individual resplendence of her noble sons.

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Observe once more—

III. THAT THE MOST POTENT INSPIRATION OF THE CHURCH CONSISTS IN THE RECOGNITION OF THE SPIRITUAL UNIVERSE.

“Of Zion it *shall* be said.” The Church has had to vindicate herself before the intelligence of the ages. Human hatred and Satanic malignity have united to clothe her with infamy and reproach. She has been arraigned before the bar of public justice as an offender. She has been subjected to the most cruel misrepresentations. Like her divine Lord she has been imperfectly understood and basely treated. While she was filling the world with the fragrance of her virtues, she was denounced as heretical and dangerous. When she was laying the foundation principles of the grandest civilization the world has ever known, she was hounded with cruel bitterness and branded with opprobrious names. When she was redeeming the stagnant morasses of society from their malarial degeneracy and turning the wild wastes of life into cultivated fields and gardens, the high places of the earth continued to regard her work as impertinent and superfluous.

And even to-day there is a growing disposition to rob the Church of her well-won laurels. The infidel and the sceptical in society are clamoring about human institutions. The morality, the intelligence, the social order, the philanthropy of this twentieth century are to them the natural results

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of an advanced civilization. Some in their inordinate and unreasoning prejudice go so far as to assert that the Church has been an obstruction in the march of the world's progress.

Her inspiration, however, does not consist in the plaudits of the unappreciative multitude. Her renown is not dependent upon the erratic praises of men. She lives, when she realizes her supremacy and fulfils her true mission, *by faith*. The approval of God and the recognition of the spiritual universe is her inspiration and her joy. "Of Zion it *shall* be said."

1. *This Recognition will be based on Character.*

The distinctions of the world are seldom accorded on the ground of merit. The accident of birth, the concurrence of favorable circumstances or wealth serve most frequently to make the this and that man of the world. Many have died in obscurity and poverty, who were endowed more richly far than were others who, on the tidal wave of circumstances, were carried into positions of supremacy and power.

But it is not so in the great invisible community of which Jesus Christ is the Lord and King. Here every man is estimated for what he is worth. God's measurement is ever based on character. When he writeth up the people, every man will have his due. It will not be then the great preacher, or leader, but the faithful, the true, the Christlike. What a reversal of positions there will be in that day! God will make no mistake. Many who now

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dazzle the Church and the world with their benefactions, the ministers who now sway the multitudes with their glowing eloquence, and many others who have stood out conspicuously before the age as teachers and reformers, may have to give place to the poor widows who cast all their living into the treasury of God, and the unostentatious men and women who wrought unseen in some humble ministries of love and mercy.

Is there not comfort in this thought to those of you who have but a small place in life—to those of you whose abilities are limited, whose means are scanty, whose opportunities of usefulness are few and meagre? Be faithful where you are. Use wisely and earnestly the small influence and energy that God hath given you, and you shall not be behind the rest. The great Lord casts His measuring line with exquisite accuracy upon both motives and achievements. He takes into account the unfavorable conditions and the limitations of your lot. Nothing that can determine judgment is permitted to pass unobserved. And if you adorn the humble sphere in which you move with the graces and activities of a true and noble consecration, you shall be amongst the distinguished ones of heaven. Of you it shall be said, "This and that man was born in her."

2. *This Recognition will be Transcendently Glorious.*

How shall I describe it? I am oppressed with the poverty of language and of thought as the ineffable

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scene plays before my vision. I can best illustrate it perhaps in the use of imagery that seemed to have a peculiar fascination for the great apostle of the Gentiles—the crowning contest in the Olympic games. It was admirably designed to fill the mind with all that glow of excitement, with all that intensity of effort, with all those swelling emotions of pride and exultation which should characterize the contestants in the Christian course. Here was a royal stadium surrounded by rising tiers of benches from which ten thousand spectators looked on with eager interest. Here were the pride, fashion and glory of the land. Princes, senators, warriors and poets contributed to the dazzling resplendence of the scene. To the competitors, the whole world was looking on. Under such a stimulus and with such surroundings every nerve would be put to the utmost tension of its strength, and when the prize was won and the laurelled crown was wreathed upon the victor's brow, and his name was heralded with acclamations of rejoicing through the streets of the city where he had hitherto been unknown to fame; and when surrounded with all the pomp, magnificence and triumph of such an occasion, he passed through the city's opened gates and through her decorated streets and felt the throb and thrill of the enthusiasm that swelled around him, who shall presume to describe his emotions?

By the use of some such imagery we may try to rise to an approximate conception of the glory and

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resplendence that shall gather around the victors in the Christian course. As in the days of ancient Rome the conqueror had a time set apart for his entrance into the city amid all the pageantry and splendor which wealth and genius could command, even so shall there be for us when Christ our Lord shall return to heaven with the armies of the redeemed. Then shall the golden gates be opened wide and the eternal city thrill with the enthusiasm of victory. Then as those who distinguished themselves above the rest, with stripes of honor on their breasts and a heavenly radiance on their brows, pass on in the grand procession, angelic voices shall indulge in exultant shouts of recognition, "This and that man was born in her." And from the azure battlements rising tier above tier, the cherubim and seraphim shall take up the strain as some more true and faithful in the service of the Eternal King come into view, "This and that man was born in her." And above all, methinks, there will be heard a voice louder than a thousand thunders and sweeter than the sound of many waters, pronouncing its eulogy on those who did valiant execution in the cause of truth and righteousness.

God grant that you and I may not only be amongst the number, but in the toiling warfare be so true and brave that we shall achieve a reward above the rest, sparkling with the glories of eternity, that of us it may be said by way of distinction and pre-eminence, "This and that man was born in her."

VIII.

THE RESPONSE OF CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE TEACHING OF OUR LORD.

“Well, Master, thou hast said the truth.”—MARK xii. 32.

IT was no uncommon occurrence for our Lord to be surrounded by the keenest critics of His age. The majesty of His character and the seeming audacity of His claims commanded attention. He moved upon the world with an irresistible and fascinating power. The leaders of human thought could not afford to regard with indifference a life and ministry that were revolutionizing society as His were. They could not endure the keen application of our Lord's teaching to themselves without the intensest bitterness and opposition. Often would they have taken Him by force had not their vengeance been restrained by fear. They would have eagerly used the baser instrumentalities in effecting their cruel purposes, were such methods compatible with their own safety. Too cowardly to pursue a course that would have exposed them to unpleasant consequences, they resorted to weapons

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in which they were skilled. They sought to entrap Him in His words. But their crafty sophistries were not effective. They only brought contempt upon their own heads. His answers to their questions were clear, lucid, discriminating, profound. He dealt with the fundamental principles submitted to Him with such sublime mastery as to cause one at least even of His enemies to exclaim in the honesty of his heart, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

Is there not in this utterance of one who was constrained to speak out his convictions (not certainly from any affection for our Lord), a suggestion of very wide significance? Does it not reveal a fact of consciousness which is as universal as humanity itself? Is there not a law of moral correspondence and affinity between all absolute truth and the human soul? Most assuredly there is. All great truths and principles that bear upon human interest and destiny, when they are permitted to enter into the mind and heart at all, command recognition and acknowledgment. Our theme, then, will be, "The Response of Consciousness to the Teaching of our Lord." We shall consider His testimony on those great questions which bear most directly upon our interest and happiness, and it will be seen whether there is not in our inmost souls a responsive thrill; a felt acknowledgment of their absolute truthfulness; a resistless conviction compelling us to exclaim, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

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I. THE ETHICAL INSTRUCTIONS OF OUR LORD WILL BE SEEN, THE MORE THEY ARE APPRECIATED AND UNDERSTOOD, TO HARMONIZE WITH THE DEEPEST NEEDS AND PROFOUNDEST CONVICTIONS OF HUMANITY.

Christ was pre-eminently a great teacher. He addressed Himself to the heart, conscience and necessities of men. He was no mere theorist—no mere intellectual expositor of doctrines which the world did not understand. He was a divine revealer of truths which were new, living, original. He touched the vital springs of thought and feeling, and caused His doctrine to distil upon the arid wastes of the world's mental and moral life "as rain upon the mown grass." His words were as well-springs of irrigating and vitalizing life. His thoughts glowed with the light and power of an inspiration that was altogether new. He gathered all the wealth of all the ages into His utterances. The poverty of human expression was the only limitation to His wisdom. In the light which the calm judgment of the centuries has shed upon His teaching, His supremacy is unquestioned. Utterances that were called forth by the momentary inspiration of events are more lustrous and enduring than the stars. Principles that have been the great moulding forces in the world's civilization, emanated from His lips with a spontaneity that betokened the inexhaustibleness of His intellectual and moral resources. Doctrines that have

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entered into the structure of society as essential factors, were uttered by Him in His ordinary conversations with His disciples. His inimitable discourses and parables bespeak a knowledge of life and an insight of character which would be altogether miraculous, unless divine.

If you gather together these great truths and principles which inspired memories snatched (if we may so speak) from the oblivion into which they would seem to be cast, you have an ethical philosophy the most comprehensive and sublime.

But what I desire more particularly to emphasize is the fact of their adaptation to the ever-varying and unfolding life of humanity. Christ spoke to human needs in such a way as to command recognition and acknowledgment. His doctrines have grown upon the world's consciousness, carrying the indubitable evidence of their supernaturalness in the nature and quality of their fruits. They have worked unseen upon the world's deepest life. They may be said to have been the fruitful inspiration of all that is purest and best in character. If they had not been misinterpreted by ignorance and caricatured by hypocrisy; if they had not been restrained by selfishness and paralyzed by bigotry, and greed, and sensuous indulgences, they would be universally recognized as divine. The soul of humanity, like the soul of nature in the springtime, would deck herself in beauty, clothe herself with fragrance, and send upward in ethereal censers the perfumed

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incense of her gratitude. The whole world would have borne witness in one glad, exultant shout, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth."

II. THE SUPERHUMAN ASSUMPTIONS OF OUR LORD ARE (TO AN EVER-INCREASING EXTENT) COMMANDING THE WORLD'S RECOGNITION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

Jesus Christ stood forth in the midst of life in all the dignity of a divine character. Although in the form of a servant He spoke ever like a king. Although clothed in human flesh and living amongst men His words were ever those of the Master of life. No prophet or patriarch ever spoke with any of the self-conscious majesty which distinguished Him. Such expressions as fell from His lips would have been unpardonably sacrilegious in the greatest of the world's legislators or teachers. The anointed seers of the former dispensation were particularly careful to preface all their important declarations with a "Thus saith the Lord." Not a single legislative enactment or moral principle was established for the guidance of the chosen race; not a single command was given or threatening pronounced by any of the old Hebrew prophets but by divine authority. The same was true also of the apostles. They performed all their mighty works in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

But all this is in striking contrast from our

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Lord's own utterances and methods. He did not hesitate to assume to Himself the very highest place of authority and prerogative. Everything He did and said during His earthly ministry was in His own name and power. His assumptions to any inclined to question His divinity must be the very consummation of impiety, the most unmitigated blasphemy. "Ye have heard it said by those of old time" (the inspired teachers of the former dispensation), thus and so, "*but I say unto you.*" He thus places Himself upon the throne of supremacy. And again, "I am the bread of life;" the world is in a condition of extreme moral destitution, and there is no satisfaction for them until they come to Me. "I am the good shepherd;" men are lost, bewildered, torn, and in Me only is their help. "I am the true vine;" there can be no fruit-bearing acceptable to God but through Me. "I am the light of the world;" what the sun is to the natural, I am to the moral world—its light, and life and inspiration. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Christ spoke of the spiritual universe with a familiarity that in any mere human personage would have been the very quintessence of audacity. The greatest of the ancient prophets were overwhelmed

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with the effulgence which was wont to break upon their astonished vision when the intervening veil was drawn aside even for a moment, but we find no such sensibility manifesting itself in Christ. I can imagine the strange bewilderment and misery that would possess the soul of an ignorant rustic who had never in his life seen anything more magnificent than a peasant's hut nestling amid the wild hills of his fatherland, if placed down amid the gorgeous resplendence of a royal palace. He would not know how to demean himself amid such unfamiliar scenes; he would be intensely miserable; he would beseech you to put him back again in his wild mountain home. Such, it would seem to me, was the experience of Isaiah when even a partial revelation of the spiritual world was made to him. "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips." Put me back again in my old mountain home; this glory is too much for me. But Christ manifested no such feelings. He talked of the glories of the eternal world as one familiar with them, as one who had been brought up amongst them. The refulgent splendor that swathed the Mount which dazed the apostles into momentary blindness, was to Him a natural and congenial element. "He was transfigured before them."

He ignored the natural limitations of life. He spoke of Himself as older than His years. "Before Abraham was I am." He represented Himself

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as having "come forth from the Father." He assumed an existence to which there was no present and no past. A life complete in itself and upon which all other lives depended. "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

What mean these strange, profound, mysterious utterances? There are but two conclusions possible in view of them. Either that Jesus Christ was an impious blasphemer, or that He was what He represented Himself to be, "*the Son of God*, the incarnation of divinity. There is no intermediate place which He can occupy. If He was not God, He was the most infamous impostor that ever trod the earth.

Who was He? What was He? Let Christian consciousness reply, for Christian consciousness only can reply to an experimental question of this nature. Philosophy and Reason cannot be intelligent witnesses either for or against a matter that founds its authority upon an experience which they have never known. I put the question, then, to those only who are qualified to answer it, Who is Jesus of Nazareth? and I hear the reply issuing from myriads of grateful lips, He is the Christ, the "Son of the living God." Ah, yes, consciousness responds to all the most assumptious utterances of our Lord with a "Master, thou hast said the truth."

Many of the world's greatest names have per-

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ished from memory in eighteen hundred years, but the name of Jesus is enshrined in tens of thousands of rejoicing hearts. "It was said of old that in His name should the Gentiles trust," and we know how true it has become. We remember (many of us) how our mothers blended this sweet name with their benedictions and their prayers, and time has not diminished its charm. We recognize it to-day as the greatest, sweetest, most precious of all names. To how many is it the very perfection of melody, the joy of life, the hope of heaven, the promise and pledge of a blessed immortality.

I know that the world is not yet at His feet. The Prince of the kings of the earth is yet to a great extent unrecognized. There are those who will not have Him to reign over them, although His claims are felt to be divine. There are the infidel and the sceptical, the irreligious and the profane, the cruel and the profligate all over our fair land.

But there are a goodly multitude who do regard the humble Nazarene as the "altogether lovely and the fairest amongst ten thousand." A great company who have known the sweetness of His love and the cleansing virtue of His blood are doing Him honor. "He sits upon His throne of ineffable glory and majesty, and on His head are many crowns." Scholarship has exerted its utmost energies in unfolding His doctrines and revealing His character. Art has bowed in loving admiration at His feet until her pencil has glowed with the very

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light and splendor of the skies. Eloquence has woven her choicest garlands to crown His sacred head. Music has breathed her sweetest notes in honor of His name. Thousands upon thousands who believe in Him, meet week after week in temples built for His worship, and the burden of their adoration is, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," etc. To every assumption of supremacy, to every claim of power, to every exercise of authority, to His assertion of equality with God, the Christian consciousness replies, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

III. THE DOCTRINAL UTTERANCES OF OUR LORD COMMAND THE RESPONSE OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

He enunciated the fundamental principles of life and immortality. All that was vital to human interests was embodied in His teaching. He spoke emphatically and exhaustively to the world's needs. No theme that touched upon the deeper and intenser life of men was disregarded. His ministry was a compendium of the most precious truths. He addressed men in the entirety of their nature. Never was Eolian harp more responsive to the breeze than human souls are to the fundamental utterances of our blessed Lord. However original and new, however contrary to human conceptions and beliefs, however obnoxious to human pride and prejudice His doctrines were, they commanded,

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and do still more and more command, the world's recognition and acknowledgment.

Christ our Lord has spoken *to us about God*. This might be regarded as the essential function of His ministry. He came to reveal the Eternal, to make intelligible to human perception and experience that Great Being who is in all and over all. It is not easy for us to grasp the idea of God. He is invested with attributes that we cannot measure; clothed in light inaccessible. "None can find Him out unto perfection." The gorgeous and suggestive imagery of the Old Testament is very helpful in enabling us to realize in some small measure the qualities of that Great Heart and Life "in which we live and move and have our being." It satisfies our imagination and our childish sense of wonder. We love to think of God as a "great rock in a weary land;" "as a covert from the tempest;" "as a battlemented castle" in which we may find security from the fury of our insatiate foes; "as the sun embosoming all light and warmth to cheer and bless the world, and as a shield girding us with an armor of defence against the envenomed darts of our innumerable foes." All this is very pleasant and comforting, and sometimes, indeed, satisfying to the mind.

But there are times in every earnest human life when the soul cries out for a revelation of God, in which personality and sympathy are the predominating elements. Stupid, indeed, must be the mind

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and cold the heart which have never longed to draw back the veil that intervenes between them and that Great Being who is the inspiration of all life. The very splendor of material phenomena but incites the desire to gaze into the face of the Great Artist. "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us" is the universal longing of the human heart. Much of His power and glory have passed before my astonished vision, but Himself I have never seen. I have felt His presence, I have seen His works, I have caught glimpses of His passing shadow, but Himself has never passed before mine eyes. I want to see *Him*—Him who stands behind the veil of all this visible grandeur around me—Him who inbreathes life, infuses energy and imparts beauty into all I see. Who is there who thinks and feels at all who does not sympathize with this desire? Ah, yes. We have often said, if not in words, in earnest, ardent thought, "O God, bow the heavens and come down. Show me, I pray thee, thy face. Assume before me some form that mine eyes can gaze upon. Thou awful mystery of loveliness, show me thyself."

Now, Jesus Christ is God's answer to this longing of the human heart. "He is the expression of Divinity;" "in Him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily." It was necessary to the satisfaction of humanity not only that the divine attributes should be declared, but that they should be incarnated. If you would know how personal God is,

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how near, how full of human sympathy, then look at Him in Christ. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," said our blessed Lord, and the hearts of multitudes of emancipated souls respond, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

He has spoken to us *about the soul*. He knew what was in man. He comprehended, as none other could, the nature and quality of His mysterious being. He saw men with the clear, penetrating vision of omniscience, so that His slightest utterances in regard to them must be fraught with the profoundest meaning. His estimate of them is indicated in the pregnant words, "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" He placed the immortal jewel outside the range of purchasable acquisition. And yet to His every utterance bearing upon this subject of so much personal and pathetic interest there is in the human consciousness an unqualified response, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth."

He has spoken to us *about sin*. He may not have frequently employed the term, but He was constantly speaking about the fact. "Sin is the transgression of the law." And our Lord has put a construction upon that law which increases its enormity and heinousness immeasurably. He went beneath the outward action, beneath the surface ebullition, basing his estimate of human criminality on the actuating motive and incipient purpose. You have never committed murder

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—the very thought is abhorrent to you. You instinctively shrink from contact with a person who has been guilty of so foul a crime ; but Christ says, " He that hateth his brother is a murderer." You have never gone by stealth into your neighbor's dwelling and despoiled him of his goods, but have you not coveted that which was your neighbor's? Your cheeks tinge with the blush of shame at the very thought of adultery, but is your heart pure? Christ in His exposition of the law goes down beneath the surface and looks at the germinant principles of evil. Ah, no one ever understood sin as Christ did. He saw it in its awfulness, in its hideousness, in its unutterable possibilities. He spoke not of the gilded life of the drawing-room and of the Church, but of the inner life of the heart. And it was a startling revelation. How the garb of human virtue shrivels up in the presence of such a ministry !

I know that to multitudes these doctrines of inward purity, of spiritual rectitude, of absolute and loving sympathy with God are unintelligible. To them Christ is a mere idealist, moving in a realm of which they know nothing ; their consciousness does not respond.

But when the light of spiritual illumination flashes in upon their souls, when men see themselves as they really are, when their eyes are opened and their sensibilities aroused, they no longer say this man is speaking in parables ; they no longer pro-

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nounce the great Teacher a fanatical exaggerist. Oh, no, no! They then realize that they are what He represents them to be—sinners of the deepest dye. They then contemplate themselves with horror and amazement, and with a deep sense of their utter sinfulness exclaim, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

Christ has spoken to us *about forgiveness*. This was the keynote of His blessed ministry. He came "to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to them that were bound." He assumed our nature, placing Himself voluntarily under the vengeance of a violated law—laying open His very heart to the envenomed darts of death and hell that He might present to a fallen and guilty world "an eternal redemption." He devoted Himself unreservedly to the cause of human salvation. His heart was full of the sublime and gracious purpose. He could not be diverted for a moment from those lines of life which converged in its fulfilment. All the paths of human ambition were accessible to Him, but He passed them by. The kingdoms of the world and the glory of them were at His feet, but they appealed to Him without response. He lived, and wrought, and sacrificed that He might break the chains of guilt that held a whole race in bondage, and that He might open the golden portals of life and blessedness to the guilty and the lost.

Forgiveness was the ineffable burden of His min-

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istry. "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee" were the mellifluous accents that were constantly falling from His lips. The healing of the body was but the result of the healing of the soul. How many diseased and guilty ones felt the thrill of emancipated and rejuvenated life that resulted from His imperial words. Nor is their power and pathos a mere record of an age that is past. He is speaking forgiveness now to every one that comes to Him with penitent and believing heart. We read those wondrous utterances at which poor guilty miserable men and women leapt from their thralldom, and we are constrained to say from a blessed inner consciousness, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

Christ has spoken to us of *immortality*. He represented Himself as a denizen of that world in which was no death. He spoke of departed saints as living, "for God is not the God of the dead but of the living." He spoke of the future with constant iteration. He came "to bring life and immortality to light." We need not enumerate the passages in which our Lord speaks of the life to come. They sparkle on many a page of the evangelistic record.

And does not the human consciousness respond? There is no belief more deep and all-pervading. You might as easily persuade a man out of his existence as obliterate the belief in and thirst for immortality. They are in every man. Rustic and

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philosopher feel the throb and thrill of that world which is to come. Men may talk about this life being all, but they don't believe it. Down deep in their inmost consciousness there is a solemn witness that contradicts all such unnatural philosophizing. Christ spoke to the universal consciousness when He depicted the future. There is that within us which laughs at the grave. We feel our immortality. We ask no proof of it, for it is a reality within us which no argument can touch or philosophy unsettle. To every unveiling of the future by our gracious Lord we are constrained to answer, "Master, thou hast said the truth."

Christ has spoken to us *about hell*. There can be no doubt as to the tendency of our times. It is decidedly against what is denominated orthodox theology. The doctrine of future punishment has been in many instances, if not absolutely denied, certainly presented with such ethical modifications as to be almost divested of its terrors. I have no desire to theorize upon the subject. I would not play upon human sensibilities for effect. I would much rather be silent on so dread a theme. But the utterances of our Lord must not be disregarded. It is our bounden duty as ministers of the sacred mysteries "to declare the whole counsel of God." Christ our Lord has never spoken more clearly and authoritatively than on this subject. And I ask, Did He preach that God was too merciful to punish sinners? Did He intimate that the provisions of

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the atonement were such as to embrace all men irrespective of character? Did He suggest that those who reject the mercy of God shall finally attain unto eternal life? Did He even whisper that punishment for sin is bounded by the present and is constituted of the varied ills that affect us in this world? Did He cause a single ray of heavenly effulgence to beam upon the doom which is pronounced upon the impenitent? What say you of the invitations and warnings, the appeals and threatenings, the promises and maledictions which fell from His sacred lips? What say you of the mysterious imagery which He employed and which cannot be read without shuddering and dismay?

And does not consciousness respond? Let the most irreligious man that breathes be shut in with himself and an infinitely holy God, and he will instinctively fear and tremble. You may talk about hell as being unphilosophic, contrary to reason and the finer sensibilities of the moral nature, but it does not change your innate convictions. It only needs the necessary conditions to awaken in your minds the most horrible forebodings, to fill your souls with fears that assert a masterful supremacy over you. It is impossible to stamp out the conviction which inheres in guilt as absolutely as fragrance in a rose or heat in fire. "Conscience makes cowards of us all." To all these solemn utterances of our Lord bearing upon the subject, consciousness responds, "They are true,

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they are true." "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth."

But yet once more Christ our Lord has spoken to us *about heaven*. Thank God that humanity is not necessarily held in the bondage of an awful doom. Christ has opened to every believer in His great name and blood the pearly gates of life. Heaven! What a wealth of blissful meaning is there in that short word! How we love to think of it amid the trials and the cares of life! How it lights up our oft-sorrowful pathway with its perennial beams! How its music, even in anticipation, soothes our pain and makes even our very solitude delightful! Oh, what a sad, sad world this would be if heaven were not above it! Christ has spoken to us about this blessed world—"in my Father's house are many mansions," "that they may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," "the righteous into life eternal."

His ministry was replete with intimations which led the weary mind away from earth and won the affections for the skies. Heaven, according to the representations of our Lord, is a scene of inconceivable splendor and magnificence—of ineffable purity—of eternal friendship—of perennial blessedness—a life of ecstatic thought, feeling, affection and activity into which neither sin, nor pain, nor death can come. And does not this entrancing revelation chime in with our hopes and longings, convictions and aspirations? What blood-bought

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soul is there who does not in view of it exultantly exclaim, "Master, thou hast said the truth"?

God enable us in the light of these great utterances of our Lord not merely to discover the largest meaning in these mysterious lives of ours, but in the most complete manner to measure up to it.

IX.

LIBERATED FROM LAW, MARRIED TO LOVE.

“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”—ROMANS vii. 4.

THE apostle Paul never appears more magnificent and masterful than he does in this epistle to the Romans. He is ever and always a close and logical reasoner, but he seems to exhibit these qualities in an exceptional degree in this marvelous epistle. He is dealing in this chapter with law in its relation to man's spiritual liberty. He brings in marriage to illustrate his point. A wife is bound to her husband by an express and authoritative law. She cannot ignore that enactment without becoming an adulteress, while her husband lives, but when her husband dies she is free from that law. Law is imperious while life lasts: no longer. The ultimate conclusion which the apostle is aiming at, the spiritual application which he is seeking to unfold, is that Christ by His death has dissolved for the believer the bonds of the law and released his life for marriage with Himself. “Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ,” etc.

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I. WHAT IS IT TO BECOME DEAD TO THE LAW ?

That is the first question which presses for consideration. The law here referred to was the Mosaic decalogue, the code which God Himself had given and which contained the fundamental basis of all right action. Surely this was not to be ignored or lightly thought of. It was holy, just and good. Laws are not always such as to be revered, for their makers are not, but the laws of God ever must be. The emanations of His will and purpose are ever such as to command the approving recognition of all rational intelligences. They are not only perfect in wisdom, but also in spirituality. They are the expression of the divine character. You could not improve upon them. In some instances they may have been given with reference to local or individual or national requirements, but the innermost intent even of these was as broad as humanity. Death to the law cannot therefore mean indifference to its claims, disregard of its authority, a living as our depraved impulses may dictate. That would be absurd in the extreme. It would be a sad day for our land and the world if the law of God were thus lightly esteemed. What is more and more needed in business, political and social life is that the law which indicates the divine ideal of right action should be emphasized in the understanding and conscience. It would never do to lessen even to the extent of an iota man's conception of the

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majesty of law. Even when it is the production of fallible and selfish man it should not be, save in very exceptional instances, impugned. It is, as society is at present constituted, essential to its very life.

What, then, does the language mean, "Ye also are become dead to the law"? Lyman Abbott represents men as sustaining one of three relations to law. The first is one of lawlessness. The child knows nothing of law. He follows his impulses wherever they lead him. The first lesson that has to be taught him is that he is in a world governed by law, that he must consult other wills than his own. He learns by some bitter experiences that there are laws of nature ; by domestic discipline, that there are moral laws. The savage knows little or nothing of law but his own will. A savage tribe live in a condition of relative lawlessness. Co-operation, combination, civil order, national existence are impossible. The first lesson to be taught the roving Indian is that there is law, and that he must be obedient to it.

The second stage is one of conscious and deliberate obedience to law—law external to one's self. The child obeys his parent, the savage his chief, the individual his God. The relation between the two in each case is the relation between a subject and a superior. The obedience in each instance is deliberate and conscious obedience, generally from fear of penalty or hope of reward, sometimes from

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a mere passive acquiescence in a superior will, but always a yielding to something above and external to one's self. This condition is a great advance upon the antecedent one. Obedience is a great advance on self-will and lawlessness.

But this condition of deliberate and conscious obedience to an external law is not the highest and final condition of humanity. There is something beyond. It is reached when the individual becomes himself an embodied law; when the law is no longer external to him, but wrought into him; when he becomes a law to himself; when the Master and the mastery are within and not without; when he does safely what he pleases, because he always pleases to do right.

A clear apprehension of the principles herein laid down will enable us to understand the force of the apostle's argument as we otherwise could not. There are a great many laws in the criminal codes of Ontario that are to me as if they existed not. They are very important, no doubt, but as far as I am personally concerned they have no accent of authority. It would not make the slightest difference to me if they were all repealed to-morrow. There would not be the slightest change in my habits in consequence. I am dead to them. They are no more to me than the parchment on which they are written. I do not obey a single law because it is on the statute book, or because there is penalty attached to its violation. I do not live

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in the realm of law as far as the external authority of it is concerned. The same is true of every reputable citizen. The criminal laws of the land are for criminals, not for those into whose very being there have entered the principles which make for correct living. There are persons to whom law is a very real and living thing. They are all the time under its frown. They do not see a policeman on the street but they look askance at him. There is no feature of our national administration which concerns them more vitally than that which has reference to the punishment of crime. They are constantly apprehensive of unpleasant consequences. Their peace is disturbed, their happiness menaced, their liberties interfered with by this thing called law. They are alive to it in every fibre of their being. I need not tell you who they are.

In the Christian life we find something analogous to all this. The object of the Gospel is to bring men from under the dominion of law and to introduce them into a life in which the motive for obedience is love. Most men begin the divine life under a misapprehension. They realize that they are sinners against a just and holy God, and the law which they have violated flashes fire before their eyes and causes the very ground on which they stand to quake. They feel that they must keep that law or perish, and they begin to agonize and strive at the impossible. They are full of fear and apprehension, for the law is constantly

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demanding, and threatening, and frowning at their failures to comply with its inexorable requirements. They are keenly alive to the law, as you see. It is their constant dread, their uncompromising taskmaster. But a moment comes when they discover a righteousness in which the law finds its perfect fulfilment and that they can become sharers in it. They see Jesus, who "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and instantly they are free. They become dead to the law by the body of Christ.

This fact contains the most vital and distinguishing quality in the Gospel message. It is the diverging point between the sinner and the saint. Law and grace are terms of immeasurable comprehensiveness. There is in every human soul upon which rests the consciousness of unforgiven sin a fearful looking-for of judgment. There is a conviction which inheres in guilt as absolutely as heat in fire. It defies all the sophistries of unbelief. There is in every guilty soul the prophecy of doom. He is himself a veritable book of judgment, the opening of the seals of which he apprehends with dread. But there are persons who have passed out of this realm of bondage. The relation of the life to law has so changed that it does not exist in the sense in which it formerly did. The believer is dead to it because for him it has been fulfilled. Judgment has passed in his favor. "Being justified by faith he has peace," etc. There is no shaft in the quiver of Satan that can touch his life. He stands before

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God in a new and divine relation. He can challenge the universal forces of evil and also the scrutiny of heaven. "It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is Christ that died." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Man in Christ is a perfect man, not in fact but in ideal, not in his own, absolute, inherent self but in the sight of God. All the claims against him have been satisfied in the person and sacrifice of his Divine Substitute. The book of judgment was unsealed upon the cross. Christ inscribed the doom of sin upon His own life and flesh. He was the living, conscious, willing parchment on which the wrath of heaven against sin was written. And he who by faith accepts Christ as his surety and Saviour passes out of the jurisdiction of law. He is dead to the law by the body of Christ. Law can no more reach him with its condemning edicts than it can the archangel before the throne.

The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do,
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.

II. WHAT SORT OF LIFE DO THOSE LIVE WHO
ARE THUS DEAD?

Not a life of lawlessness. Not a life of indolent disregard of all the obligations of existence. Not a life of self-indulgence even. Our text says, "Ye

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also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ that ye should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God." We die to live. We are liberated from the bondage of the letter that we may live in the freedom of the Spirit. We are related to the law still, but as masters and not as servants. We have entered into the realm of love, and our old taskmaster has become our slave. We were wont to do his bidding, but he now does ours. It makes all the difference in the world where the mastery of our lives is centred. What sort of life do those live who are thus dead? I answer—

1. *It is a Life of Vital Union to Jesus Christ.*

Death to the law, in the sense that the apostle uses the term, means that. It was with a view to this higher relation that it was effected. The Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, thus prepares the soul for its nuptials with the King's Son. There is something exceedingly suggestive about the simile of marriage in this relation. A true marriage demands singleness of heart. If former allegiances come in to lay claim upon the affections, the marriage is not a happy one: cannot be. The espoused wife must be dead to her former husband and to all other dominant attachments before she can hope for an ideal married life. The real difficulty, I apprehend, with many Christians, is that they have not recognized this fact. They have entered into a professional union with Jesus Christ,

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their souls have not been married to Him. They are under the law of the old husband still. And what is the consequence? Unrest, toilsome drudgeries, intolerable hypocrisies. They have no real interest in religion. It is all toil, and task, and work. They tug at it as the galley-slaves tug at the oars. They study the Bible as they would take a dose of medicine. They go to their devotions with a mental lassitude that is oppressive. They hear the church bells ring of a Sabbath morning, but there is no responsive music in their souls. They have no yearning of love. The hour of prayer is too tedious and uninteresting to be borne. They would rather not come under its influence. Money given for Christ's cause is to them downright imposition. They fling their unwilling dollars into the Lord's treasury; they would rather far have spent them on some foolish or even sinful luxury. Their whole religious life is gone through slavishly, carelessly, superficially.

That sort of thing is not a true marriage. It is a species of professionalism which must result in misery and bondage. Better be an out-and-out worldling than a heartless religionist.

Christianity means, if it means anything, vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ; that is its essential, fundamental feature, without which it is but a name, a pretence, a hypocritical exhibition which is inexcusably abhorrent. What sort of lives do those live who are thus dead?

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2. It is a Life of Exuberant Activity.

Where love is, all service is a delight. Let the soul become truly married to Jesus Christ and there will be no difficulty about the life. Love makes everything efflorescent. It is the most stimulating thing in all the world. It is the most refining and ennobling. When the soul comes under its dominancy all chains fall off, all darkness vanishes, all toil and pain and weariness are forgotten. We rejoice that we are accounted worthy to serve Him, to suffer for Him, to do anything in His name. What scene of worldly amusement could draw that young mother away from the cradle of her suffering child? She has no thought or care for anything in this wide world that can compare with the sorrowful joy of ministering to that little life that God has given her. "No cord or cable can draw so forcibly nor bind so fast as love can with a single thread."

When the love of Christ constrains, the tedium and the difficulty of service immediately disappear. A log of wood that on the dry ground would resist the stoutest efforts of human energy, when the flood rises around it, moves off of itself and is carried whithersoever the current wills. When love goes out-swelling over our duties and difficulties, how absolutely insignificant they do become.

I have known persons in midwinter in a cold and drafty house trying to keep alive a few solitary flowers. They were careful to water them and to

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keep them in proximity to the windows that were most favored with the sunshine ; but it was not a success ; the flowers only put forth a very feeble leaf and never really blossomed. But there is no trouble in raising flowers in summer even in Canada ; they grow spontaneously ; they peep out of every nook and crevice ; they beautify the whole bosom of the earth. Men try in the wintry realm of law to develop Christian virtues, but it is not a success. You must look into the summer land of grace if you would see the exquisite bloom and fragrance of the redeemed life.

When the soul becomes "dead to the law," and truly married to Jesus Christ, life attains its highest reachable ideal. What sort of life do those live who are thus dead ?

3. *It is a Life of the most Perfect Freedom.*

Where love is regnant the liberty is complete. I want no larger freedom than the bondage which love throws around my life. I can do anything I desire to, because my desires are unselfish. I can go anywhere I please, because it is my pleasure to walk in the ways of righteousness. I am no longer a slave to the law which says, Thou shalt not do this or the other. I have been born into the new liberty wherewith Christ makes free. I have become "dead to the law, and have been married to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead." And what follows ? An ideal life of loving fellowship and service. Ask the man who is

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married to Jesus Christ, Do you want to be free? What would he say? Free! Why the cords that bind me to Him are the badges of my highest freedom. I want no sweeter liberty than His service affords. When love becomes a necessity of the heart I become dead to the law—law ceases to be law, captivity itself is led captive. The young lover is a slave to the object of his affections. See how he gives up all his former attachments for her; how he seeks for opportunities to serve her; how he will trudge through mire and dirt and darkness with a light heart to do her bidding, or to enjoy her approving smile. He is a slave indeed to all outward seeming, but ask him what he thinks of it, and he will tell you that it is the sweetest liberty he ever knew. It is "the perfect law of liberty." You can never know what freedom really is until your life is united in holy wedlock to Jesus Christ, until He takes possession of your heart. Men think that the Christian life is bondage. It is the very reverse of that. They think that it is a perpetual course of self-denial and restraint, whereas it is a perpetual doing of the very things which you delight to do, and a perpetual having of what you most desire to have. You are free as the winds of heaven. Your supremest pleasure, your superlative delight will be to do His will. His statutes will be your song, His bondage your liberty.

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Have you ever noticed the peculiar form of that invitation—"Take my yoke upon you, and I will give you rest," etc. Yoke and rest do not seem to go happily together, and yet herein is the secret of the true life. The rest comes with the yoke, the liberty is embosomed in the bondage.

X.

THE ATTRACTIONS AND REPULSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

“And of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord ; multitudes both of men and women.”—
ACTS v. 13, 14.

WE cannot study the life and growth of the infant Church without being impressed with two very diverse and seemingly contradictory effects. Not many days had passed after they had organized for their sublime mission, before both the attractions and the repulsions of Christianity began to make themselves felt. There were large numbers who were drawn toward the little community, and there were greater numbers still who were repelled. That Christianity had in it elements that could captivate heart and intellect was speedily demonstrated, but that it represented elements also that could awaken bitterness and hatred the most persistent and intense, was none the less marked. It is to this fact that I wish this morning to call attention. I would observe then—

I. THAT CHRISTIANITY HAS IN IT ELEMENTS THAT BOTH ATTRACT AND REPEL.

This is a fact that is abundantly attested. Evidence of the working of these seemingly antago-

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nistic principles are so numerous as to make anything like corroboration superfluous. There is not a community, however small, in which Christianity is making itself felt where they do not assert themselves. There are few families in which their antipodal influences have not been experienced. There are hearts all around us that respond to the Gospel message, like the magnet to the pole ; and there are others equally well favored that are aroused by its loving appeals into bitterest antagonism. It comes to the one like the breath of spring to the flowers ; it comes to the other like a wintry blast, closing every avenue of beneficent approach. It is "the savor of life unto life," and, at the same time, "the savor of death unto death."

The nearer the Church approaches to the New Testament ideal the more surely and effectually will these two elements become operative ; the more irresistibly will she attract and the more powerfully will she repel. The instance with which our text stands associated is a case in point. The purity of the Church had been vindicated by the interposition of divine judgment. Two professed disciples, because they lied unto the Holy Ghost, were stricken dead at the apostle's feet. The effect of such an occurrence cannot easily be conjectured. The consternation must have been profound. Every heart quailed in the presence of the unseen power that gave such witness to the sanctity of the religious life. A great many who, from false motives

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were eager to associate themselves with the infant Church, drew back. They "durst not," it is said. Christianity has qualities that it is not safe for unregenerate souls to touch. While "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and women," "of the rest durst no man join himself to them."

This twofold energy is not peculiar to Christianity. It is really a law of growth. Every tree and flower has it. As much is dependent in nature upon repulsion as upon attraction. It is as important that alien elements should be rejected, as that congenial and healthful elements should be attracted and retained. The natural is in this, as in many other instances, strikingly symbolical of the spiritual.

II. THAT THE ATTRACTING AND REPELLING ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY ARE EQUALLY NECESSARY TO HER BEST INTERESTS.

We have been emphasizing the one and ignoring the other. It has been so much our care to make Christianity attractive, that whatever would be likely to strike a worldly and fastidious taste unpleasantly has been carefully manipulated. We have not kept fully and clearly before the mind the fact that the real attraction of Christianity is her purity: not her æsthetic charms; not her sumptuous worship; not pomp and forms and ceremonies; not anything superadded by man's

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ingenuity or wisdom; but her own inherent, divinely inspired life. The idea of making Christianity attractive has taken deep hold of the politic thinking of the modern Church. The maintenance of religious societies, with their elaborate equipments, has almost forced her into questionable methods. We often hear it said, by good-intentioned souls, we must have this or that or the other feature introduced to draw the crowd. The Church has been cursed with a feverish anxiety to improve upon the divine plan. We are humiliated at the thought of much that is done in the name of religion. When the pulpit is degraded to amuse a crowd of sacrilegious worldlings, and the choir gallery turned into an exhibition for the display of musical excellencies, it is time, methinks, for those who love the Nazarene to hang their heads for very shame. When the advertising columns of our newspapers lay special stress upon the fact that not the Gospel but some subject remotely related thereto is to be considered, and that some operatic minstrel is going to render sacred solos with all the wondrous effectiveness which has charmed the pleasure-loving multitude in theatre and Bacchanalian feast, it does seem like a desperate effort to make Christianity attractive. We protest most solemnly against everything of this sort as derogatory to the nature and spirit of Christianity; as an insult to the name of Jesus Christ; as an offensive and wicked caricature

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of that religion whose interests it professes to promote.

I believe in good music in the services of God's house. I have no idea that the Great Being whom we adore is better pleased with discords than with harmonies. When the heavenly choristers come together they are surely able to carry their several parts. The song of Moses and of the Lamb rendered by redeemed saints with a supplementary chorus of angels and archangels must be unutterably sublime. I think we should aim at some measure of approximation to it. Our sanctuary praises should be as noble and grand as we have the ability to make them, but they must be heartfelt, praiseful, worshipful. All attempts at mere display are not merely out of place but out of tune with the exalted harmonies of spiritual worship. Whatever is not an expression of the soul's deepest and divinest life is an intrusion and a mockery.

I believe in comfort and even in modest elegance in all the appointments of God's house. I believe that our piety should blossom out into architectural, as well as spiritual, ideals that are beautiful and impressive. It is surely no indication of superior spiritual excellence for those who live in ceiled houses to worship God in edifices that are severely plain and inexpensive. The house of God should have some sort of harmony with our own. But for congregations to indulge themselves in the absurd

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idea that God can be acceptably worshipped only in a finely conceived and elaborately adorned structure is a palpable delusion. It is possible that Christian churches have gone to an unjustifiable extreme in the costly luxuriousness of their places of worship, even when the money was easily forthcoming. The example, in some instances at least, has been pernicious. The attempt to make Christianity attractive with ornamental stone and mortar is not always as laudable as it appears. It has not infrequently lured good-intentioned men and women into extravagances which have led to depressing and humiliating consequences.

The Church is without beauty, however irresistible her external charms, if she be without purity. This should ever be her coveted distinction. In this respect she cannot be too alluringly beautiful. When men and women crowd around her because of her moral and spiritual fascination, it is more than well. But when there is a drawing into her fellowship because of her respectability; because of the social advantages to be gained thereby; because of the fineness of the preaching, or the elaborate luxuriousness of the worship, it is more than wrong—it is ruinous.

I very much doubt whether what may be called the repelling elements in Christianity, are given the prominence which they should command. We do not emphasize the cross as we do the crown—

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we overlay its roughness with the flowers of sentiment. We do not impress the inquiring soul with the fact that the Christian life is a battle—a hard and continuous struggle with contending forces. We sing men and women into the Kingdom amid exciting and promising conditions. We very seldom bring them face to face with the stern fact that the Christian life means a “crucifixion of the flesh, with its affections and lusts”; that it means a giving up of darling propensities; that it means “holiness of character, without which no man can see the Lord.” We bring the fair and inviting aspects into the forefront, and leave the uninviting and repelling in the background. We smooth down the asperities and angularities of doctrine and practice so as not to offend the fastidiousness of those whom we would bring into the divine fellowship, and the result is, in too many instances, that persons are induced to enter into “the feast who have not on the wedding garment.”

Christianity has an aspect of fascination, which is all-subduing; but it has also an aspect of severity, which is awe-inspiring. It has attractions which are irresistible, but it has also repulsions which are unmistakable. It is a bad sign when the unregenerate are so interested in the Church as to seek her fellowship. The most flattering thing that could be said of any religious community is this, “And of the rest durst no man join himself unto them.”

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III. THAT THE ONLY WAY OF KEEPING THE ATTRACTING AND REPELLING ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIANITY IN FULLEST AND MOST EFFICIENT EXERCISE IS BY THE MAINTENANCE OF A HIGH STANDARD OF PURITY.

The two forces indicated radiate from the one great principle of holiness. When this is maintained as it should be, it will draw and repel simultaneously and irresistibly. It will keep out the bad, and draw in the good ; it will attract the believing, and repel the unbelieving ; it will captivate the poor and needy, and keep the proud and self-sufficient at a distance. A spiritual church has a wonderful charm for the regenerate, while it is devoid of all attraction to the unregenerate. What is needed to develop the most complete and vigorous exercise of these antipodal principles in church life, is spiritual health. A healthy body throws off diseases, repels the microbes and the malaria that infest the atmosphere, and assimilates readily whatever is for its good. A living church does precisely the same thing. She gathers into herself such elements as are promotive of her spiritual growth, and repels all such as would prove deleterious and harmful. This repelling and attracting process is constantly going on. The ideal presented in our text is thus realized : "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord ; multitudes both of men and women."

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IV. THAT WHEN THE REPELLING ELEMENTS ARE MOST DECIDED, THE ATTRACTING ELEMENTS ARE MOST COMPLETE.

When the Church is too pure to receive the unregenerate into her fellowship ; when her whole tone is such as to repel the worldly and the carnal ; when she "loves righteousness and hates iniquity" in such a fashion as to make it uncomfortable for ungodly persons to even lodge under her roof, then does she appear in the character which most becomes her position and destiny ; then is she fair, even to loveliness, in eyes which have been spiritually illuminated, whatever she may be in the conception of the ungodly.

The Church that is unspiritual, that is little distinguished from the unregenerate world, does not command the respect of the irreligious nor the confidence of the devout. She is held in contempt by both saint and sinner.

The Church which the age needs, which commands the respect and allegiance of all honest men, which will prove a purifying and regenerating influence in the land and in the world, is the Church which is not afraid to assert her principles, however much they may antagonize and offend ; that is resolved to make no compromises with the devil ; that is eager to send the shafts of her illuminating effulgence into the deepest abysses of spiritual darkness, and has no higher ambition than to glorify

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her sovereign Lord. Such a church cannot fail to prove a terror to unbelievers, while, at the same time, a delight and a joy to all who are seeking for spiritual help and succor. She will be clear as the moon, bright as the sun, and yet terrible as an army with banners.

XI.

THE UNIQUENESS AND SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS CHRIST.

“Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him : knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once : but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.—ROMANS vi. 8-11.

CHRIST occupies a relation to believing humanity that is complete and final. You cannot get beyond Him. You need not get beyond Him. Christ became man that He might redeem men and introduce them into a life of spiritual fellowship and conquest. This He accomplished. He died, He rose again, He ever liveth. He died for us. We died with Him. Our death with Him meant life. That is the Gospel, the whole Gospel, the final and complete Gospel. “For if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him,” etc.

I. THE ONE CHRIST THE ONLY CHRIST.

He stands alone in the annals of the ages. To suggest the possibility of comparison is sacrilege. He was the one unique personality in whom was

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no sin. He occupied a plane of moral excellence higher than any that the world has ever known.

He was not merely a superlatively endowed man, but a divine man, a super-earthly man, the God-man. No being that ever lived occupied the same plane as *He*.

There have been other men whose endowments have been great, whose natures have been noble, whose beneficence has been sublime. There have been other men who have conceived the thought of saving their fellows from their sins and have given themselves to self-sacrificing ministry in that behalf, but they have been but as the glow-worm to the sun in the comparison.

All other philanthropists were moved by a great impulse, but "He came forth from the Father." He was the anointed One from before the foundation of the world. Other lights there have been, but He was the fountain of light, the sun of the moral universe. Others had life given them, delegated life, which they used in some instances nobly and unselfishly, but *He had life in Himself*.

In no proper sense can any other life or any other ministry be compared with His. "The one Christ is the only Christ."

II. THE ONE ATONEMENT THE ONLY ATONEMENT.

There never has been any other except figuratively, and there never will be. "He died unto sin

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once." That was enough. His death in our behalf was final and complete. The apostolic utterance is emphatic and unmistakable as to the finality of Christ and His work. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."

The Gospel is not an evolution. It is not a set of laws and principles that are ever changing with the conditions of society. It is not one thing to the Greek and another thing to the Jew. It is not a crude, ill-digested system which must be changed or modified as men advance in knowledge and attainment. It is not one thing in an age of primitive simplicity and another thing in an age of intellectual enlightenment. Men's ideas in regard to the Gospel may change, but the Gospel itself is eternally and unalterably the same. Our theories and philosophies may undergo modification, but the fundamental principles of God's eternal truth remain in all their primitive integrity. The Gospel is the ultimate message of deity that knows no change with changing time. It is for all ages and for all lands and for all the innumerable complexities of intellectual, social and moral being.

Men talk about a new theology. There can be no new theology so far as Christ's death and resurrection are concerned. What these great facts were at the first they must ever continue to be. New systems and new forms of belief are all the time coming to the front, and men and women eagerly adopt them ; but the old Gospel of life through the

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atonement sacrifice of Christ cannot be superseded. "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." Christ crucified, Christ raised from the dead, Christ ever living is the only message of hope. There is no other. There never will be any other.

To the apostle Paul, Jesus Christ Himself was the Gospel, the converging and radiating centre of all truth and life. "The Man was the doctrine and the doctrine was the Man. That one transcendent personality gathered into Himself all the effulgences of illumination and all the sufficiencies of being. He was at once the mystery and the meaning, the question and the answer, the alpha and omega, the inspiration and the consummation of the apostle's ministry." "For I determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Not Jesus Christ merely in His divine-human personality, but Jesus Christ in His sacrificial and mediatorial relations, Jesus Christ as the Saviour and substitute of a lost world, "Jesus Christ and him crucified."

This was the Gospel which the apostle preached. All his wisdom, all his learning, all his splendid genius, all his magnificent enthusiasm were consecrated to its development and furtherance.

It might be argued that such a ministry, with all the splendor of its ability and earnestness, would be circumscribed, that the range of it would be narrow even to irritation and enfeeblement, that it

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would involve constant and painful reiteration, that there would be little room in it for the healthy play of the faculties, that it would shut one up from the living, throbbing currents of the world's many-sided life. It might have served an itinerant ministry such as Paul's, but it would prove intolerably narrow and repetitious in the stated ministries of these modern times. But is it so? "The maturest and ablest men in the Christian pulpit will testify with tears of delight and thankfulness that the gracious mystery of redemption by the blood has evermore grown before the vision of their love and reverence until it has filled all things with its mournful, holy, infinite glory." It is absolutely inexhaustible in its suggestiveness. It is not a single orb of truth but a constellation, not a monotone but a symphony, not a part of divine revelation but the sum and substance of it. It sweeps the whole range of human thinking and acting. It touches life in all its needs and longings, in all its ignorance and misery, in all its outreaching and unfolding activities. There is no music in the world like that which is set to the key of forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. There is no spot on earth with a thousandth part of the sacredness attached to it as Calvary. The spell of its enchantment has fallen upon the heart of the ages. Take out of the civilization of this age the life and power that have come into it through the cross, and you have hurled the foremost nations of the

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earth back into barbarism and night. It is as varied as the universe and as new and fresh as the morning sunlight. It is the full and final and sufficient message of Heaven to a lost and needy world. There is no other, there never will be any other.

III. THE ONE DEATH—THE PERENNIAL LIFE.

Christ died. *Yes*, that is true, blessedly, gloriously true; but equally true is it that He lives. "He was dead, but is alive again, and he liveth for evermore: death hath no more dominion over him."

Christ's identification with our humanity has given a peculiar quality to the life which He now lives. It is in a sense a glorified human life. He who carried our humanity with Him into the grave has also lifted it up with Him to the throne. He is the Man Christ Jesus still. There is no life in the universe so glorious and exalted. Higher than the highest is He who bears our nature. His is a rich, full, all-sufficient, triumphant, sovereign life. He ever liveth. He ever reigneth. He is beyond death, above hell, superior to all exigencies. He humbled Himself, but He is highly exalted now and ever will be. He died once, but His life is perennial.

All that Christ did, suffered and achieved was that we might have life. He died for us that He might live in us. Life was the result aimed at, not

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rescue merely, not security of interest supremely, but *life*, rich, full, abounding life. "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

Our identification with Jesus Christ introduces us into life. This is the great thought which this chapter seems to emphasize. Our death with Christ means life with Him. We are raised with Him as surely as we died with Him. We are to accept these great facts as sufficient and final, not merely with respect to Christ but with respect to ourselves. "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

The quality of this life will be gathered from several considerations.

1. *It is a Resurrection Life.*

Life with death as a background, with death as an eternal separation. "But if we died with Christ, reckon yourselves dead." We live, so to speak, on the other side of the grave. The old carnal existence in which we were enslaved has been left behind. We have emerged out of its tyranny and bondage through death. That is what it means. It is a new life. It has new aims, aspirations, ideals. It has a new conception as to the controlling purpose of being. The old life was carnal, this is spiritual. The old life was of the earth earthy, this is of the heavens heavenly. The old life was self-centred, this is Christ-centred. The old life was narrowed by the grave, this is illimit-

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able in its outreach and unutterable in its possibilities. It is essentially new. "Old things are passed away, all things are become new."

2. *It is a Life of which Christ Himself is the Environment.*

"Alive unto God in Jesus Christ." The matter of environment is not by any means to be depreciated. A rare flower will not flourish in every clime. The conditions must be favorable to the largest growth and the fairest unfolding. There are conditions where it is impossible for aught that hath life in it to remain inoperative. It would be impossible here in Canada to develop growths of any kind in winter, but in summer it is not difficult. When summer comes, every form of vegetable life seems to grow spontaneously, joyously, irresistibly. Christ is the summer of the soul. If you get *into Him* there will be no difficulty about the unfolding. The best and the sweetest that are in you will be called forth. He is both warmth and sunlight. It is possible for trees to grow and flowers to bloom in the wilderness, but they are exposed to a thousand contingencies, and when the winter comes "riding in his car of storms" and "scattering his ice-like morsels," there is nothing to protect them; but in the royal gardens there are conservatories that provide summer conditions all the year round. When a man "lives unto God in Jesus Christ," he is in an environment of perennial summer.

You may try to live a true, rich, unselfish life out

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in the open. I don't say that you may not succeed for a while at least. While summer conditions last there will be little difficulty, save from an occasional blizzard. *You* may trust your life and growth to that sort of environment, but as for me, I must get where the protection is more complete, where the temperature is more uniform, where the conditions are more certain. I find them in Jesus Christ—"alive unto God in Jesus Christ."

3. *It is a Life, once more, of which Jesus Christ is the Architectonic Idea.*

"The life that he [Christ] liveth, he liveth unto God." "Reckon ye also yourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God," or, in other words, there is your pattern. You are to be like Him. Not merely are you to grow up in Him as an environment, but into Him as an ideal. He is the representative Man, the pattern Man. "If we be risen with him, we must seek those things which are above." We must live unto God. We must be true, holy, unselfish, for these are the essential elements of that life into which we have been raised. Every life has its archetypal pattern. Christ is ours. To be like Him is our goal, the acme of our ambition and attainment. We shall never be all that He is, but we can see in Him God's conception of a true life, and we can say from the depth of our heart, "We shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness." The completeness of our manhood is realized in Him.

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And now as to the practical bearing of this teaching upon those of you who are unsaved. Is it not clear that the only way into the true life is through Jesus Christ? There is a life outside of Christ, no doubt, but it is not the life to which the apostle here refers. There is a superior quality of life, a moral life, a chaste life, a philanthropic life, which is the result of culture along mere human lines, and I would not depreciate its value; but what the Scriptures call "eternal life" is essentially different. This is the result not of evolution, but of regeneration. It is a new life, a divine life, which comes through identification by faith with Jesus Christ. "For if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." My message to you who are unsaved, therefore, is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Your hope is in Christ, only in Christ. Every other life fails. It may be good, but it is not good enough. It may command the respect and admiration of the world, but it has not the quality that is approved of God. "In him only is life." "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

XII.

WHERE IS ZEBEDEE ?

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons worshipping him."—MATTHEW xx. 20.

IN reading a sermon a short time since from this text, by Newman Smyth, I was impressed with the new setting given to a subject which had frequently exercised my own mind. The query which he emphasized and developed in its bearing upon modern life was, where was Zebedee? Supposing him to have been alive during those eventful years, why was it that he did not openly identify himself, as did his wife and sons, as the avowed follower of Jesus Christ?

I am not disposed to occupy precious time in speculating as to Zebedee's indifference to the claims of the Nazarene upon his allegiance. He might have been dead for aught I know to the contrary. Salome might have been a widow, and it would be unjust to the memory of a good man to arraign him for delinquencies of which he was not guilty. I have no desire to raise even a suspicion in regard to Zebedee's conduct. He who permitted his two sons to follow the Lord without

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an objecting word, when their services must have been of real value to him, cannot be regarded in an unfavorable light.

It is legitimate, however, that we should catch the suggestion in its bearing upon the religious life in our own day, here and now. There are large numbers of men whose wives and children pursue a course of conduct in relation to spiritual interests which is in marked contrast with their own. We look around our congregations and we find the wives and mothers frequently regular, faithful, worshipful, while the husbands and fathers are absent. Salome is almost always at the prayer-meetings, but Zebedee only at rare intervals, if, indeed, at all. Many churches would be but feebly sustained in their worship and their work if they had to depend exclusively on the male portion of the community.

If we were to look over the record of members in the voluntary churches of Christendom, we would find a very large preponderance of women. They take the decided lead in religious matters. They are giving character and complexion to the progressive activities of the age in these regards. I do not feel disposed to murmur or complain. I am far from depreciating the womanly excellences that so frequently redeem the religious life from puerility and contempt. I have a sincere appreciation of the earnestness and zeal, the devotion and fidelity, the intelligence and consecration of the

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noble women in our churches. I am profoundly glad that there are so many good and true Salomes. What troubles me is that the Zebedees are in such marked and unaccountable minority. I rejoice that the women are pushing to the front, but I regret that the men are so far behind in respect to matters of such transcendent importance.

One of the practical questions pressing upon the attention of the Christian world at the present time is, "Where are the men?" The instances are rare in which the mothers and children are not identified with the cause of Christ, but where are the heads of the households? Where are the Zebedees? It is a most grateful spectacle when whole families are represented in the public services of God's house. A pew with Salome and the children may present a tolerably good appearance, but it is not what it should be without Zebedee. I am always very sorry to see a mother doing her utmost to train up her children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord without the encouragement and support which she ought to receive from him who has an equal responsibility in regard to them. Happy is the family in which there is a common fellowship and enthusiasm in all such matters, in which Zebedee and Salome love the same Saviour, and rejoice in the public and social services of the same church, in which there is a bond of Christian sympathy sweetening and sanctifying every other relationship.

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I am to speak, however, more especially of the absent Zebedees. Where are they? What are they doing? Why are they so indifferent to the claims of religion? What can be done to win their confidence and sympathies?

The Sabbath is a very convenient time to indulge. After the toils and anxieties of the week, the mind and body very easily relapse into a lethargy which is not readily shaken off. There are instances in which it has developed into a chronic malady. I have known remarkable specimens of good health who on Sabbath morning were so thoroughly prostrated as not to be able even to leave their beds. It must be a great blessing for such persons that Sunday only comes once a week. What a fearful rate of mortality there would be in some of our congregations if it were otherwise. There is one feature of these maladies, however, which is worthy of mention; they don't interfere with business. They invariably manifest themselves during the early hours of the sacred day, and gradually modify, leaving the subject in a pleasing and refreshing lethargy which has rather a recuperative effect upon the system. Monday morning comes and the individual who was exceedingly out of sorts on the preceding day is as fresh and as buoyant as ever. Nor is there the slightest danger of a relapse unless it be on the following Sunday, about the same hour.

There are those who assure us that they use the

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sweet and inviting quiet of the Sabbath for meditative purposes. There is so much noise and bustle during the week that they look forward gratefully to the sacred day as presenting a most inviting opportunity for a little earnest thought. Exemplary individuals, surely. But what do they think about for the most part? About their souls? About the great interests of the future? About the world to come? Oh, no! Such persons are apt to find the sanctuary services both precious and profitable. What, then, are their earnest thoughts about? Why, of course, about their business, about the world that now is. They are glad of the Sabbath quiet because of the facilities which it affords to work out their plans of enterprising activities and perfect their schemes of material aggrandisement. They would righteously disapprove of persons going out into the fields with plough and sickle, or into the workshop with plane and saw, or into the office with day-book and ledger—but they are engaged in a work which is equally secular. They are thinking out the difficult problems that eluded them in the rush and hurry of the week. They are mending their nets for to-morrow's haul. They are crowding their minds with matters that pertain solely to the material and the present. Not a few who profess better things are wont to steal the hours of the sacred day from their high and holy uses in this ignominious fashion. They may go to church occasionally, to ease their consciences or to

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preserve themselves from being reflected upon unfavorably by their neighbors, but the day, for all that, is spent in a most worldly manner. They might just as well throw off all sham and hypocrisy and go down to the office or the store, for they are really there in spirit. Their bodies may be very reverently ensconced in the family pew, but their minds and hearts are immured in scenes which are by no means religious or worshipful. They may have an honorable record for regularity of attendance on the means of grace, and yet in the sight of God they are perpetually absent. Alas, for the desecration of the holy day which is going on beneath the garb of a supercilious sanctity!

There are others who justify their absence from the services of God's house on the plea that they are more profitably employed. They tell us that they occupy the time in reading good books—especially homilies and sermons by the great preachers of this and other ages. There might be some measure of plausibility in such a subterfuge if the main or even a great part of the sanctuary service were intended as an exhibition of sacred oratory. Those who go to church for the sole purpose of hearing sermons have certainly missed the primal purpose of the sacred institution. There are much better sermons within easy reach than are preached regularly in any pulpit in the land. I am not so sure, however, that those who absent themselves from the services of God's house are

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addicted to this class of reading. Indeed, I am very thoroughly satisfied that they are not. The novel or the Sunday newspaper is the kind of intellectual and moral pabulum in which they are the more likely to indulge. There can be no profitable thought or worshipful experiences to those whose minds have been swept by such an east wind of worldliness as an ordinary Sunday newspaper could not fail to produce. No reading, not even that of the Bible, can take the place of the sanctuary services, however barren they may be of high and stimulating thought. What God has instituted is not to be treated with irreverent disregard without incalculable moral injury.

Small store of manners when the Prince says come
And feast at Court, to say, I've meat at home.

But we need further to inquire why the secular club is more attractive than the prayer-meeting. Why the sanctuary services are so lacking in fascination. Why the women have a more sincere appreciation of such privileges than the men.

Is it because religion is too sentimental to appeal strongly to their more robust intelligence? I know that there is an impression prevalent to that effect, "It is good enough for women and children, but is too diluted in quality to satisfy the appetite of strong, healthy manhood." But is it so in reality? I readily admit that much that goes under the name of religion is excessively jejune and insipid.

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Religion is misrepresented and caricatured to such an extent that strong-minded men are often made to turn away from it with disgust. There is a goody-goodyism which walks our streets, and sits in our pews, and goes about with a limp-covered Bible under the arm, presuming to be the consummate blossoming and fruitage of Christianity, but it does not command respect. The unctious piosity that indulges freely in scriptural phraseology and weak sentiment may be admired by the superficial, but it is despised by the robust. Religiosity is not religion. Piosity is not piety. Goodness is not Christianity. There is a great deal too much of this sort of thing passing current in the religious world, and I believe that it is accountable to some extent, at least, for the disgust which many sensible, broad-minded men entertain for what is called religion. The power needed to win the respect and confidence of men of this type must be something that has heart in it, that has intelligence in it, that has sympathy in it. It must be something that can grip by reason of its superior strength and lovableness. Sickly sentimentalism will never get hold of the hearts and consciences of men who think, and reason, and who have no natural predilections toward Christianity.

These irreligious Zebedees, however, are not to be let off so easily. However much we may sympathize with their abhorrence of sham and cant and religious insipidity, we freely charge them with

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dishonesty in fastening their attention upon such ungainly specimens. We are inclined to the conviction that there is "method in their madness." They are glad of some plausible excuse for their irreligious behavior. They know full well that Christianity is not what it is represented to be by these nondescripts who cross their pathway. There are Christians who are true and noble, broad-natured and unselfish, commanding respect and inspiring affection wherever they may happen to abide. Strange that the irreligious Zebedees do not see them. And above all, there is Jesus Christ; is there any defect or effeminacy or namby-pambyism in Him? To say that Christianity is not such as to command respect and confidence, when under its inspiration humanity has blossomed into an efflorescence so irresistible, and unfolded into a nobility so sublime, does not speak well for the honesty of those who make it a plea for their refusal to identify themselves with the people of God.

There are also individuals not a few, who stand aloof from an open and avowed Christianity because they have persuaded themselves that it is the manly thing to do. They have been wont to regard the professed followers of Christ as having given up their independence. They decline to submit themselves to the yoke of bondage; they love their liberty too well. They refuse to become such imbeciles as to forego all the joys and

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delights of life in deference to a mere sentiment. They will be their own masters, come what may. Let fanatics and enthusiasts do as they please, they have too much sound sense to tie themselves down to a course of life which is hemmed in with prohibitions and restraints. Such reasoning I apprehend is not uncommon, but it is absurdly fallacious. Christianity, instead of being a bondage, is the highest kind of liberty. True freedom is only possible in the repression of self. As the ox cannot be made serviceable except by being brought under the yoke, man cannot be made of any use either to God or to himself except as his natural freedom is restricted. They think that they indicate their freedom by breaking the law, by doing as they list. But there is a higher wisdom and a sounder philosophy which says that freedom can only be attained by keeping the law. If we fulfilled the law, if it had an undivided mastery over our lives, we would instantly be free—free as air, free as the morning light. The most pitiable slave on God's wide earth is he who has permitted his appetites and passions to obtain the mastery of his life.

There is, furthermore, a rationalistic tendency into which men are more easily drawn than women. They want to know the why and the wherefore of everything. I have no fault to find with intelligent inquiry; Christianity courts the light. I would not have faith in a religion that

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dwelt in the obscurities. But it is absurd to expect a perfect understanding of all religious phenomena. In the very nature of things there must be mystery. If we are assured that the revelation is authoritative, then we must be prepared to accept its teaching. There are great fundamental truths that appeal to our intelligence and consciousness; it is folly to reject them because all the declarations of the inspired Word are not intelligible to us. God is a fact. Sin is a fact. Redemption is certainly not such a revelation as to be utterably incredible, for it meets our deepest and profoundest needs. "If we do His will, we shall know of the doctrine"; we shall find by blessed experience that the book is divine, that its "words are spirit and life," and that our highest wisdom lies in obedience to its authority.

I want now to address a concluding word to any of you who are not amongst the open and avowed followers of Christ, for any of the reasons which I have indicated. I desire to appeal to your judgment and conscience. I am anxious to know whether you are satisfied with your position. Are your excuses tenable? Will they stand the test of fair and honest scrutiny? You are glad that your wife is a Christian, and that your children are being trained up in that way; why is it that you withhold from them your sympathy and support? Does such a course command the approval of your better nature? Is it right? Is it honest? Is it

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manly? You give mental assent to the claims of Christianity. Why not come out openly and declare your allegiance? For your wife's sake, for your children's sake, for your own soul's sake, and for Christ's sake, I plead with you to cast your excuses to the winds and perform the part which reason, and conscience, and all the sacred interests entrusted to you most pathetically demand.

XIII.

STORM-TOSSED BUT TRIUMPHANT.

“The waters increased and bare up the ark.”—GENESIS
vii. 17.

WE are carried backward in thought by the very reading of this passage to one of the most stupendous events in the history of the world. Not many centuries after man had fallen from his high estate of purity, his progeny developed a character so utterly hopeless and irredeemable as to make it necessary that they should be destroyed. God is about to deluge the earth with the most overwhelming token of His displeasure. The destruction is to be as universal as the guilt and the doom as terrible as the enormity of the transgression. The pent-up waters are to be marshalled and let loose to execute His wrath. Not on all the wide bosom of the earth is there to be exemption from the onswEEPing desolation. The valleys are to be flooded and the highest mountain overtopped. God is about to come forth out of His place and visit the earth with His displeasure, for the iniquity of the race has become loathsome and aggravated beyond the endurance even of the divine forbearance.

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In strange and beautiful contrast from this universal degradation and degeneracy, however, there appears one righteous man—a being of singular and distinguishing virtues—one of whom it could be said that “he was a just man and perfect in his generation, and that he walked with God.” He cannot be included in this destruction which is about to be visited upon the guilty world. If there exists a necessity inexorable that judgment should be poured forth upon those who have exhausted the divine forbearance, there is a necessity equally imperial for the preservation of that one who has been true and faithful under conditions so utterly unpropitious and depressing. God never confounds the righteous with the wicked. There is an exquisite adjustment in His administration. “His ways are in the sea and His footprints in the deep waters, but righteousness and judgment are the habitations of His throne.”

He commands Noah to prepare an ark for the saving of his house. When the huge vessel is completed and the last creature which the Lord had directed gathered therein, the rain begins to descend. At first it may be as a gentle shower in which everybody rejoices, but as it continues from day to day to fall faster and fiercer, drenching the earth and overflowing the streams, men curse the storm that seems determined never to break up. A week passes but there is no cessation. The lowlands are flooded and the swollen streams have

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widened into rivers bearing all that obstructs their progress on their maddened bosom, and still the waters rise. Weeks go by until nought can be seen on the face of the earth but a wild and blackened flood, above which the hills and mountains are alone visible, and still the waters rise. The few frantic creatures who have succeeded in fleeing to the surrounding eminences have only lengthened out their misery, for still the waters rise. At length there is but one hill-top left, upon which have climbed the fiercest and the strongest of the sons of men, but they, too, in their turn, with oaths and blasphemies, imprecations and prayers upon their lips, go down into the same relentless maw, for still the waters rise. And now nothing is to be seen from horizon to horizon but the God-guided and protected ark. Upborne by the flood over buried cities and mountains she floats on the crest of the shoreless deep. While cities embosoming the wealth and glory of that ancient civilization go down—while everything that this wicked generation possessed, including their own guilty selves, go down—the ark which they had despised, which they had so often ridiculed as a huge piece of folly, goes up. The very element that brought universal destruction to the world lying in the wicked one, carried that vessel on its heaving bosom as tenderly as a mother would her infant child. “The waters increased and bare up the ark.”

Such is the historic record with which our text

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stands associated. I desire now that we should utilize it for purposes of instruction.

The ark may be regarded as the type of the Church. Not of any visible organization known by that name, but of that great spiritual community redeemed by the blood of atonement and united by faith to our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only true Church in the comprehensive sense, and there is no salvation save in its fellowship. It has been divinely conceived and elaborated for the safe housing and preservation of the elect. It is God's pavilion, where He hides His chosen family until the calamities of judgment be overpast. It is the secret of His tabernacle, where there is the most perfect security amid the driving storms and the upheaving floods in which the ungodly are to perish. There is no power in either earth or hell that can wreck the Church. The waters have risen and submerged nations—they have risen and overtopped thrones—they have risen and swept away civilizations, but as they have increased they have but borne up the ark.

The history of the Church is a record of the supernatural. In no other light could it be understood. The apostles had scarcely begun their ministry when the agitated waters began to surge around them. The early Christians were distinguished for their great sufferings. They were the victims of every form of cruelty. They were excluded from all places of honor and emolument—were fined—had

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their goods confiscated—were banished from their homes and the sacred scenes around which their affections had entwined. And these were only inconsiderable parts of their sufferings. They were condemned to the mines; placed upon the rack; torn in sunder with branches of trees; burned in pitched coats; thrown into cauldrons of boiling oil or lead; crucified with their heads downwards. Infernal genius could not invent forms of torture which were not inflicted upon the disciples of Jesus Christ during the first centuries of the Christian era. And these persecutions and cruelties followed each other with furious and unrelenting rapidity, leaving the Church scarce time to breathe between the several fierce and sanguinary attacks under which she languished. But in spite of all these experiences the converts to Christianity became a vast and ever-increasing multitude. Amid the surgings of the billows and the wild frenzy of the floods "the waters increased and bare up the ark."

When we reflect upon the vast numbers who were thus swept out of existence and consider the effect of such horrible atrocities upon the favorably disposed, it is occasion for no little astonishment that there were any left who were willing to be known as the followers of the despised Nazarene. Upon no principle of mere human reasoning can the marvellous fact be accounted for. The inextinguishable potency of Christian principles under such inimical conditions is altogether outside the range

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of ordinary comprehension. It is a positive reversal of what we are too frequently called upon to witness. While we might have reasonably looked for the very extinction of the Christian name, we find it rising in majesty above the diabolical energy that would crush it, above the deadly flame that would consume it, above the hellish fury that would sweep it out of existence. From the ashes of the slaughtered thousands there arose phoenix-like a multitude that could not be numbered. The little band that seemed so feeble, that seemed so utterly without means of resistance, that seemed so easily annihilated, grew in strength and formidableness in the very teeth of the horrible cruelties to which they were subjected. The bush burned but was not consumed. The more agitated the waters, the more fierce and loud and terrible the blast, the more majestic and invincible rose this mysterious, God-built craft. "The waters increased and bare up the ark."

When persecutions subsided the strong currents of heresy kept the waters in agitation. Who can read the history of the Church during that critical period when errors spread rapidly, when false beliefs as to the nature of Christ and the responsibility of man became widely prevalent, when doctrines the most unscriptural and pernicious were held even by those who assumed to be leaders and teachers of the redeemed host, when the body of Christ was divided into factions and the most

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visionary and rationalistic theories were held and promulgated—who could contemplate this state of things without experiencing the most sincere astonishment that her strained timbers were not battered into fragments? It was certainly a time of the most searching peril. The strength and velocity of the currents were such as to be to all outward seeming irresistible. We look upon the seething, boiling, maddened waters and we tremble for the issue. What craft could ever live in such a sea without being supernaturally sustained? The strain is too great, the adverse influences are too strong for any mere human seamanship to overcome. The elasticity and regnancy of the Church amid such conditions are altogether unaccountable save on the principle that “God was in the midst of her and she could not be moved.” She had a charmed existence which played with the lightning and hurled defiance in the very teeth of the blast. Notwithstanding the ungovernable play of circumstances that seemed to render disaster inevitable, “the waters increased and bare up the ark.”

After this came the flood-tide of ignorance over-swelling almost every trace of ancient civilization. The treasures of learning and art were swept on on its relentless bosom. Every ray of kindly light seemed to have been extinguished by the all-prevailing gloom. For centuries the Church was enveloped in an obscurity so dense as not to be visible only at rare intervals, and even then only with

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hazy indistinctness. Sailing amid jagged rocks and treacherous shoals ; enshrouded in a darkness that could be felt, and in waters that were not particularly distinguished for their tranquillity, is it not surprising that she was not wrecked ? The conditions were such that without special supernatural intervention there could have been no other result. And yet when the sky became clear again and the dense humidity in which she was enveloped disappeared, there was no object on the bosom of the waters more conspicuous. Through the dreary centuries when ignorance and superstition swept the western world like a flood, "The waters increased and bare up the ark."

The propitious breezes of the Reformation were followed by a dead calm of worldliness and formality, only to be succeeded, however, by a fierce east wind of infidelity that threatened to sweep the main with unheard-of disaster. The writers of that period have made the page of history vivid with the delineations of its ravages. So angry were the winds and so loud the roar of the upheaved waters that timid souls everywhere were alarmed for the safety of the Church. It seemed that the time had at length come when not merely disaster but extinction were inevitable. Men arose of no mean repute whose avowed purpose it was to destroy her utterly. They even boasted of its easy possibility. Gibbon, Voltaire, Chesterfield and others spurned the thought of her possible survival. They exult-

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ingly pointed at her strained and broken timbers and proudly prognosticated her speedy and irretrievable submergence. But contrary to the loud and blatant predictions of which the infidel literature of that period is full, she rode upon the crested waves like a thing of life. The very press from which Voltaire's works were issued was subsequently used in printing the Word of God, and Chesterfield's parlor, formerly an infidel clubroom, became a sanctuary in which prayers were offered and hymns were sung to Him whom they delighted to blaspheme. The text was never more signally verified, "The waters increased and bare up the ark."

The age in which we live is by no means one of undisturbed tranquillity. The waves, as far as eye can penetrate, bear unmistakable evidence that the Church is having to plough her way through a very angry sea. It would be absurd to attempt to persuade ourselves that the perils are all past, and that fair sailing is henceforth to be expected and rejoiced in. The sceptical tendencies of the times are by no means without ominous suggestiveness. There is not a little in the appearance of the waters to awaken solicitude. Scientific rationalism hurls its proud waves at the very bulwarks of the Church. Unbelief in some of its most insidious forms is violently sweeping around her keel. Learning, philosophy and genius lend their energies to uplift the water into a foamy flood. It would be utter folly to ignore the antagonisms that assert them-

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selves even under the guise of religion. Never, perhaps, has the invincibility of the Church been put to a severer test. But the old ship is not going to be engulfed. Sooner might the waves of ocean extinguish the fires of the sun. She rides upon thought waves; upon waves phosphorescent with genius and majestic with acquired knowledge as surely as upon those that hide their fury under the iridescent glow of friendliness. The Church has been the miracle of the ages, and she has lost nothing of her rebounding and recuperative quality. "The floods have lifted up their voice, yea, the floods have lifted up their voice, but she has been mightier than the sound of many waters." The sweeping waves that in these days threaten to imperil her security and impede her progress are but lifting her the more surely into distinction and making her a wonder and a praise. "The waters increased and bare up the ark."

There could be no more profitable contemplation than that which the Church of the centuries affords. She has carried the witness of her divinity in the inextinguishable regnancy of her life. She has passed through every form of opposition and peril. Had it not been that the Lord was on her side she would have a thousand times perished from the earth. God was in the midst of her, therefore she has not been moved. He has guided her course, therefore she has not been wrecked. He has upheld her with His strong arm of power,

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therefore she has not been overwhelmed. His voice has been upon the waters, so that in their wildest ebullitions they have not been able to engulf her. He has made her impervious to the fury of the elements and caused the floods to bear her on her heaven-sent way. With all her imperfections and failures her history has been unparalleled and sublime.

We are certainly justified in gathering inspiration from this splendid retrospect. It would be unpardonably weak and cowardly for us to be apprehensive and despairing in view of such a past. The men who stand upon the deck of the Church as alarmists are miserable traitors. If she has been preserved so marvellously in the past, is there any reason why she should not be in the future? If she has passed triumphantly through the rough waters of persecution and heresy, of superstition and ignorance, of infidelity and rationalism, through every form of malignant and insidious opposition, shall we doubt that it shall be so even unto the end? Are not the sources of her strength abidingly the same? Are not the promises of God Yea and Amen? Is there anything too hard for the Lord? We should have no fear for the ultimate triumph of the Church. The Captain of Noah's ark can steer any craft over the stormiest seas. God is caring for His Church, let not your heart be troubled. He is accomplishing the purposes of redeeming grace in her history, and no weapon

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formed against her shall prosper. He who brought the ark through the surging waters of the deluge to the brow of Ararat will not fail to carry the Church through storms and currents, through all contrary and devastating tempests to the Mount Eternal.

There are now, as in the days of Noah, those who pour contempt upon the ark of God. Aha, say they, what folly to turn away from the exhilarating delights of life to prepare for the future! There is no such future as the Bible predicts, anyhow. It is all a hideous delusion foisted upon the imagination of the world by fanatical enthusiasts. Talk about a deluge—about “the wrath to come”! What nonsense! See the heavens, they are bright with sunshine and serenity. Everything is as it was wont to be in the past. There has been no break in the harmony of nature from the beginning. What madness to coop one’s self up in an ungainly ark when there is nothing to be apprehended! What utter imbecility to subject one’s self to unnatural restraints when we may enjoy boundless liberty! The old enemy of humanity is as blatantly wicked and persistently unprincipled as he has ever been. The old unbelief with which Noah had to contend is as assertive and obtrusive as of yore. The air is full of it. It stands out defiantly against all gospel warning and invitation. It adopts the most effective methods that infernal wisdom can devise to keep men in a condition of moral and

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spiritual insensibility. But the flood is coming for all that. The crested waves of destruction will overswell the highest mountain-peaks of human merit as well as the proudest eminences of carnal security. It is as certain as the Word of God is infallible. There will be no escape for those who pour contempt upon the invitations of infinite love. The scoffer, the blasphemer, the moralist, and the pharisee shall be whelmed in the same ruin.

My brother, are you housed in this divinely provided, heaven protected, Calvary insured ark? Are you of the number of those of whom our Lord said in His intercessory prayer, "Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost"? Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus found entrance into the sacred place of infinite security? Are you identified with the family of faith, "whom the Lord hath shut in"? Then whatever may befall this old earth, you shall dwell in safety. The throne of God is not more impervious to assault than are those who are enfolded in His covenant of redeeming love.

XIV.

PITCHING THE TENT TOWARD SODOM.

“ Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.”—GENESIS xiii. 12.

IT may seem strange that we should take a fragment of Old Testament history from which to gather instruction for the proper guidance of our lives to-day. It is not our purpose, however, to speak of habits and tendencies which have become obsolete. What Lot did thousands of years ago is being done in our very midst. His insane course is a graphic representation of the policy of multitudes who will learn wisdom only by an experience which is bitter and humiliating. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom ; and I am going to speak of those who are doing precisely the same thing in the very circles of society in which we live and move.

I. SODOM.

We know what it was in patriarchal days. It was the chief of a group of cities, which, on account of their infamous wickedness, were con-

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sumed by fire from heaven. But what does Sodom mean to us? How may we pitch our tents toward Sodom? What is the practical bearing of this imbecile behavior upon ourselves in this age of special and distinguishing enlightenment? We have but to inquire into the spirit and character of society around us to get full and sufficient answers to these questions. Sodom is the scene of licentious living, of dishonest acting, of prurient thinking. Wherever you find these characterizing features you need not hesitate to use the term. The quality of the life determines the fitness, or otherwise, of its application. Sodom is by no means a city of antiquity. It exists and flourishes upon this continent to-day. Whatever may have been consumed on the plains of Jordan forty centuries ago, the spirit which cursed its inhabitants survives.

1. *Licentious Living.*

We do not question the existence, in modern society, of a great deal that is admirable. The principles of the Christian religion have not operated upon the thought and life of humanity without the most beneficent effects. There is a social morality in every country in Christendom which is beautiful and elevating. And yet it must be admitted, that in spite of all the mighty currents of thought and action which have been making for righteousness, the social degradation, especially in our great centres of population, is appalling. We

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need not retrace the ages to find Sodom. It is here! It is here!

Licentious living is not confined to any particular phase of impiety. The term sweeps the whole range of action in which just and reasonable restraint is held in contempt. The drunkard, the Sabbath breaker, the blasphemmer, no less than the lewd and the incontinent, are included in the representation. They do not bring themselves under the control of those principles which are essential to pure and exalted living. They disregard the laws in obedience to which humanity must ever realize its highest interests and noblest destiny. Every form of lawlessness was found in Sodom, and the same thing is only too true of our own land and times.

2. *Dishonest Acting.*

This was characteristic of life in Sodom. We cannot conceive of the infamous inhabitants of that vile city having any scruples in regard to the rectitude of their transactions. Such a virtue as honesty could never have flourished in an atmosphere so utterly and hopelessly impure. Where God is not revered, man is not likely to be scrupulously considered. But we need not retrace the ages to find exhibitions of dishonesty. It is found in every variety of manifestation around us. It is the bane of our politics, the degradation of our business, the blight of our civilization. It would sometimes seem as if it had gained in power

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with the advance of intelligence. It is not the coarse and vulgar thing it used to be. Men are accounted smart whom our fathers would have branded with infamy. Fine names are given transactions that in both inception and consummation are disgustingly unprincipled. The spirit of dishonesty has permeated society to such an extent as to blunt the public conscience to the enormity of some of the most atrocious and criminal exhibitions of which humanity could be guilty. In its coarser aspects it is held up to reprobation, but when arrayed in silks or broadcloth, ornamented with jewels and rendered effulgent with the splendor of a great name, we too often prostrate ourselves before it as the Israelites did before the golden calf in the wilderness. The political and commercial immoralities of the age are the humiliating outcome of this state of things. Sodom is not a city of antiquity.

3. *Prurient Thinking.*

Such deep-rooted and all-dominating depravity as was found in this ill-famed city could not be possible under any other conditions. All the fountains of being were corrupt. Their gross wickedness was the legitimate result of their gross thinking. I hesitate to institute comparison in this instance. And yet there can be no doubt that a vast amount of the most vigorous thinking of this generation is unsanctified. Not a little of it is absolutely Sodomitic. Books that are saturated with

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infidelity, pictures that are vile in conception and elaboration, schemes that are satanic in their heartlessness, conspiracies against public interests which are infamous and unblushing, all go to show that society in this age is not at such a wide remove from that of the cities of the plain that only fire from heaven could purify.

With all these facts before us, you will, I am sure, feel that I am more than justified in speaking of Sodom as something actual and near.

II. PITCHING THE TENT TOWARD SODOM.

There is a very solemn significance in this expression. Lot did not enter Sodom. Nothing was further from his mind than to settle down amongst that godless community. His whole soul revolted at their wickedness. But "he pitched his tent toward Sodom." He did the very worst thing possible. He voluntarily placed himself in the way of temptation. It makes all the difference in a mountainous country as to what aspect the land has. A southern exposure means warmth and genial atmospheric conditions. A northern exposure means bleak winds and almost perpetual shadow. The result in the one instance is fruitfulness and beauty, the result in the other is barrenness and sterility. The aspect of the life is of unutterable significance. But when may it be said that men are pitching their tents toward Sodom?

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1. *When Worldly Pleasures and Gratifications are permitted to have an undue Influence over the Mind.*

Lot saw the beautiful valley of the Jordan and his heart yearned for its delights. He did not stop to think of all the evil influences to which he and his children would be exposed. His own personal gratification was the supreme thought. Here are fruitful meads and well-watered valleys, why should I not occupy them? and so "he pitched his tent toward Sodom."

How many are there who are lured into important decisions in the same way! They profess to be followers of Christ, but "they pitch their tent toward Sodom." They approve of practices and indulgences that are neither helpful nor elevating. It would be most unreasonable to question the need of recreative enjoyments. I have no manner of sympathy with that supercilious sanctity that casts its disapproving frown on all mirth and gaiety and gladness. Enjoy life—why, certainly; who has a better right to such enjoyment than the children of the King? But you may be thoroughly happy without being frivolous. Sunshine may be plentifully experienced without imitating the flutter of the butterfly. You may quaff sweet draughts of life and drink from golden goblets at the very fountain of inspiration without indulging in any of those inanities which please but cannot satisfy, which give the cheeks a lurid flush but cast a withering influence around the heart.

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You know what I mean by worldly pleasures, and to permit them to exercise an undue fascination over the mind is to do just what Lot did, "pitch your tent toward Sodom." This is the case also—

2. *When the Getting of Gain becomes a Supreme Passion.*

Lot seems to have forgotten that there were other things to be considered in a decision so momentous, beside which luxuriant valleys were as the drop in a bucket. What is wealth to character? What are the most alluring scenes of earthly affluence to those which offer enrichment for the soul. Lot was too thoroughly enamoured with the prospect of mere worldly advantage to think of these higher interests.

Nor does he stand in isolated singularity. He is a type of multitudes of infatuated human beings. The tempting possibilities of speedy acquisition have led men and women, otherwise good and great, into the worse than folly which is here described. The question, can I with a clear conscience, can I without imperilling my spiritual interests, can I without exposing my family to influences which might prove disastrous to their best and highest well-being, is seldom asked when the prospect of gain glitters before the eager eye of greed.

Money-making is legitimate. The theory that it is necessary to be poor in order to be good is a

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fanatical absurdity. If you have the ability to rise into affluent circumstances, by all means use it. If you have the facilities at command to enable you to acquire place and power, there is no reason, human or divine, why you should not avail yourselves of them. But to be rich at any price is the policy of hell. There are roads to fortune, to walk in which is to lose self-respect and the respect of all right-thinking men and women. To make outward advantage the first consideration is the very perfection of folly. The man who places gold above character, material acquisition above spiritual endowment, the getting of earthly good of whatever sort above the enrichment of the soul, is "pitching his tent toward Sodom."

This is the case once more—

3. *When Reading and Thinking run in the line of the Rationalistic and Impure.*

The influence of books is great beyond estimation. They create public sentiment; they mould character; they determine, in no small degree, the nature and quality of human living. Impure and rationalistic reading is more to be deprecated than the breath of a pestilence. If a book tends in the smallest measure to lessen your reverence for God, to relax your self-government, to intensify your love of sinful indulgences, cast it away from you, even though it be bound in calf and edged with gold! I would say with the profoundest emphasis of strong conviction, to all those who employ their

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leisure in reading books on whose pages the serpent has left the mark of his insidious trail ; to all those who read novels, the leading characters of which are coarse or immoral, and the general tone of which is low ; to all who delight themselves in literature that is impure, frivolous, sceptical or atheistic, you are "pitching your tent toward Sodom."

III. AT HOME IN SODOM.

We are not informed as to the time when Lot moved into Sodom. He little thought when he pitched his tent toward it that he would eventually find himself settled down within its walls. He would probably have resented the intimation of such a possibility. He had no love for the Sodomites, but he loved the fruitful plains contiguous to their city. He began by pitching his tent toward Sodom, and then he began to do business with the Sodomites, and eventually he was induced by considerations of profit and convenience, and possibly by the persuasions of his wife and children, to move in. Lot became a great man in Sodom. It is said that he sat at the gate. He was a magistrate. He had a place in the council of the city. The world is always ready to elevate into position men of this type, provided they are not too straightlaced. It gives a glamor of respectability to their institutions. The fact that Lot was made an official in this vile city is not a little ominous.

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It suggests compromise, to say the least. He could not have been elevated to place and power in a centre of such wickedness without yielding up much that should have been sacred to him. Like too many in our day he was blinded by the deceitfulness of riches and rendered morally powerless by his compromising pusillanimity.

At Home in Sodom. Who shall measure the depths of mournful significance which these words suggest. If he had gone there as a missionary the case would have been different, but he was drawn into the unhallowed scene from considerations which were purely selfish. He settled down in Sodom with a view of bettering his worldly circumstances. He thought of nothing but the material gain which the settlement promised. And what is life in Sodom to such a one? It is—

1. *Morally Relaxing.*

A man, however good he may be, cannot expose himself to the worst influences from mere love of gain without suffering incalculable moral injury. Lot is a melancholy illustration of this fact. He spent years in this wicked city without producing any impression for good. Not a single individual was he instrumental in leading into the knowledge of the true God. He lost power over his own household. Living in Sodom relaxed the fibre of his spiritual manhood, and deteriorated all that was noble and manly in his character. Take warning, I beseech you, from this depressing record. You

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cannot live in Sodom without losing immeasurably more than you can ever gain. You cannot give the world the first place in thought and affection without sacrificing your piety and paralyzing your spiritual influence. There are professedly Christian men and women within the circle of our knowledge, who, by pursuing this insane policy, are religiously valueless. They have no spiritual power. They are ciphers in the church and family. Whatever their professions, they are absolutely without spiritual potency. Those whom they should influence for good hold them in derision. At home in Sodom is also—

2. *Socially Destructive.*

Considerations of personal and family advantage led Lot to seek a home in Sodom. It was to secure for those he most loved a goodly estate and fine society, and you know the result.

You may acquire a fortune and secure high worldly distinction for yourselves and children, but if it be at the risk of higher interests; if it be at the sacrifice of all that affects character and destiny, better, a thousand times better, that you and your children should live and die in the extremest destitution. Alas, for that ambition that crowds out of human calculation every thought that bears upon the higher interests of the soul. Whole families are sliding out into worldliness and worse, as the result of such unutterable folly. We are surprised sometimes to see children growing up to

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despise the religion of their parents, to see those who have been instructed in the knowledge of eternal things, becoming openly and avowedly ungodly. But if we knew all we would perchance discover the reason. The folly of Lot cannot be repeated without experiencing the same calamitous results. If you are more anxious that your children should do well than be good ; if you are more concerned that they should move in fine society, that they should form alliances with regard to the world that now is, than with regard to that which is to come, depend upon it you will have your reward. You cannot live in Sodom without eating of its fruits.

3. *It is utterly ruinous.*

Lot lost everything but his own life, and that was rescued only as by fire. All the property that he had accumulated as well as his spiritual influence were forfeited. Instead of becoming a rich man with his family around him to enjoy it, he saw everything that he had worked for, that he had sacrificed the spiritual interests of himself and children to acquire, consumed. If ever a man felt mean ; if ever a man's cupidity recoiled upon him ; if ever a man was led to see the folly of giving the world the chief place in thought and affection, that man was Lot. He stands out as an example and a warning to all the ages. Let us avoid his imbecility if we would escape his humiliation. Let us take warning by his example, if we would be

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preserved from the consequences of his ruinous folly.

And now ere I say my last word, let me impress upon the impenitent in this assembly, that Sodom is a doomed city. The judgment of God has been pronounced upon it. There can be no escape for those who dwell within its environment. You may laugh and mock at the messages of warning, but the day of doom will come none the less surely. To live in Sodom is to dwell "in the city of destruction," and the only advice that can be given to you is to flee for your life. Better would it be for you to build your home on the sloping sides of Etna or Vesuvius than to settle down in Sodom. May you be awakened to a realization of your danger ere it be too late. Like Bunyan's pilgrim, when the fact that the city in which he dwelt was going to be consumed, flashed in upon his soul, flee. Linger not amid such peril, as you love your life. Rest not until the plain stands between you and the city of the curse, and you look down from the supreme heights of a Redeemer's righteousness, rejoicing in the grace that has provided for your deliverance.

XV.

THE REPRESENTATIVE CHURCH IN SIMON'S HOUSE.

“Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone.”—
JOHN xii. 1-7.

WHO that knows anything of this book has not read of Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus, and Bethany. Bethany was a place of Christ's frequent resort, and Mary, Martha and Lazarus His chosen and beloved friends. It is very probable that His visits to this memorable village were far more frequent than the record indicates. He was now in Bethany for the last time, a few days before the eventful crisis of His history was to take place.

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When our Lord arrived from Jericho He was kindly and gratefully received into the house of Simon the leper, whom He had healed from his loathsome disease. Here there was an entertainment prepared and a company invited to attend. Lazarus was there, whose resurrection was still fresh in the memory of the people. Martha was there, busily engaged in attending to the outward necessities of the feast. Mary was there, quiet and unobtrusive, yet full of adoring love. She occupied a position near unto her Lord, and, when opportunity offered, gave expression to her great affection by breaking upon Him an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very costly and precious. Judas was there, in his mean, sinister and unmanly spirit upbraiding this act of spontaneous beneficence that shall live in the world's admiration and remembrance as long as the sun.

This deeply interesting and touching history we shall employ this morning to represent the various characters and offices sustained in the Church of the living God. Here we have—

I. A PICTURE OF SINNERS SAVED.

“Simon and Lazarus.” These are the materials of which every true church is built. They are the living stones of which the spiritual edifice is reared. Taken from the quarry of degeneracy and sin, they are carved and polished and fitted for an abiding place in the supernal temple which is

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being upreared by the agency of the Holy Spirit, in the midst of life. There can be no church where there are no saved sinners, because of these the building is erected and fitly framed together into an holy temple in the Lord. In every community of the redeemed we have the counterparts of these representative characters of our text—those who have been cleansed from a loathsome leprosy and those who have been raised from the dead. They are the constituent elements of every true church. Every living member of this spiritual fellowship is *a saved sinner*. And this leads us to observe—

1. *That such Characters are Unmistakably Changed.*

The change in Simon was not a matter of conjecture. It was so great, so complete, so thorough that no one had the slightest occasion to doubt its reality. The cleansing which he had received was perfect. A leper could not enter into society without being immediately distinguished and abhorred. He was universally known and shunned. His best friends had to discard him. He was prohibited from mingling with his fellows under any pretext whatsoever. But on this occasion he is in the midst of his friends. He makes a grand entertainment for their reception. There is not the smallest apprehension experienced as to his condition. He is only called a leper now because of what he had been. The guests that enjoy his hospitality have not the slightest dread of contagion.

This is certainly how it should be in the blood-

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bought Church of God. Those who enter into her fellowship should be so thoroughly changed, so manifestly different in their life, character and habits as to convince even the ungodly that they are no longer lepers ; that they have experienced a radical and unmistakable transformation ; that they are no more what they once were than a man in the fulness of health is like unto him who is covered with a loathsome leprosy ; that, although sinners, they are sinners saved.

The whole country knew of the resurrection of Lazarus. Many of them had been speaking words of condolence to the bereaved family. Not a few of them had wept at his grave. There was not the shadow of doubt in the minds of the people as to his death, nor as to his resurrection.

Are not these characters fair and fitting types of what we should expect to find in every spiritual community? Should not those around us, even the ungodly, be constrained to acknowledge that we have been raised from the dead ; that we have been born again into a new life? Would that all the members of the Church of Jesus Christ were like Simon and Lazarus, distinctive monuments of Christ's power to cleanse, vivify and save!

2. That such Characters are Consciously Changed.

Simon was not ignorant of what he had experienced. He could not be. He had passed through an ordeal which he could never afterwards forget. He must have felt himself a new man.

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Leprosy was not only a most loathsome and hopeless, but also a most painful, disease. Its poison entered into the very joints and marrow of life. We can form but a very imperfect conception of its terrible character. It was a living death. Its victim could not fail to be the most miserable of mortals.

Such had Simon been, and is it for a moment to be supposed that he could have undergone so complete and radical a change without being thoroughly conscious of the fact? The very suggestion of such a possibility is absurd.

And should not the Christian consciousness in regard to salvation be alike clear and unmistakable? We have been lepers. From the soles of the feet to the crown of the head we were loathsomely unclean. But we have been redeemed; we have been cleansed; we have received the divine forgiveness, and should we live in uncertainty in regard to it? Is it a virtue to be in doubt as to a matter of such infinite moment? Is it honoring to Him who hath cleansed us to say, "I do not know"? It is the privilege of every child of God to walk in the light and blessedness of assured confidence. If our sins have been forgiven we should know it. If our hearts have been changed we should not be in ignorance of the fact. If our eyes have been opened we surely should be able to testify, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

Lazarus could not have passed away from the scenes, friendships and affinities of his earthly life;

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he could not have experienced the greatest change incident to our mortality ; he could not have lain in the grave four days and come forth by divine command and not know it. The transition was so altogether strange and wonderful and supernatural that to pass through it without being vividly sensible and consciously impressed would be impossible. He knew most assuredly that Christ had raised him from the dead.

And so it certainly should be with respect to those who have been called forth from the grave of corruption and moral death. They should have a living, joyful consciousness of the fact.

3. *That such characters occupy the nearest relation to Jesus Christ.*

Simon and Lazarus were regarded with peculiar affection by the Master. The one had been cleansed from a virulent disease, the other had been raised from the dead. He felt, doubtless, a very special interest in them on this very account. There are none that occupy a higher place in the heart of the Redeemer than saved sinners. However lightly they may be esteemed on earth the Saviour regards them with a deep and tender affection. They are His jewels, purchased with the price of His own precious blood. They are the gems which He came down to earth to secure with patient toil and sacrifice, and when cut and polished by the Holy Spirit they are to sparkle in His crown for ever. *Saved sinners.* Ah, yes! they are the

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objects of Christ's peculiar delight on earth, and they are to stand nearest His throne in heaven. The veil which conceals from us the glories of the future was once drawn aside, and the favored seer of Patmos was permitted to gaze in vision upon some of its unutterable revelations. Be astonished, O ye heavens; shout for joy, ye favored earth, for John tells us that "he beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands."

Don't be ashamed of your name. If you are saved, don't be ashamed to add sinner to it. There is no company more honorable in the reception halls of the celestial city than the "blood-washed." To be a condemned sinner is unutterably sad, but to be a redeemed sinner is unutterably glorious.

II. A PICTURE OF CHURCH SERVICE.

"Martha." She was a truly representative character. We cannot fail to discern in her the portraiture of some Christian professors in every age. They are to be found in well-nigh every church—those who attend to the secular interests of the cause, who are busying themselves about the arrangements and requirements of the feast. And here we would observe—

1. *That this is a necessary department of church life.*
We cannot do without our Marthas. We must

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have men and women who give thought and time and energy to what may be called the secular interests of the cause. If the arrangements of this entertainment in Simon's house had been left in the hands of the more devoted Mary, they would have been most imperfectly carried out. She had not the energy and business tact necessary to qualify her for such service.

And it is precisely so in the Church of Jesus Christ. There are diversities of gifts, all of which are necessary to a healthy, vigorous, progressive life. The Marthas are as honorable as the Marys if they are inspired by affection for their Lord. They are needed to plan and organize and execute in lines of activity for which the Marys have no manner of qualification. We do not know how much the Church is dependent upon the men and women who give thought and effort to her material well-being. Without their ministry the entertainment would be very meanly and inefficiently served, and the great Lord would be dishonored in the house of His friends.

2. *This is a commendable department of church life.*

The supper which was provided on this occasion was no doubt peculiarly grateful to Christ. It was a token of respect and gratitude. It was a demonstration of friendship. "Martha served." Although a person of quality and social position, she did not think it beneath her station to minister when Christ

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sat at meat. Her conduct must have been pleasing to the Master, because it was an evidence of the most sincere attachment and appreciation.

It is even so with regard to all such services and ministries as affect the material interests of the Church of Jesus Christ. If the spirit of love is there; if the spirit of sacrifice is there; if it is done for His dear sake, it is glorified. It is as worshipful as the most sacred devotions in which His great name is hallowed and adored in prayer and song. I have known men give time that was valuable to them in their business—give anxious thought that preyed upon their energies—give with unstinted liberality of their means to further the interests of the cause of Christ, who were constitutionally unfitted for the more spiritual exercises of religion. And are such services and sacrifices without value in the sight of God? Nay, verily. If love to Christ be the actuating and crowning motive, the most secular activity becomes sublime. "For Christ's sake" glorifies the veriest drudgery. God bless the faithful Marthas in our churches. They are doing a work upon which must ever rest the smiles of heaven. Observe further, however—

3. *That this is a department of church activity which may be over-exercised.*

There is a passage in Luke in which Martha is censured for "being cumbered with much serving." She is reminded that one thing is absolutely needful. It is necessary and commendable to serve—

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to be given to hospitality—to attend to the secular and financial departments of Christian labor. But when these absorb the thought and energy to the neglect of the spiritual requirements of the soul—to the neglect of the higher life—there is merited exposure to the censure of the Almighty. Every department of church life must be subservient to “the one thing needful.” The healthful, active, spiritual life of the Church should ever have the first place. The Marthas, if they are not spiritually minded, are a curse rather than a blessing. If they think more of the feast than they do of the Royal Guest; if they are disposed to measure the value of Christian service by the exchequer; if they are disposed to place a higher estimate on the secular committee than they do upon the meetings which are held for prayer and worship, there is and must be well-merited exposure to the censure of the Great Head of the Church.

III. A PICTURE OF CHRISTIAN DEVOTION.

“Mary.”

1. *Here we have Supreme Love to Christ.*

She thought nothing of His entertainment. It never struck her for a moment that He had travelled and needed refreshment, else she would have flown as on wings of love to satisfy His needs. Forgetting the common rites of hospitality, she seemed completely absorbed in the contemplation of love and in the devotion of a true heart. Her

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eyes were fixed upon her divine Lord as by a sacred charm, and her ears caught with avidity every word of wisdom and affection that fell from His lips. Thank God, we have our Marys in the Church still—those who devotedly sit at the Master's feet and joyfully drink in of the Master's spirit. They may be altogether ignorant of business qualities and utterly unfit for any secular department of church activity. The feast, if left in their hands, would be very imperfectly prepared and very inefficiently served; but they have loving, devoted, earnest hearts, full of enthusiasm for the Master and precious in the sight of heaven.

There is a fascination in this character which is altogether irresistible. Her love was strong and all-absorbing. To sit at the Saviour's feet and listen to the heavenly wisdom which distilled from His gracious lips was her supreme delight. There was a sweet unconsciousness and self-forgetfulness about her which is very charming. She forgot everything in Christ. The cares and duties of the household, the concerns of life, even the preparation of an entertainment for her Lord—all all is forgotten in the fervor and intensity of her affection.

We are accustomed to measure character by the amount of demonstration which accompanies it. History is full of sublime achievements. Legislators, warriors, statesmen, preachers—the men who have by their intellectual activities moulded the habits and crystallized the thought of the ages, are

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familiar to us. They have enshrined themselves in their imperishable works, and successive generations have lent their voices and their pens in giving perpetuity and effulgence to their names. But we hear very little of those who work unseen—the noble mothers who enfold their children in an atmosphere of holy enthusiasm—the unostentatious men and women who labor in the shady places of life, creating an atmosphere which is often more healthful and vitalizing than the breath of spring.

Think not that influence is of small account because it is silent and unconscious. Mary sitting at the Master's feet in the rapt adoration of a true affection is a grander illustration of Christianity than a whole lifetime of cold and formal service. You are inclined to suppose, perhaps, that sacred eloquence is confined to the pulpit or platform, but I say unto you that an eye beaming with tenderness in the home of sorrow or a voice whispering the message of encouragement and sympathy to the fallen and disconsolate is more eloquent than the glowing periods of a Hall, a Spurgeon or a Whitefield. You may imagine that the only way of making the world feel the sublime and imperial power of the Christian religion is by talking and working, but I say unto you that lives of unostentatious goodness are often more effective in their influence. The bloom of an orchard in spring is not more fair, nor the golden hue of grain in autumn more rich, than the blossoming and

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fruitage of virtue in the quiet gardens of our King. If you were to ask me what is the mightiest regenerative force in society to-day, I would answer—not our churches—not our ministry—not our colleges of learning—but our consecrated Marys ; lives receptive of all holy influences and odoriferous of virtue, creating an atmosphere that steals upon human life with a moulding and developing inspiration.

That which is most needed to make the Church in this age a resistless and all-commanding power is not eloquence of speech, but eloquence of character. Christ must be incarnated in human souls to make the unbelieving multitude acknowledge their superior quality. As the lark that soars the highest builds her nest the lowest ; as the nightingale sings most sweetly in the gloaming when all things rest ; as the branches that are most richly laden bend the lowest, and as the lowliest valleys are most abounding in their fruitfulness, even so the Christian who occupies a place at the feet of Jesus.

Mary was unconscious of everything but Christ. Moses, when he descended from the mount, wist not that his face shone. The greatest danger of our religious lives is a looking at our shining faces. What we need still more and more is to be so absorbed in the contemplation of Christ's character and so receptive of His holy influence that our whole being shall shine with celestial brilliance and we remain unconscious of the fact.

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2. *Here we have again supreme liberality for Christ.*

She brought forth a box of ointment of spike-nard, very costly and precious; the most precious thing she had; the most costly article that she could have unostentatiously utilized as an expression of her overflowing affection for her Lord. What can be withheld by those who truly love the Saviour? The greater the love the greater the liberality. The language of true love is—

“Had I ten thousand worlds to give,
Lord, they should all be Thine.”

Who shall ever estimate the power of love over the human heart? As the light of morning steals into the half-opened petals of the flower and causes it to unfold, bathing its blushing beauties in the smiles of heaven; as the soft zephyrus breezes of the south charm the imprisoned earth to liberty and beauteous life; even so the love of Christ enters into the human heart, lays open its inmost affections and aspirations to the light, melts the ice-bound fountains of its activities and joys, and so interpenetrates it with genial inspirations that, instead of barrenness and sterility, there grow in clustering affluence the fruits of righteousness and bloom in rich profusion the flowers of paradise.

Love and beneficence must ever go hand in hand. They are twin graces. Love is the sun, beneficence the rays of life and blessing it emits. Love is the

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gushing fountain of the soul, beneficence the pellucid streams vivifying and gladdening all the scenes through which they flow. Mary, in her spontaneous liberality, breaking upon the person of her Lord the costly ointment, is the most suggestive type of the spirit and genius of Christianity that this book affords.

IV. A PICTURE OF WORLDLY INTERFERENCE.

"Judas." It is almost a pity that this dark portrayal of selfish meanness should be permitted to mar the tranquil beauty of so fair a scene. But such is life. There has never been an age in which the Church was perfect. There are few churches (if any) that are altogether free from the presence and influence of ungodly men. The first Christian Church received into her fellowship a Judas, and his counterparts have been reproduced in every age and in almost every church.

Judas in this particular instance was not without his influence. His false charity carried the disciples with him. They sought to check the outgushing of Mary's love. In a cold and heartless spirit they attempted to smother her enthusiasm for Christ. "Why this waste?"

Ah, this parsimonious, worldly, unchristian spirit is too frequently found in the Church still. The affection and devotion of the Marys are often checked and chilled by the cold and heartless interference of the disciples. Have not some of you

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heard, while your hearts were aglow with the Saviour's love and your energies directed to do His will, your fellows—even your very brethren—say, if not in words, in actions, "Why this waste?" Cold, lifeless, inactive members who are not in sympathy with the spirit of the Master are terrible stumbling-blocks in the Church. They cast a chilling, blasting influence upon all around them. It is not more difficult for a rose or violet to thrive in a bed of weeds than for a truly earnest, living, enthusiastic Christian to grow and flourish amidst a number of inanimate or worldly professors.

You will most surely hear as the fragrance of your noble deeds are expressed, the voice of jealousy or selfishness, or hypocritical parsimony indulging in the sentimental inquiry, "Why this waste?" You cannot do a truly noble thing without being misrepresented and misjudged, and you will find often that the bitterest foes of your religious progress "are they of your own household." Judas is dead, but his ill-spirited progeny are numerous, and not infrequently do they disgrace the high places of the Church. But let no true-hearted follower of Christ be overborne and discouraged by their pernicious influence. Strive rather to emulate the example of this noble woman and become too absorbed in your devotion to Christ to heed the heartless interventions of spiritual pauperism.

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V. A PICTURE OF DIVINE INTERPOSITION.

"Christ." He is ever near to defend and vindicate His own. He will not leave you comfortless. He will come to you with His healing and inspirational ministries in every time of need. Are there malign influences and wicked men that find their way into the holy places of life? Yes, assuredly, but there is one who is their Master. He before whom Judas shrank abashed and before whom devils trembled, is ever present with His people. "He walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks and holdeth the seven stars in His right hand." His eyes are like flames of fire beholding the evil and the good. His heart is full of helpful sympathy, and His arm almighty to defend and succor those who trust in Him. "Let her alone, for the day of my burial hath she wrought this."

And now let me bring back the developed teaching of our text upon your experience and consciousness. Are you a Simon or a Lazarus? Have you been cleansed? Have you been raised from the dead? There are no questions more pertinent to some of you and certainly none more momentous. Can you answer them?

In most churches there are Marthas and Marys and possibly a Judas. The former are her glory and her strength; the latter is her weakness and disgrace. Which do you represent?

In every true church there is a Presence which

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is divine, an eye which never slumbers, an energy which never fails, a helpfulness which is all-sufficient. What assurance could be more inspiring!

May every member of this church be of the number of the redeemed, living ever in the conscious blessedness of sins forgiven. May many faithful Marthas and devoted Marys exercise their ministries and exhale the fragrance of their useful lives within these walls. And above all may there be experienced the all-gracious Presence which shall supply all needs and glorify all activities.

XVI.

THE HABITUAL TEMPER OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

“Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.”—I THESS. v. 16, 17, 18.

WE need not be surprised that Paul should have been considered as a visionary by unspiritual men and women. His precepts are in many instances so far above all ordinary Christian living that they seem chimerical. Such a verdict would, I apprehend, be passed with instant readiness upon the passages which I have chosen for my text. We recognize the value of a joyous disposition ; there are seasons when the soul should ring her joybells loud and clear. We frequently assert the wisdom of cultivating an iridescent quality of soul, but to tell us to “rejoice evermore,” to be always rejoicing, seems a sort of cruel mockery in view of the varied experiences of human life. It is all very well to tell us to pray. There are frequent instances when such an exercise is the greatest relief of the religious nature. We would find it impossible to live without praying. There are times when we fall upon our knees involuntarily,

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when we yearn for the opportunity to be alone with God, when prayer is the greatest of privileges, the sweetest of luxuries, but to tell us to pray without ceasing, to pray always, to pray all the time, is quite another thing. This seems impossible, even to the most devout. There is a sweet reasonableness in the exhortation to be thankful. There is something in that which appeals to the universal consciousness. There is no duty more incumbent upon us. We should be thankful for the blessings which come to us day by day. Ingratitude is an indication of baseness of which none of us would care to be guilty; but in everything to give thanks transcends all ordinary conceptions of Christian obligation. To be thankful for the pleasant things, for the beautiful things, for the delightful things, for all that ministers to our enjoyment and happiness, we can readily understand as eminently reasonable and indeed imperative. But in all things to be thankful! To be thankful for losses, for sorrows, for disappointments—to be thankful for those things that sweep in upon our lives with desolation—is something that does not meet with the approving judgment so readily. To a great many Christian men and women it is altogether outside the realm of their thinking.

What shall we say, then, of these injunctions, "Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks"? I regard them as

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setting forth the habitual temper possible to the Christian life as Paul understood it. He was not speaking without thought, without knowledge of the full significance of language, without really meaning what he said. He was speaking in the power of the Holy Spirit, whose mouthpiece he was. What, then, am I to make of these words? What sort of life do they suggest? I answer that it must be a life attuned to melody, a life attuned to worship, a life attuned to thanksgiving.

I. IT MUST BE A LIFE ATTUNED TO MELODY.

“Rejoice evermore.” Religion has been sadly caricatured by men and women who believe that they have a monopoly of it. They have put the stamp of a sickly sentimentalism upon this joyous creation of the Eternal, and sought with their officious fingers to rub out from her fair countenance the freshness and the bloom of her exuberant life. You must not do this or that or the other. You must not crush into your cup of Christian joy the juices of the luscious clusters that grow upon the vines of life. You must eschew the world even in respect to its simple gaieties and innocent delights. You must not take pleasure in the great masters of literature nor allow the spell of the most enchanting music to captivate your souls. You must deny yourselves everything that is pleasant; everything that is intellectually, æsthetically or emotionally exhilarating; everything that

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appeals to appetite, taste, fancy, which they in their oracular infallibility do not approve. They maintain that godliness consists in choking down every natural instinct of the soul and finds its highest consummation in an immaculate asceticism.

It is time, surely, that we stripped this angel of light of her funereal investiture and dispossessed her of the sombre gloom with which the busy fingers of an unenlightened austerity have disfigured her celestial countenance. The Christian life has the best of this present world as well as of that which is to come. There is not a flower that blooms but is more beautiful, nor a bird that sings but is more melodious, nor a genius that inspires but is more inspiring, because I have been brought into right relations with Him who is the inspiration of them all. The man who has been adopted into the divine family has an inheritance in all the good and sweet and true and beautiful. The world is his, its wealth is his, its natural exhilarations are his, its intellectual delights and æsthetic enchantments as far as they are pure and healthful are his. He is the richest man on earth and should be the happiest. That is what the apostle evidently thought when he said, " Rejoice evermore."

Paul did not mean that we were always to be jubilant, that we were to be always bounding with delight, that we were to be in a continuous glow of merriment and laughter and song. There is a time for all things. There is a time to be sad, a

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time to weep, a time to be agitated, a time to mourn. What he means is that we are to have the secret peace of God ever hidden in our hearts, so that even while sorrowful we can be always rejoicing.

It is said that in the depths of the ocean there is a region of infinite calm. The storm may sweep the main until it fills the heart of the stoutest mariner with terror, but it does not reach with its disturbing influence the tranquility which is perennial. The noblest men and women are exposed to the surface agitations that are incident to human life. They are not exempt from the innumerable influences that disturb, annoy and desolate, but, where the heart is right with God, below all the agitation and unrest there is a gracious calm.

The great thing is to have the life attuned to melody. The soul is a musical instrument, and "to rejoice evermore" it must be strung to concert pitch; it must be set to the key of heaven's own harmony. This does not mean that the music will be always jubilant. It will often necessarily be sad. The strings may sometimes wail out their weird and plaintive cadences, but it will be musical for all. I have heard music that made me weep; I have heard music that broke up the very fountains of my soul, as well as music that made me exultant. When the life is attuned to melody there may be strains of sadness; there may be

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notes burdened with mournfulness, but there will be no discord. This exhortation of the apostle strikes a high ideal, but it is not an impossible one. There is no Christian grace more essential to advancement and efficiency than joy. A joyless Christian is of very little practical value to the cause he has espoused. The apostle, in enumerating the graces of the Spirit, mentions joy among the first. It is choice fruit. One of the Old Testament writers says that "the joy of the Lord is our strength." It lies at the very heart of Christian energy as an essential factor. The apostles went forth to the accomplishment of their sublime mission, and met its tremendous demands because they were filled with a strange joy that lifted them above fear or doubt and rendered them incapable of defeat. In all the history of the ages Christian triumphs have followed in the wake of armies that have thrilled with the joy of sins forgiven and the enthusiasm of holy fellowship with the unseen. It is said that a few ancient Britons on one occasion routed a whole army of Saxon invaders by leaping out of their ambushed retreat, shouting "Hallelujah" (Gogoniant). I believe that all the great victories of the Church have been hallelujah victories. What we need to-day is a songful religion—a religion that has caught the ground tone of Love from the vibrant tuning-fork of the cross and that sings its way to victory.

Unless your life is set to music it will amount to

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little in the spiritual kingdom. The quality of your manhood, the potency of your influence, the contagiousness of your example, the winsomeness of your testimony will all largely depend on the fact that there is music in the soul. "Rejoice evermore."

Every member of the Church of Jesus Christ should, according to ability, contribute to its musical effectiveness. In the spiritual realm virtues are harmonious and vices are discords, and when the Church shall have realized this sublime ideal, when the feeble and the mighty, the ignorant and the learned, the young and the old, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, shall each in his own place and with his own disciplined ability, whatever it may be, follow the lead of the great Master of melodies, the Holy Spirit, the ravishment of human hearts shall be universal and complete, and all that is hideous and discordant in human life shall be swept into oblivion by the waves of melody. The apostle knew what he was talking about when he put in this injunction first in a sacred trinity of obligation, "Rejoice evermore."

II. IT MUST BE A LIFE ATTUNED TO WORSHIP.

"Pray without ceasing." Paul does not mean that we are always to be on our knees, always in an attitude of devotion, but that we are to be always in the spirit of it. We should have stated times for prayer, but it should not be a matter of

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times and seasons. It should be an habitual temper of the soul. The meaning is not that men should do nothing but pray, but that everything done should be enveloped in an atmosphere of devotion.

There can be no diversity of opinion amongst Christians as to the importance and utility of prayer. It is to the spiritual nature what the breath is to the body. Only when the Christian prays he lives. To maintain the spiritual life without prayer is as absolutely impossible as it would be to maintain the physical life without air. It is the divine medium of contact between the believing soul and God, between the needy heart and heaven.

It is, however, possible to entertain very erroneous views as to what prayer is. It is possible to invest it with functions which do not belong to it, to degrade it to uses that are selfish and unworthy, to make it in fact a mere expedient for the gratification of our whims and fancies.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the determinative quality in all true prayer is acquiescence in the divine will. It is not an instrumentality whereby God may be brought down to the level of our desires and wishes, but an instrumentality rather by means of which we may be lifted unto the level of the divine. It is not the authoritative "I will," but the submissive "As thou wilt." It must be so or it becomes dictation. The all-wise, omnipotent, eternal God controlled in the execu-

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tion of His wide-reaching plans and purposes by the erratic pleadings of ignorant and short-sighted man! The very idea is essentially absurd. We have a desire for a certain supposed good, and we pray for it with all our hearts, but is that a sufficient reason why it should be granted? Are we wiser than our Maker? Should not the very fact that it is not granted assure us that it was not for our best interests that it should be? Shall the child of meagre knowledge and of absolutely no experience direct his father as to the administration of his affairs? Would you dethrone wisdom and enthrone ignorance? Such folly could not be entertained by rational human beings. Prayer is not dictation. It is not command. It is not a power entrusted to unsteady human hands to direct the interests of the universe. There could be no stability or order under such an arrangement. There could be no such thing as law, no sovereign administration of the interests of life. To invest man with the power of realizing all his wishes would be to hurl the world with all its interests into irretrievable confusion and disaster. The bare supposition of such a possibility would be appalling. "The Lord reigneth" is the only sentiment of wisdom even in the midst of reversal and disappointment. In the higher realm of Christian living to which we should aspire, petition takes a secondary place. The cry of need is silenced in the joyful sense of the overshadowing care and life of the All-Good. Petition is the alpha-

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bet of worship; holy intercourse with God the higher attainment of the Christian life. Petition is the childhood's privilege; trustful confidence is the manhood's joy. Prayer still, but on a plane more noble and sublime. It is now the devout heart yielding itself to infinite affection to be kept and cared for. It is the believing soul, waiting upon God, knowing that whether it be its lot to throb with suffering or thrill with ecstasy that all is well. We never pray more truly than when all want and care are lost in the blest assurance that He who is our great guardian and protector knows—than when we want nought but to be ensphered in Him. Standing at the gates of heaven we forget that we are needy. The selfish elements which too frequently enter into our petitions are consumed as we draw near to the great heart of love. There is a realm of spiritual living in which all thirst and hunger and pain and necessity are forgotten—in which “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” has set the soul at rest. Nature in the early springtime, with heart open to the sunshine, with every fibre of her myriad-fashioned life thrilling to the breath of the returning season, with root and bud and grass-blade reaching out with trembling sensitiveness to the light and warmth that play upon them, that is the most helpful imagery that I can think of, of that life in which the spirit of worship is regnant in the soul. Let all the emotions and faculties bound upward to the

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slightest touch of the invisible Presence which is above and near us ever, and the essential elements of a worshipful activity are realized.

That is what Paul meant when he said, "Pray without ceasing." Live in the spirit of prayer, live in fellowship with the unseen. Don't fill every working day of the week with selfishness and then try to crowd enough godliness into the seventh to last you for another week. That is but making a mockery of sacred things. Sunday is no more sacred than any other day, only as it is made the crowning pinnacle in the temple of the week. Sunday cannot be holy if all the other days are not. If you are not religious in your buying and selling you cannot be in your praying and worshipping.

III. IT MUST BE A LIFE ATTUNED TO THANKSGIVING.

"In everything give thanks." This is perhaps the most difficult precept of the three to live up to. How shall we meet its requirements? There are times when it is easy enough, when the song is in the heart and the pæan on the lip without any effort of the will. There are periods in life when it would be difficult not to experience gratitude—when thanksgiving springs up involuntarily like water from a living fountain. There are days when the pulse of life is so full that mere existence is a joy. The sun shines upon a world that is fair even to loveliness. The birds sing their sweetest songs.

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The flowers are radiant with the bloom of a most bewitching beauty. The very trees clap their hands.

But there are other seasons when the conditions are reversed and it is hard to trace the glory of the Eternal behind the veil of gloom. Ah, me! Who has not experienced them, or at least felt the cold chill of their depressing shadow as they have fallen upon others that are near and dear? "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." There are days when the light seems to have gone out from the heavens above us and the beauty to have vanished from every scene which we were wont to gaze upon with delight. There are periods when sorrow crushes in upon our lives like an avalanche, blighting our fondest hopes and shivering our most cherished ideals, when the future has little to invite us to but dreariness and desolation. In the one instance thankfulness is natural and easy; in the other it is unnatural and difficult.

The apostolic injunction says, "In everything give thanks." Can I ever come up to it? I may be stolidly resigned, but can I be thankful for what pierces my hand with thorns, for what desolates my heart with sorrows? Can I kiss the rod that smites me? That is what the text enjoins. How can I comply with it?

Sure I am of this: that I must believe with unshaken confidence in my heavenly Father's love first. I must believe that He knows all about me,

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that He cares for me, that He does not afflict willingly, that every moment and every trifle of my history are enfolded in His ceaseless providence, that there is a purpose of love in all my life which is working out in me and for me a destiny which shall be worthy of His infinite wisdom and unfathomable grace. It is the profound conviction of these great facts of revelation that can alone enable us "in everything to give thanks."

Let it not be supposed, however, that the fulfilment of these injunctions is possible apart from the life of which they are the expression. It is not the result of effort "to rejoice evermore—to pray without ceasing—in everything to give thanks." You may try with the utmost striving to perform either one, and you will discover that the ability lies deeper than mere desire or resolution. They are the fruit of the regenerate heart. The life of God must flow through your soul. You must learn to say, "I live, nevertheless not I, but Christ liveth in me." This supernatural quality of being must have a supernatural inspiration. The joy of the Lord must be your strength if the strength of the Lord is to be your joy. The Almighty and All-Helpful One must be a perpetual reality to faith if prayer is to be a perpetual delight. The God of providence must be the very synonym for purposeful love if you are "in everything to give thanks." You

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must be a divine man before these heights of spiritual experience can be reached.

These passages set forth an ideal of Christian living which is sublime. There is not a shadow of gloom in it. There is not a suggestion of bondage in it. There is no limitation of privilege in it. There is no narrowing of personality in it. There is no blighting of bloom in it. It does not empty the cup of human felicities, but fills it. It does not curtail liberties, but expands them. It does not diminish the keys of melody, but multiplies them. The Christian is here represented as standing at the very fountain of Life—as having free access to the very throne of infinite sufficiencies—as receiving everything as a ministry of benediction.

You are destined to be to yourselves, to the Church and to the world a joy and a blessing just in the measure that you come up to this ideal—just in the measure that these precepts represent the habitual temper of your Christian living. “Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.”

XVII.

SOUL RESTORATION.

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came out of the land of Egypt.”—HOSEA ii. 14, 15.

THIS is a passage which has always had for me a very peculiar charm. Its poetic beauty, to say nothing of its doctrinal suggestiveness, is captivating. It presents the God of the Old Testament in a light which is in harmony with our highest conceptions of His character. The apostle John could not have given the picture a fairer setting. It would be impossible to read this description of His tender and solicitous concern over Israel's apostasy, and His exquisite method of restoring them to His fellowship and favor, without feeling that the dominant quality in His nature was love. It is true that He is a God of justice, that He hates sin with a perfect hatred, that He is intolerant of everything that is low and mean and selfish, that He can punish as well as bless; but His tenderness, His grace, His sympathy, His

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yearning affection, even toward those who have gone far astray, is nevertheless unmistakable.

I want to speak this morning to those who are God's children, but who are out of communion with Him—to those who are in the family but who are strangers to the family life—to those who have been born again but whose existence is so feeble as to be the occasion of dissatisfaction and misery rather than of delight; who are wont to cry with the Psalmist, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."

My subject is "Soul Restoration." I will speak of it in its origin, methods, blessings and effects.

I. IN ITS ORIGIN.

What are the originating agencies in soul restoration? They are not easily denominated, because not easily discovered. They, for the most part, lie back of what is seen. We may ask the same question in respect to the production of summer with its blossoms and its fruits. And the answer no doubt would be the divine ministries of sun and shower. There could be no summer without these. A man does not make summer by cultivating his fields. Nothing that human effort or genius could bring to bear upon the soil would make a single flower to bloom, or a single blade of grass to grow. The energies that go to make summer are divine.

And the same is true of the soul. The only influences that can prove effective in restoring the

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soul to summer experience and fruitfulness must come from God. It is not repentance, nor faith, nor service, nor sacrifice. These, at best, are but outward and visible evidences that the soul has been restored. These are but the fruits of the indwelling life. As the sun carries in his rich bosom all that effulgence which is needed to give richness to the vine and fragrance to the flower and the charm of varied beauty to every form of growth, even so is God the vital source of all those influences and inspirations which are needful to enrich and beautify the soul.

It would be a depressing prospect if our spiritual restoration were dependent upon our own good deeds—upon our own efforts after holiness. The divine effulgence is necessary to our illumination. The divine inflowing of life and warmth is essential to the production of Christian sensibility. We can neither repent, nor believe, nor indeed live in any true sense, without the inbreathing of the life of God.

The sun does not shine upon the earth because it is fair and fruitful. He shines rather to make it so. It is not our goodness nor our prayers that lead God to love and bless; but He loves and blesses that we might become enriched with all Christian grace and excellence. Every virtue that shines in human character is heaven-born. What we need, then, to bring back the activity and bloom of summer into our withered lives is God. The

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divine indwelling, the outpouring and inflowing of the Holy Spirit.

Let us look at soul restoration again—

II. IN ITS METHODS.

How does God restore the soul? A common method in human families of bringing children into proper relation to the parental authority is the rod. The disobedient one is punished, and in some instances very justly. There is not a child of God in this assembly that does not deserve punishment. We have been disobedient, erratic, guilty. The Great Parent does not withhold correction from any member of His household, but He administers it in love. "I will allure her into the wilderness."

But what is this wilderness? We know what it was of old. It was a barren waste in which were serpents and scorpions, and thirst and hunger—in which was Sinai, "upon whose rugged summit Jehovah descended in consuming fire, accompanied with thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud and a voice exceeding loud so that all the people that were in the camp trembled." Such was the scene into which He led His ancient people. Is there a similarity between that wilderness and the one into which we are brought to-day? Most assuredly there is. Soul restoration is effected by the same agency and perfected on the same plan as conversion. It is through the wilderness that we come into the divine favor and fellowship.

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1. *The Wilderness is Suggestive of Barrenness.*

The Arabian desert is a fitting type of the surroundings of that soul which has been led away from its vanities into a conscious sense of the divine nearness and purity. The best men that have ever lived have shrivelled up in the all-radiant presence of the Holy One. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man" is the unconscious utterance of the man who sees himself in the light of God. Pride and vanity give place to self-abasement. A sense of affluence to an experience of extremest poverty. The wilderness ever stands between guilt and holiness. You cannot become estranged from God in affection and be restored to the enjoyment of His favor without being brought out into the wilderness. God brings you into its desolation that you may appreciate His love. He makes you to realize your poverty and guilt, that you may be prepared to rejoice in His wealth and forgiveness.

2. *The Wilderness is Suggestive of Solitude.*

There is no scene more isolated from the busy life of the world. Through all its wide wastes there reigns the stillness of the grave. No singing bird is there. No flocks or herds seek pasturage on its barren mounds. It is remote from every sound of jubilant existence. And it is to such a scene the Lord leads out His own. "I will allure her into the wilderness." Solitude is necessary to repentance. You may be jostled by the busy, bustling throng. Human beings

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may press you on every side, but when you are brought by grace divine into a realization of your sinfulness, when convictions of unfaithfulness flash in upon the soul, you are and must be absolutely alone. Your body may come in contact with its kindred flesh, but you are in the wilderness. It is only in such a scene and with such surroundings that our inconstant hearts can learn the inner meaning of the Christian life. It is only when thus alone with our great Lord that we learn to despise frivolities and sins and yearn for succor in His unchanging love. Soul restoration can never be rejoiced in without the wilderness experience. "I will allure," etc.

3. *The Wilderness is Suggestive of Terror.*

Not merely such as is incident to solitude or uninhabited wildness. The Sinaic Mount is here with its lightning and its smoke. The flaming law which has been broken here lifts up its awful voice of condemnation. The guilty soul with trembling and dismay looks up into the frowning blackness and the lurid smoke in which the divine displeasure against sin is written. Yes, Sinai is in the wilderness. The horrors of a guilty conscience scathed with the lightning flashes of a broken law must be experienced before a wilful and disobedient prodigal can be restored to the conscious assurance of His Father's love. Sin must be felt in its awfulness and guilt before it can be forgiven. Sinai must frown before Calvary can smile. "I

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will allure her into the wilderness and speak comfortably to her."

Let us further regard soul restoration—

III. IN ITS BLESSINGS.

"And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope." She is only brought into the wilderness that she might be weaned away from her illicit loves. She is only led into barrenness, and solitude, and fearfulness, that she might realize the preciousness of that all-gracious One whom she has so lightly esteemed. No sooner has she been stript of her foolish pride and made sensible of her shameless folly—no sooner does she begin to blush, and weep, and tremble, than the loving Lord takes her into His arms, and presses her to His bosom, and enriches her with all the wealth of His affection. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence," etc.

Here we have—

1. *Affluent Experiences.*

No imagery conceivable could be more expressive. The wilderness with its barrenness and terrors as by magic turned into a scene of enchanting loveliness and of abounding fruitfulness. The desert transformed into a Paradise. What deep, rich, unending joys does this language represent! And yet it is not an exaggeration of the truth. This is precisely how our gracious Lord deals with every returning penitent. The privileges and

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experiences of the new life are too exquisite to be exhausted by any imagery. The Lord gives not merely a sufficiency, but a superabundance; not vines merely, but vineyards. He gives like a king—gives as if He knew not how much to give. Some of us have experienced His munificence. We have been abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house and He has made us to drink of the rivers of His pleasure. What entrancing experiences were those which thrilled the soul of the sweet singer of Israel when he knew that he had been forgiven! What ecstasies of joy filled the heart of Peter, when, notwithstanding his apostasy, he was assured of his restoration to the Saviour's confidence and love! What deep, rich, overwhelming emotions were those of the prodigal when, not merely his father's house, but his father's heart, were his once more! Oh, yes, this is the kingly fashion in which our Lord treats the contrite soul that has been brought to loathe his sin and sue for mercy. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence."

Here we have again—

2. *An Inspiring Hope.*

"And the valley of Achor for a door of hope." This valley was memorable in Israel's history as that in which the displeasure of the Almighty rested upon them because of Achan's sin. It was all but being the scene of their utter extermination by the Canaanites. They must have spent therein

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days of agonizing dread. They were exposed and helpless before their enemies. But, through the interposition of Joshua and the humiliation of the people, the divine favor was again restored, and upon the dark cloud that overshadowed them was caused to radiate the bow of hope.

What myriads of human beings could testify with unfeigned gratitude and joy to the prophetic truthfulness of this historic fact! What occurred in that far-distant scene so long ago has been occurring evermore. The valley of "trouble" has become the door of hope to all God's chosen. When they have been most perplexed their deliverance has been the most glorious. When their trials have been the most overwhelming their consolations have been the most abounding. On their darkest night of sorrow has broken the effulgence of their brightest day. The promise is true—grandly, gloriously, unfailingly true. "And the valley of Achor for a door of hope."

But there is another interpretation of these words, which is most precious. The valley of Achor was the first part of the promised land of which Israel became possessed. It was the prophecy and pledge of all the rest. God gave that scene of fruitful plenty amid the hills of Jordan as an assurance that He would eventually give them the inheritance beyond. "And the valley of Achor for a door of hope."

And is it not so still? Is not this imagery

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meaningful to the true in every age? Was not the valley of Achor to Israel a prophecy of God's royal munificence to every humble, believing soul? Has not this gracious promise found its fulfilment in the experience of many who now hear my voice? You have "the valley of Achor for a door of hope." You have much Christian joy. If the grapes of Eshcol are not within your reach, the clusters of Engedi are. If all the land is not yet in your possession, you have enough to satisfy you that it is a rich country, and that it will be all yours by and by. If heaven is yet in prospect the foretastes of it are a present joy. To you God has given "the valley of Achor for a door of hope."

And now, finally, let us look at soul restoration—

IV. IN ITS EFFECTS.

"And she shall sing as in the days of her youth." And she could sing when she was young. This old earth has never listened to such an exalted outburst of melody as that which rang out from the lips of the redeemed nation on the borders of the Red Sea. The song itself is a masterpiece and the execution of it must have been sublime. All the circumstances contributed to make it effective; with the scene of their life-long bondage almost within view and the pride of Egypt buried at their feet, every heart must have leaped for joy, every soul must have thrilled with triumph, every lip must have trembled with

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emotion. Praise, triumph, ecstasy—every emotion and passion that could be awakened in a redeemed nation's soul found expression in this ever-memorable and immortal song.

And the promise of the text to Israel was that she should sing as "in the days of her youth, as in the day when she was brought out of the land of Egypt." Nor was it without its fulfilment.

But what is the application of these words to ourselves? Is it not, that when God restores our souls, when we have been weaned away from our illicit affections, when our heart is once more centred upon our divine Lord, when we are restored into a full sense of His favor and fellowship, we shall sing "as in the days of our youth, as in the day when we were brought up out of the land of Egypt"?

How was it with us then?

1. *What Praise?*

The memory of it lingers as a delightful reminiscence in our souls. The spirit of angelic minstrelsy seemed to have fallen upon us. Our hearts were filled with gratitude and our lips with song. Ah, yes, we could sing when we were young with a sweetness that savored of the skies. And the promise of the text to us is, "that we shall sing as in the days of our youth," etc.

2. *What Triumph?*

How the sense of it thrilled us! "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power. Thy right

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hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Such were the lofty notes of our rejoicing when we came up out of the land of Egypt. We saw our enemies dead upon the seashore, and our jubilant experiences found expression in magnificent strains of triumphant enthusiasm.

3. *What Exultation?*

Our song gathered its inspiration, not merely from the past, but from the future. "The people shall hear and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina." We anticipated the deliverances in prospect. We had no doubts, no fears, no solitudes. Our confidence in the right arm of the Almighty was immovable. We were not more certain of the victories achieved than we were of those that were to distinguish every step of our pilgrim way. "The kingdoms of Edom will be amazed, trembling shall take hold of them, all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away." Such was our exultant contemplation as we stood upon Redemption's shore and viewed the prospect stretching out before us.

How many of us here this morning supremely need soul restoration! We are without joy, without power, without a sense of victory in our souls. We are scarcely able to rise above the discouragements of our life and work. The land is without moisture and the fruitful places have become deso-

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late. O God, in thy great mercy come to us as the springtime comes to the earth. Lure us into the wilderness, and there beneath the shadow of the frowning mount reveal to us thy holiness and make us to appreciate thy love. Give us vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope. Then shall we sing as in the days of our youth, as in the days when we came up from the land of Egypt.

XVIII.

THE MACKENZIE MEMORIAL EULOGY.

MORE than seventeen hundred years ago, when the eruption of Mount Vesuvius occurred in which Pompeii perished, a Roman soldier stood sentinel at one of the city's massive gates, and in the dire confusion and misery and rush for life was overlooked and forgotten. With a chivalry which was sublime, he stood bravely at his post amid a pitiless storm of ashes and of lava, until he was buried as he stood in that rising sea of ruin. Seventeen centuries elapsed, and antiquarian curiosity, delving amid the pile of buried magnificence, discovered the skeleton of that once manly form erect in his marble niche, still panoplied, the helmet on his empty skull and his petrified fingers still grasping the spear. Magnificent subject for the painter's brush or for the sculptor's chisel.

I could not think of a more fitting simile of that fidelity to duty that distinguished the fallen statesman whose memory we are met to honor. He was as brave a Roman as was ever clad in coat of mail.

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He lost his health in the service of his country. Despite a physical condition which would have made any ordinary mortal a confirmed invalid, he stood bravely at his post, more eloquent in his imposed silence than many another whose graceful periods were not accompanied with the emphasis of an honest patriotism.

One of the poets in pronouncing a eulogy on Wellington represents him as standing up like a tower of strength, four-square to all the winds that blew. No nobler tribute could have been paid to a man who had occupied a distinguished place in the service of his country. The instances are rare when it is absolutely true in its modern application. Men of soundness in every fibre of their being are not so common as to pass unnoticed in any of the commanding walks of life. There is so much of selfishness and cowardice lying covered in the best of human hearts that we cannot fail to regard with profound admiration those who rise above them. It may not be in this land as it was in the degenerate days of Jerusalem, well-nigh impossible, with the most eager searching, to find a man that executed judgment and that sought the truth; but the highest type of statesmanship is not so common, even here, but that it stirs the nation's veneration and enthusiasm when a life like that of Alexander Mackenzie's is brought under review.

The career of our departed friend, like all those

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that have been marked with almost phenomenal success, is interesting. He was not born to power. He was one of those rare men who largely overcame the inimical conditions of his early life by industry and perseverance. His early advantages were few. The schoolmaster and the professor had little to do with his equipment. The simple foundations were well and truly laid, but the superstructure which was builded thereupon was largely the result of his own industry. He learnt to be a mason and an architect in a double sense at once. He became as skilful in quarrying thoughts as stones, and learnt how to fit them into the structure of his intellectual and moral manhood so perfectly that he had little occasion to be ashamed even when brought into association with the refined and polished graduates of colleges and universities. The artistic effects of his mental make-up may have been lacking and the ornamental features developed with little regard to general impressiveness, but the structure as a whole was strongly and symmetrically put together and the furnishings of the most useful sort. He was one of the best-informed men in the country, and his practical common-sense has seldom been excelled. He could not compare with some of his Parliamentary compeers in ornate and classical eloquence, but to expose the weakness of an argument, to make public questions intelligible to the masses, to move and sway the popular heart with racy, apposite

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and effective speech, he was probably in his best days without an equal either upon the public platform or on the floor of the House of Commons.

The influence of heredity has seldom been accorded a sufficiently important place in our estimate of character. The elements that enter as determining factors are frequently transmitted. Behind every human life there is a history that runs back farther than we either think or dream. Neither saints nor reprobates are produced as photographs by instantaneous process. A child is fortunate that has come of a good stock. The stream of tendencies which flows from a noble or ignoble ancestry exerts no small influence in determining the quality and potency of being. Alexander Mackenzie's parents were not endowed with material riches, but they had what was of immeasurably greater value—they had healthy minds and pure hearts, intellectual vigor and sterling principles; they had not what is called blue blood flowing through their veins, but they had blood that had not been tainted by hereditary dissipation. The boy born into this life with a nature upon which the virtuous and industrious living of generations has been exerting its influence may well be envied whatever his worldly circumstances might chance to be.

It would be exceedingly presumptuous in me upon this platform, sacred to the study and application of divine principles, to venture upon

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anything like an analysis of Mr. Mackenzie's political value. Even if I thought myself equal to such an undertaking I would certainly not regard it as either the fitting time or place. We are here without regard to political affiliations or party convictions, to hold in grateful recognition those qualities which adorn and ennoble, which command affection and inspire gratitude wherever they are brought into vigorous and unselfish exercise.

Alexander Mackenzie was pre-eminently a man of the people. Born of the people, he kept his heart beating warm and true to their interests. He was loyal to the Queen and to the institutions of the country, but above all was he loyal to the manhood for which governments and institutions of whatever sort are made. This fact, perhaps more than any other, may help to explain his widespread popularity. There is a feeling of genuine affection for him which never could have existed so widely, and grown rather than diminished during all these years when his voice has not been heard, if it had not something solid to rest upon. His name has not always been spoken of with kindly appreciation. He did not escape the venom of the slanderer's tongue. He was not exempt from the common penalty of unswerving loyalty to his convictions; but what is this but saying what is true of every man who has had sufficient individuality and force to stem the

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currents which have borne others down upon their swirling waves? In the active contests of his political career he struck against weaker natures with a force that hurt them and antagonized them, and made his caustic humor sting and smart and sometimes rankle in the minds of his antagonists. How could it be otherwise? But every resentful feeling has long since been forgotten, and it would be difficult to instance in any city or in any land one whose character after so many years of public service stood upon a plane of honor more unsullied and whose memory was more universally revered.

The most fascinating qualities in Mr. Mackenzie's character are known only to those who came within the charmed circle of his personality when he was in the strength and vigor of his life. He was not the stern, self-contained character which he is sometimes represented to have been. His geniality was iridescent. He had a rich fund of humor. He not only could hold vast audiences under the spell of his enchantment, but make the circle of his intimates revel in the intellectual enjoyment of which he was the inspiration. Like some old English castles of the early Gothic period, he frequently presented an exterior that was rugged and angular, and sometimes perhaps repelling, but within were all the elegances and affluences of a well-furnished home, with the fires of a royal hospitality in perennial glow. He was

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a man whose mould was struck in granite, but imbedded in its bosom were gems of richest lustre and of transcendent worth. He possessed in rare combination those qualities which are most admired in manhood, and which another Scotchman has delineated in immortal verse—

“A prince can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke and a’ that ;
But an honest man’s aboon his might,
Guid faith, he maunna fa’ that.”

The best that can be said of any man who is to act his part amid the realities of an eternal future is that he is a Christian. This lifts him into unison with God and with the higher laws of the spiritual universe, and gives a perpetuity and value to all that was noble in his earthly living that even death cannot invalidate. “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.” Death is not the end of the good man’s life ; it is really the beginning. We must die to live. This is our period of pupilage ; death is our graduation into a higher sphere of usefulness and enjoyment. This is the root life ; the blossoming and the unfolding come when death opens the golden portals of the everlasting summer. Here there is limitation and bondage—our capabilities are circumscribed. We have room to move about in a laborious sort of way, but we cannot go very far nor very swiftly ; but death

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introduces us into a realm where we shall know no hampering limitations, where we shall have the elasticity and celerity of thought, where we shall be clothed in light as with a garment, and in our thought, aspiration and activity keep everlasting chime with the rhythm of God's eternal purpose.

Alexander Mackenzie lives. For lo! these years he has been imprisoned, his eager spirit often beating impatiently against the bars that held him captive. But the time of his emancipation has come at length and he is free. The old body that had lost its cunning and its strength has ceased to encumber his activities. He has begun to work again in the presence of the Eternal, in the Parliament of Worlds. He has heard methinks ere this the gracious welcome of the King of saints, "Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things."

God's work is one eternal sphere,
Our work a segment of His work,
And He whose spirit eye is clear.
Whose ready will no load would shirk,
May read His name divinely writ
Upon the work for him most fit,
Assigned to him for each new year.
And so no true work comes to naught,
But with God's endless work is wrought
And with eternal value fraught.

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How inestimable is an honest man! His price is above rubies. He is the keystone in the mighty superstructure of society. He is the strength of every great financial institution. Society is a heap of sand, and government a gilded swindle without honest men. Oh, how Alexander Mackenzie loved Canada! And if he could speak to us to-day with lips unsealed it would be to urge us to fidelity in all that would tend to develop her resources and enhance her glory. Methinks I hear the grand old patriot sending back a shout from the everlasting hills bearing the message: "Defend Canada from her enemies; be true to her interests; lay yourselves upon the altar of her service; preserve the fair heritage which God has given you; rest not until her brow is wreathed with purity, her loins girded with righteousness, her feet unshackled, holding in her right hand the volume of eternal truth and its laws written on her heart." Thou grand old defender of thy country's liberties, farewell!

APPRECIATIONS.

"There are some volumes of sermons which have small excuse for publication, but here is a book that is worth reading, furnishing gems of truth that are suggestive. The titles of the sermons are excellent, far removed from the sensational, and yet whetting the appetite to learn what the preacher has to say on the subject. In pleasing diction, vigorous language, apt illustration, forceful appeal, and clear exposition Dr. Thomas delivers his message. This is *one of the best volumes of sermons* we have handled for many a day. The portrait of the preacher enhances the value of the book, as it shows us the strong yet genial face of the man who talks to us in plain speech enshrined in beauty about high themes which stir the soul."—*The Wesleyan*.

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