

STUDIES

IN THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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IN PREPARATION,

STUDIES

IN THE

GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.

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ST. MATTHEW.

BY
REV. J. CYNDDYLAN JONES,
AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN THE ACTS."

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CARDIFF,

P R E F A C E .

THE favour with which my "Studies in the Acts" has been received by the press and the public, encourages me to bring out another volume. I trust that those into whose hands it may chance to come will not find the perusal of it altogether fruitless.

J. CYNDDYLAN JONES.

CARDIFF, *Jan. 1*, 1881.

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Jesus Christ the Centre of History.

"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."—ST. MATT. i. 22, 23.

ST. MATTHEW, in the first chapter of his Gospel, adduces a prophecy of Isaiah to ratify his strange account of the birth of Jesus Christ, and to pave the way for its reception among the Jews. The prophet had foretold that a "virgin" should bear a son; he referred possibly to a case which actually happened in his own days. One who was a virgin when the prophet uttered the words, would, in the ordinary sequence of events, bear a son; and before her son would be of age to distinguish between right and wrong, the danger that threatened the land would have passed away. But the Evangelist perceived another and a richer meaning in the words; he instinctively applied them, and justly too, as we shall presently see, to the miraculous birth of Christ. "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel,

which being interpreted is, God with us." Evidently St. Matthew aims at connecting this event with what had previously been announced, and showing that it fits in to the current of history.

That the words had been spoken by the prophet shows that the world expected a Messiah. That they were spoken of the Lord by the prophet shows that He was preparing the world for His coming. That a virgin should be found with child by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost shows that the world could not produce Him. And lastly, that it should occur at the period it did, shows that He was the goal of the old dispensation, and the starting-point of the new.

I. THE WORLD EXPECTED AN EMMANUEL.

The popular view of prophecy is, that it was mere prediction of things to come. There is truth in it, to be sure, but only a part. We should get nearer the heart of the matter were we to look upon prophecy as vitally connected with the present, as bodying forth the aspirations which were then heaving in the hearts of men. Prophecy is only inspired poetry; and if you want to know what the deepest faith, the divinest heart, of a nation is, you will find it in its poetry. This is equally true of the Jewish nation. Prophecy was its poetry; it shows to us what the best aspirations of that people were. The prophet spoke out of the present, and to the present, and about the present, though implicitly and not less truly about the future too.

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That prophecy sustained a vital and organic connection with the life of the people, and was dependent for its form, and to a large extent for its matter, on that life, a very cursory investigation will suffice to prove. When the national pride centred in the throne; when the fame and royal splendour of David and Solomon and their immediate successors dazzled neighbouring countries, and caused the hearts of all true Israelites to swell with glowing admiration, the regal element predominated in the prophets of the period; they portrayed the Messiah as a king, and clothed Him with befitting dignity; their lofty pæans mirrored the national heart. But when royalty received a rude shock, when its dignity trailed in the dust, when the nation was led to captivity, the prophets no longer sang in stately rhythm of a king and a hero; they attuned their song to the national spirit, and warbled in subdued and plaintive strains of one "stricken of God, and afflicted." This suffices to show that prophecy is not a bare, cold, abstract announcement from heaven concerning the future, without any relation to the present. Nothing of the kind. It is indissolubly connected with the life of the people; it is first the aspiration of man, and next the inspiration of God.

To ascertain what the expectations of the Jews were, we have only to consult prophecy. What then was the burden of prophecy? The advent of Emmanuel. Who was He, and what was He, they did not always clearly understand; consequently there was much vagueness characterising their hope

and their literature. Generally it was feeling rather than thought. Only now and again in their great men—their poets, their prophets—did it resolve itself into intellectual shape and find for itself articulate utterance. Wherefore it was capable of many applications, and would admit of more than one Emmanuel. The name is not specific—it is “God with us;” and may be accommodated to any case of Divine interference on behalf of our race. If we see God with us in the history of Abraham, of Moses, or of David, we are justified in looking upon them as Emmanuels in their degrees. We have a case in point in the seventh chapter of Isaiah. Judah was in imminent danger; Israel and Syria had conspired together to crush it; but the word of the Lord came to Ahaz, the king of Judah, to assure him that the peril would shortly pass, and as a sign a virgin should conceive and bear a son, and call his name Emmanuel; and where such a faith in the theocracy existed, it was impossible the nation should perish. The prophecy did not point to an arbitrary, capricious sign; it embodied an eternal principle—that no evil shall befall the people who have their faith in “God with us.”

But was the sign exhausted in that individual case? Certainly not; the principle was eternal, and awaited a truer realisation of itself. Every good man in his degree was an Emmanuel, but no one in a full degree. No one had a pre-eminent claim to the title; no one filled the name; no one nailed down the idea to himself so as to render it robbery for another

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to adopt it; no one converted the general into a specific term. They were signs that God was with us; none of them claimed *to be* “God with us.” But the imperfect realisation of an idea always points to a more perfect to follow; the thought never rests till it finds a perfect incarnation and a lasting home. The son who was *called* Emmanuel in the reign of Ahaz was a prophecy of One who would *be* Emmanuel in the reign of Herod. The prophet Isaiah gives utterance to an idea; the idea is greater than the man who first wears it; therefore it passes on to the future to be realised thereafter. “Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass on his head, he armed him also with a coat of mail;” but any one who might chance to see David would at once conclude that the accoutrements were not originally intended for him; they were too big for him, “and David put them off,” for a bigger than he to wear them. And the idea of Emmanuel was too big for any in the Old Testament, which is a sufficient proof that, though first worn by one of them, it was not primarily intended for them. It was designed for him that could fill it, for him whom it fitted. And St. Matthew tells us that One was born in Bethlehem who *fulfilled* it, who nailed it to Himself, who perfectly realised it, who converted a common into a proper noun. He therefore has a pre-eminent claim to it. Every book at one time might be called a Bible; but since the inspired volume has been completed, the general name has been converted into a specific one. “Bible” is now

the exclusive title of one book. And there was a time when the term Emmanuel might be applied to any good man; but One has since appeared that occupies the same place among men that the Bible does among books; He has made the name His own, and that because it suited Him and suited no one else. Judge to whom it belongs by discovering whom it fits. In St. Matthew's opinion it fitted Jesus; he does not accommodate the words of Isaiah by making the use he does of them; it was the prophet that accommodated in applying them to one who did not *ful*-fil them, to one who only *half*-filled them. In Christ the words of the prophet were first *ful*-filled.

I have said that at first the expectations of the Jews for an Emmanuel were very vague, but as centuries rolled on they began to crystallize and define themselves. About the days of the Maccabees and after, there was a fresh effervescence of the national life. A general impression prevailed that the long expected One was about to appear; so deep was it that several impostors could palm off their spurious pretensions on the public, the one after the other, in rapid succession. And when John the Baptist appeared, an intense excitement blazed up throughout the land; the tension was so great that the least whisper made the Jewish heart vibrate to the very core. Indeed, so electrifying was it that the Gentiles heaved with expectancy; they looked eagerly for the coming of the Divine Stranger. The conviction was universal that the world had reached a crisis. The wise men everywhere expected a Teacher from

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God. The far East expected Him to come from the West, the West expected Him from the East, and thus East and West gravitated towards Judæa. Put a flower into a dark room, and let the light shine in through the keyhole; the flower will instinctively turn towards the door, and stretch out its little leaves for the sunbeams to give them a kiss. There is sympathy between the flower and the light. And the world was shut up in darkness. There was but one sky partly relieved by streaks of celestial light, but one land favoured with true illumination, and the religious nature of man quivered in its direction. The wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?"

II. GOD WAS PREPARING THE WORLD FOR THE COMING OF EMMANUEL.

I have represented prophecy as an embodiment in language of the best aspirations of the Jewish nation. That, however, is only half the truth. The other half is this: it is the result of the inspiration of God. According to the first half, the prophets interpreted the latent thoughts of their age; according to the second, they declared to that age the thoughts of God. They were the messengers of God, crying, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."

This of course implies that the world was not in a state of preparedness. God is a being of perfect order, and the Incarnation must not be an untimely intrusion upon the world. The ground must be

cleared for it; it must take its proper place in the sequence of history; it must run into the eternal fitness of things. It might take place as an outward fact in space at any moment of time, but at any moment it would not answer any moral purpose—it would not bring about the redemption of the world. The mind of the world required to be disciplined before the physical miracle could have to it any spiritual significance, or exert upon it any moral influence. At an earlier age the Incarnation would be meaningless. The mariner's compass has been known in China for thousands of years; nevertheless, for the most part of that time it was but little better than a toy—the Chinese mind was not educated enough to estimate its value. Only a few centuries ago the compass became a blessing to mankind, because only a few centuries ago we attained the intellectual state requisite to apprehend its usefulness. And did the Incarnation take place in the days of Abraham, or of Moses, or of David, it would have been an idle, purposeless miracle, so far as its human aspect is concerned, and Christ would have died in vain. Under the Old Testament, therefore, God was educating the world up to the fact. He was begetting Christ in the human mind before conceiving Him in human nature; and to do the former was apparently harder than to do the latter. To form Christ in the human mind took God full four thousand years; to beget Him in human nature was only the act of a passing moment. The history of the inward conception in the mind occupies the whole

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of the Old Testament; a few verses in the Gospel suffice to give an account of the physical conception in the nature.

1. Look at the preparation that was going on among the *Gentiles*, to which St. Matthew refers in the verses following. Two things strike us at once—first, that mankind had lost sight of God; second, that God had not lost sight of them. “The times of ignorance God winked at;” but you are not to suppose that He utterly neglected them. He overlooked them so far as not to grant them a direct revelation from heaven. He did not overlook them so far as not to care or trouble Himself about them at all; He gave them a revelation from the earth. In order to teach the infant to walk, the mother leaves it to itself, and the child for a time forgets its mother with its toys; but the mother does not forget the child, her eyes constantly revert in its direction. That is a faint picture of the Divine treatment of the Gentile world. God was a tender Father to the poor pagans who were wandering far away and amusing themselves with religious playthings; He had some gracious end in view, which in due time will be revealed. One good lesson we know was taught the world: what it could do, and what it could not do; what it could accomplish, and what it could not accomplish.

What then did the world learn to do? It learnt to ask questions, but it did not learn to answer them. Some people think it a very easy thing to ask questions; but in reality it is a hard thing, the next

nardest to answering them. An uneducated mind cannot interrogate; the power to do it is the result of long and severe drilling. Here then is the climax in which the preparation of the Gentiles culminated: they learnt to ask deep and subtle questions touching the immortality and final destiny of the soul, and the nature and character of the Maker of the universe. They propounded the most momentous problems it is possible for a finite being to be employed upon; but here comes in their ignorance—they could only propound them, they could not solve them. Socrates and Plato and others confessed that they could only ask questions, that a teacher must come from God to answer them. God trained the Gentiles to ask questions; in the very next chapter you see their wise men coming with a question on their lips, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" They could only ask it, they could not answer it. Paganism, therefore, is only the world's note of interrogation; Christianity is the answer which follows. For God to give the answer when nobody asked the question, would be out of place; therefore He waited and worked, worked and waited, till the time should arrive when it would slide in naturally and without violence to the current of secular history.

2. But His method of procedure with the *Jews* was different. He came out of His hiding-place, and committed to them His oracles. It was needful to familiarise the mind of a portion of mankind with some of the leading truths of the Kingdom of God. Without this the life and discourses of the Emmanuel

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would escape unheeded, just as a lecture on the higher mathematics would be unintelligible jargon to a man who has never learnt his arithmetic. The human mind cannot make a long leap at a time; it must familiarise itself with lower truths ere it can grasp the higher; it must see them singly before it can understand them collectively. That is a necessity of our nature, and with it God must conform. I am therefore prepared to find most of the truths of the New Testament in the world prior to the Incarnation; and this, so far from detracting from the glory of Christianity, considerably enhances it. It links it to the past; it shows that God had for hundreds of years been preparing the mind of man to receive and understand it. The sceptics who labour so indefatigably to show that the New Testament contains materials previously extant, do solid service to the cause of Emmanuel: they show that the world had been prepared for His coming, and that His advent was not an interpolation. But as a matter of fact the Jews were trained by every possible means to an apprehension of spiritual truths; God granted them His revelations, and by His providence strove to engrave them on their inner soul. The progress was very gradual, it is true, for He could not reveal faster than they could receive. The master can never teach quicker than the pupils can learn. Oftentimes the Jews were obliged to learn the same lesson over and over again; and after the days of Malachi no new lesson is taught them. Why? Because they had better review the old. The volume of the Mosaic

dispensation closes by bidding the nation to reflect on the old lessons, and lay them deeply to heart. "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." That is going back, you say. No; it is going back in order to go on. The student who reviews past lessons before the day of examination is doing better service than he who learns new ones. And their day of trial was at hand, the day that would sift every soul of them; and Malachi bids them con over their old lessons and review their former history and improve upon it before the coming of the "great and dreadful day of the Lord."

And the four hundred years that elapsed from the days of Malachi to the appearance of Jesus Christ saw, no doubt, a great change in the nation. Well, then, did the nation arrive at last in a state of preparedness for the coming of Christ? I answer, Yes. They were not so prepared as we should like to see them; they were not so prepared as to receive Him, in fact they rejected Him; but they were prepared enough partly to apprehend the significance of His life and death. Here we have a proof in the existence of the New Testament, written by men of that age and that nation. The disciples afford us a specimen of the education of the ordinary Jew. They were not cultivated, but they were not ignorant; they were not polished, but they were well versed in the Scriptures; and their previous national training enabled them to lay hold of the words of Christ, and gradually by the aid of the Holy Spirit to evolve their

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meaning. "God at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the fathers by the prophets," His words were extensively read and commented upon; and no other nation could present such an intelligent populace. The Gentiles were taught to ask questions; the Jews were taught to answer them. The wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" And the scribes answered and said, "In Bethlehem of Judæa, for thus it is written by the prophet." The Gentiles asking, the Jews answering.

III. THE WORLD COULD NOT PRODUCE THE EMMANUEL.

He was begotten by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost and the power of the Highest. The world expected Him; the world was prepared for Him; yet the world could not produce Him.

1. Look for a moment at *heathenism*. The heathen world laboured long under the delusion that it could grow its own Saviour, and God gave it a fair and ample opportunity of unfolding its resources. The highest intellectual culture of which human nature is capable in its sinful state was attained prior to the Incarnation. The stateliest heights of eloquence were then reached. Statuary arrived at perfection. Philosophy never soared higher. Greek poetry remains still unrivalled. God sent His greatest souls into the world during that period that it might have every facility of working out its own salvation; and if the master minds of classic history failed, then it is

useless for us who have come after to say that possibly we might succeed. The ablest thinkers of the race lived before Christ, to demonstrate once for all that if they failed, much more would we. Their writings occupy the same place in the history of the world that the Holy Scriptures do in the history of the Church. They are the standard of taste in literature, just as the Bible is the standard of faith in theology.

All those bright lights had onceshone but were now gone, and the world was none the better, but rather the worse. All experiments had been tried, and all had failed. The world was brought to a solemn and hopeless pause. Men were "*sitting* in darkness." There had been a time when they were walking in darkness, when they were groping in darkness; but now they are "*sitting*," thoroughly convinced that no efforts of their own can bring them salvation. Now, then, is the time for God to interpose. They have despaired of their religions and philosophies. These were only torches of their own kindling, and they rejoiced for a while in their lurid light; but now the last torch has burnt out, and left nothing behind but darkness and stench; and therefore it is safe for God to make His Sun—the Sun of Righteousness—rise with healing in His wings. Why not make Him rise earlier? Because men would delude themselves into the belief that the Sun Himself was only a bigger torch of their own kindling, and greatly pride themselves on their success. They must be first brought to confess their impotence, their utter inability to

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produce a Saviour. And at the time of the birth of Christ that was the general impression. And when all the earthly lights had been extinguished, the heavens began to twinkle. "A star appeared unto them." And they forswore their self-confidence; they followed the star and found the Sun. "The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up." They *found* light but did not *kindle* it.

2. We have seen that heathenism could not produce the Saviour; we further notice that *Judaism* could not produce Him. The Jews had produced several false Messiahs lately; but they were false, and it was not in the power of Judaism to bring forth a true one. Though their knowledge of the Old Testament was very extensive, though they were familiar with most of the truths enunciated in the New Testament singly, yet they could not compose one whole out of them. Their *constructive* power had died out. They knew that the Messiah was predicted as Divine and as human; yet they could not bring the two ideas together and frame an Emmanuel, one who was very God and very man at the same time. They knew that He was portrayed as a king and as a sufferer, but could not wed the two thoughts together and see He was a king of spirits, ruling over them in virtue of His agony and death. They knew these truths singly and separately; but could neither harmonise nor combine them. The most wretched literalness was prevalent everywhere. Their intellect

could only analyse and split; it could not put together and build. It was the age of scribes, not seers. Morally they were blind and sterile. Politically they were at the lowest ebb; the sceptre had departed from Judah, and a bloodthirsty Edomite was on the throne, and he a vassal to Cæsar. Intellectually they were mere analysts, capable of laying down minute formularies, but not of enunciating any grand principle. In every sense their glory was departed. The voice of revelation had hushed. The tree of Judaism had borne no fruit for many a long century; several buds had been struggling into life; but they all withered for want of greater vitality in the tree. It was old "and ready to vanish away." The last words of the Old Testament spoke only of fire. "For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." The nation was like an aged, decayed tree; one could not look upon it without thinking with the prophet what fit fuel it was for the fire. It was sere and lifeless, barren of fruit, despoiled of blossom, stripped of foliage. Now then is the time for the "plant of the Lord, the plant of renown," to grow. In a meadow in one of the counties adjoining Wales is a willow tree.

"Aged is the willow,
In the sere and yellow leaf,
Seeming to the fancy
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“ Growing on the willow,
 So melancholy bare,
 Is a fragrant rosebush
 Luxuriantly fair ;
 Methought it strange that beauty
 Should choose to blossom there.

“ Perchance into the willow
 Some birds the first germs bore
 Of those commingled roses,
 Which yearly blossom more.”

There the old willow stands still, dead in itself, yet in summer covered with beautiful roses. Like it was the condition of the Jewish nation, dead to the very roots; but when everybody thought its dissolution was near and inevitable, a lovely rose was seen growing upon it. The Rose of Sharon displayed His beauty, and loaded the centuries with His Divine perfume. How came that to pass? God let a seed drop from heaven, and it grew out of the ancient stock. “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” The house of David was more humiliated than any other in the land. But when all the branches were cut down, and nothing remained except the bare stem, a rod was seen to grow and a branch to wave, and on it the most charming blossoms. If the branch grew at an earlier period, it would have been attributed to the latent vitality of the stem; but it was now evident to all that the life was long gone out; and when the world was convinced of that, God caused His “plant of renown” to grow to redeem the former glory of the tree.

The Saviour grew *on* Judaism, but not *out* of it. He is the gift of God.

IV. AS THE EMMANUEL WAS THE GOAL OF ANCIENT, SO HE IS THE STARTING POINT OF MODERN HISTORY.

Jesus Christ is a *new* starting point for the race. The Old Testament begins with the creation of man, the New with the Incarnation of God. In the opening chapters of the Pentateuch we behold man; in the opening chapters of the Gospels we behold "God with man." We are here on the brink of an awful mystery, and I am not surprised that men sometimes shrink from believing it. It is almost too great for belief. "God manifest in the flesh!" It seems sometimes as if we should feel bound to refuse credence to this doctrine were it not for one consideration,—the greater, and, I might say, the insuperable difficulties involved in denying it. There are difficulties on the side of faith; there are greater difficulties on the side of unbelief. That God exists is a mystery; that He does not exist is an absurdity. That God works daily in nature, and can modify, change, or suspend its laws, is a mystery; that He cannot modify, change, or suspend them is an absurdity. That God should tabernacle in human nature is a mystery; that the story of the old world with all its disquietude and perplexity should culminate in nothing, and the strange narrative of the last two thousand years begin in a myth, and be founded on a lie, is an absurdity. Belief in the Incarnation is

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hard, its denial infinitely harder. "Great is the mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh."

And it is gratifying to know that the course of modern history has been steadily upward. Seeing that it begins from the high vantage ground of Emmanuel, we expect to find corresponding results marking it throughout. The Incarnation gave God a firmer and a more vital hold upon the human race; we therefore expect to discover in modern history a Diviner character and more abundant energy. The movement of ancient history was, on the whole, downward. From comparative liberty the nations sank into thralldom; class was in bondage to class; at the epoch of which we speak the Cæsar had his foot on the neck of a prostrate world. "It came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And all went to be taxed." The moral life of the world, too, slanted downward throughout the ages; and at the time Jesus Christ was born, it had reached the lowest possible stage of degradation. In Palestine religion was a whited sepulchre, full of filthiness and dead men's bones, neither life, nor warmth, nor beauty left. And among the heathen the moral sense was well-nigh obliterated, morality had been swamped in vice and irreligion. Read the concluding paragraph in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; can you conceive a darker picture? Can the most impure imagination add one shade to its darkness, or one feature to its horrors? Sins are mentioned, foul, gross, horrible, which happily have

been stamped out of modern life. The course of the world was downward. But there is a line of demarcation sharply drawn across history; a new era was born differing widely from all previous eras; modern civilisation is not willing to go back more than one thousand eight hundred and eighty years, to find its fountain-head; we make but little more count of the years before the Incarnation than of the years before the Flood, they form no part of the real progress of the race. In the first century of our era something happened which stopped the downward headlong career, and changed the entire drift of history.

If we consider the history of the Church, we observe about that period a great elevation in its spiritual tone. Humanity is putting forth new virtues; it is heaving with fresh potencies; it is all aglow with holy enthusiasm; it exhibits nobler courage and develops more heroic qualities of endurance; in a word, we see it quivering with new life. In the year one of our era the world was lying numb, bound hand and foot, in dense darkness; before the year fifty there are magnificent outbursts of fresh life. In the year one there is a deadly torpor oppressing the heart of the world, an ominous stillness; but in a few decades after there is a remarkable movement throughout the nations; there is stir, commotion, faith, life. Now there is no movement, especially a movement upward, without a mover. Who, then, is the great Mover that pushes the nations forward in the upward path of progress? Evidently we must go back to the first beginning of

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the movement in the first century; and who there can be the mover but Jesus Christ, the God-man? God in human nature is the mighty power that carries the world onward.

Yes, you say, we must confess that Jesus Christ, God in our nature, is the Creator of modern history, the energising power of European civilisation; but how did He give impetus to the movement? How did He bring about the change? What is it in the Incarnation that did it? I answer—the Incarnation first changed God's relation to men, and when they apprehended that, it changed their relation to Him; and a change in their relation to Him necessarily involved a change in their relation to one another. That is the true genesis of modern life.

First, God changed His relation to man; the God over us is a God with us; the God who created our nature is a God in our nature; the Lawgiver has become a sin-bearer.

Second, This infinite change in His relation to us brought about a corresponding change in our relation to Him. Before Christ, apart from anticipations and hopes of His coming, mankind regarded God, when they knew Him at all, as a stern, relentless, inflexible lawgiver and judge; therefore they recoiled from His touch, they cowered in His presence. They might give Him their obedience, but they refused Him their affections. They could perceive no interest in common between Him and themselves. How to change their relation to Him? Only by changing His relation to them. Loving messages through

the prophets could not completely do it; something more than words, even deeds, were necessary to restore it. We would not believe in *communion* between the Divine and the human till we had seen them in *union*. In the history of Moravian Missions, we read of a missionary who undertook to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ to the suffering, despised, down-trodden slaves of the West Indies. So cruelly were they treated, so hard were they worked, so mercilessly were they flogged, that their spirits rankled with bitterest hostility against the more favoured race which had doomed them to their sad, hopeless condition. Under such untoward circumstances the missionary could not get a hearing. It became a grave problem with him how to reach their hearts, win their sympathies, and thus fulfil the purpose of his mission. At last he saw a way to overcome the difficulty. How? By selling himself into servitude. He became a slave; he partook of the same fare, and endured the same privations as his dusky brethren. Thus he obtained an access to their hearts. In like manner men, before Christ, were afraid of God; "they were all their lifetime subject to bondage." When He spake they feared and quaked, and "entreated that the Word should not be spoken to them any more;" they dreaded His presence, and "hid themselves among the trees." But at last God rent the heavens and came down. In the first page of the Gospel we see not God over us as a taskmaster, but God with us as a brother; and as we proceed from page to page, we

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behold Him toiling in our world, sharing our condition, and encountering our temptations. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." "He was made of a woman, made under the law." What for? "To redeem them that were under the law, that ye might receive the adoption of sons." Men thought that "to be under the law" was bondage and degradation, but seeing the only begotten Son "made under the same law," our views are changed; we begin to understand that "to be under the law" means freedom, and in place of a sense of slavery, there grows the spirit of liberty. We looked at a God in the skies with fear and trembling; the distance between Him and us was immeasurably great. But when we see Him sending His Son, "made of a woman, made under the law," we begin to feel there is a nature in common between Him and us, and the sense of fear yields to a growing consciousness of sonship. The Incarnation has changed our views of God, and, as a consequence, has revolutionised our feelings towards Him.

Third, This change in men's relations to God has effected a corresponding change in our relations to one another. Spiritual freedom has translated itself into civil liberty; and Divine sonship has construed itself into human brotherhood. Freedom and brotherhood! They are the watchwords of modern progress. Liberty and fraternity! Both are founded on the Incarnation of the Son of God. Liberty is extending its sway daily; new races shake off the fetters of the

despot; new classes fling away from their wrists the shackles of the oppressor; fraternity is drawing men and nations together; the middle wall of partition is falling; the spirit of equality is stalking on the troubled sea of European life and politics. Many good conscientious people are alarmed, and exclaim, "It is a ghost;" and like every ghost it at first frightens the timid and creates much excitement, and, perhaps, confusion. But by and by a voice will reach us across the troubled waves, saying, "It is I, be not afraid;" and we shall discover to our agreeable surprise that it is the spirit of the Master.

Thus the Incarnation has changed the character of history, and will continue to change it; and notwithstanding many serious drawbacks and grave hindrances, the world will progress, till by degrees the face of the earth will be made like the face of heaven. Yes, assuredly, the impulse of history is upward. God is with men bearing them aloft to the skies. He is a living energy, an irresistible abiding presence in modern society. It was not enough to give the world an impulse two millenniums ago and then leave it. The path of progress is steep and rugged; the impulse, therefore, would soon expend its force, and mankind would again rush along the downward road to ruin. There must be a continuous outflow of moral force from Him to us. Let us then put ourselves in the proper attitude "to receive of His fulness, and grace for grace."

What, then, is the goal which awaits humanity under the Gospel economy? Its starting point is

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“God with man ;” its goal will be “man with God.” In ancient history God was coming down ; in modern history man is going up. Ancient history reached its goal when God partook of human nature ; modern history will reach its goal when man will partake of the Divine nature. Oh the grandeur of the era in which we live ! At its beginning we see God made in the likeness of man ; at its close man made in the likeness of God. Behind us we behold God coming down to earth ; before us we behold man going up to heaven !



II.

Philosophy and the Babe.

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him.”—
ST. MATT. ii. 1, 2.

WHAT part of the East the wise men came from we cannot definitely settle—probably from Persia, or one of the surrounding countries. Tradition says that they were three kings, which, however, we dismiss by simply naming it. They might be kings and they might be subjects, they might be three and they might be thirteen, for aught the Evangelist says on the subject. All we are warranted in gathering from the narrative is, that they were men of considerable wealth, and of a sufficiently high standing in society to obtain from Herod a courteous reception and a considerate treatment. They were generally known as the Magi, the priests and philosophers of the East. The particular form their philosophy took was that of astrology, or the study of the stars in their bearing upon human destiny. They believed the heavens indicated, probably shaped, the course of human history. This belief of theirs is obviously traceable

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in the words of my text: "We have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him."

They were styled wise, not because they possessed wisdom, but rather because they sought it. At an earlier date their philosophy wore a more dogmatic form, but now its dogmatism is toned down into a fair, candid, anxious inquiry. Youth is always dogmatic. The young man propounds his views with much more confidence and assurance than those advanced in age and experience. And philosophy in its youthful days is oftentimes very opinionated, and sometimes intolerant; but as it grows into maturity it assumes the accent of the hesitant learner rather than that of the accomplished teacher. Physical science in England at the present day is very dictatorial and self-sufficing; but we must not, on the one hand, be alarmed overmuch, nor, on the other, be too censorious. She is as yet young. She will grow wiser as she grows older. Astrology at an earlier period had made very high pretensions, and talked very ambitiously: but bitter experience has stripped her of her delusions; she is now convinced that she has not possessed wisdom, and that her best course is humbly to inquire for it.

Philosophy in the West had to go through precisely the same stages. At the first outset its votaries called themselves by the once dignified name of Sophists, the possessors of wisdom; but as the utter barrenness of all their speculations became apparent, they were obliged to relinquish their old position and abandon their old name, and become not sophists

but philosophers—not the possessors of wisdom but its lovers. They had not “attained, but pressed forward.” And if we wish to study the world before Christ with anything like success, this must be our key to unravel it. Its attitude was that of inquiry and expectancy. Humanity was deeply conscious it had left its moorings; it tossed restlessly about; it knew it had lost something, though it could not tell exactly what, and was busily seeking it. Its whole course was one of intense investigation. Its religions were experiments rather than solutions; its philosophies queries rather than answers; its whole literature was one solemn note of interrogation. It has been often asked, What was the real nature of the system propounded and believed in by the sublimest of ancient thinkers? But it seems to me that he had no system; his philosophy was an inquiry, not a solution; he refutes the fallacious, but seldom lays down the true; his dialogues generally close before the reader can learn his opinion upon the questions in dispute. He is an incomparable interrogator; you must look elsewhere for the answer. He was not the possessor of wisdom, only its lover; not a teacher, but a seeker. The greatness of the ancient world culminated in Socrates and Plato, and the greatness of Socrates and Plato culminated in their power to ask questions, and not in their power to answer them. The ancient world started problems; it remained for the new world to solve them.

And here you will permit me to note one vital difference between the wise men of the East and the

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West and the Founder of Christianity. They were mere seekers after truth; He was its revealer. They were trying to gather together from all quarters the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge; in Him all those treasures dwelt as in their native home. They came to the world to seek ideas; He came to the world to give them. They asked, What is truth? He testified of the truth.

Having premised so much, let me have your attention, if you please, to two points—

- I. The Wise Men seeking Christ.
- II. The Wise Men finding Christ.

I. THE WISE MEN SEEKING CHRIST.

I. They are presented to us here as *seekers*. Now, to seek is a condition with which the wise men of every age must acquiesce in order to find. There are some who find Christ without seeking, others find Him only in consequence of seeking. You may remember that Jesus Christ spoke the two following parables to His disciples. One is this: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Evidently that man was not seeking treasures; he was simply walking or working in the field when he accidentally discovered a treasure, the value of which suddenly flashed on his mind; and he there and then resolved to sell all he had and buy that field. In the very next verse another parable is spoken: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is

like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it." Unlike the other, this was anxiously seeking pearls. He was not merely a man but a merchantman, one whose avocation it was to find precious stones, and do merchandise therein. These two parables, placed by the Saviour in closest juxtaposition, were no doubt intended to describe two types of men. Some in every age find Christ without seeking Him; they walk through the world thoughtlessly and carelessly; but all of a sudden their attention is arrested, the value of a Saviour flashes on their minds, and, without conferring with flesh and blood, they barter all they have to possess themselves of the Saviour. But the wise men belonged to a totally different class. They were merchantmen in a spiritual sense; it was their profession to seek the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; in the course of their studies they had possibly made a few discoveries; but none of their acquirements could appease the yearnings of the mind; they had to go on still seeking. And it is remarkable, that what we call sudden conversions seldom take place among the intelligent classes of the community. The dark masses are still visited by sudden gleams of heavenly light; but it is expected of the wise men of every age to seek ere they find, to follow the glimmering light of the stars before they are privileged to see the sun. Spiritual enlightenment generally comes as the reward of sincere investigation.

2. The earnest search is finished in the far East; Jerusalem thousands of frankincense and, finally counting earnestness in an age in which sophic, haughty which ne hoops and forlorn come in sceptic the West nessed the if not will to heaven a heart satisfied with gro Infinite. find in it roar of the the dying witness in And if we we will find the sighs

2. The history further shows that they were *earnest* seekers. Abundant evidence of this is furnished in the context. They left their homes in the far East; overcame difficulties on the road and in Jerusalem that would have unnerved the hearts of thousands; offered liberally of their substance—gold, frankincense, and myrrh; incurred much expense; and, finally, disobeyed the king's commandment, not counting their lives dear. All this betokened terrible earnestness. Bear also in mind that they lived in an age in which all the old systems, religious and philosophic, had miserably collapsed. The hewn cisterns, which never held much water, had thrown off their hoops and given way. Some tried to forget their forlorn condition in levity, some in animalism, others in scepticism and despair. But in the East and in the West there were a few choice souls which witnessed the ruinous failure of philosophy with sadness, if not with dismay; they sent a half-articulated cry to heaven, muffled and sorrowful, like the sound of a heart breaking. They felt they never could be satisfied with the visible and material. Man sighs with groanings which cannot be uttered for the Infinite. If you apply a shell to your ear, you will find in it reminiscences of its original home. The roar of the sea, the wail of the wind, the groan of the dying wave are all discernible therein; it has the witness in itself that it belongs to the mighty deep. And if we only listen attentively to the human heart, we will find constant proofs of her destined abode; the sighs and the yearnings, the dreams and the

tears, the sadness and the music—all testify that we are made for God, and that the Divine only can satisfy our wants. Perhaps no more telling proof of this can be adduced than the very science which these men pursued. The study of the stars had its origin in the vague, yet intense, aspiration of the soul for the High, Holy, and Sublime. It was something to gratify the heavenward breathings of the soul. And in the transition from astronomy to astrology there was a tremendous effort on the part of man to grasp the heavens, and to link his destiny to the Higher Powers. Astrology, magic, and all the kindred arts testify to the immortal longings of humanity; it was not, however, in the power of any or all of these to pacify those longings. Human wisdom in none of its wide domains could grow that which would break the hunger of the spirit. Instead of water it had only the sand of the mirage to offer; instead of bread it had only the stones of the desert to give. And now the initiated Magi, the very priests themselves, are turning away to seek satisfaction in another quarter. Their hungering for wisdom was simply agonising. The shadows of things in the heavens they had seen, now and again, flitting before them in visions and dreams; but the things themselves they had not yet beheld; yet the sight of the shadow sufficed to convince them of the existence of the reality somewhere. We should never see the shadow of a bird gliding softly across the field were it not that a real bird is flying in the air. We should never see a moon in the pool on the roadway, were it

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not that a real moon is shining in the sky. The shadow of truth proves the existence of the reality somewhere. And these Magi are hungering and thirsting after true satisfying wisdom. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," said Satan once; but surely he has found out his mistake before to-day. Looking upon the wise men and kindred souls in different countries, one might venture to affirm that man would gladly forfeit life itself for wisdom; for what is life worth without wisdom?

3. We further learn from this narrative that the wise men sought Christ *reverently*. All the context bears witness to their deep reverence. They saw the mysterious and wondrous star in the East, and followed its beckoning; it could speak to them about higher things than navigation, and the best time to unfurl the sails to the wind; it could speak to them about worship; and having found the young child, notwithstanding His poor surroundings, they fell down and worshipped Him. They declared that they had come from the far East for the express purpose of worship. Surely their sense of veneration must have been very intense to induce them to travel all that distance to gratify it. "We are come to worship Him." This is refreshing to contemplate in an age which was driven by the fruitlessness of all previous searchings, either to superstition on the one hand, or to unbelief on the other. There were plenty of credulous people about—astrology had degenerated into magic. There were plenty of scoffers about—philosophy had drivelled into scepticism. But here is a

band of men who still believe in the existence of truth; and who, permeated with reverence, verging on awe, incur much trouble and expense, and set out on a fresh pilgrimage after truth—after that wisdom which, according to tradition, dwelt in the bottom of some well or other. May be they will find her in the well of Bethlehem! No study, if honestly and faithfully pursued, tends more directly than astronomy to ennoble the mind, to expand its powers, to fill it with solemnity, and to excite it to adoration and praise. You look up and see the stars stretching out on every hand, far, far into infinity. You turn your eyes to the sky, and are overwhelmed with a sense of the boundless and the vast. You try to take a survey of the illimitable fields of immensity, and your nature instinctively strives to grow and swell, that it may mirror them back in all their amplitude. You, moreover, pursue it under the deep shades of the night, the shadow and symbol of the Inscrutable. I can never walk out in the night and meditate seriously on the awful blank round about me, but I feel engulfed in infinite sadness and infinite mystery. And the Magi were students of the night, the mother of reverence and devotion. And whenever a frivolous, sneering spirit creeps over us, we can do nothing better than steal out to the still, and sable, and solemn night; and the probability is, that our hearts will be subdued into awe. We speak flippantly enough of the “dim, religious light;” but the words embody a deep and lasting truth—dimness tends to foster reverence. The consciousness of this guided our fore-

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fathers in the construction of worshipping-places; they felt that daylight, if too glaring, tended to dissipate the sense of devoutness. This is the truth that guided the ancient Britons—whose Druids belonged to the same fraternity as the Magi, and whose functions, social and religious, were much the same—to the woods, there to adore the ineffable Light under the deep shades of the spreading oak. This was one reason, perhaps, why God planted the Garden of Eden with trees and placed man there, for humanity feels a strong impulse to fall on its knees whenever it walks among trees. This, too, is the reason why all nations of antiquity had their sacrificial groves, and chose the hour of twilight, morning and evening, as the fittest season to offer worship to their respective gods.

But, as already intimated, the learning of that age, as a whole, was pervaded with an irreverent, unbelieving spirit. It was a very superficial age, a very shallow age. Faith had died out. The Magi were the exception and not the rule. And, looking upon the history of human knowledge for the last two centuries, what must we say is one of its characteristics? I am afraid we must point out irreverence as the chief. With his usual insight, a great poet has depicted the devil of the eighteenth century as a sarcastic, sneering, irreverent scoffer. That appears to me to be the radical idea of a devil—an inveterate scoffer. Read the Book of Job, where, if the received chronology be right, we find the first sketch of him on record. What sort of a devil is portrayed there?

Read the first two chapters and you will find that he is the embodiment of utter irreverence. So irreverent is he that he jests in the presence of the Eternal; so irreverent is he as to sneer at virtue in a special meeting of the sons of God; so irreverent is he as to talk of blasphemy beneath the effulgence of the Divine and holy Eye that rests upon him. That was the devil of the days of Job—the embodiment of utter irreverence. Read the last great poet of Europe, and you will discover that that was also the devil of his days—a sneering, jesting, frivolous, light-headed, light-hearted spirit. The age was ingrained with unholy levity. Voltaire, its guiding genius, could not ask a serious question nor entertain a solemn thought. He never asked what was true in the world, what was true in humanity, what was true in religion. He only asked what was false, what was ridiculous, what was out of joint. To him the earth was nothing better than a paradise of fools, and he a fool among the rest. And in a world like ours, where sin has deranged the faculties and depraved the affections, there is abundance of things out of gear which a jester may laugh at. Irreverence had impregnated the age. It has not disappeared altogether yet; would to God it had! It still lingers, especially in that branch of natural science which concerns itself about the earthly and minute. It may be partly accounted for, perhaps, on this principle: there is an ineradicable belief in man that he is the lord of Nature, and, therefore, her superior; that he is greater than any truth he may discover, for, certainly, the discoverer is

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greater than the discovery; and if a man spends his life in exclusively prosecuting a line of study in which he meets with nothing greater than himself, the sense of reverence gradually dies out of his breast. And I am sometimes disposed to think that the greatest danger that threatens the Nonconformity of England and Wales in the present day is lack of deep awe and godly fear. The worshipping-places have been frequently constructed, and the services conducted, on a principle which tends directly to slay the sense of reverence in the worshipper. How else can we account for the grievous defections to Rationalism on every hand? On what other principle can we account for the fact that some of the eminent churches of the Puritan period, over which such men as Matthew Henry presided, fast degenerated into Unitarianism? I account for it partly on this wise—that, in the desire to avoid the extreme of Popery, they fell into the other extreme, and the sense of reverence was gradually stifled in the heart. And once a man loses the sense of reverence he is essentially a Rationalist; you can make nothing else of him. In vain the stars look down upon him from above as if they were angels' eyes suffused with love—he does not understand their language. In vain the evening zephyrs play among the flowers—he hears no Divine Voice walking in the garden. In vain is there a rustling of leaves among the mulberry trees—he sees no white-winged angels between the branches. In vain would God rend the heavens and disclose to his vision the unsullied brightness of the great white throne—he

would only theorise on the nature of its granite. "Instead of drinking the water of life he will analyse it; instead of eating the heavenly manna he will speculate on its make." "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." Parents, cultivate reverence in your own hearts; cultivate reverence in the hearts of your children. Reverence becomes the worship of God.

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he, who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

4. We further learn from this story that *God assisted them in the search*. "We have seen His star in the East." This star has caused a great deal of fruitless discussion. God put it in the sky to guide the wise men of old; but by some means or other it serves to confound the wise men of the present. Some suppose it to be a comet; some a special meteor obeying special laws; some see in it the Shekinah of Judaism. Kepler arrived at the conclusion that it was a strange conjunction of the three planets—Jupiter, Saturn, and Mars, and another strange star, such as occurred only once since, in the year 1603. His astronomical calculation agrees perfectly with the appearance of the star to the Magi. It looks certainly a very plausible explanation. The other views are only suppositions; this is a supposition backed by demonstration. But, whatever hypothesis we adopt, it must at last come to this—the star was to the wise men a supernatural

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But we are not to suppose that Divine help was confined to a few Magi. God had been educating the whole Gentile world. That world, it is true, groped in darkness; but the darkness was not total. There was a glimmer of light, a star twinkling above it; not enough to chase the darkness, but quite enough to show it. There were rays of pure light streaking the firmament of the Gentile world. The spirit that decries the excellences of the heathen world is greatly to be deprecated. To call the stars "dark spots" in the sky, does not in the least degree enhance the brilliancy of the sun. Better call light light, though it be but a single ray. In the philosophy of those who were outside the commonwealth of Israel, we see glimmerings of the true; in their poetry and sculpture, wonderful conceptions of the beautiful; in their history, many examples of the most heroic virtue. But such sentiments are opposed to received dogma, you say; which dogma denies the possibility of virtue apart from Christ, and goes the length of calling their very excellences only "splendid sins." The worse for the dogma, then, I say. I freely admit that virtue is not possible apart from Christ, any more than flowers can grow without light and heat. The Bible clearly teaches so much. But if we say that the existence of virtue depends upon our hold on Christ, we assert that for which we have no warrant. The existence of virtue depends, according to the Bible, not upon our hold

on Christ, but upon His hold on us; and He has a hold on us oftentimes before we have a hold on Him; and that is the root of all goodness. The light is not *of* man—there your dogma is right; but, though it is not of man, yet it is *in* man—there your dogma is wrong. “This is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Well, do I not believe in original sin? Certainly I do! and I believe in original light too. I believe in original sin through the transgression of the earthly parent; and I believe in original light through the grace of the Heavenly Parent by means of the Eternal Word. Original sin is only half the truth; original light is the other half; and you must have the two halves to form the complete circle. “This is the true light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” This light burned in the spirits of the heathen—not, indeed, with noonday splendour, not even with the soft light of the roseate dawn, but with the glimmering light of the stars. God was silently educating the nations of the earth; He was preparing them for the advent of Jesus Christ in the flesh.

And we must not forget that a Divine star is shedding down its soft pure light on the science of the present day. Do you think God takes no interest in the march of intellect? Do you think the procession goes by and He heeds it not? No: God is leading the van. Scientific men, many of them, are serving a Master they know not. Cyrus, though ignorant of God, did the work of the ancient Church manfully and creditably; and many men of science, who

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will have none of our Christianity, do it great and solid service; and by and by it will be seen that the wise men have been taken in the craftiness of their hearts, and that they have been, if not journeying themselves towards Bethlehem, then preparing the way for others to travel there. Men of science are doing solid service to the cause of Christ. As sure as that Eastern star pointed to the Saviour, so does each of her sister stars. "We have seen His star in the East;" and have we not seen it in the West? Are not all the stars His? And this is the grand ultimate purpose of nature—to testify to Christ. This is the final aim of philosophy—to pave the way for Christianity. "Search the Scriptures," said the Saviour once, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." The Jews blindly believed that eternal life was contained in the Book which they daily read and expounded. "You are mistaken," says the Saviour: "eternal life is not, cannot be in a book; eternal life is in Me, and the Book was given you to lead you to Me, who can give you all that you need." He addresses the same kind of language to the students of physical science at the present day: "Ye search the elements of nature, for in them ye think ye have all that is requisite for the development and perfection of the race; but the elements of nature are they which testify of Me." They think the new Gospel of Science can yield satisfaction to human nature; but science was not designed to yield it—she is intended to lead to Christ, who can abundantly

supply all our need. The pages of Nature, ponderous though they be, testify of Him; and if we fail to see His name inscribed in the rock, then we do not understand geology in its profoundest import. "The rock was Christ." If we cannot decipher His name in the flowers of the field, we do not appreciate botany on its divinest and most delicate side. "I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys." If we do not hear the evening zephyrs chanting His name, and the purling brook singing a song about Him, then the highest significance of Nature is hid from our eyes. "They are they which testify of Me." But, to attain this desirable end, science must submit to be enlightened by revelation; philosophy must go to theology for the solution of her greatest problems. Philosophy can ask questions; revelation only can answer them. I told you just now that the greatness of the ancient world culminated in its power to ask questions; beyond that it could not go. And here we see human philosophy coming to Divine revelation with a question on its lips—"Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" It could only ask it, it could not answer it; it had to look to theology for the answer. To be a doctor of philosophy is a noble distinction enough, for aught I know; but the doctors of philosophy must go to Jerusalem to the doctors of theology to be enlightened on the greatest questions. "Behold, there came wise men"—the doctors of philosophy—"from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" "And the chief priests and scribes"

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—the doctors of theology—“ answered, In Bethlehem of Judæa, for thus it is written by the prophet.” Philosophy asking, theology answering; science questioning, Christianity solving; the old world starting problems, the new world settling them.

II. THE WISE MEN FINDING CHRIST.

1. Here let me remark that they were seeking a *person*. They were not seeking a system, or a theory, or a religion—their hearts were set upon a person. Man cannot find rest in a system, though it be the right one; he cannot find peace in a theory, though it be the true one; he cannot find quiet in a religion, though it be a Divine one—Judaism was divine, but it afforded no home to the human heart. I am a person, and in a person only can I find repose. Were I only a thing, I might feel at home among things. Were I nothing but intellect, I might find rest in a theory. Were I nothing but conscience, I might find peace in religion. But I am different from each of these, and different from their sum total. I am a person, and in a person only can I find rest. My whole nature cries out, “ Where is He that is born King of the Jews? ”

2. But it was not a mere person that they sought—that person must be a *King*. Man is created to rule and have dominion; but it is equally true, much truer, that he is made to serve and obey. It is inscribed deeply on his nature that he is a subject, and that in subjection his true happiness consists; wherefore, he has been going about through the ages

looking for a King. Only some three or four years ago we witnessed the sad spectacle of a large country going the round of Europe looking for a ruler. Why, it is only what the world has been doing ever since the Fall. Man is always seeking a King, for he feels in the depths of his being that he is never so great as in the presence of his greater. Let a great man appear in the world, and smaller men spontaneously rally round him; for they feel they are never so great as in the presence of their greater, never so noble as in doing the work of obedience. "He that is great among you, let him be the servant of all." That is an axiom engraved within us before Christ formulated it into words and committed it to the pages of inspiration. Mankind desire a king—one whose behests they deem it all honour to obey, and in whose presence they think it exaltation to bow. On what other principle can we account for the terrible despotisms that have crushed the world? How were they possible, a few tyrannising over millions? They were possible only on one condition, that they were a response, or the semblance of one, to a deep craving implanted in our nature by the Creator. "Where is He that is born King?" The vast empires were only answers to the question—false ones if you like, but answers nevertheless—and the poor distracted heart of humanity deemed any answer better than none at all. And please to mark the language of the text, "In the days of Herod the *king*"—mark that—"behold, there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is *born King*?"

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In the days of one king they cried out for another. Herod did not reach their ideal; Nimrod, "the mighty hunter," did not come up to their standard; Cæsar did not satisfy their expectations. In the days of all those kings humanity was asking for another. They were made kings; we wanted a born king. They were manufactured rulers, many of them of a very raw material; we wanted a ruler in his native right. They reigned by right of blood, or right of conquest, or right of power; we wanted a king that should reign by right divine. "Where is He that is *born King*?" cried the nations. "We have had enough of your made kings and manufactured rulers; give us a king whose crown is the blossom of his nature, and whose sceptre is the outcome of his heart; give us one that is a *born king*."

3. The story further teaches that they sought a king and found a *Child*. There is something very remarkable in the fact that they came from the distant East, and after all their sojourning and seeking found only a—Child. Yet it was worth all their toil and trouble to learn the hard, but precious lesson, that true greatness consists in childlikeness. The world all the ages through had been growing away from the Child; its notions of greatness lay quite in the opposite pole. The Evil Spirit in his interview with our first parents succeeded in confusing the mind of the world relative to this point, and to put the case altogether on a false issue. "Ye shall be as gods," said he, "knowing good and evil." He put

likeness to God to lie in knowledge; and the whole drift of the Divine education of the race has been to counteract that notion, and teach us that it consists not in knowledge or power either, but in childlikeness. As we review the history of the world we see it dividing itself into three stages. In the first, Power is magnified, Force is deified. The great man is the strong man. In that era Nimrod is the hero after the world's heart; strength receives the homage of men. In the second stage Power is pushed back a step or two, and Intellect comes to the front. The great man is the intellectual man. In that era Homer is the favoured idol before whom the populace delight to bow; genius receives the homage of men. But Christianity has inaugurated a new period; it points the world not to Nimrod or Homer, but to a Child—not to Power or Genius, but to Goodness. The great man of the future will be the good man. The time is fast approaching when goodness will be the regnant power on the earth. Most men live through these eras in their individual history. I remember a time when, if any one mentioned the names of Napoleon Buonaparte or the Duke of Wellington, my heart responded in admiration, and I wished to become a soldier. I remember a time after that when, if you mentioned the names of Shakespeare or Milton, my heart responded in admiration, and I wished to be a poet. Yes; I have had my heroes, and I have worshipped them devoutly. But, were I to tell you my experience to-day, it is this—I have lost a great deal of my respect for power; I

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have lost a great deal of my admiration for genius; the supreme desire of my heart to-day is that I may be a good man, a childlike man, one whose life and character will mirror the Divinity. The great man of the future will be the good man. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." That verse has always been more or less evaded by commentators; but it seems to me that the meaning is that the era is to arrive when meekness, goodness, is to be the regnant virtue—the Queen to which all other powers are to bend. Power has had its era—it has reigned; but its reign has come to an end. Genius has had its era—it has reigned; but its reign is fast closing. Goodness will have its era too, when the world will transfer its homage from men of power and men of genius to men of goodness. The great man of the future will be the good man. The period is fast dawning when a good man, though dependent upon public charity for a living, shall be more honoured than the hero of a hundred battles, or the mightiest unsanctified genius that has flashed its brilliant, lurid light across the centuries. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The old world reached the goal of its education in its recognition and worship of the Divinity of the child-like. "Except ye be converted, and made like little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

4. Having found the Child, *their seeking came to an end.* They had fully attained their object. "The tar stood over where the young child was." Heaven

and earth here found a meeting place. Angelic intelligences had, doubtless, been pursuing truth throughout the ages; and, having made one discovery, would turn their backs on it, and proceed to make another; having found one truth, they would leave it behind and go in search of a greater; but here at last they have reached the climacteric of truth—they have discovered the King—beyond this they cannot go. “The star stood;” heaven has found a resting-place; angels look down, with outstretched necks, in rapt amazement to behold Him whose name is Wonderful. I know not how vast is the range of the knowledge possessed by angels and archangels; but I venture to think that they know of nothing nobler than the Incarnation—that they have discovered no truth which will eclipse “God manifest in the flesh.” And here also the wise men found the object of their search; where the heavens rested, there the earth rested too—“over the place where the young Child was.” Finite intelligences cannot go beyond this; neither angels nor men can turn their backs on the Incarnation in hope of finding more glorious truths. I do not say that we cannot turn our backs on Christ, if we like; but I do say that we cannot turn our backs on Him, and go on. Many in England and on the Continent turn their backs on Him every year; but it does not require much sagacity to perceive that from the moment they leave Him they begin to retrograde. The wise men of the East might turn their backs on Zoroaster, and go on. The wise men of the West

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might turn their backs on Plato and Aristotle, and go on. The wise men of Judæa might turn their backs on Moses and David and Isaiah, and go on. But men cannot turn their backs on Christ, and—go on. If you leave Christ, you must go back—there is nothing else for you. “The star stood”—and the wise men stood—“over the place where the young child was.” Heaven and earth had reached their goal.

5. Having found Him, “they fell down and worshipped Him.” I offer you no explanatory remarks upon these words. I let them alone in their grandeur. “They fell down and worshipped Him.” Repetitions like this do not accord well with the laws of homiletics, perhaps, but there are occasions when I like them. “They fell down and worshipped Him.” A memorable spectacle that! The wise men, their venerable tresses grey with age, their long, silvery beards flowing down their chests, and that look of mysteriousness which the study of astrology and a continued peering into the future inevitably engender, combined with the dignified visage of the Eastern hierarchy—the ancient and renowned representatives of the riches, and the philosophies, and the religions of the world, prostrating themselves before the unconscious Infant. “They fell down and worshipped Him.” They are only the first-fruits; the harvest is to follow. The princes of this world are to bow before Him. Now they make obeisance to one another; they worship success, they respect station and pomp. But the mighty ones of the earth are to

learn that there is something better than success and nobler than rank—

“Rank is but the guinea’s stamp;
Man is the gold for all that.”

5 Wealth must learn to acknowledge the greatness of the Babe, though it can boast of no better birth-place than a stable. And by the side of wealth, human learning is to bow its head in silence and awe. Isaiah, in the glorious vision granted him, saw the seraphim above the Throne of Glory; “each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face; and with twain he covered his feet; and with twain he did fly.” Of the six wings they used four for adoration and praise; two only they used for private purposes. Of the six they gave four to God, and kept only two for themselves. And there live men in our age of vast capacity and unsurpassed culture; they are richly endued with six wings; but, alas! with the six do they fly; they devote all their wondrous faculties to further their own ends, and none to promote the worship and service of God. But as sure as the wise men of old went to Bethlehem to worship the mystery of the Incarnation, the wise men of the future will follow in their track. With twain will they cover their face; with twain will they cover their feet as they bow themselves in the presence of the Babe; and twain only will they reserve for private and secular purposes. Four-sixths of human nature are intended for communion with the higher world; only two-sixths for communion with the world of sense.

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We are further taught that they accompanied their devotion with fitting gifts. "And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." To the devotion of the Spirit we must add the gifts of the hand. And please to observe that they opened their treasures of their own accord, and made the gifts at the spontaneous impulse of their hearts. The Gospel never opens men's treasures for them; that it leaves them to do for themselves. What, then, does the Gospel do? The Gospel opens the heart; but, believe me, whenever the Gospel opens the heart, the hands open the coffers. It is a mistake to suppose that Christianity breaks open your safes against your wish; it only breaks open the heart. And it is a mistake, on the other hand, to think that the Gospel has opened the heart when the hands refuse to open the treasures. "They fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Do you hear, ye rich men of England? "Gold! gold! gold! and frankincense and myrrh." Here is the culmination of religion, the union of devotion and service. The angels, according to the vision, have wings; but underneath the wings they have hands. They have wings wherewith to cover themselves in the Divine Presence; they have hands wherewith to make themselves useful in the Divine service. The *Wing* and the *Hand*: godliness first, usefulness afterwards. "They fell down and worshipped Him"—there you

see godliness; "and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts"—there you see usefulness. Some Christians seem to have wings but no hands; others seem to have hands but no wings; but the perfect Christian, like the perfect angel, has wings and hands: wings to join in the worship of God, hands to serve in the Church of God!



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John the Baptist.

“In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”—ST. MATT. iii. 1, 2.

THERE lived in the hill country of Judæa two aged people of the name of Zacharias and Elisabeth his wife. “They were both righteous, before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Some people are very observant of the commandments whilst neglectful of the ordinances. Others, again, are observant of the ordinances whilst neglectful of the commandments. But Zacharias and Elisabeth his wife were equally observant of both. “They walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”

To this aged couple was born a child, who may very appropriately be called a “child of miracle.” This is the child spoken of in the text as John the Baptist; and my object will be to give you a brief sketch of the life, character, and ministry of this remarkable man.

I. “In those days came *John the Baptist.*” We shall stop there, in the first place, for by so doing an

opportunity will be given us of directing attention to John's character as a MAN.

1. John was a man of extraordinary *piety*. "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb," filled with a view, not to inspiration, but to sanctification. Paul also was "separated unto God from his mother's womb," that is, set apart and mentally endowed for his allotted task in the world. But he was not filled with the Holy Ghost and sanctified—that belonged to the period of his manhood. But John was "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb"—he was a godly child, a godly boy, a godly man, the greatest saint probably of his dispensation.

2. His piety was marked by extreme *abstemiousness*. He was a Nazarite from his cradle to his grave. His abstemiousness shows itself in his drink. "He shall drink neither wine nor strong drink," said the angel of him before his birth; or according to Wicliffe's translation of the Bible, "he shall drink neither wine nor cider." We must not forget that cider also is included in the list of intoxicating beverages, and is forbidden to the total abstainers of the present day just the same as to the Nazarites of ancient times. His monasticism is further shown in his food. "His meat was locusts and wild honey." By "locusts" here I prefer understanding a species of grasshoppers well known in the East, and by "wild honey" the honey deposited by the Palestinian bees in the cliffs of the rocks. "This same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle

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about his loins"—a loose coarse robe fastened around the body with a belt of skin. Bear also in mind that as a life-long Nazarite neither scissors nor a razor had ever come near his head. His hair had never been cut, his beard never trimmed. Portray to yourselves, accordingly, the hermit who came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa: a tall, lank man; beard shaggy and flowing down the chest; hair long, dishevelled, unkempt, growing in wild profusion; eyes flashing fire; visage wan and spectral; a coarse rough cloak tightly strapped round the loins; his daily fare being water, grasshoppers, and honey.

“Parched body, hollow eyes, some uncouth thing
Made him appear long since from earth exiled.”

3. Partly as a consequence of his Nazaritic obligations, his dwelling was in the *wilderness*. “He abode in the desert until his appearing unto Israel.” Herein we partly see the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament holiness. The Old Testament holiness manifested itself principally in isolation from the world. Its primary idea was separation. The word “holiness” meant separation. But the New Testament holiness consists, not in separation from the world, but in the pervasion of the world. Its primary idea is permeation. The Kingdom of God under the Old Testament was “like unto leaven which a woman took” and hid away by itself. But the Kingdom of God under the New Testament is “like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was

leavened." Under the Old Testament, separation; under the New, permeation. Hence John lived and laboured in the wilderness; he was the last and highest embodiment of the Old Testament holiness. But Jesus Christ lived and laboured in towns; He was the first and highest embodiment of the New Testament holiness. It follows, therefore, that social life is a higher style of life than the monastic; to serve God in towns is nobler and diviner than to serve Him in deserts.

4. At the age of thirty, the "word of the Lord came unto John"—he received his official *call* to be a prophet. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." That verse shows the hollowness of the theory that John the Baptist or any one of the prophets or apostles was the product of his age, the incarnation of the tendencies silently working in contemporaneous society. Can darkness produce light, or pollution engender holiness? Could the most degraded age in the history of Judaism produce the greatest man of the dispensation? I trow not. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the products of the age, not John. John did not so much come *from* society as *to* society. He had not a mission *from* his age, but a mission *to* his age. He borrowed not his light from his generation: say rather that his generation borrowed its light from him. Were he of the age he would have swum with the current. But instead of that, we see him meeting it, opposing it, resisting it with might and main. A grand sight that! A lean, emaciated, spectral monk, a veritable son of the

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desert, hovering on the frontiers of the two worlds, confronting his age, keeping it at bay, hurling denunciations like flaming thunderbolts into its midst, till he made it quiver with emotion from Dan to Beersheba! The nature and magnitude of the work he had to do depended on the age. But the worker derived his energy and momentum and inspiration, not from the age, but from the heavens. "There was a man sent *from God*, whose name was John."

That the great man should be an interpreter of his age is true; but to interpret does not mean to share. John clearly saw that the bias of his age was towards evil; he could nowhere discover a bias towards holiness. He did interpret it, not to participate of it, but resolutely to resist it. He was an interpreter of his age, not because he was the visible embodiment of it, but rather because he came "from God." The little men are the incarnation of the thoughts of their age, the surface thoughts of humanity. The great men—the poets and philosophers—are the incarnation, not of the thoughts of one age, but of the thoughts of all ages, the deepest thoughts of humanity. But prophets and apostles are the incarnation, not of the thoughts of one age nor of the thoughts of all ages, but of the thoughts of eternity, the deepest thoughts of God. This constituted John a prophet and not a poet: a poet expresses the thoughts of time, a prophet the thoughts of eternity. A poet gives utterance to the thoughts of man, a prophet to the thoughts of God. And preachers in the New Testament are called "prophets." Why?

To teach us that it is our function to speak not the thoughts of time but the thoughts of eternity, not the thoughts of the human heart but the thoughts of the Divine Heart. Every true preacher must, like John the Baptist, be "sent from God." You cannot grow preachers as you grow soldiers; every true preacher must have Divine authorisation. "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest." "Send forth:" literally, thrust forth. The words teach that the same Almighty power which created the worlds must grow preachers; that the same hand which started the planets in their orbits must start ministers on their career.

II. "In those days came John the Baptist, *preaching* in the wilderness of Judæa." We shall stop there in the second place, for by so doing an opportunity is given us to speak a little of John's character as a PREACHER. His character in this capacity is well summarised in the third verse. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."

I. John is here described as a *Voice*. Jesus is denominated a Word, but John only a Voice. What is the difference? This: a word carries its meaning in itself, but a voice must fetch its meaning from another quarter. Jesus Christ was a Word—He carried His mission in Himself; but John was only a voice—he had to fetch his mission from Jesus Christ. A deputation once waited upon him from Jerusalem, asking, "Who art thou?" He answered, "I am

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the Voice of one crying in the wilderness; I am nobody in myself; I am not a person but a thing; I am only a voice." Not only he raised his voice, but he himself was a voice. Not only he bare witness, but he himself was a witness. "The same came for a witness." To behold John was a sermon in itself. "I am a voice; I am not the Speaker, only the voice of one; the Speaker is coming after me, for He was before me." In this John was typical of what all the servants of Christ ought to be. We are nobody in ourselves; we are only voices crying in the city or in the wilderness as the case may be; the Speaker is behind us and above us. We ought to sink self in the message, to reduce ourselves into mere voices.

2. He was a Voice *crying*, literally, crying aloud. He did not content himself with delivering his message in a quiet, hushed undertone. His voice was loud, clear, and strong. His speech was a wild shriek, reverberating between the rocks of the wilderness. He delivered his sermons at the top of his voice. Let me guard you, however, against the supposition that his ministry consisted of nothing but sound. "John was a burning and a shining lamp," says the Saviour. "He was a burning lamp:" thereby we are to understand the warmth of his preaching; he powerfully roused the consciences of his hearers. He was also a "shining lamp:" thereby we are to understand the light of his preaching—he informed the understanding as well as moved the conscience. Some preachers are only "burning lamps;" they give out plenty of heat, but yield no light. "They tear a

passion to rags." Others again are "shining lamps;" they emit plenty of light, but impart no heat. Like the moon, they shine and freeze the same moment. John the Baptist, however, combined to some degree the two extremes. He gave out light and heat, but heat first; he was more remarkable for his passion than for his thoughts.

3. He was a Voice crying aloud in the *wilderness*. Those whose lifework it is to break up the fallow ground of a nation have special need of sound lungs as well as sound minds. Thunders frighten the uneducated even more than the lightnings. Sound wields magical influence over the illiterate; but, in the gradual growth of knowledge, the time surely arrives when sound must be superseded by sense. First came John the Baptist crying aloud in the wilderness, shouting lustily at the highest pitch of his voice. Then came Jesus Christ, the very opposite of John, sitting quietly whilst teaching, and speaking in calm, subdued, and measured tones. "He sat and taught them;" and in a sitting posture one cannot indulge either in loud declamation or violent gesticulation.

These two stages are clearly observable in the history of preaching in our own country. The last generation of preachers in Wales was a generation of criers. They were men of massive build, expanding chests, magnificent voices. They cried till they awoke the echoes in the rocks, yea, in hearts harder than rocks. But loudness begins to be at a discount in the land. The ministers are no longer robust and

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sturdy; they cannot shout if they wished, and they need not particularly wish it, for on the whole they can afford to dispense with it. Because we do not keep as much noise as our fathers, some innocently believe that we do not accomplish as much work. But it behoves you to remember that, though the thunders terrify, yet it is the lightnings which kill. Our predecessors thundered much; let us hope that we flash more. Young ministers as a rule believe much in thunders; as they grow in years and experience they believe less in thunders and more in lightnings. The normal method, perhaps, after all, is to believe in both. Thunder, if you can; but if you cannot, shine.

4. He was a Voice crying aloud in the wilderness, "*Prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make His paths straight.*" His was the work of preparation; strength, therefore, was more requisite than refinement. "He grew mighty in spirit." He had rough work to do; therefore a man of refined taste and delicate organisation could not perform it. John is fitted for his work—a coarse man levelling mountains and filling up valleys, sternness in his looks, vehemence in his voice. The truth is—Reformers must despise the conventionalities of society. They have rude work to do, and they must not be too dainty respecting the means they adopt to effect it. Adorn your frontispieces, embellish your corner-stones, but let the foundations be as rugged as you please. Decorations are for the superstructure, strength and solidity for the base. Luther has often been charged with rudeness, coarseness, and

even scurrility. The indictment contains, perhaps, too much truth for us successfully to gainsay. But we should not forget that he had a coarse age to deal with, coarse enemies to contend with, coarse sins to battle with. Coarse or not coarse, the question is—Did he do his work? If he did that, who are we to cavil at the means he used? Would our smooth phrases and rounded periods accomplish the task of regenerating half Europe, and of giving the other half a shaking from which it has not yet recovered, nor is likely to recover this century? Regenerate half Europe indeed! Shame upon us! We cannot regenerate half a parish, and who are we to find fault with a man who regenerated half a continent? Who will go to fell forest trees of a thousand years' standing with a superfine razor? Is not the heavy axe the fit tool wherewith to cut them down? "And now also the axe is laid unto the roots of the trees." John the Baptist was wielding the axe to cut down with fell strokes the mighty overshadowing trees of Jewish superstition and corruption. Luther also was swinging the axe to clear Europe of the mighty overshadowing trees of Popish superstition and corruption. I am not sure but the great need of the present day is a powerful, ponderous axe; and the next great need a strong robust man to wield it with a firm resolute purpose against the colossal falsehoods which bring disaster into trade and dishonour upon religion. Oh, for the ministry of the axes once more! Let us all do our part to prepare a path to the Lord in our neighbourhood; and the path being prepared, pray

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III. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, *Repent.*" This gives us an opportunity of saying a word upon the character of his MINISTRY. Austerity in the man generally indicates austerity in the preaching, which in this case may be summed up in one word, "Repent."

I. His ministry consequently chiefly aimed at the conscience. "Repent:" it is a word addressed not to the understanding or to the imagination, but to the conscience. John was the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets; it is but reasonable, therefore, to find all the lines of the Old Testament teaching focussed in him. What was the main object of the Old Testament teaching? To develop the conscience and make it profoundly conscious of the terrible odiousness of sin. Herein the national training of the Jews differed widely from the national training of the Greeks and Romans. The paramount object in view in the training of the Greeks was the development of the intellect—in Greece you see intellect in its meridian brilliance. The paramount object in view in the training of the Romans was the development of the will—in Rome you see will screwed up to its highest pitch. But the paramount object in view in the training of the Jews was to develop the conscience, to make the moral nature keenly alive to the eternal distinction between right and wrong. Accordingly, God gave the Jews, not

the canons of taste, but the canons of morality. Not through the understanding nor the will, but through the conscience can the world be saved. God therefore took the discipline of the conscience into His own hands. The truth must not be overlooked that the great function of Judaism was to cultivate the conscience by constant and emphatic insistence on the radical difference between right and wrong. And John, following in the wake of the Old Testament prophets, strove to awake the national conscience from the profound torpor of centuries. "He came preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent."

This kind of ministry, which appeals straight to the conscience, is sorely needed in our own country and century. The High Church clergy appeal principally to the imagination: they endeavour to please refined taste; their services conform to the principles of art rather than to the principles of morality. The Broad Church clergy, again, appeal principally to the understanding: they are inspired by an ardent love of truth; they esteem truth above all other things, even above holiness itself. It should therefore be the chief aim of the Low Church and Nonconformity to appeal to the conscience and rouse that. The chief characteristic of Calvinism is that as a system it is based on the conscience. Calvinism satisfies neither the reason nor the heart, but it has a mighty fascination for the conscience. It lays infinite stress on *righteousness*, and righteousness constitutes the factor by which the conscience is roused and invigorated. Calvinism is,

first and foremost before it has any other claim. The reformers and the undaunted would sacrifice rather than do damage.

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first and last, the theology of the conscience; wherefore it has given the world in the Protestant Reformers and the English Puritans men unrivalled for the undaunted strength of their convictions, men who would sacrifice their livings, liberty, and life itself, rather than be guilty of the slightest act that would do damage to the conscience.

The supreme object of the ministry of every age should be the cultivation of the conscience. I do not assert it should be the only object, but without controversy it should be the first object. Man is not all conscience. He is reason and imagination besides; and Christianity, as the religion of humanity in the totality of its powers, is designed to cover the whole area. But its paramount work is to awaken the conscience. "By manifestation of the truth we commend ourselves to every man's conscience." "I will make thee," says the Lord to Isaiah, "a new threshing instrument with teeth." That describes precisely the kind of ministry the Church just now wants—a ministry with teeth to it, a ministry that will bite. Preachers especially should beware lest their sermons lose their teeth.

2. His aim being the conscience, he neither reasoned nor apologized, but stated the truth in its stark nakedness. Ratiocination is best adapted to satisfy the understanding; but declamation is best adapted to quicken the conscience. Ministers should speak the truth, and not be over-anxious to construct an elaborate argument in its defence. We should shoot the lightnings into the conscience, and not be over-careful

to elucidate the laws of electricity; it is the lightnings and not an exposition of their laws which kill. Many preachers in the present day are afraid to be dogmatic; is not the dogmatism of theology sternly forbidden by the dogmatism of science? Consequently many assume unconsciously a timid, apologetic tone. But if my observation be right, dogmatics, not apologetics, it is which save the world. I do not say we should be dogmatic as to the geological construction of the globe, or the evolution of the human species, or such like questions which lie far away on the remote boundaries of theological science. But are we forbidden to speak positively of the Incarnation of the Son of God? Of the atonement He offered on Calvary for the sins of the world? Of His ascension to the right hand of the Father? Are these questions to be doubtfully canvassed in the pulpit? Are we to hesitate and waver? If we must hesitate and waver at all, let us do it, not in the pulpit, but out of it. The man who hesitates concerning the fundamentals of religion, has no right to enter the pulpit at all. On the central topics of the Gospel, ministers are and ought to be dogmatic.

IV. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, and saying, Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." This affords me an opportunity of saying a few words on the **MOTIVE FORCES** of his ministry. Now the Kingdom wears two aspects: of wrath, to those who obstinately refuse allegiance to it; of grace, to all who submit and accept its overtures of peace.

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1. The first element is the Divine *wrath*. This is the truth to which John gives special prominence. Severity accords better than grace with the genius of his mind and of his dispensation. Every kingdom, whilst conciliatory to its confederates, is terrible to its foes. "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" The Jewish nation was about to be overwhelmed by an irresistible outburst of Divine fury. It had enjoyed advantages beyond all the nations of the earth; but instead of magnifying God for them, it magnified itself upon them. The Jews excelled the other nations in privileges, not in conduct. Divine anger was hovering like a thundercloud over them, ready to burst upon them in wild cataracts of sad misfortune. It was their imperative duty to "flee."

What is true of the Jewish nation as a whole, is true of every individual sinner in this congregation. "The wrath of God abideth on him." Flee—flee—flee. But whither? Whither, too, but to the place God has appointed? "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." A company of travellers were journeying together through one of the vast prairies of America, covered with the hay and stubble of centuries. As they were about to encamp for the night, the guide observed that the fringe of the distant horizon looked ruddier than usual. Presently he gazed again, and the sky appeared to be all in flames. The solemn truth dawned on his mind that the prairie was on fire. What to do? Escape through the high, entangling

grass in their then weary and exhausted state was impossible. He therefore struck a match, set the grass on fire just where they stood. The fire burnt slowly at first, more fiercely afterwards. Presently it burnt a large circle, and the guide looking with satisfaction at it devouring its way to meet the fiery wave that was rolling towards them, cried out to the company—"Rush into the circle; stand all where the fire has burnt." Within that circle they were all safe, notwithstanding the wild conflagration that was raging round them on every hand. And as I look far away to the sloping horizon of time, I behold the firmament red with the wild flames of the Judgment Day. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Is there a place of refuge where poor trembling sinners may witness the grand panorama of worlds all in a blaze shooting like rockets through the sky, and yet be safe? Yes! Another fire was kindled on Calvary, it burnt fiercely and hot; but, blessed be God, it burnt a place of safety for us. We are now invited to enter within the Circle of the Sacrifice. "Stand all where the fire has burnt"—no harm shall befall you there.

2. The other factor is *Divine Grace*. John dwelt chiefly on the Divine Wrath; but we, living at the zenith of the Gospel dispensation, should expatiate more particularly on Divine Grace. Repent—why? Because Wrath is coming. Repent—

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why? Because Grace *has* come. Grace has overtaken us before Wrath, and by accepting the Grace we may escape the Wrath. John lived just before the Sun of Righteousness arose, the coldest hour of the long night. He therefore snatched a few flaming brands from the Everlasting Burnings, and wildly flung them here and there on the sea of ice. The flames glowed fiercely, and thawed the ice wherever they fell; but the thawing was only in patches. But now the Sun has risen high above the horizon, he has climbed the slopes of the morning, he sheds down his light and heat, and the ice is gradually melting from pole to pole. In flinging the flames about there is more excitement; but the Sun melts, though silently, yet more effectually. Wrath frightens and overcomes; Grace wins and subdues. Repent—why? “Our God is a consuming fire.” Repent—why? “God is love.”



IV.

The Temptation of Christ.

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."—ST. MATT. iv. 1.

A HOT controversy was waged in the Middle Ages concerning the peccability of Christ. Could Christ sin? One class of theologians, taking their stand on His Divine nature, answered in the negative; another class, taking their stand on His human nature, answered in the affirmative. Orthodox divines, however, all agree that He had the power *not* to sin; and that was the power humanity most urgently needed. The power to sin was common enough, alas! too common, in this world of ours. Unfortunately it does not require much ability to sin. What was rare among men was ability not to sin; and this ability Jesus Christ possessed, and is willing to impart to all His faithful followers.

Taking this truth then for granted, I now proceed to the consideration of the *Temptation of Christ*, as presented to us in the context. Time will not allow me to comment on the numerous theories touching this subject; as much as I can do is to comment on the story as related by the Evangelists.

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Luke says that He was *led*, Matthew that He was *led up*, words signifying the concurrence of His will with the impulses of the Spirit. He was not led reluctantly like a victim in the train of the victor; He supremely desired to retire for a while from human society, till He could again compose His excited feelings consequent on the marvellous revelations granted Him in His baptism. Mark uses a stronger word: "And immediately the Spirit *driveth* Him into the wilderness." His capacious nature was filled to the brim with the Holy Spirit. As the wind blows in the unfolded canvas of a ship and bears her powerfully along, so the Divine afflatus blew quite a gale in the outstretched faculties of the Saviour, and carried Him out of public view into the solitudes of the wilderness. He was in a state of unusual excitement, the Divine seeming for a time to overpower the human. But the true Divine always moves in the lines of the true human, so that after all the "driving" is only "leading." The Divine power does not break, it only bends, the human will.

II. Jesus led up of the Spirit into the WILDERNESS.

What wilderness is here meant cannot be definitely settled, probably one of the Judæan wildernesses. Observe the marked contrast between Christ's temptation and Adam's. Adam was placed in a garden—the scenery charming and food abundant; and yet he fell. But Christ was tempted in a

wilderness—the landscape grim and food scarce; and yet He stood. Amid every advantage to stand, Adam fell; amid every facility to fall, Christ stood. The question, no doubt, has often presented itself, Why lead Him into a wilderness? Why not conduct Him to some secluded enclosure, well stocked with fruit trees, from which He might occasionally refresh His exhausted nature? The answer is—that the Saviour must be absolutely deprived of all earthly resources, and thrown back entirely upon His moral centre. He must stand in the bare nakedness of His inner personality, and fight out the great battle of humanity without any extraneous aid, and thus demonstrate for ever His love of the right and hatred of the wrong for their own sakes.

St. Mark adds another very significant feature—“He was there with the wild beasts.” The preposition “with” signifies He had established Himself with them on terms of happy intimacy. He was under no necessity of devising means of protection against their sudden raids; He moved among them on terms of sweet amity. In His holy presence their ferocity seemed immediately to depart. They were once more brought into right relationship with man and with one another.

“Among wild beasts; they at His sight grew mild,
Nor sleeping, Him, nor waking, harmed.”

Man in his creation was entrusted with the supreme sovereignty of the world. “Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of

the air, and upon the beast of the field. Man brought to earth lost his right from His fall, its allegiance only himself. In his fall of the earth ground for sin, Adam terms of grown wild nature of rated—mar Vestiges of seen through and the ani former gen riority. St animosity. appeared, fi old relatio the old kin the leopard lawful mon ingly. The first Adam beasts. Th in the wilde

the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." "The Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam." But through sin man lost his rightful dominion. The moment man fell from His allegiance to God, the universe fell from its allegiance to man. Adam's fall involved not only himself and his posterity, but the entire world. In his fall the lion and the tiger fell; even the soil of the earth became impoverished. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." Before the introduction of sin, Adam dwelt with the beasts in Paradise on terms of closest friendship—nature had not then grown wild. But upon the entrance of evil, the nature of man and of beasts became sadly deteriorated—man grew cruel, and the beasts grew fierce. Vestiges of the original sovereignty continued to be seen throughout the centuries. When human nature and the animal nature were brought face to face, the former generally succeeded in demonstrating its superiority. Still their relation was one of warfare and animosity. But when Christ, "the second man," appeared, free from the degrading taint of sin, the old relation was temporarily re-established, and the old kingship revived. The lion, the tiger, and the leopard instinctively acknowledged Him as their lawful monarch, and made Him obeisance accordingly. The Lord God led the wild beasts to the first Adam; He led the second Adam to the wild beasts. The disturbed harmony of Eden was restored in the wilderness. On the same principle we are to

understand the striking incident in Christ's last journey to Jerusalem. "And He saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you; and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat: loose him, and bring him. And they brought the colt to Jesus, and He sat upon him." How came an unbroken colt to walk quietly to town, and to carry its burden sedately the first time it was ever ridden? The answer must be found, not in the skill or dexterity, but in the moral character of the Divine Rider. He manifested such royal dignity and gentleness that an untrained ass at once submitted willingly to His rule. Goodness is an unrivalled tamer of the animal creation. And His sojourn in the desert with savage, bloodthirsty beasts is an infallible pledge of the sure advent of the millennium. His short life of thirty-three years is the type and condensation of the 1 life of humanity.

III. Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS BAPTISM.

The Evangelists take care to note that His withdrawal at once succeeded His Baptism. The sequence of events, no doubt, is governed by a deep rhythm, whether we be able to discover it, or not. What, then, was the object of His sudden disappearance?

1. One object, doubtless, was to *commune with His Father*. The strange occurrences of the Baptism threw His nature, moral and intellectual, into a seething ferment. The witness He had just received

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to His Divine Sonship thrilled through His whole being, and evoked a deep and awful response. He retired, therefore, into the loneliness of the desert, there to reflect devoutly on the revelation vouchsafed Him, and to find sweet repose in the paternal bosom whence He came. So absorbing was His contemplation, that, like Moses on the Mount, He forgot all the most urgent needs of His physical nature. "He fasted forty days and forty nights." "And in those days He did eat nothing." He buried Himself deep in the bosom of God, and entered eagerly and sympathetically into the purposes of His love.

2. Another end in view was to realise the *plan of His life*. To say that Christ drew a plan of His life is, perhaps, hardly right. In fact, the plan was already drawn; He had only intelligently to recognise it, and then firmly to execute it. For forty days He endeavoured to comprehend the Divine Idea respecting Himself; gradually, as His human capacities could receive, the Divine revelations were given. He came out of the wilderness perfectly aware of the self-denying course He was to follow, and of the stubborn resistance He should encounter. From the first moment of His public ministry, He is free from hesitation or wavering; He makes no tentative efforts; He stamps on every word and deed the impress of perfection. The teaching, of course, is characterised by progress; but no improvement, mental or moral, is discernible in the Teacher. Take in your hand an English

Grammar. You discover progress in the plan of the Grammar; the last lessons are more advanced than the first; but you do not discover progress in the author. He could not have evinced such mastery of the subject in the first pages, did he not know the end when he composed the beginning. Thus progress marks the teaching of Jesus Christ. The first eighteen months of His public ministry are characterised by cheerfulness, bordering almost on buoyancy, and contain hardly an allusion to His death. But the last eighteen months are deeply tinged with sadness, now and again verging almost on despondency, and teem with allusions to His approaching end. Some see in the change of tone a change of plan, but I perceive in it only progress. He could not have taught with such authority and certitude in the early stages of His ministry, did He not foresee the tragic events of the close. Into those forty days was compressed the thinking of the twenty centuries which have followed. In that brief period He thought out the leading truths of the Church from that date until now. What intense thinking! No wonder He had no time to attend to the necessities of His physical nature.

3. Another object he had in view was to *encounter the Devil*. Run with the wind, and you hardly know it is blowing. Run against it, and you are convinced of the existence of a resisting medium; and in direct proportion to the speed with which you run, will be your consciousness of the force with which you are opposed. Thus as long

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as you run with the Devil and promptly do his behests, you may be inclined to deny his existence. Disobey him, and you will be made painfully aware of a spectral being casting his dark shadow upon you, and endeavouring to thwart all your efforts in the direction of goodness and holiness. The Divine and the Devilish are closely allied in human experience. In this world the Devil-consciousness is in direct proportion to the God-consciousness; where the latter is superficial, the former is proportionately shallow. The measure of our sympathy with goodness is the measure of our antipathy to evil. Whereas the saints almost invariably believe firmly in the Devil—St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Luther—and dolefully bemoan his sore temptations, the poets and philosophers are disposed to ridicule him and deny him. Why? Because in the absence of a vivid consciousness of the Divine, a vivid consciousness of the Diabolical is well nigh an impossibility.

Now the Baptism is remarkable for the consciousness of God which burst in upon the Saviour. A warm glow of holy enthusiasm pervaded Him, body, mind, and spirit. He never afterwards, perhaps, attained such lofty heights of ecstatic experience. Of course, He was full of the Holy Ghost all along from the Baptism to the Crucifixion; but fulness of the Holy Ghost does not imply a state of continuous rapture. A believer is as full of the Holy Ghost when he is asleep as when he is awake, when his feet follow his secular avocations as when his countenance glistens in the Sabbath worship. Neverthe-

less, the tides of his emotions continually ebb and flow. In like manner, Christ was always, after His Baptism, "full of the Holy Ghost;" but His spiritual experiences often fluctuated. His emotional nature, I imagine, was never more powerfully wrought upon than at His Baptism. A joy almost too exhilarating to bear thrilled through all the chords of His being. It follows that in the period immediately succeeding He would most fully realise His antagonism to all that is inimical to God. Thus the Baptism with the Holy Spirit must, in the nature of things, be succeeded by the Baptism with the Evil Spirit.

IV. Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness immediately after His Baptism to be **TEMPTED**.

Now "to tempt" has two meanings: first, to try, test, prove; next, to allure, seduce, entice to evil.

1. To *try*. "He was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted;" that is, to be tried or proved, that He might reveal His celestial mettle and show clearly of what stuff He was made. The man who is never tried knows not his own strength; nay, he acquires not the strength of which he is capable. An untried spirit necessarily means an undeveloped spirit. God, therefore, makes every moral being, whether angelic or human, go through a severe process of probation. In exercise only can man, physically and spiritually, gain strength. Consequently, if Christ was to become morally stronger than all other men, it could only be by being morally

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exercised above all other men. Sinlessness is negative, holiness is positive; and it was requisite the "second-Adam," like the first, should encounter the temptation of the devil before His sinlessness could unfold into holiness. The temptation was, therefore, not a matter of choice, but of stern necessity, in the development of His character.

It, furthermore, revealed the latent forces which lay deep down in His nature. He had just felt the Divine call to be the Saviour of the race. But has He the moral calibre necessary for His task? Is He endowed with the powers of doing and suffering adequate to carry Him through till "He brings forth judgment unto victory"? At the first outset He is led to a personal encounter with the arch-fiend; the Deliverer and the Destroyer are locked in a death-struggle. And no sooner has He practical demonstration of His superior might than a new confidence possesses Him. "He returned unto Galilee in the power of the Spirit." What was only plenitude of the Spirit at the commencement of the Temptation, becomes the "power of the Spirit" at its close. And forthwith He began to "cast out devils." Having overcome the Prince of devils, He cast out the little devils with ease. "He cast them out with His word"—only with His word. No grappling of spirit with spirit, no strenuous wrestling as of giants in mortal combat—that was behind in the wilderness; His mere word sufficed to drive them out like vipers from their hiding-places.

2. *To allure to evil.* The question may natu-

rally be asked, Why did the Holy Ghost lead Him to be tempted, whilst we are taught to pray that we may be delivered from temptation? There is something in the text startling to the ordinary current of our thoughts. But we should remember that Jesus could not be thoroughly tried without being tempted, nor thoroughly tempted without being seduced to evil. The first meaning in its fulness includes the second. To be thoroughly tried means to be tried, not in one way, but in every way; not only by suffering, but also by sin. Divine Wisdom thought proper to expose the "First Man" to the temptation of the Devil, and shall the "Second Man" escape? Humanity is sorely tried by suffering, it is true; but it is and always has been more sorely tried by sin; and Christ must not escape the peril—the only great peril—to which His human brethren are all exposed. Not only He must bear the burden of sin's guilt, but He must feel the force of sin's temptation. The solicitation of Him to evil formed, therefore, an indispensable process in the way of salvation. Strike out the temptation, which is a stumbling-block to so many commentators, and you have no Saviour. No one can deliver from the power of the Devil who has not first conquered the Devil. The temptation was necessary to perfect Him as a Saviour, and an imperfect Saviour would be no Saviour at all.

V. Jesus led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the DEVIL. The question inevitably arises—Whence did the suggestions to evil arise?

1. A few had their own deputation to submit to, and would hail it as the history to that effect. The material supplied by the time. But "the times" spirits which

2. Many to the nature. He was gentle reflecting on the course of thought here. The different of suggestion of evil plausible, can the thoughts were, and of Jesus, then His thoughts are. But we are separate from not originate contaminated that He neither

1. A few writers go on the supposition that they had their origin in a *fellow-man*—in a scribe or a deputation of scribes, despatched from the Sanhedrim to submit to Him the conditions upon which they would hail Him as the long-promised Messiah. But as the history contains not the slightest intimation to that effect, we are bound summarily to dismiss it. The materials of the temptation were probably supplied by the ideas in vogue in Jewish society at the time. But we should not forget that “the spirit of the times” is often the spirit of evil. There are spirits which rule in the air.

2. Many otherwise fair authors seem to trace them to the natural operations of Christ's *own mind*. As He was gently reclining in a cave of the wilderness, reflecting on the dismal condition of the world and the course He should pursue therein, the train of thought here parabolically described started itself. The different temptations arose in virtue of the law of suggestion, and therefore did not argue the existence of evil in Christ. But no sophistry, however plausible, can explain away the plain truth that, if the thoughts were morally wrong, as confessedly they were, and originated spontaneously in the mind of Jesus, then His nature must have been corrupt. Evil thoughts are never dissociated from an evil heart. But we are taught He was “harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” “Harmless” in that He did not originate evil; “undefiled” in that He was not contaminated by evil; “separate from sinners” in that He neither imparted nor contracted evil.

3. It remains, therefore, that the temptations must have proceeded from a *personal Devil*. "To be tempted of the Devil." "The Tempter came unto Him."

If it be asked, How the Tempter came? In what shape? I cannot tell. Maybe that he came as a bare naked spirit, and whispered inaudibly, yet distinctly, in the Saviour's ear his wicked thoughts. But I confess that I am inclined to believe he appeared in visible corporeity. Not, however, as pictured in the story-books of our childhood—an ugly satyr in rags, with his tail and horns and cloven feet clearly visible. It would not require much moral courage to repel indignantly the insidious approaches of such an one. In my illustrated copy of Milton, the artist, borrowing his conception from the poet, portrays him as a rustic shepherd with the pastoral crook in his right hand and a bundle of fire-wood under his left arm. But I rather think that he appeared as an angel of light or some high ecclesiastical or civil functionary, one whose outward mien would lend weight and plausibility to his arguments. You ask, Why I believe in the visibility of the Devil? First, because that is the first impression the narrative makes on every unsophisticated reader. Second, because a visible embodiment would lend force to the temptation. A sinless nature is not as accessible as a depraved nature to sinister influences; a sinless nature, it seems to me, can most effectually be tempted through the bodily senses. A fallen nature has sin within, ready to respond to the artful solici-

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tations of sin without. "The Devil entered Judas"—he found an open avenue by which to commune with the traitor spirit. But the Devil could not so enter Jesus. The purity of the Saviour, in virtue of the law of antipathies, effectually barred his entrance. Likes attract, unlikes repel. There was, therefore, no facile way of access to the mind of Christ except through the open gates of the senses; and to gain access thereby the adversary must become visible, capable of articulating human speech. This, I believe, was the reason he had to embody himself in a serpent before he could tempt our sinless Representative in Paradise; and the same reason demands he should assume the semblance of a human body to tempt our sinless Representative in the wilderness. Good spirits possess the power to materialize themselves, then why not evil spirits? At the close of the temptation, "angels came and ministered unto Him;" and in Gethsemane "an angel appeared unto Him, strengthening Him." And if angels have inherently the power to assume human shapes, then why not devils?

What impression did the Devil's temptations make upon Christ? Did they awake any response within Him? We must answer Yes and No. Yes, from His physical and intellectual nature; No, from His moral nature, and the moral nature is the seat of good and evil. Did they meet with no response, there would have been practically no temptation. But the Scriptures teach us that He felt the power of temptation. "He suffered, being tempted;" that is, the

temptation violently wrenched His nature, causing Him acute mental agony. Take the first temptation—"Command that these stones be made bread." Were this suggestion made to Him in the midst of plenty, it would have darted off like a wooden shaft from a marble pillar, and left not a trace behind. But at the time the pangs of starvation were upon Him. In His hunger, therefore, the temptation gained a foothold; in His natural appetite it found a place to grip Him. His bodily cravings at once joined issue with the solicitations of evil, for the stomach knows no distinction between good and bad; and as a consequence the Saviour felt His whole being upheaved and convulsed to its deepest depths.

Take the other temptations. "Then the Devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on the pinnacle of the Temple." "Again, the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain." I take the words literally. To understand them literally up to the fourth verse, and spiritually afterwards, as most commentators do, is to introduce into the narrative two antagonistic principles of interpretation, and to rob the temptation of a great deal of its force. "We cannot bring ourselves to believe," exclaim the learned critics, "that the blessed Saviour should be so far surrendered to the power of the Devil, as to be led on foot or transported through the air, from place to place, at the Devil's pleasure. We rather picture Him as sitting under the shadow of a huge rock in the desert, and making these journeys only in imagination." The

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old story again—men cannot believe as much as the Bible affirms. The temptation must be shorn of a part of its reality, to square with our preconceived notions respecting the power of the Evil Spirit, and the proprieties that should be observed between him and the Saviour of the world. But the fact is—the Saviour was more severely tempted and more roughly handled by the fiend than we are bold enough to picture. It is with this as with other truths—the letter of the Bible goes farther than our specious philosophies. The believers in the letter are intellectually bolder than the advocates of the symbolic interpretation; they think and believe more, not less. The temptation of Christ was severer than our learned commentators dare conceive. The Devil had a terrible power over His body and mind, a power similar to that he had over Job, not altogether dissimilar to that he exercised over demoniacs, and yet His moral nature continued all through in its strict integrity without twist or flaw! The Saviour was fearfully bruised in His dread conflict with the malignant foe; His entire nature received a terrible shock. “He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.” We cannot believe it, cry the critics. Very likely not; it is almost too awful for belief.

VI. Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness immediately after His Baptism to be tempted of the Devil in ALL POSSIBLE WAYS.

I. Notice the extraordinary *prolongation* of the

temptation. Two of the Evangelists inform us that it extended over the forty days. The Devil eagerly witnessed His baptism, persistently dogged His steps in the wilderness. The very presence of the Devil must have had a depressing influence upon Him. Some climates repress the energy of the blood; and some persons by their mere presence freeze our buoyancy. In words they may praise goodness; but their very breath, like the east wind, blasts its bloom. A deadening influence emanates unconsciously from them and damps our ardour. Margaret in Faust felt this withering influence of Mephistopheles—

“ His presence chills my blood ;
Besides, when he is near I ne'er could pray,
And this it is that eats my heart away.”

And no doubt the Devil's presence cast a chill on the delicate lily of the Saviour's humanity. This unconscious, but sickly, influence must form a constituent element in the temptation of the forty days.

2. The *wide area* covered by the temptation is as remarkable as its extraordinary length. “When the Devil had finished all the temptation, he departed from Him.” “All the temptation,” literally, *every* temptation. The Devil had completely exhausted all his wiles; he had directed his virulent attacks upon every power and faculty of the Saviour. The first temptation was directed against His physical nature; the second against His spiritual nature; the third against His intellectual or imaginative nature. No point was left unassailed. “He was tempted in

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all points like as we are." Not in a few points, but in all points. He was tempted round about the entire circumference of His being. There is no faculty for action or endurance tried in us but the same faculty was previously tried in Him. He knows exactly how every man feels under every temptation; not because He suffered precisely under the same circumstances, but because He suffered precisely in the same faculties. No trial, no sorrow, no suffering can befall us in any point of our being but Christ has suffered the same.

3. To the length and breadth of the temptation we must add its *depth*. The intensity of the temptation baffles our description. The Evangelists give us to understand that it steadily increased to the very last. The days immediately following the baptism, when He was at the white heat of the Divine enthusiasm, all aglow with the fire of the Spirit, the assaults of the fiend could hardly make any impression upon Him. In that high state of spiritual temperature man is well-nigh above temptation. Evil suggestions die before they are born. But as the temperature cooled, the temptation increased in virulence; and when He was at His weakest, the temptation was at its strongest. Temptations borrow their strength from our weakness. The temptation which one day we cast from us in an instant, another day quite overpowers us. Why? It is the same temptation? Yes, but we are not the same; we are changed in mood and circumstances; we are changed, perhaps, in health. When we are bodily and men-

tally strong, the temptation is weak; when we are bodily and mentally weak, the temptation is strong. Thus Jesus, on His first retirement to the wilderness, fresh in body and flushed in mind, could hardly be reached by temptation. But as the forty days wore on, and His vigour gradually declined, temptation was gathering strength at the same ratio. When His body utterly collapsed for want of food, and His brain reeled almost deliriously under the awful strain, the temptation had gathered fearful strength and burst upon Him in terrible fury.

Wide surface and great depth seldom go together. But though the temptation of Christ covered the entire area of humanity, yet in every point the temptation was most intense. Every faculty in Him was strained to its highest tension. Never was there such tremendous force brought to bear upon any one as upon Him; His whole nature quivered under the awful concussion. "He suffered, being tempted." The desperate assaults of the Enemy, inspired as they were by the fellest malignity, gave Him keen anguish; His holy nature was severely bruised. His divinity did not blunt the edge of the satanic appeals; rather did He, because of His divinity, feel them all the more keenly. As His Divine nature did not deaden His susceptibilities to physical pain, but rather excite and intensify them, so it did not numb his susceptibilities to moral pain, but rather quicken and sharpen them. The storm which creates only tiny ripples on the inland lake, produces mountainous waves upon the Atlantic. "He suffered, being

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He did not live long in the world, but He sustained in that brief period the whole force of every temptation which may possibly assail humanity. He did not live long, but He lived much. He lived through life. The majority of men live only through a small portion of life. A man spends eighty years in the world, and yet, at the end of that long term, vast tracts of experience remain which he has not touched. But Christ traversed every region of life, drank the goblet to its very dregs. It is a common remark that when Christ died, He finished dying—He went through death and emerged triumphantly the other side. Others die—die—die, but they never finish dying. But Christ died the death, He finished dying; "He *accomplished* His decease in Jerusalem." The same remark is equally applicable to His life. He lived through life. In thirty-three years He exhausted every emotion it is possible for man to experience. He cried out on the cross, "It is finished." Not only had He finished doing, but He had finished feeling. Had He lived a hundred years longer, there would be no new regions of experience for Him to explore. He finished living ere He began dying. He traversed the whole continent of finite existence, and yet "without sin."

A vague, undefinable feeling lurks in many minds that it cost Him less than it costs us to resist "the Wicked One," that He conquered in virtue of the active exercise of His Divine attributes. But we

should endeavour to distinctly apprehend that the battle was fought out on the field of our humanity, and won by forces available to every child of man. He triumphed, not as God, but as man. It is not without a purpose that the Evangelists all note that Jesus was "an hungered." His hunger must not be overlooked in our estimate of the temptation. The Devil chose the hour most favourable to the accomplishment of his infernal designs, the hour of the Saviour's extreme anguish, when a sinking, dying sensation had possessed Him, in consequence of His long fast, when body and mind seemed utterly to collapse. He will succumb? No; Christ at His lowest vanquished the Devil at his highest; the Saviour at His weakest routed the adversary at his strongest. Here, then, we behold the strange spectacle of humanity in its extremest condition, on the very brink of starvation, overcoming "principalities and powers." Weak man at his weakest proved too strong for the Devil at his strongest.

You may rest assured the Devil exerted himself to the utmost to give His nature a wrong bent, His faculties a false development. He marshalled all his forces to overbear Him—to press Him in the direction of evil. We all incline to evil. Look at the forest; you can say from the bent of the trees from which quarter the wind chiefly blows throughout the year—more boughs branch out on one side than on the other. And if you look on the dense forest of humanity, you can easily infer from the uniform bias of mankind that a strong current has been

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steadily blowing them in the direction of evil. The same current blew on Christ. Did He bend? No; "tempted like as we are, yet without sin," He appeared when the wind was blowing higher than usual, when it had waxed to a furious tempest. Men by the score were possessed of devils; there has not been such a period in the world's history before or since. The blast blew fiercely. The scribes and priests and elders of the people—the hearts of oak of the nation—were shaken to the roots. Did Christ yield? No; He stood firm and erect in the midst of the storm. "When the Devil had finished all the temptation, he leaveth Him." "Tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin."

His victory is a source of encouragement to us. When Correggio first saw the unrivalled creations of Raphael, he rapturously exclaimed, "I also am a painter!" The successes of Raphael carried inspiration to his soul. And when we read that Christ held on His way without swerving to right or left, notwithstanding the tremendous pressure brought to bear upon Him, a fresh courage possesses us, and we cry out, "We also are men!" What the "man Christ Jesus" did, we also may hope to do in His strength. "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you."

V.

Jesus Christ as a Public Teacher.

“And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain : and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him ; and He opened His mouth and taught them.”—ST. MATT. v. 1, 2.

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine : for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”—ST. MATT. vii. 28, 29.

STUDENTS of the Saviour's history generally observe that the first year of His public life was chiefly remarkable for the “mighty works” He performed, and the last year for the “mighty words” He delivered. At the outset miracles, at the close sermons. We are able partly to discover the reason for this procedure. The Saviour's first duty was manifestly to arrest public attention, and call together a crowd; and this He could more successfully do by performing miracles than by delivering sermons. Works always more deeply impress the untutored than words. Some one has compared miracles to a “bell,” and the comparison is a very felicitous one. And in the verses before the text we see Jesus Christ going “round about all Galilee,” ringing the bell of miracles. To whichever neighbourhood he went He rang the bell—He healed the sick or cast out devils. As a natural conse-

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quence people turned out eagerly from their houses and villages to ascertain the cause, to learn why the bell was ringing, especially the great bell, the bell which had not rung before for five or six centuries. They had often heard the little bells of the scribes and Pharisees ring, but this is the first time for them to hear God's bell ring. Consequently they flocked from all the hamlets and towns to inquire the reason. "There followed Him great multitudes from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan."

Here is a large congregation gathered together by the bell of miracles; now then for a sermon worthy of the occasion. A congregation first, a sermon afterwards. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him; and He opened His mouth and taught them." That is the Evangelist's introduction to the sermon generally known as the Sermon on the Mount. "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine, for He taught them as One having authority and not as the scribes." That is the Evangelist's criticism on the sermon after it was delivered—a very fine criticism, for it was a very fine sermon. Now if we put the introduction before the sermon and the criticism after the sermon in juxtaposition, we shall learn that this remarkable discourse was delivered, not only in the hearing of the disciples, but also in the hearing of the people. The subject, therefore, which presents

itself to our meditation is—*Jesus Christ as a Preacher*; in other words, Jesus Christ as a Public Teacher. The subject divides itself naturally into three parts:—

- I. Jesus Christ speaking.
- II. Jesus Christ speaking with authority.
- III. Jesus Christ speaking with authority to the people.

I. JESUS CHRIST SPEAKING. Two sentences are used in the text to describe His great power and skill as a speaker.

1. The first is this: "He opened His mouth and taught them"—words denoting the *naturalness* of His speech. "He opened His mouth." Many ingenious conjectures have been made respecting the precise meaning of these words. Stier explains them thus: "Humanity is the mouth of creation, Christ is the mouth of humanity." Luther explains them thus: "Open thy mouth, speak boldly, finish quickly"—a very necessary exhortation to preachers who are apt to spin out their sermons longer than the hearers can spin out their patience. But they seem to me to contain a clear intimation that to Jesus Christ to speak was no effort. He had not to elaborate His discourses beforehand. He had only to open His mouth, and Divine thoughts at once flowed out in a deep river of golden speech. Read the sermons of other men and you everywhere discern signs of effort, symptoms of a certain straining after effect. Read the sermons of Jesus Christ and you nowhere perceive signs of effort; in all His utterances you are

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conscious of the most serene repose. His thoughts grew freely, naturally, spontaneously within Him, like primroses in the corner of a field. He had only to "open His mouth," and forthwith "gracious" words proceeded out thereof. We are taught to look upon Him as a Prophet, Priest, and King; and in the text for the first time He assumes publicly the office of a Prophet. What, then, is the fundamental idea of a prophet? Well, the Hebrew word for prophet, the famous word *nabi*, is derived from another which signifies "to bubble up." In Israel, therefore, a prophet was compared to a fountain of water gushing up spontaneously from the ground, and, without the aid of hydraulic machinery, sending forth a mighty river to refresh the thirsty land. A prophet, then, is one whose thoughts bubble up spontaneously in his soul, without educational or any other human aid. And Jesus Christ fulfilled the idea of a prophet as He did every other idea. To speak to Him was no effort. He had but to open His mouth, and majestic thoughts at once flowed forth like water from a spring. He was the most natural and easy speaker the world ever saw. "Never man spake like this man."

2. The second sentence is this: "The people were astonished at His doctrine"—words denoting the *effectiveness* of His speech. "The people were astonished," not at Him, but "at His doctrine." Their admiration ran out, not in the direction of the Speaker, but in the direction of the sermon—an incidental but infallible proof of the exquisite perfection of His oratory. When the sun shines in His meri-

dian splendour and covers hill and dale with his golden radiance, men exclaim, "How beautiful the earth looks! how fine the landscape in front of us!" They mutter not a syllable about the sun; they forget him in the intensity of their admiration for the earth which he illuminates. But when the moon shines, and only half enlightens the globe, men cry out, "What a fair, fine, full moon!" They positively stop in the street and gaze rapturously at her. They say not a word about the earth; they forget her in the intensity of their admiration for the moon. It is precisely the same in the world of human kind. A great man, like the sun, makes people forget him in his subject; a little man, like the moon, makes people forget his subject in him. A first-rate preacher sinks himself in his sermon; a second-rate preacher sinks his sermon in himself. This, says an ancient historian, incontrovertibly demonstrates the superiority of Demosthenes as an orator over Cicero. People listening to Cicero admired Cicero. After a grand oratorical display, every tongue in Rome would be set going to magnify the rare abilities of Cicero. The soundness or sophistry of the argument was overlooked—all the praise went to the credit of Cicero. But people listening to Demosthenes forgot Demosthenes. They returned home, firmly knitting their brows, convulsively clenching their fists, and ominously hastening their tread, saying, "Let us go and fight Philip." Not a word about the matchless eloquence of the orator; they forgot him in the eagerness of their desire to go and

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hurl back the ruthless tyrant. And it is noteworthy that at the conclusion of this discourse of Jesus Christ, it is recorded that the people's admiration was directed not towards the Preacher, but towards the sermon. The time was to come, it is true, when He was to direct special attention to Himself, but not as yet. His special aim now was to lead their thoughts to the fundamental principles of the kingdom He came to establish, and in this He succeeded admirably. He was doubtless the most masterly speaker that ever addressed an assembly. "The people were astonished," not at Him, "but at His doctrine."

II. Jesus Christ speaking with AUTHORITY. "For He taught them as One having authority and not as the scribes." The scribes were practically the philosophers, poets, and commentators of Jewry; we are, therefore, quite justified in taking them to represent these three classes of men.

I. "He taught them as one having authority" and not as the *philosophers*. Well, how did the philosophers speak? They spoke hesitantly, had recourse to long and tortuous arguments, and at last arrived by means of logical deduction at what they dimly supposed to be the truth. They did not know the truth—they only sought it. Hence their investigations, prolonged and intense though they were, are viewed in the Bible as mere gropings. "That they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." *If haply*. There was a good deal

of "hap" in the teaching of the philosophers, but there was no hap in the teaching of Jesus Christ. He never spoke at a venture; His feet were planted on the rock of eternal truth; His tread was firm and vigorous. The philosophers were great reasoners; but Jesus Christ never reasoned. He never arrived at truth by way of argument, because the truth was already present to his mind. What is reasoning? The mind feeling its way from the known to the unknown, proceeding warily from a near and manifest truth to a truth more remote and obscure. Reasoning is only a search after truth, and they only have to search who do not already possess. Jesus Christ, therefore, had not to search, for He was already in possession.

Read the philosophers and they are always seeking truth; they strain every nerve; they pant for breath. Read the Gospels and you never see Jesus seeking; no strain or effort is anywhere perceptible; the truth is already in His grasp and under His complete control. Accordingly the philosophers taught walking—they were peripatetics. But Jesus taught sitting—the truth was in his possession. "And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain; and when He was *set*, He opened His mouth and taught them." "I *sat* daily with you teaching in the Temple." "He entered into one of the ships and He *sat* down and taught the people." The philosophers taught walking—they were seeking truth. Christ taught sitting—He possessed truth. The great words of the philosophers are "because"

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and "therefore"—the two necessary links in every chain of reasoning. But they are not the great words of Jesus Christ. What, then, are His great words? That is one, the word *declare*. "The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it." His business was not to draw inferences, but to make declarations. The philosophers sought a God lost; the Saviour advertised a God found. Another great word in His ministry is the word *testify*. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." You know a witness is not to appear in court to speculate and theorise, but to testify that which he has seen and heard. And Jesus Christ was not a speculator or a theoriser—a seeker after truth, but the witness of truth. He spoke with the directness of an eye and ear witness.

2. "He taught as one having authority" and not as the *poets*. How do they teach? They imagine, guess, teach by happy conjecture. But Jesus Christ never imagined—He knew; and inasmuch as He knew, why should He again imagine? The great word of poetry is the word "perhaps"—always understood if not expressed. Men are not very certain of their ground, and therefore they say "perhaps"—"Perhaps like this," "Perhaps like that." We say "perhaps" a hundred times a day. But the word "perhaps" found no place in the vocabulary of the Saviour. He never said the word "perhaps." Read the Gospels, and you find it not from beginning to

end. A great doctrine in the education of men is the "doctrine of probabilities." Only a year or two ago one of the greatest living statesmen wrote a learned and elaborate article to one of the leading London journals on this important subject. Men are not quite sure of the truth; we therefore pile probability on the top of probability to form what is called a "cumulative argument," and conclude by saying, "Probably it is like that." But the doctrine of probabilities found no place in the metaphysics of the Saviour. He never uttered the word "probability." "Perhaps" and "probably" are the great words of poetry; but they are not the great words of Jesus Christ. What then are His great words? That is one—the word *verily*. "Verily, verily—indeed, indeed—amen, amen"—assurance doubly sure. He takes His solemn oath that what He says is the pure unadulterated truth. Men build castles; the majority, however, build their castles in the air; but as for that we are thankful for a place to build them anywhere. Jesus Christ built castles too, magnificent and grand; but He never built one in the air. No; He founded all His castles on the immovable rock of eternal truth. Some fifteen years ago or thereabouts a very able book was published by two brothers of considerable repute, entitled, "Guesses at Truth." A very appropriate title for all books of human composition—"Guesses at Truth." But when you read the Gospels beware of labelling them "Guesses at Truth." They contain not a single guess from beginning to end—they

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are *The Truth*. Jesus Christ somewhere calls John the Baptist a "lamp." "John was a burning and a shining lamp." Like John the Baptist, all other thinkers and writers are only lamps; and lamps, however multiplied, will never make a day. Plant thousands of lamps in this town of Cardiff, and the thousands together will not make a day even in our own neighbourhood. Jesus Christ, however, was not a lamp, but a sun; and one sun suffices to make a day in eight planets the same moment. "I am the Light of the World." Not, however, Holman Hunt's "Light of the World," who is obliged to carry a lantern in his hand to show him the way; but One whose own person is filled with the infinite plenitude of Divine Light, and who scatters it broadcast upon the Universe. Lamps have to borrow their light, but suns make their own light.

3. "He taught as one having authority" and not as the *commentators*. The scribes were commentators by profession. How then did they teach? They dissected truth; and, dissecting it, they killed it. The scribes killed living truths; but Christ quickened dead truths. "My words, they are spirit and they are life." Commentators take the truths of the Bible and mercilessly analyse them, and thereby rob them of their vitality. But the Saviour did with truths as He did with men—"He healed all their sicknesses and diseases." Many a lame truth He made to leap again; many a truth struck with palsy He again restored to strength; and many a dead truth He raised again from the grave. The

general resurrection of truth is already passed. But I am afraid that we as preachers are in danger in the present day of following the example of the scribes too much, and of Jesus Christ too little. We become critics in the pulpit, and not preachers. We have taken the grand verities of Divine Revelation, minutely dissected them in the study, embalmed their bones in what we are pleased to call "Bodies of Divinity." And on Sundays we take these skeletons with us to the pulpit, and rattle their joints in the hearing of the congregations. No wonder that many timid souls are scared away. What then should we do? Imitate Christ; put flesh on the bones, and infuse life into the whole. A Body of Divinity is all very well, but the Spirit of Divinity is better. We have taken the Tree of Life into our workshops, stripped it of its foliage, lopped off its branches, split up the trunk, and tied the chips in well-assorted bundles. And on Sundays we take these bundles with us to the pulpit, and hold up one after another to the people, saying—"See here; this is the Tree of Life; its leaves will heal the sick; its fruits will quicken the dead." But the men who know how God makes trees answer—"No; God never made a tree like that; He is not the author of chips, for God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." What then should we do? Oh, show you the Tree of Life growing in the Paradise of God, with the verdant leaves waving in the wind, and the luscious fruit ripening in the sun; and the people who deny the Divine authorship of the chips will be the first to

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The commentators generally discuss the minor truths, but Jesus Christ directed attention to the great truths, truths of eternal and paramount interest to universal humanity. The scribes tithed the "mint, the anise, and the cummin" of theology. They wrangled and quibbled about trifles. But the Saviour spoke of the "weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." The doctrines He expounded were of supreme importance to every human being. Speaking world truths and not class truths, whole truths and not half truths, He awoke a distinct echo in the universal heart of humanity. Great things are more easily seen than small; fundamental truths are more intelligible than auxiliary ones. It is easier to see the sun than a star, and easier to see a big star than a little one. It is precisely the same with truths. It is the small doctrines that perplex the people; the saving doctrines are intelligible to all. Jesus Christ preached the great truths, and men instinctively felt their weight. Read the sermons of fifty and sixty years ago, and to me they are insufferably tedious. Why? Because the authors walked the boundaries of Divine truths and endeavoured to explain wherein Calvinism and Arminianism differ, instead of to explain wherein they agree. But mark you—the differentiating truths of any system are its small truths. Knowledge of the "five points" of Calvinism will not save any one, nor will ignorance of them damn any one. They

do not constitute the "saving truths." Which, then, are the "saving truths?" The truths common to the two systems. The Incarnation in Bethlehem; the Atonement on Calvary; the Intercession on the Right Hand: these are the saving truths—the great facts of the Saviour's life and death: not the philosophy of the facts, but the bare facts themselves. Some of you, like myself, have read that little book styled "The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation." I like the philosophy very well, but I like the plan better. And did we only preach the great truths, they would lend their own Divine weight to our feeble discourses. In their strength shall we be strong.

III. "He taught with authority" the PEOPLE.

1. His special endeavour was to reach the *people*. The Jewish rabbis were very scornful in their treatment of the people. "This people who knoweth not the law is cursed;" literally, "this rabble." And when officials high in authority call those under them by hard and uncomplimentary names, it is a sure sign that they are deficient in the "enthusiasm of humanity." They did not love the sheep, they only loved the wool; they did not love the flock, they only loved the fleece. But Jesus Christ loved the sheep, let who will have the wool. He yearned over them with infinite compassion. "When He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion, because they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd."

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In this the Saviour differed also from the pagan philosophers. Than Plato a nobler soul never breathed. But with sorrowful sadness we confess it, he bestowed not a moment of his time nor a fraction of his brilliant abilities to educate the masses. He and his contemporaries looked upon the large bulk of the people as well-nigh incapable of either mental or spiritual improvement. Jesus Christ, however, distinctly discerned the Divine germ in every human heart, and strove day and night with ardent hopefulness to vitalise and develop it. Plato had inscribed in large legible letters over the portals of his celebrated academy, "No admittance except for geometricians." His philosophy was intended for the exclusive benefit of scholars. Jesus Christ cried, "Come unto Me *all* ; take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me."

2. He taught the people in a way they could *understand*. "The common people heard Him gladly"—sweetly. His kind gracious words carried "sweetness and light" into the inner recesses of their souls. He was a very sweet preacher. "The people were very attentive to hear Him." On the margin, they "hanged" on Him. You have seen bees in summer time delicately poising on the soft lips of the flower, and daintily imbibing honey therefrom. In like manner the multitudes of Judæa "hanged" on the lips of the Saviour, and eagerly drank in the honey of His love. He adapted His teaching to the capacities of all, without doing the **slightest** damage to the truths He was commissioned

to reveal. Some deny His popularity, and others His success. But the truth is—He was both popular and successful. The crowds followed Him wherever He went; and, on the whole, His preaching was crowned with success. Where is the proof? Here—five hundred *brethren* met together after His death upon a mountain in Galilee—five hundred men without women and children. Five hundred men in three years—that is not bad, is it?

What was the secret of His popularity? That He spoke so that the people could understand Him. He invariably used the shortest, plainest words—words easily intelligible to the artisan, the labourer, and the child. Have you ever seen a man, however illiterate, reading the Sermon on the Mount with a Dictionary at his side? I have not. The Saviour's style is perfectly simple, transparent, and restful—everyone at once understands His vocabulary. You are brought face to face with naked truth, and you hardly know that language intervenes. You go out on a clear sunshiny day, and view with rare delight the scenery round about you. But so serene is the atmosphere, that you are quite unconscious of the material medium through which you look. And the style of Jesus Christ is so plain, simple, and pellucid, that you never bestow a passing thought on His language—you only behold the truths behind and beyond.

As was the diction, so were the thoughts—clear as crystal. Do not misunderstand me; they were infinitely profound, but profundity is not obscurity.

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The powerlessness of philosophy consists in the fact that it is profound and obscure; the strength of Christianity that it is profound and clear. One of the most illustrious German thinkers said on his deathbed—"I carry one regret with me to the grave, that of having been understood by but one man in the world; and he has only half understood me." A system like that was not destined to live, and Hegelianism is already dead. But Jesus Christ made every truth shine; and herein consisted His greatness. Some fondly imagine that the great is dark. No: the great is clear. The sun, the greatest world in our system, is clear. God, the greatest being in the Universe, is "light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Jesus Christ was the "Light of the world"—He made every truth shine. A model preacher!

3. But He further urged the people to *do* what they heard. We often conclude our sermons by appealing to the emotions; but Christ concluded the Sermon on the Mount by appealing to actions. "Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and *doeth* them." He taught no purely speculative truths; that is, truths which have no relation to practice. This shows the marvellous energy and the comprehensive grasp of His mind. In the history of truths we behold two stages. The first when the truth exists merely in the region of speculation. The mind has discovered it, but does not perceive its manifold relationships, and is not consequently able to apply it to the practical purposes of life.

It may remain in that nebulous state of theory for a century or two. Then comes a mind who converts the truth to some practical end; and thenceforward it will enter as an appreciable factor into the history of civilisation. And to apply a truth often evinces as great intellectual power as to discover it. Thus almost every truth requires two minds to introduce it from the domain of speculation to the region of life—one to discover it, the other to apply it. But in Jesus Christ the two go together. Not only He revealed truth, but He also applied it. He showed its bearing upon the daily practice of the world. He left no truth in the dim and cloudy air of speculation—He invariably incarnated it, brought it down from the sky and made it walk the earth.

Not only the truths He taught were capable of being realised in daily life, but He further inspired His hearers to attempt their realisation. Many of the most beautiful and striking sayings contained in the Sermon on the Mount are supposed to have found utterance before, more or less perfect, in the maxims of the Jewish rabbis and heathen philosophers. But they were only uttered—they were not done. Men's power of conceiving was incomparably greater than their power of accomplishing. It is the distinguishing merit of Christianity, however, that it enables the humblest peasant to do what the noblest philosopher could only intermittently think. The ordinary actions of Christians are on a level with the sublimest ideas of philosophy. "We not only think—we live great things," said an

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ancient father of the Church. Christianity, therefore, in its ultimate form is not theory but life, not speculation but practice. Each of us can do the sayings of Christ. We can practise the Sermon on the Mount. It is a beautiful sermon to read—it makes our hearts throb, and our eyes glisten; but infinitely more beautiful to live. Imagine this brilliant discourse lived in our town! Imagine every verse of the New Testament translated into corresponding deeds in the Drama of the world! The New Testament, as written and printed, is only a book of ideas, and a most precious book it is in this respect. No book like it. But the New Testament ideas are to be construed into New Testament lives. Live Christianity. “Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and DOETH them.” You hear them, you understand them, but do you do them? I know the religion you like. You, English people, like the religion of the understanding; you, Welsh people, like the religion of feeling; but what about the religion of doing? “And DOETH them.” “Enoch *walked* with God.” He did not understand much—the Bible was not given. He did not feel much—sentiment was not born. But what for that—“He *walked* with God.” True religion must enter the head, go down through the head to the heart, sink down through the heart to the very feet. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who bringeth good tidings.” The ideas? Yes, perhaps. The emotions? Yes, possibly. But, above all, how beautiful the feet! “Thy word is a lamp

unto my feet." A lamp unto the head? Yes. A lamp unto the heart? Yes. But, above all, a lamp unto the feet! You have the religion of the head; you have the religion of the heart: what about the religion of the feet?



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VI.

Jesus Christ as a Moral Legislator.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”—ST. MATT. v. 17.

FROM something Jesus Christ had done or said, the rumour had widely spread that He was going to set up a kingdom in antagonism to the Kingdom of God under the Old Testament. The burden of His preaching hitherto had been, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” The people naturally but erroneously jumped at the conclusion, that the kingdom which was “at hand” was radically different from the kingdom “in hand.” In the text the Saviour corrects this view. He distinctly states the position He wished to occupy in relation to the ancient Theocracy. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” By “to destroy” here we are to understand to annul, dissolve, abrogate. What the Saviour then says is, that He was not come to repeal either the law or the prophets, but to supply whatever in them was lacking. His teaching was not contradictory to that of Moses, but confirm-

atory and complementary, carrying on to a perfect goal the lessons he so admirably commenced. The subject, then, is — *Jesus Christ as a Moral Legislator*. In other words, Jesus Christ perfecting the teaching of the Old Testament on the important subject of practical morality. “To fulfil” is a very large word, and must be split up into three or four others to express its full meaning. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by spiritualising it, by developing it, and by generalising it. In other words, He made it deeper, He made it higher, He made it broader.

I. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by SPIRITUALISING it. In the verses following the text, He passes under rapid review several of the Commandments, and, instead of explaining them away, He rivets them more closely upon the conscience of the world.

1. He first reverts to the law of *murder*. “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, Whosoever shall be angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.” The law of Moses as popularly expounded, took cognisance only of the act of murder, it threatened punishment only upon the act. But the same law as expounded by Christ fastens upon the feelings in which the act originates. It pronounces judgment not only upon the deed, but upon the thought. Moses forbade murder; Christ forbids anger. That is not relaxing the law, but tightening it; not destroying it, but fulfilling it.

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2. He then speaks of the law of *adultery*. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The law of Moses, as popularly expounded, only forbade the outward transgression. But Jesus Christ carries it into the deepest abysses of the soul, and peremptorily prohibits the momentary indulgence of illicit love in the breast. Moses enjoined men to keep their lives clean; Christ enjoins men to keep their souls clean. Moses forbade the adulterous act; Christ forbids the adulterous look. That is not relaxing the law, but tightening it; not destroying it, but fulfilling it.

3. He next alludes to the law of *oaths*. "Again ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you, Swear not at all." Swearing was very general in Judæa at this period, common swearing, I mean, such as is prevalent in the lower strata of society at the present time. And much swearing is always a symptom of much vice and immorality. The existence of umbrellas in our country proves the humidity of the English climate; where there is no rain there are no umbrellas. And the multiplication of umbrellas, as has been the case this year, witnesses to the unusual prevalence of rain. In like manner, the existence of oaths proves the existence of dishonesty—where there is no lying, there is no swearing. And

the unusual multiplication of oaths in the later days of Judaism is a proof positive of sad degeneration in morals—one man could not believe another except upon his oath, and not always upon that. Now Christ forbids indiscriminate swearing. How? By forbidding false speaking. “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” If your Yea always meant yea, and your Nay always meant nay, oaths would be gradually rendered unnecessary. Any term stronger than these is an evidence of moral rottenness, either in the individual who speaks, or in the community in which he lives—“it cometh of evil.” Moses said, “Swear not falsely;” Christ says, “Swear not at all.” That is not annulling the law, but screwing it more closely upon the conscience of humanity; not destroying it, but fulfilling it.

II. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by DEVELOPING it. I shall illustrate this truth by two examples contained in this chapter.

I. Take first the law of *justice*. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.” That is, if a man smite thee on thy right cheek without thy prior knowledge or consent, no thanks to thee for bearing the blow: to show thou art a willing sufferer in the cause of truth, suffer a little more than thou must—“turn to him the other also.” “And if any

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man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." That is, if in a lawsuit thou lovest the trial, and art ordered by the judge to part with thy coat, in order to the satisfaction of the plaintiff, no thanks to thee for giving it—the law constrains thee: to show thy good will, give him a little more than thou must—"let him have thy cloak also." "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." That is, if a superior officer of the Roman Government make thee go with him a mile, to help him forward with his transports, no thanks to thee for going—the imperial law compels thee: to show thy loyalty, go with him a mile further than thou must—"go with him twain." By these and similar paradoxes, the Saviour teaches His followers to uproot all feelings of resentment.

In the development of this idea we discern three stages. The first is characterised by the unlimited indulgence of revenge. If a man wrongfully injured his neighbour, the latter took into his own hands the means of retaliation, and, instigated by his savage nature, he would not desist till he had paid doubly and trebly for the harm he had suffered. Resentment knew no limits; it persecuted its victim to the very death. Cast your eye back to the antediluvian period. Then justice was not recognised—might everywhere triumphed over right. The earth was full of violence. In the beginning of that era, we behold Cain, actuated by unholy jealousy, committing one murder, and afterwards sinking into despair.

So great is his despair that he becomes a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth. At the close of that era we behold Lamech perpetrating two murders, and proudly glorying in his deeds of bloodshed, and consigning them to song. "And Lamech said unto his two wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken to my speech: for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy and sevenfold." It is the oldest poem extant, the only snatch of poetry that has come down to us from the days beyond the flood, and is devoted to the celebration of murder. And when murder is thought deserving of immortalisation in song, it is a sure indication of mournful corruption in morals. No wonder that God washed the earth with the waters of the deluge—it sorely needed washing!

Moses inaugurated a second period—a period characterised by certain judicious restraints set upon the feeling of revenge. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth:" that is not intended so much to encourage retaliation as to regulate it. Man needs not to be commanded to requite insult—he is strongly impelled thereto by the constitution of his nature. It is the first impulse of every man. But he must be sternly commanded to restrain his anger; and this is what Moses did. Much evil for little—two eyes for one: that is the law of fallen nature, and upon that the world hitherto had acted. No; one eye for one eye; the evil inflicted upon the criminal must be

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in exact proportion to the magnitude of his crime: that is the law of Moses, and upon that the Israelitish nation was called upon to act. It marked a step forward in the moral education of the race.

Jesus Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount, ushers in a third period—a period characterised by the eradication of the feeling of revenge; not its indulgence according to the law of nature, not its limitation according to the law of Moses, but its complete eradication—nothing less will satisfy the law of Christ. Judgment by weight, and righteousness by plummet—one eye for one eye, and not two: so spoke Moses, for to say more just than would be to say too much. But Christ says, “Resist not evil,” “overcome evil with good,” uproot all feeling of resentment. That is the Christian law; but it is another question whether we live up to it. Moses taught men to restrain their anger; Christ teaches them to uproot it. Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, died exclaiming, “The Lord require it”—it is the spirit of the Old Dispensation. But Stephen, the proto-martyr, died under the shower of stones, exclaiming, “The Lord forgive it”—it is the spirit of the New Dispensation. “Overcome evil with evil, only do it in measure”—that is the law of Moses. “Overcome evil with good”—that is the law of Christ. That is not degrading the law, but ennobling it; not destroying it, but fulfilling it.

2. The Saviour next develops the law of *love*. “Ye have heard it said, Love thy neighbour, hate

thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you."

We discern three periods again in the growth of this idea. The first is distinguished by love only to blood relations, hatred to all besides. The rule now is—Believe a man to be honest till you find him to be a thief. The rule then was—Believe a man to be a thief till you find him to be honest. Every stranger was immediately set down as a thief, and therefore to be narrowly watched. That is the general condition of society as revealed to us at the dawn of history—love was confined to the family or tribe, hatred roamed over all the world beyond. Ulysses sacked a city for no other reason than that it had not formed a compact with Rome. Had it offended him? No. Provoked him? No. Without the shadow of justification or excuse he smote all the inhabitants with the edge of the sword. Love to a few relatives, hatred to all besides: that is the law of primitive times.

The second period was introduced by Moses, and has for its leading feature—Love to neighbours, hatred to enemies. But the remarkable thing is, that in this period hatred duly received the sanction of law. Men foster enmity now as well as then, but they do it in spite of law and not in virtue of it. But in times anterior to the advent of Christ, enmity received the public recognition of law; it had a large and legitimate place in every code of ethics. It was as honourable, nay, more honourable, to hate

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than to love. Look to Greece and Rome; in the literature transmitted to us, hatred of enemies is as much recommended as love of friends. Not to make quotations, allow me to state an ordinary practice in the legal courts of classic lands. If a man thought fit to prosecute another, the first thing he endeavoured to do, or his counsel for him, was to demonstrate that he had private and personal grounds of enmity against him. That always told immensely in favour of the prosecutor—that he hated the defendant for private reasons. In our courts, if the prosecutor admits that he has sworn never-dying enmity against the defendant, he has practically lost his case—his testimony is rendered invalid. Now it is a point lost, then it was a point gained. Hatred received the sanction of law.

The same spirit reigned in Judaism, though not to the same extent. In the light of this principle are we able to understand the maledictory Psalms. They contain imprecations which make our flesh creep, and which no genuine Christian dare repeat. "When he shall be judged, let him be condemned, and let his prayer become sin. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath, and let the strangers spoil his labour. Let there be none to extend mercy to him; neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children." Many are puzzled how to account for these and similar imprecations, forgetting that they are not to be judged by the Christian, but by the

Jewish, standard. Such curses were pardonable then, nay, they were the legitimate outcome of the genius of the dispensation. They contain much to shock the heart of a Christian; they contained nothing to shock the heart of a Jew.

The third period is inaugurated by Jesus Christ in the text—He raises the standard of morality—"I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Love thy relatives, hate all strangers: that was the law of primitive times. Love thy neighbours, hate thine enemies, and all the bad are thine enemies: that was the law of the Mosaic dispensation. Love all, hate none: that is the law of Christ. Love the good, hate the bad, said Moses. Love the good, love the bad also, says Christ. So far from making void the Ten Commandments, the Saviour adds an Eleventh: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." Ten Commandments under the Old Testament, Eleven under the New. Love others less than thyself: that was the law of primitive times. Love others as thyself: that was the law of Moses. Love others more than thyself: that is the law of Christ. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Fear is the beginning, but it is not the all of wisdom—it is the beginning, but it is not the end. What, then, is the end? "The end of the commandment is charity." Morality, like religion, begins in fear and ends in love. "Love

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is the bond of perfectness." In the Old Testament we see goodness in its incipient stages—goodness in the roots. In the New Testament we see goodness in full development—goodness in the flower. Job says that the "root of the matter" was found in him, but only the root; you must look elsewhere for the flower. Religion in its root he possessed; but religion in flower and fruit was reserved for New Testament times. Every believer has the roots planted in his heart, the roots of all the virtues; and our supreme duty consists in cultivating the roots and seeking to unfold them into flower and fruit.

III. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law by GENERALISING it, or making it universal.

I. He made the law universal in the sense of breaking down all *class* distinctions in morality. Heathenism maintained these mischievous distinctions. It divided mankind into two classes, the learned and the ignorant, and between these two it erected a high partition wall. Accordingly, knowledge was divided into two parts—esoteric and exoteric. The esoteric, or knowledge proper, belonged only to the initiated; the great bulk of the people was considered incapable of true intellectual or spiritual enlightenment. These distinctions, though discountenanced in Jewish law, were admitted in Jewish practice. "This people, which knoweth not the law, is accursed." "Only the learned shall reach unto the resurrection," had passed into a maxim in contemporaneous Jewish society. True, the Rab-

binical doctors discussed problems of high morality in the schools, but they did not endeavour to disseminate light among the people. They advocated monopoly in knowledge, human and divine.

The Saviour, however, declared in favour of free trade. He boldly demolished the wall of partition built high and broad between the cultured and the illiterate. He entered the granary of Divine truth, took out the golden grain, and scattered it broadcast on the face of the common earth. The truths of the favoured few He made the common property of the uncultured many. He alone of all His contemporaries or predecessors, perceived the intrinsic worth and vast possibilities of the human soul. He alone, therefore, recognised in their fulness the inalienable rights of human nature, whether to be found in the plebeian or the patrician. The advocates of what is called Secularism proclaim with a loud voice that there is a strong undercurrent of deep feeling in the populace strongly inimical to Christianity. If that be true, then the people war against the only religion which recognises in full the inherent claims of every individual soul.

Look to Oriental religions and empires: they only allow liberty to one—the king; all others are slaves existing only at the sovereign pleasure of the monarch. Look to Greek religion and philosophy: they only allow liberty to the few—the oligarchy; the masses of the people are reduced to hopeless and abject bondage. Christianity alone proclaims liberty to all, bidding every human being go free in virtue of his inherent personality. Tom Paine, the well-

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known infidel, published a book under the pretentious title of "The Rights of Man," in which he advocated democracy in government and infidelity in religion. The book became so obnoxious to the then reigning powers of England, that its sale was strictly interdicted. An old man in Glamorgan-shire, Iolo Morganwg by name, suspected of undue sympathy with radicalism, was narrowly watched by certain spies of the Government. The grey-headed old man, coming to a knowledge of the fact, cunningly wrapped up a book in paper, wrote on the back of it in large letters "THE RIGHTS OF MAN," then exhibited it in the window of his little shop for sale. The agents of the British Government, glad of the opportunity of entrapping him, whose like for antiquarian lore was not to be found within the four seas, entered the shop, eagerly purchased the book, paid for it, cash down, considerably more than its full market value. Opening the book to lay criminal information against him, lo! they beheld, to their chagrin and disappointment, a veritable copy of the Holy Scriptures. Well done, old man! With laudable intuition, he distinctly saw that the Bible is the only book which clearly expounds and staunchly vindicates "the rights of man" as against the despotism of governments on the one hand, and the communism of infidelity on the other.

2. He made the law universal in another sense—He broke down all *national* distinctions in morality. In ancient times morality was strictly national. This was emphatically the case among the pagan nations

of the earth. Their gods being national, their religion was national; and their moral obligations never extended beyond the bounds of their religion. Members of the same nation were believed to be under obligation to one another; but they were not supposed to owe any duty to the inhabitants of other countries. Heathen ethics did not acknowledge the rights of strangers. A Greek was expected to respect a Greek; but he could murder, rob, or enthrall a stranger at pleasure. A Greek could exercise what severities he liked towards shipwrecked foreigners, and yet be looked upon by his neighbours as an honourable and high-minded citizen of the state. Foreigners had no rights in Attic soil, and consequently natives had no duties in their relation to them. I am not forgetful that here and there we perceive a kind of yearning after cosmopolitanism in morals as in empire. But these yearnings existed only in the transient dreams of a small school of philosophers—they did not permeate society and fashion its course. They only served to show that God was silently preparing the highest thought of the world for the great transition about to be made in the Gospel of His Son.

Jewish morality was also national. I need not adduce proofs—the idea is familiar enough to you. The intense nationalism of the Jews in the time of the Saviour is proverbial; they surrounded sea and land to make one proselyte. Instead of trying to make Judaism commensurate with the world, they tried to make the world commensurate with Judaism.

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However, Jewish morality here, as in every other instance, was superior to contemporaneous pagan morality. Notwithstanding its intense nationalism, Judaism always inculcated kindness to strangers. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the *stranger* within thy gates." True, the stranger is put after the cattle, as of less consequence than they; nevertheless, it is to be remembered that Judaism is the only ancient code of morals which accords him a place at all. "The stranger within thy gates:" the recurrence of that phrase in the Mosaic ethics lifts them above all other ancient ethics whatever.

What Moses only began, Jesus Christ beautifully perfected. He made morality absolutely human. Politics still practically remain within the thick barriers of nationalism, though we hope to see the day when they also will become cosmopolitan. But Christian morality is cosmopolitan already—perfectly so in theory, increasingly so in practice. Jesus Christ has laid every man under obligation to every other man on the face of the globe. It is no longer Greek under obligation to Greek, but man under obligation to man. What the Greek poet only momentarily conceived, Jesus Christ has converted into a powerful element in modern civilisation—"I also am a man, and nothing human is foreign to me." Ancient morality was founded upon the differences between men, Christian morality upon

their likenesses; and men are more like than unlike after all. Human is now the origin of humane. The Gospel thus created a new virtue. Patriotism was known to the world before; it was the cardinal virtue of ancient history—the love of country. But Jesus Christ introduced philanthropy—not love of country; but love of race. Paul could exclaim, “I am debtor to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise.” The Gospel engendered in his breast a sense of indebtedness to the entire race—a sentiment new to the history of humanity. Fénelon said, “I am more of a Frenchman than of a Fénelon, and more of a man than of a Frenchman.” “I am more of a man than of a Fénelon:” therein he teaches that he belonged more to the State than to himself, a sentiment pervading all ancient codes of morality. “I am more of a man than of a Frenchman:” therein he teaches that he belonged more to his race than to his country, a sentiment distinctively Christian, and utterly unknown to ancient thinkers. Ancient ethics sufficed to create the enthusiasm of nationality; and that is the only enthusiasm to be discovered in the early annals of mankind. But Christian ethics have served to create the enthusiasm of humanity; they flower naturally in evangelising efforts at home and missionary enterprise abroad. Love of man, in his bare capacity as man, independently of the colour of his skin or rank in the social scale, throbs in thousands of human hearts. Not love, cold and formal, as expressed in the old classic word for philanthropy;

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but love, warm, glowing, burning, as expressed in the newly-coined word *agapæ*, a love all ablaze to deliver others from ignorance and vice, and to introduce them to the inestimable benefits of knowledge and religion.

3. He, moreover, abolished *sex* distinctions in morals. The idea of man as originally conceived by his Maker contains the two genders. "God created man; male and female created He them:" the singular in the first clause being equivalent to the plural in the second. But ancient civilisation apprehended only the masculine element. It is unnecessary to dwell at length upon the servile position of woman in the pre-Christian ages. Let one illustration suffice—you can see by the bent of one straw which way the wind blows. In modern times all public speakers, standing before promiscuous assemblies, begin by addressing the ladies. "Ladies and gentlemen," not "Gentlemen and ladies." It was not so, however, from the beginning. Again and again in classic literature we come across the phrase—"children and women." Women were uniformly placed, not only after the men, but after the children; they were looked upon simply as "necessary evils." The woman was denied all rights—the right to knowledge, and the right to liberty. Man was everything, and woman nothing; hence the manly qualities were sedulously cultivated to the utter neglect of the womanly. Strength, severity, self-possession: these are the prime excellences of the heathen world. The idea of man was broken and fragmentary.

But the Saviour gathered up the fragments, that

nothing should be lost. He presents the idea of humanity once more in its proportionate totality. "Male and female created He them." He first unites them in His own character. The title for which He evinces the greatest fondness is that of the "Son of Man." This term, as is well known, is generic, including the masculine and the feminine. In Him, therefore, we first discover the full realisation of the ideal humanity. He is man in His strength, woman in His tenderness; man in the indomitableness of His will, woman in the invincibility of His love. Artists have intuitively seized this idea—they universally give Him a face noted for delicacy and pathos. More; this idea has well nigh revolutionised the world of Art. In the classic ages, the prevailing form was sculpture. The granite was fetched from the quarry, carefully chiselled, and elegantly polished to represent the "human form divine." Their art was characterised by simplicity, severity, and stern grandeur. But whereas Sculpture was the prevailing form of art among the ancients, Painting is the prevailing form in the Christian era. Why has painting thus to a large extent superseded sculpture? Because painting is more feminine, and, therefore, more capable of giving adequate expression to the softer, warmer virtues. Firmness and severity in sculpture, warmth and love in painting.

This softening influence of the Saviour's teaching is more particularly felt in the domain of ethics. He restored to woman her original rights, and imposed upon her the corresponding duties. Woman

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is now an appreciable factor in the civilisation of the world. Christianity by no means discourages the masculine properties. Certainly not; as much heroism is to be observed in modern as in ancient history. But it has added to the rude strength of the man the seductive grace of the woman, thereby producing a new type of goodness—that based on the non-resistance of wrong. There is a nobler heroism than that displayed in the exercise of power—the heroism shown in the restraint of power. Kindness, meekness, patience; that is the tap-root of Christian morality. Kindness to all in spite of bitter provocations to the contrary, kindness even to the animal creation. It is to be remarked that neither was the Jewish law quite forgetful of the cattle. “In it thou shalt do no work, thou, nor thy *cattle*.” The cattle also are comprised in the moral law. How? To keep it? No; but to be kept by it. But still Judaism had not the power to convert the precept into a sentiment operative in the history of mankind—that was reserved for the Gospel. We have been long before understanding the lesson; but we now begin to comprehend it. Most civilised nations have enacted regulations which have for their object “the prevention of cruelty to animals.” That is not contracting the law, but expanding it; not destroying it, but fulfilling it.

“He prayeth best who loveth best
 All things both great and small;
 For the dear God who loveth us,
 He made and loveth all.”

VII.

The Gospel Righteousness.

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."—ST. MATT. v. 20.

IN the verses immediately preceding, the Saviour gives utterance to a very momentous truth. "Who-soever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." To do evil and teach others to do it, is to increase evil enormously; on the other hand, to do good and teach others to do it, is to multiply good indefinitely. It is, therefore, of supreme importance that the followers of Jesus not only do good themselves, but teach others to do it. Our personal goodness must become social; our piety must have in it the power of self-propagation. This distinguishes the New Testament from the Old Testament goodness, that it has the power to propagate itself. This suggests a subject for our present consideration—*The super-excellency of the New Testament righteousness* or goodness or morality, call it

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by what name you like. This subject received our attention in the last sermon; but enough yet remains to be said to occupy our time to-day.

I. The Gospel morality excels all other moralities in **KIND**—in the ethereal delicacy of its texture. It lays infinite stress upon holiness, an idea which receives full development only within its pale.

1. Examine *Paganism*, its worship and philosophy. The religious cultus of the ancients afforded a direct encouragement to the depravation of morals. The gods of Paganism were only deifications of human nature; deifications of its sins as well as of its excellences, of its carnal lusts as well as of its more spiritual aspirations. Consequently the character of the gods was the condensation of all unnameable impurities, and tended directly to contaminate the morals of the worshippers. Indeed, the only way to render acceptable homage to some of the deities of Greece and Rome, was by unlimited indulgence in the coarsest and most repulsive sins. So great corrupters of morals, public and private, were the gods supposed to be, that the later philosophers found it necessary to dissociate ethics from religion, and form them instead into a distinct department of philosophy.

Seeing that the idea of holiness is absent from the heathen religions, is it to be found in the heathen philosophies? I think not. In Aristotle's enumeration of the cardinal virtues, no place is found for holiness. He mentions wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice; but he seems to have failed to

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discover the idea of holiness. Hence a brilliant writer very properly remarks, that in the annals of the Pagan world we look in vain for a "saint." Sages, warriors, orators, poets, artists we find in abundance, but saints none. The best men of heathenism, such as Socrates and Plato, were guilty of abominations which would blight for ever the reputation of any modern. Heathenism possessed neither the idea of holiness nor the quality represented by the idea; hence its morals were earthly and coarse.

2. Consider *Judaism* again. Doubtless it was vastly in advance of Paganism, for it did possess the incipient idea of holiness. Nevertheless, the Jews at the commencement of their career betrayed a lamentable tendency to worship God in the old Egyptian fashion, by giving unbridled license to the animal appetences. "They rose up to dance;" "they saw God and ate and drank:" the vision of the Almighty only whetted their appetites. The vision of Him would inevitably make Christians fast; but it made the Jews eat and drink all the heartier. This shows the raw, barbarous material Moses had to work upon and fashion into shape. Nevertheless, Moses did succeed in introducing into the world the idea of holiness; but he has scarcely had the praise due to him for the discovery of such a grand idea. Aristotle is much eulogised for discovering the laws of thought, and Newton for discovering the laws of astronomy; how much more should Moses be praised for discovering the fundamental laws of

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morality? Every excellence, to be acceptable with God, must be holy.

3. In *Christianity*, however, we see the idea in full bloom. Holiness is twofold, outward and inward. Judaism embodied only the first half—the consecration of the outer man to the Divine service. The Hebrew word for holiness meant external separation, not internal purification. Only by degrees could the idea of holiness be revealed in its comprehensive totality, for only by degrees could the mind adequately apprehend it. Judaism only insisted on the first half, outward consecration; but Christianity insists upon the second half, inward purification. Hence Judaism developed into a system of baptisms and divers washings; but Christianity developed into the doctrine of regeneration and sanctification. Accordingly, in Paganism we see no vestige of holiness; in Judaism we do discover it, but only in the germ, holiness in a state of raw incipiency; in Christianity, however, we behold it in full development, holiness of body, soul, and spirit. Other systems contain creditable exhibitions of virtue; Christianity is the only system in which all the virtues are white.

II. Christian morality excels all other moralities in DEGREE; it comprises all that is good and praiseworthy in prior or contemporaneous systems. "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "Perfect"—all the parts present. "Entire"—all the parts in perfect develop-

ment. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly," that is sanctification perfect in degree; "and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," that is sanctification perfect in all its parts.

1. Christian morality contains all the *old* virtues which distinguished the ancient world. Of course, many virtues flourished outside Christianity and prior to its establishment. But you discover no excellence outside it and before it, but you discover the same within it. Whatever in humanity was noble and good, was immortalised, not destroyed, in Christianity. The history of virtue runs parallel with the history of truth. Paganism contained many truths of vital importance. Infidel writers, such as Voltaire, have delighted to dig in the old mines to bring to light forgotten maxims, and to show that Jesus Christ was antedated in their utterance. That many of the truths contained in the Gospel were to be found outside the Gospel, they look upon as militating against the Gospel. But so far from militating against it, it militates for it. It proves that the Gospel is true to human reason, and fully recognises all truths relative to conduct to which the human reason has ever given utterance. Be it further remembered that the grand principles underlying all the old religions are buried under cumbrous superstructures of error, like a few gold grains under a thousand tons of rubbish. But Christianity is all truth without any error, all gold without any base

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alloy, all precious stones without any hay, straw, or stubble. And how is this to be accounted for? Only on the supposition that the Founder was divinely aided and inspired.

Similar remarks hold true of the Gospel virtues. The heathen world was not all bad, totally and irretrievably bad; doubtless it could boast of many solid excellences. On closer examination, however, they betray a lamentable want of proportion. Some few virtues stand out prominently, like Corinthian columns amid wildernesses of ruin. These select virtues are sedulously cultivated, whilst all the other virtues, which give balance and strength to character, are utterly disregarded. One system gives great prominence to one virtue, another system to another virtue, but none of them to the whole round of virtues. The Gospel, however, has gathered them all together; no excellence is recognisable in the heathen world but the same is to be found in Christianity transfigured and glorified. All the colours of the rainbow must be proportionately blended to make white; and all the virtues now lying scattered over the devastated surface of humanity, must be brought together and properly arranged to form the pure white of the Christian character. Herein Christianity towers high above all Pagan codes of morality—that whereas their several lists of virtue are partial and incomplete, the Gospel list is “entire, wanting nothing.”

2. This leads me to remark further that the Gospel introduced *new* virtues to human life, the virtues which grow out of love as their tap-root. “Brethren

ye also should love one another;” “Love your enemies.” Your love is to embrace, not only your brethren, but your enemies. In this again the Gospel morality differs much from the morality of the heathen world. Love in its modern signification is nowhere to be found in the ancient writings. The heathen religions did not consist in the love, but in the fear, of the gods. Their very word for their religious services denoted fear as the predominating influence; and where fear governs in our relation to the gods, suspicion governs in our relation to men. Whether the story in Genesis means a literal serpent or not, I am not going now to discuss; but certainly it indicates the introduction to human life of the serpentine subtilty which forms so prominent a feature in all savage communities. And as in the ancient religions, so in the ancient philosophies, love in its evangelical signification is nowhere inculcated. Ancient philosophy found its noblest outcome in Stoicism; and Stoicism means self-assertion, not self-denial—self-exaltation, not self-sacrifice. Love of self, in various disguises, lies at its basis; hence pride, self-control, contempt of privations and sufferings, are its chief products. The gentle, delicate, feminine virtues, it held in supreme abhorrence. From three to four hundred letters of Cicero are still extant; but notwithstanding the numerous items of news they contain about things trivial and things important, they contain not a single allusion to his mother. On the contrary, in a letter addressed to him by an intimate friend, he is roundly

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rebuked for being so weak as to grieve at the loss of his only and beloved daughter. Such virtues as love of mother or love of daughter were deemed unworthy of true, proper manhood.

Judaism, however, is superior to Paganism; nevertheless love, and the excellences immediately springing from love, find in it but a very subordinate place. Reading the Old Testament we cannot but be painfully struck with the absence of the word "love" from its pages. In Judaism, as in Paganism, the paramount element is fear. "This is the whole duty of man: Fear God and keep His commandments." Consequently the Jewish virtues are only such as could be evolved out of fear; they have all an evident touch of servility about them. This, I suppose, is what is meant by the charge of legalism brought against the Jewish righteousness. I do not forget that the Beatitudes with which the Lord Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount, and which are devoted to the celebration of the gentle virtues, are all borrowed from the Old Testament; but so scattered were they up and down its pages, that they failed to attract particular notice. Jesus Christ was the first to behold their modest beauty, and to bring them together and to bind them into one sweet bouquet. This is His peculiar merit among all the moral sages of the world, that He is the first to give special prominence to the suffering virtues. The excellences lying isolated under the Old Testament, like "flowers born to blush unseen," He has placed in the forefront of His religion, and upon their culti-

vation He exhorts His disciples to bestow double care.

The central principle of Christian morality being love, a new class of virtues sprang into existence, to represent which the old Greek language had no terms, its richness and fertility notwithstanding. Therefore the New Testament writers found themselves under the necessity of coining new words, or of infusing new meanings into old words. You have often heard that the word "humility" had to undergo a radical change in its meaning, in fact, to be regenerated, in order to express adequately the new virtue which Jesus Christ introduced into human conduct. Humility in ancient times signified meanness of spirit—a humble man meant a base man. But humility in modern times indicates greatness of spirit—a humble man means a noble man, and the more humble the more noble. Very remarkable also is it that the old classic word for love (*ἔρως*) is not once used in the New Testament. It had contracted so much defilement in the roll of the years, that He who shrank not from the touch of leprosy recoiled from the slightest contact with it. He invented a new word in preference (*ἀγάπη*), a word to be found in none of the secular writers, a word signifying love: not, however, the love which arises from the passions of the animal nature, nor the love which arises from the perception of beauty by the mind, but the love which arises from the principle of goodwill in the heart. "Love your enemies:" love them, not because there is any beauty, moral or physical, in them, not because they deserve it, but because you

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are impelled thereto by the resolution of the moral will. No thanks to you for loving them who love you; do not even the publicans so? Your love, like the Divine love, must be self-moving; it must carry its cause within itself. The word "philanthropy" again (*φιλανθρωπία*) originally signified culture, politeness, courtesy—a creditable meaning enough so far as it went, but it did not go far enough to satisfy the genius of the Christian religion. The New Testament writers have, therefore, given it a deeper meaning—a meaning certainly implying outward decorum, but implying, further, an ardent love of mankind, manifesting itself in persevering efforts to mitigate the manifold evils, temporal and spiritual, which afflict them.

Thus with Christianity came into social currency a new class of virtues. The human mind, since the advent of Christ, has shown great ingeniousness, and has been marvellously fruitful in inventions; but it is a fact, patent to all, that it has not succeeded in adding a single new virtue to the sum total of human goodness. Every excellence finds its type in the Gospel. As "corruption" means the breaking up of human nature, the promiscuous collapse of all its faculties, so "holiness" means wholeness, the resetting of the broken powers, and their beautiful re-arrangement in a complete system. Humanity is to be restored to more than its original completeness; the ideal Christian is a compendium of all the virtues—"perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

3. Not only Christianity contains all the virtues,

new and old, but it further contains them in a state of *full, mature, perfect development*. The virtues it teaches and demands are not virtues in a state of rawness, but virtues in their ripest, sweetest, mellowest stage. Many of them, as already intimated, are to be found in the green stage in other religions and philosophies; in Christianity alone do they unfold the richness of their hue and the delicacy of their fragrance, in it alone do they reveal their innate wealth of colour and sweetness. It has been often remarked that the New Testament is remarkable for its enthusiasm. It possesses light, more light than any other book; but the main secret of its influence lies not so much in its light as in its heat. The great motive power of the world is not light, but heat. And the New Testament is full of both, full of light and full of heat. It is a very hot book. You cannot read it for any length of time but it makes you hot—you grow enthusiastic, and invent comprehensive schemes for the renovation of the planets, schemes which astonish and bewilder your cooler acquaintances. “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.” “Fervent in spirit,” or, literally, “boiling in spirit.” I like to see Christian professors boil in spirit; I have no objection to see them boil over; at all events, better to see them boil over than not boil at all. “The effectual, *fervent* prayer of a righteous man availeth much”—the hot, boiling prayer. Our prayers are often very cold, they freeze like icicles upon our lips; but to avail in heaven, they should be at

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boiling point, no harm if they splash over. Yes, our virtues require to be well boiled; till then they are raw and sour, setting people's teeth on edge. "He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." That was to be the distinguishing feature of the New Dispensation as compared with the Old—its fire, its heat, its enthusiasm. Only when virtue is hot is it infectious. Fevers never spread except in hot weather; cold always kills the infection. Be that as it may; virtue, goodness, piety, never spreads except when it is hot. Religion cold will never kindle the fires of a new life in hearts "dead in trespasses and sins."

III. Christian morality excels all other moralities in **POWER**—in the hold it has upon, and the strength it imparts to, men in their endeavours after a higher life.

I. Christianity, and it alone, presents us with a perfect *ideal* of morality. From what has been already advanced, it is clear that preceding codes of morality are defective on the one side or the other. But I challenge any man to put his finger on a single blot in the Gospel page. A few, I know, have attempted it; but the attempt has recoiled in disgrace upon the authors. The imperfections they pointed out did not inhere in the Gospel, but in their one-sided interpretation thereof; they did not exist in the New Testament, but in the ingenious brains of the critics. An astronomer examines the stellar heavens through his telescope. At first he sees, as he believes, worlds half formed in the empy-

rean; presently he beholds what seem to be ruins of planets, black and ugly, tumbling helter skelter through space. Before publishing his strange discoveries to an astonished world, however, he takes the precaution to examine the disc of his telescope; and, lo! there he finds the cause of the strange phenomena he had just witnessed in the planetary system. Flies inside the telescope impeached the integrity of the universe! And the writers I have just alluded to have turned the ends of their telescopes or microscopes—it is all one—to the Gospel history; and they find it deficient in veracity in one place, in sincerity in another, in love of liberty in a third place. Alas! they ought first to carefully examine their mental discs; and probably they would find, some in their brains, and others in their hearts, the cause of all the supposed aberrations in the life of the Saviour. Their interpretation it is which is at fault. The Gospel continues a living embodiment of our highest conception of morality, of what is due from man to man, and of what is due from man to God.

2. It further exhibits a perfect *example* of morality. Its standard of morality is higher than anything to be found outside itself, whether in Judaism or Paganism; still the great want of the world was not so much a new ideal as a new example. Mankind knew a great deal more than they could do; their ideal was immeasurably higher than their practice. Not the power of conceiving, but the power of performing, was the chief want of the world; not

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light, but the ability to live up to the light. The philosophers showed men, as they supposed, the sovereign good; but the question still remained, How can we attain it? We do see it, but how can we reach it? We needed an example even more than an ideal. The Gospel meets this want; in Jesus Christ it shows us a perfect example. Not only it lays before us a theory perfect in all its parts; but the theory is reduced into practice. His life was a commentary upon His teaching. He lived His ideal before the eyes of men. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Not which of you chargeth me, but which of you convinceth me? Many then, and a few now, charge Him with immorality; but which of them has substantiated the charge? Which of them has proved their wild accusations? "I have sinned," exclaimed Judas, "in betraying innocent blood." There is some evil in everybody's blood save Christ's; however exemplary the outward conduct, some evil always lurks in the blood. But here is One exempt from taint, both in the blood and in the life. "A Lamb without spot"—not a single speck on His character. "He magnified the law, and made it honourable." In other instances the law makes the men who keep it honourable; but here Christ makes the law honourable. The commandments reflect credit upon us, if we obey them; but here is One too great, too holy, to receive credit from them, He reflects credit upon them.

3. The perfect ideal embodied in a perfect example fills the breast with *inspiration*. The standard

is high; but One has reached it, One in our nature: that fires us with a hot, holy ambition to reach it also. Seeing Christ, we feel an ardent desire to follow in His steps. "Example is better than precept." Precepts give light, but examples give heat; and heat is the great motive power of the world. Jesus Christ produces heat. We cannot contemplate His life and death, but "our hearts burn within us as we talk of Him by the way." We can never accomplish much till our hearts burn, till our souls are all aflame. Still Jesus Christ as an example is not enough; to inspire is one thing, to enable is another. Jesus Christ as an example serves to fill us with inspiration; but one may have the desire to live holily without possessing the ability. As a minister was dwelling, in the hearing of some of the lowest dregs of society, on Jesus Christ as an example, and exhorting his hearers to walk in His steps, one of them cried out in anguish of soul: "Your rope, sir, is too short; it cannot reach me in the depths of my wretchedness and sin." Take Christ as an example, follow Him. "We should like to, but we cannot," I hear some of you cry; "sin has depraved our nature, weakened our strength—we have not the ability." "What we hate, that we do." Well, is there any way of lengthening the rope, of imparting the power as well as the desire? Yes—

4. The crowning glory of the Gospel morality is its doctrine of the possible *regeneration* of the nature. Christian ethics are founded upon a radical change in the quality of our being. The Gospel imparts a

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new nature to the human soul. Much stress is laid in the present day upon culture. Culture is doubtless good. But what is there to be cultivated? The seeds of all goodness are hid in the soil of our nature, answers a certain school of philosophy, and all we have to do is to awaken and develop them. That they were once sown, I believe; but the Enemy came and sowed tares. Any theory which ignores the Fall is incomplete and one-sided. And if good fruit is to be grown, good seed must be once more sown, and that is done in regeneration. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him." And the Divine seed produces a Divine crop. Cultivate the ground as much as you like, you will not have a golden harvest unless you sow it. And cultivate human nature as much as you like—I say not a word against the Gospel of Culture; but I do say that culture alone will not suffice. Besides culture, there must be regeneration; besides light in the intellect, there must be grace in the heart. Jesus Christ imparts grace; He makes us strong in the inner man; and by degrees "the righteousness of the law shall be fulfilled in us." "His Divine power hath given us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue . . . that ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

VIII.

Anxiety.

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air,” &c.—ST. MATT. vi. 25-34.

IN the paragraph preceding the text the Saviour warns the rich against laying up treasures on the earth. In the text He warns the poor against over-carefulness respecting this world's goods. Between these two extremes—the greediness of the rich and the anxiety of the poor—He places that significant statement, “Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.” Now that statement looks backward and forward. It looks backward to amassing earthly treasures; for to do that to the neglect of religion is to serve Mammon. It looks forward to over-anxiety concerning the future, for to be guilty of that to the neglect of the soul is to serve Mammon. If you are covetous, you render service to Mammon; if you are anxious, you render him service all the same. The avariciousness of the rich and the carefulness of the poor, belong equally to the worship of the “god of this world.”

“Take no thought for your life. Take no

thought for the morrow." The word "thought" has undergone considerable modification in its meaning since the authorised translation of the Bible was made. Thought then often meant solitude, worry, vexation. Thus Bacon writes—"Queen Catherine Parr died of thought," that is, of anxious exciting thought, she died of a broken heart. The Saviour, therefore, in the words of my text prescribes an antidote to His hearers against *anxiety*. One class of considerations He bases upon Nature, the other class upon Religion.

I. Reasons based upon NATURE against anxiety.

1. "Behold the *fowls of the air*. Are ye not much better than they?" The argument is—If God is careful to supply the wants of the lower creation, it is only reasonable to infer that He will not be regardless of the wants of man. "Behold the fowls of the *air*"—not the fowls which man has domesticated, not the fowls which are confined in pent-up houses, but the fowls of the air which have no man for an owner, and consequently no one to take care of them. "Behold the fowls of the *air*"—there are millions of them in this little island, and yet every one of them contrives to get a living; and certainly a man ought to be ashamed of himself if a bird can get a living and he cannot. "Your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" If God feeds His fowls, it is not at all likely He will starve His children.

2. "Consider the *lilies of the field*. Wherefore,

if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The care He bestows on the grass is a proof positive He will not be forgetful of man. "Consider the lilies of the field"—not the lilies of the garden, not the lilies of the conservatory, but "the lilies of the *field*," the wild flowers growing profusely up and down your farms. "Consider the lilies of the field," and yet each one bears evidence to the most exquisite skill and the most delicate care on the part of the Divine Artist. "Consider the lilies of the field," and learn a lesson of economy, for God makes one suit of raiment last them the whole year round. Not but that He could afford to give them a change of raiment every month, but at best it would be but beautiful waste. "Consider the lilies of the field" again, and learn a lesson of trustfulness, for He who decks the lily and arrays the grass, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? A very touching incident is recorded in the life of Mungo Park, the great African traveler. Reduced to the extremest exhaustion, he one day laid himself down on the ground to die, his body suffering from hunger and fatigue, and his mind from gloominess and despondency. Presently his eye caught in the barrenness around him a little tuft of moss, green and cheerful; and that tuft of moss preached to him a sermon, short but pointed, on the folly of anxiety. "Look here at me," said the tiny moss; "here am I, a little wee thing, in the midst

of a desert of sand; here am I, a little lonely thing, just like you with no companion to talk to. But God feeds me, and clothes me, and watches over me, how much more will He feed thee, and clothe thee, and watch over thee, O thou of little faith. I have more faith than thou; thou art lying down to die, but I intend living yet for months, O thou of little faith!" And the distinguished traveller drank in the lesson taught him by the tiny grass; he soon revived, and lived afterwards to wonder at his weakness and unbelief.

3. "Behold the fowls of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. Yet I say unto you, That even *Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*" Beauty has a large place in Nature, proving to us the copiousness with which the Divine Being delights to bless. God never gives grudgingly or with stint—He gives largely, liberally, up to the measure of beauty. Some people always harangue on the vanity of beauty, they reiterate to weariness that it is but skin-deep. Well, what of that, provided we always wear our skin? If it be but skin-deep, it is deep enough for all intents and purposes; what would you do with it deeper? Look where you will, God does not give scantily, but bountifully, abundantly, even to the measure of beauty. See yonder birds. It would answer precisely the same practical purpose if God created them all in grey uniform, just like the sparrows. But instead of that, He has arrayed them in gay plumage, He has given them life, and given it more abundantly,

He not only gives them down to keep them warm, but He gives them feathers to make them beautiful as well. Look to yonder field. It would answer just the same utilitarian object if it contained nothing but green grass. But instead of that, God has bespangled it with lovely flowers, so lovely that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them. He gives not only to fill the farmer's barns, but also to please the farmer's eye. Look at yonder trees, "dressed in living green." How graceful the branches, how gorgeous the foliage, how luscious the fruit! Yet they would realise the same amount of profit to the cottager if God sent the apples without either blossoms or leaves. But when He gives, He gives largely, copiously, up to the measure of beauty.

I do not believe that God departs from this rule in His treatment of the human race. I do not believe He would lavish so much considerate care and artistic skill on the "grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven," and fling man upon the world, destitute, forsaken, forlorn, unloved, and uncared for. In the vast storehouses of Nature, He has, doubtless, provided not only for the bare necessities of life, but over and above that for the sweet gratification of the sense of taste and enjoyment which He has implanted within our breasts. That is not universally the case now; for every one who is surrounded with refinement and comfort, there are twenty surrounded with squalor and filth, deprived of the simplest requisites

of life. But whose fault is it? Assuredly not the fault of Him who paints the lily and colours the daisy. Think you He would take so much loving pains to embellish His flowers whilst He neglected His children? I have never known a father yet fond of his flowers but regardless of his children; the love of flowers and the love of children always go together. And if the heavenly Father has taken such care to clothe His flowers, it is a proof tantamount to certainty that He spared no pains to make His children happy, and to surround them with the true, the beautiful, and the good. If men are in a worse plight than the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, the blame lies at the door, not of Divine, but of human, Providence. The Saviour's argument is—If they are abundantly fed and beautifully clothed, how much more shall we? Are we not much better than they?

4. "Behold the fowls of the air; for they *sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns*; and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; *they toil not, neither do they spin.*" They are not able to contribute to bring about the result—they can do nothing to feed and clothe themselves. But men can; and if they are helped which cannot help themselves, how much more they who can? Many people innocently imagine that not to sow and not to reap on the part of the birds, and not to toil and not to spin on the part of the lilies, indicate their superiority to us in those particulars. But, closely

considered, those things are signs of inferiority, not superiority. Who is the superior, he who sows or he who sows not? To answer this question, we must ask another—Who is the nobler, he that receives one grain of wheat from God and multiplies it into a hundred, or he in whose hand the one will for ever remain one? Certainly the one that can multiply. Again, who is the superior, he that spins or he that spins not? To answer this question, we must ask another—Which stands the higher in your estimation, he who wears a coat given him out of charity, or he who has earned the coat he wears? Certainly he who has earned his own coat. You therefore perceive that to sow is preferable to not to sow, for to multiply God's gifts is better than to diminish them. To spin is more commendable than not to spin, for to wear a coat of our own making is better than to wear a coat of our own begging. Young people, remember that work is infinitely more honourable than idleness, and resolve to stand in the world upon your own basis or upon no basis at all. One cannot help admiring Dr. Johnson when a penurious student at Oxford, "a poor, rough, rawboned, scrofulous lad," stalking about the streets in midwinter with his shoes worn out. Compassionating his poverty, a gentleman kindly sends him a new pair. Young Johnson raises them, inspects them in his nearsighted way, and then—pitches them right out through the window. There was poverty there, but manliness and independence withal. Let us stand like the

Doctor on our own foundation, on shoes such as we ourselves can get; on frost or mud, if you like, but honestly on that. Remember—toiling is superior to not toiling, spinning to not spinning. To sow the seed for man, to spin the raiment for man, would be to degrade man in the scale of existence. God sows for birds and spins for lilies; the earth is to-day a vast factory, where He weaves many coloured garments for creatures innumerable. But He expects man to do it for himself, for to do it is an honour to him.

Take no carking, consuming thought for the morrow; nevertheless, persevere in the faithful performance of duty, because only as you fall in with the specified conditions will you reap the promised results. "They that pass through the valley of Baca make it a well:" that is, it was the business of the travellers in their journeys through the valley to dig wells therein. What next? "The rain also filleth the pools"—that is God's part of the business. You are asking the question, What shall we drink? Now do not fret about it, but go and dig a well—that is your share of the work. What then? "The rain also filleth the pools"—God will fill the well with water: that is His share of the work. "Surely," says Solomon, "the churning of milk bringeth forth butter;" and you all like butter, but do you all like churning? You all covet the butter of prosperity whether in trade or in study; but you cannot get the butter unless you make up your minds to churn, and hard work churning is, I can assure you. You ask your-

self the question, What shall we eat? Now do not worry about it, but go and churn—that is your part of the process. What then? “The churning of milk bringeth forth butter”—that is God’s part of the process. Once upon a time Simon Peter was hard pressed for money to pay the taxes, as many have been since his day, as for that. He went to Jesus Christ and told Him the predicament he was in, not at all a pleasant one. “Well, Simon,” answered Christ, “there are fish in the sea, and there is money in the fish.” But how to get the money? Only by catching the fish. And Simon Peter had to tackle his rod, row his boat, and set about his work like any other fisherman on the lake. But why give him all this toil and trouble? Why not send the money there and then straight into his pocket? Because that would be too wide a departure from God’s method of sending money to men. If Peter is to have money wherewith to pay the taxes, he must work for it, and work he did. And I need not tell you that there are fish in the sea to-day, and that there is money in the fish; but if you want to get the money you must go and catch the fish. The exhortation not to take “thought” is not inconsistent with strenuous and persistent effort on the part of man, rather is it founded upon it. This truth Oliver Cromwell understood well when he bade his soldiers “Trust in God, and keep the powder dry.” To trust in God and lose the powder would never do; to trust in God and keep the powder damp would never send a shell into the enemy’s camp. What

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then? "Trust in God and keep the powder dry"—do your duty honestly and manfully, and leave the results without chagrin or misgiving in the hands of God. The God who feeds the birds and clothes the lily, shall He not much more feed you and clothe you who have done your best to feed and clothe yourselves? If He helps those who do not help themselves, He will not neglect those who do.

5. Or turn the current of your thoughts from irrational to *human* nature. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" In giving the greater, God always pledges Himself to give the lesser. Do you doubt the validity of the pledge? In giving you being, God shows that nothing will be lacking on His part to give you well-being. I think we may safely lay down this principle—God never confers life without amply providing for its subsequent sustentation. He did not create fish and put them aside in a vase till He should have time to create the sea. No; the sea first, and fish afterwards—He provided the means of sustaining life before imparting life. He did not make birds and put them aside in a cage till He should have leisure to make the atmosphere. No; the atmosphere first, and birds afterwards—He provided the means of supporting life before giving life. He has always made it possible to exalt being into well-being, to crown existence with happiness. He has given you life; did He intend that life to be miserable? To say so would be to libel His holy name. The resources of nature are amply sufficient to support all the lives

upon it. But you reply—We have actually seen people without anything to eat. Have you? Well, all I have to say is—It was not God's fault; it was theirs, or yours, or somebody else's, because for every mouth which does not receive its proper portion, another receives a double portion. Yonder is a man who has not bread enough in his house. How to account for it? Because another man in the same town has bread enough and to spare; if one man has not enough, another has more than enough; and if they do not divide, it is their fault and not God's. The principle is this—God sends life, He also sends means to support that life, but it is man's part and not God's to bring both together. A holy fire, you all know, was always glowing in the tabernacle; that fire descended to the altar from heaven, but it devolved on the priests to feed the fire and keep it burning. God sent the fire and God sent the fuel; but it was man's duty to bring the fuel to the fire and not let it die out. It is precisely the same with us—God sends down to our frame that fire which we call life, and He sends the fuel which we call food; but it is our duty and not His to bring together the fuel and the fire, the food and the life. “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”

II. Reasons based upon RELIGION against anxiety.

I. The Saviour here teaches that His followers should be different from *worldly and irreligious* men. “For after these things do the Gentiles seek.” “What shall we eat? what shall we drink? where-

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withal shall we be clothed?" These three questions are a fair summary of all worldly life. They may be disguised, but they are not changed. The rejectors of Christ, whoever they be and whatever their profession, are materialists in thought and action. They differ in nothing from the brutes around them save in the intensity of their unceasing pursuits after worldly things. All the tumult and bustle of business, all the rattle and energy to be witnessed in our populous cities, are directed to the answer of the questions enumerated in the text. But many men who reject Christ cultivate Philosophy? Yes; as a rule, however, their Philosophy gravitates strongly to the earth; and it is an ominous sign of the times that the Philosophy chiefly in vogue in the nineteenth century completely ignores the higher faculties of man. Nothing is deserving of study except nature and her iron laws. The taunt holds true, that whereas Philosophy among the ancients dwelt in the clouds, it has in England been dragged down to the earth and sent to serve in the kitchen and the shop. "Be ye not like unto them." "Set your affections on the things which are above, and not on the things which are on the earth."

2. Another consideration is based upon our peculiar *relationship* to God. "Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things." When the children of Israel were reduced to sore extremity in the wilderness, God gave them the bread of angels to eat. He does better for us—He gives us the bread of men. "Your heavenly Father knoweth

ye have need of all these things"—He knoweth and administereth accordingly. An emergency in Providence is not a sum in arithmetic, which you can work out to a proper conclusion with slate and pencil. You are possibly much involved in commercial embarrassments, you are much perplexed by distracting thoughts. But remember—another is thinking of your difficulties and seeking the best way to extricate you from their confusion. "The morrow shall take thought for the things of itself"—an invisible Divine Agency in the morrow will take thought, and a way will be discovered to deliver you from all your troubles. "The morrow shall take thought" and the problem be gradually solved. For this cause the Divine Government of the world is properly styled Providence—a government which provides and never fails in an emergency. Human governments often commit mistakes, and where help is most needed no provision is at hand. But the Divine Government always provides, *i.e.*, as the etymology of the word shows, *foresees*, and foreseeing procures the requisite aids to upbear us under adverse fortune. God foresees, and foreseeing provides. "Your heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of all these things." But we see no signs of coming deliverance? Perhaps not—was there a sign of a sun before God created it? Believe firmly in God's paternal care. He feedeth the fowls of the air and clothes the grass of the field. He is not their Father, but He is your Father. The English language cannot boast of a sweeter word, except it be, perhaps, mother. But

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father and mother meet in God; fatherhood and motherhood are combined in one deep, mysterious, infinite emotion in His breast; you may, therefore, repose implicit trust in His watchful, loving kindness. "Your heavenly Father knoweth." A deservedly popular preacher has a sermon entitled—"God our Mother." I do not quite approve of the title—it is unnecessarily novel and sensational; but still I like the truth embodied in it, that God's great heart is full of motherly tenderness. "I am God Almighty," said God to Abraham after his return from the pursuit of the kings. Literally, "I am God full of breasts," a metaphor borrowed from the sacredness of motherhood; and He invites Abraham to dismiss all gloomy forebodings and draw his succour from Himself as a child from the breast of his mother. God the Mother was revealed in Genesis to the infant Church before God the Father was revealed in the Gospels to the adult Church.

3. Furthermore, true religion carries within it a *sure guarantee* that our earthly wants shall be supplied. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." The word "seek" here means persistent, honest, earnest endeavour. Instead of concentrating the energies of your soul upon the possession of perishing wealth, bend them in earnest quest after a kingdom. Man is destined to be a king, and it does him infinite dishonour to leave off seeking a kingdom to go seeking the asses. One who possesses a kingdom need not fear he will lack food, drink,

and raiment. Anxiety concerning things temporal answers no good purpose. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Instead of adding a cubit, you are much more likely to take a cubit off. But anxiety concerning spiritual things and an earnest endeavour to possess them will secure infallibly a rich reward. Leave off, therefore, the uncertain, and desire that which is steadfast and abiding. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness"—temporal things will naturally follow.

A good man is always provided for in this universe of God. The construction of the planet is favourable to the cultivation of virtue. A well-known writer has declared that there is a "Power in Providence making for righteousness." As a definition of God, it is wretchedly inadequate; as an exposition of the fundamental laws of the world, it is profoundly true. Therefore "seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness"—cultivate goodness, for goodness is the first essential element in success. Yonder is a woodsman wielding his axe in pursuit of his calling. He swings it upward to lop off the heavy branch, but finds it hard work. His skyward strokes are feeble, for the law of gravitation operates against him and to a certain extent neutralises the power of his arm. He next swings it downward, and every stroke makes the hills resound. He works with and not against the law of gravitation; and the power of this central law of creation being added to the power of his muscles, he prosecutes his work with energy and success. Every stroke has a double

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power—the power of the arm and the power of gravitation. Thus man in pursuit of evil proceeds in the teeth of the most potent laws of the Divine Government—the odds are all against him, his strokes are all upwards; and sooner or later he must be made to feel the weariness of wrong-doing. But the good man places himself in harmony with the moral law of God, and thus the strength of the law becomes his panoply. His goodness is so far an advantage to him and not an impediment. And in prophecy the reign of goodness is always associated with the reign of plenty; when the knowledge of God will cover the earth, then and not before will a harvest of wheat be reaped upon the tops of the mountains. Evil and famine on the one hand, goodness and abundance on the other, always go together.

I do not say that goodness is the only element of success, but assuredly it is the chief element. Therefore our principal business should be to “seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness”—all other things lie in the line of goodness. This teaches us to put this world and the next in a straight line with one another, so that working for the one may be preparing for the other. The great mistake of men consists in putting them side by side in a cross line, so that in turning their attention to the one they divert it from the other. “Take no thought,” literally, do not divide or cut up your mind; let your whole moral and intellectual life move in one plane towards one object. How? Do not divide the two

worlds, do not separate this from the next; let them lie in a straight line before your spiritual vision, so that in the pursuit of the one you will render service to the other. The Saviour inculcates unity of thought and purpose as against distraction and division. But how to secure this unity? Only by uniting the two worlds and putting one in a straight line with the other. "Ye cannot serve two masters." The emphatic word is "masters." Ye can serve two, provided only one of them is master. Ye can serve this world and the next, provided the next is allowed the place of supremacy in your meditations and strivings. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you."

This word "righteousness" is a large word, and comprehends under it not only efforts after goodness, but efforts also after understanding. To be good, in the narrow sense of that word, is not enough to ensure success. Goodness is the chief factor, but it is not the only factor. To goodness you must add understanding; and the "righteousness" of the text includes both. By means of goodness you secure in your favour whatever power inheres in the moral laws of the universe; and by means of understanding you secure whatever power inheres in the natural laws of the universe; and this double power is necessary to perfect success. "Seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness:" that means manly, unwavering discharge of duties in whatever sphere of life we are placed. It will make you ardent in the

pursuit of knowledge and diligent in the prosecution of trade. To conſe to church or chapel, ſing hymns, join in the prayers, and then return home to ſpend the day in idle reverie or ecſtatic talk, will not ſecure you the addition of the temporal mercies promiſed in the text. No; there muſt be earneſt endeavour all round the circumference of life, a faithful diſcharge of duties to the family and to ſociety as well as to God. No comfort here to the idle, no encouragement to thoſe who neglect the ſecular employments of life to ſeek religious excitement. Religion, properly underſtood, grasps the two worlds; righteouſneſs, properly apprehended, inculcates ſecular as well as ſpiritual duties; goodneſs, in the Bible ſenſe, ſignifies faithfulneſs to man as well as faithfulneſs to the Saviour. Religion, righteouſneſs, goodneſs, thus interpreted, carry with them the promiſe of the life which now is as well as of that which is to come. "Trust in God and do the right," and your future will be bright—food, drink, and raiment will be added unto you. "Trust in God" and do the wrong, and your future will grow dark; food, drink, and raiment will be denied you; your ſun will ſet under dark and thick clouds.



IX.

The Touch of Faith.

“And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment : for she said within herself, If I may but touch His garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned Him about, and when He saw her, He said, Daughter, be of good comfort ; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.”—ST. MATT. ix. 20-22.

THIS woman had been ailing for twelve years. Instead of improving, her disease was growing gradually worse. Matthew does not notice this feature, but Mark and Luke do. Luke was himself a physician, and understood something of her complaint, whereas evidently he had a strong sympathy with the profession, of which he was so distinguished a member. Yet he is obliged to confess that her case had baffled all the medical skill of the age. “She had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any,” says he. In Luke’s opinion, she was manifestly an incurable. A sad state, the saddest you can picture upon this earth—to be cast aside by doctors as incurable.

Mark, however, is much severer in his denunciation of the doctors. He did not belong to the privileged guild, and consequently he could afford

to be more explicit and downright. "She had suffered many things of physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse:" that is Mark's version of the story. "She had *suffered* many things of them." So far from alleviating her disorder, they had considerably aggravated it; so far from curing her, they had made her worse.

Moreover, she was now poor as well as sick. "She had spent all she had upon physicians"—she had parted with the last cent she possessed for the inestimable privilege of growing worse. The language seems to imply that, when her ailment first came on, she was in comfortable circumstances. But in twelve years "she spent all she had upon physicians." Fortunate woman! I spent all I had upon them in two years. "Everything that a man hath will he give for his life." Invalids know that right well. If there be the remotest chance of a cure in any quarter, however high the fee, the invalid is quite willing to pay it. And this woman had gone from physician to physician in the sanguine hope that her sad condition might be ameliorated; but the physicians had only succeeded in complicating her disorder, and, unintentionally no doubt, reducing her to poverty withal.

Once more the news reached her of a great Healer, who had risen up in the land, and her heart throbbed again with high expectation. The strange tidings respecting the Wonder-worker made her spirit flutter. "She said within herself, If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be

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whole." The sequel of the story you all know. The subject to which I solicit your attention is—*The various elements in the cure of this woman.*

I. She possessed FAITH. "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

1. She exercised *faith* in the Saviour. Not that faith was absolutely necessary to the healing of the body. So much has been said of the connection between faith and miracles, that in most minds an indistinct impression exists that the one is an essential condition of the other. That, however, is not by any means the case. Jesus Christ did not demand faith before performing the first miracle in Cana of Galilee; but, in the sovereign exercise of His power, He at once turned the water into wine. He did not require faith of the widow of Nain before raising her son to life; but, at the sudden impulse of His compassionate heart, He resuscitated the young man "and gave him unto his mother." And, doubtless, it would be a strain upon our charity to suppose that He discovered faith in each one of the crowds, whom he healed on special occasions. "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them." True, we read of a certain town that "He did no mighty works there, because of their unbelief." In other words, He performed no miracles, not because He was physically unable, but because He could accomplish thereby no moral

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purpose. It would be a sheer waste of power, the means of confirming them in sin instead of lifting them out of it.

Faith, however, was absolutely necessary if the physical miracle was to issue in the salvation of the soul. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." "All things are possible to him that believeth." And whenever Christ demanded faith, it at once shows that He intended something greater than the healing of the body, that He further intended the healing of the soul. Hence in the Gospel narrative, "peace" and "forgiveness" are always associated with the miracles which have faith as a condition. Accordingly, the miracles of healing recorded in the Gospel have a double aspect, physical and moral; they are histories of spiritual conversions as well as of physical cures, and in virtue of this alone are they entitled to a place in the sacred story.

2. Her faith was in the *person* of Jesus Christ, and not in any dogmas concerning Him. No dogmas had then been elaborated—dogmas are the consequents, not the antecedents, of faith. Faith in the person of Christ is the root virtue; other virtues will in time be added, such as temperance and knowledge. First, faith in the person of Christ; next, knowledge of the doctrine of Christ. This poor woman possessed faith, but she had no knowledge. She had never heard the Saviour preach, had never read a chapter of the New Testament, had never been instructed in the "fundamentals," as they are called. Very ignorant, and yet believing. She

exercised a kind of large, liberal trust in Jesus Christ. Hence the New Testament writers adopt a peculiar phrase, a phrase never to be found in classical authors—to believe *in* or *on* Christ. You believe Plato, not *in* Plato; you believe Aristotle, not *on* Aristotle; but you believe *in* and *on* Jesus Christ. Despairing of a cure anywhere else, this woman cast herself wholly on the power and goodness of the Saviour. Here we come upon the primitive meaning of faith—to lean upon, to rely. The Hebrew word in its root signifies to lean, to rest upon, hence to trust. It is a figure of speech borrowed from infancy, the child putting its weight and resting itself upon its father. “Abraham believed in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” That is, Abraham leaned on the Everlasting Arms, and rested himself there as a child upon the arms of its father. And this poor invalid relies upon Christ, trusts in Him for a cure; she believes in His Love, and not in any doctrine concerning His nature. She has no clear conception of the Divine dignity of His rank, has never heard of the Incarnation, knows nothing of the relation between the Divine and the human in the mysterious constitution of His person; and yet she has a genuine saving faith in Him. Not but that it is well to educate this faith and enlighten it; but then the faith must be there to be enlightened. The faith may be there without any education, it may be there despite a false education, a kind of large blind trust in the Almighty Love. Who knows but

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many a Unitarian has faith in the right person, though in the wrong creed? Who knows but the gracious Redeemer perceives the germs of true faith in the superstitious Papist, counting his beads and repeating his *Ave Marias*? The faith of this woman, though vague and indefinite, was yet genuine.

II. Her faith manifested itself in her TOUCH. "If I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole."

I. The word *touch* here means more than a slight contact of the languid fingers with the extreme border of the Saviour's robe; it means literally to *feel about*, hence to seize, clutch, pluck. "If I may but clutch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole." There is here an eagerness of desire, an earnestness of purpose. Her faith, though dark and confused, was yet vigorous. Through a debilitating illness of twelve years' continuance, she is reduced to a mere skeleton of humanity; and, owing to the nature of her disorder, she is laid under a civil and a religious ban—divorced from her husband, separated from her friends, and forbidden to worship in temple or synagogue. But no sooner did she hear that Christ was passing by, than she forgot the prohibitions of the ceremonial law, and, throwing herself into the dense throng, she wound her way till she came within reach of the Wonder-worker. Her excitement was so great that her fingers nervously twitched, and she snatched eagerly at the flowing

robe, and gave it a sudden pull. The Saviour felt the pull, and turned round, saying, "Who pulled me?"

And if you earnestly desire to be saved, you will not be content with a passive acceptance of proffered salvation; you will stretch out your hand and eagerly snatch it. "Lay hold of eternal life"—a firm, powerful hold. "Hold fast your profession"—not loosely or indifferently, but with a tight grip. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Strange words, but yet true. Only men of moral violence, of strong spiritual determination, can enter the Kingdom. Whilst others are dallying, these stretch forth their hands and clutch the Kingdom, they take it, as it were, by force.

2. The word "*hem*" is also significant, indicating properly the fringe. "If I may but touch the fringe of His garment, I shall be whole." But why the fringe? Because the fringe was usually considered as extraordinarily sacred. Of the Pharisees we read "that they made wide their phylacteries." The Saviour does not censure them for wearing phylacteries, He wore one Himself; He only condemns them for making them wider than requisite, for measuring their holiness by the width of their flounces. And this hem or fringe means the sacred phylactery. "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them *fringes in the borders* of their garments throughout their generations; and

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that they put upon the fringe of the borders a *ribband of blue*; and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them" (Num. xv. 37-39). It was this ribband of blue blue, the colour of heaven—this sash of the covenant, that the poor invalid touched. It was, so to speak, the point of contact between heaven and earth, the point in which the Divine virtue and grace became operative factors in the history of the Jewish nation. Preachers and commentators declare the woman's faith was admixed with much superstition. I am not so sure of that; at all events, we must allow it was superstition verging on the most exalted truths of the Old Testament. She resolved, not to seize any random part of the garment, but this sash of peculiar sacredness, the very article of dress to which Jehovah had bound Himself by covenant.

Jesus Christ is now ascended to heaven. We cannot come into physical contact with Him; but in the ordinances of His house we are still able to touch the very hem of His garment. All nature may be looked upon as His vesture; but the Christian faith is like a sash of blue flung across the broad shoulders of creation, by touching which we may evoke the healing virtues. Men may walk out on Sabbath-days and admire the beauty and the grandeur of Nature, but they do not draw forth virtue from the God of Nature; they touch the robe but not the sash, the garment but not the hem; hence they miss the blessing. In the house of God and in the ordi-

nances of His grace it is that we touch the hem; here has He bound Himself by covenant to bless. "I will meet with thee there." "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We often feel that the public worship of God is loaded with Divine virtues; stretch forth the hand of faith and you will be healed.

III. Her touch drew forth VIRTUE out of Christ. "Somebody hath touched me, for virtue is gone out of me."

1. By her touch of faith the woman *liberated* the healing powers which were lodged in Christ. His whole nature quivered to the touch. As the zephyr's breath awakes the music asleep in the wire, so faith's touch excites the powers slumbering in the Saviour. "Virtue is gone out of me."

"How will you know the pitch of that great bell,
Too large for you to stir? Let but a flute
Play 'neath the fine-mixed metal. Listen close
Till the right note flows forth, a silvery rill:
Then shall the huge bell tremble—then the mass
With myriad waves concurrent shall respond
In low, soft unison."

Thus the slightest touch of faith makes the nature of the Godhead quiver to the centre. The cry of faith at once awakes resounding echoes in the Divine Heart. "Somebody hath touched me, for virtue is gone out of me." The miracle, it would appear, was performed passively rather than actively by Jesus Christ, and seems to suggest to us the law of faith

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in the spiritual world. Where faith is weak, the active energy of the Saviour is strong—faith at its minimum exhibits the Saviour's activity at its maximum. On the other hand, where faith is strong, the active energy of the Saviour is correspondingly quiescent—faith at its maximum exhibits the Saviour's activity at its minimum. We witness here no active exertion of Will on His part; He seems to be passive whilst faith was stealing a cure.

2. "Virtue is gone out of me;" the miracle then was the result of a direct efflux of *power resident* in His person. This disposes of the theory now current respecting miracles, that they are the combined result of the conjunction of unknown laws. The "reign of law" is certainly a despotism; it exercises a kind of tyranny over the modern mind; and such devout thinkers as Bushnell perceive in miracles, not the contravention or suspension, but simply the conjunction, of laws—the laws of the higher world crossing the laws of the lower, and in the crossing bubbling up into miracles. A respected President of the Congregational Union declared not very long ago, in an address from the chair, that the Lord Jesus performed His miracles in virtue of His more intimate knowledge of the "mystic streams of healing," circulating through the creation, that He took the sick and plunged them in these "mystic streams," hence the astonishing cures He effected. That, however, is only a rationalistic mode of accounting for miracles, none the less rationalistic for being a little poetic. The teaching of the Saviour is—"Virtue is gone out

of *me*;" not out of Nature, but out of Christ; not out of the creation, but out of the Creator. Accordingly, miracles are the immediate result of the immediate interference of God, the direct result of the direct exertion of power to be found nowhere except in God. "Virtue is gone out of *me*."

3. If virtue went out of Him, then virtue was *always resident* in His person. Men are powerful only as they utilise the powers of Nature—power does not reside in us. But power resided in Christ, it organically inhered in His person. "In Him was life"—in Him it dwelt. It flows through others, but in Him it rises and abides. "The first Adam was made a living soul;" that is, he received life and in consequence lived. "But the second Adam was made a quickening spirit;" that is, He originates life and is able to impart it to others. Just the same with the miracle-working power; it dwells in Him, and exists nowhere else except as it emanates from Him. He wrought His miracles, not by a power received by Him or delegated to Him, but by a power original and innate.

Hence the difference between Him and His disciples in the performance of miracles. He does everything without the slightest effort. In none of His miracles, although they be prodigies of power, do we discover a single element to remind us of anything in the shape of strain. Herein He stands alone and without a parallel in history. We are keenly alive to more or less of the artistic in everything and everybody human till we come to Christ.

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Other men spoke truths, but we feel them to be the result of hard and prolonged study; He spoke truths, and we feel as if they spontaneously leaped into existence. Other men performed wonders, but we labour under the conviction that they cost a great deal to their authors; Christ performed wonders, and He everywhere evinces perfect ease, naturalness, and composure. He never appears to be under the stern necessity of exerting Himself. The disciples perform miracles, and we naturally suspect that they rise above themselves, that they mount higher than their ordinary and proper level. Christ performs miracles, and we suffer from no such misgivings. He multiplies wonders as He lists, and we never see Him put to the strain. On the present occasion He is on His way to heal the daughter of Jairus, sick unto death; nevertheless He has leisure to pause on the way to heal the woman with the issue of blood. You have seen doctors hurrying to the sick on the brink of death, hastening on at the top of their speed, for five minutes may make all the difference to them between life and death. They have no power in and of themselves to heal; all they can do is to help and direct the powers of nature; and once life becomes extinct, the most skilful physician is as powerless as a babe. Jesus Christ, however, had boundless power lodging in His person; and His difficulty was, not to exert it, but to repress it and keep it in check. He was on a level with the supernatural; miracles, therefore, ceased to be supernatural to Him and became natural, as natural as digging a garden or building a

ship is to us. Supernatural influences dwelt in Him as in their natural home.

4. The healing virtue which was in Him was not special but *universal*—a power to heal not one but every disease. He is the primal fountain of all virtue; in Him, therefore, we find combined all the healing powers of nature. No curative property lodges in any medicinal herb but it has derived it from Jesus Christ. But what is divided in nature among many herbs is whole and undivided in Christ. Very properly is He designated the “Branch of Healing;” “and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” He is the universal panacea for the universal evils of the world. “He healeth all sickness and diseases among the people.” “Himself took our infirmities and bore our sorrows.”

IV. The virtue which proceeded out of Christ made the woman **WHOLE**. “And straightway she was made whole.” “Thy faith hath made thee whole.”

1. She was cured *straightway*. No sooner did she grasp the fringe of blue than she felt a Divine flow of health rushing into her wasted frame, and tingling in every vein and nerve like a stream of electricity from a powerful battery. “The fountain of her blood was dried up”—there the cause of her disorder is removed. “The issue of her blood stanch’d”—there the symptom of her disorder is removed. She had not to undergo a tedious process, but was cured “straightway.” This is a very important word in the history of the Saviour—He did everything

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"straightway." Very few things can we do "straightway;" we are generally obliged to do things in a roundabout way. Bitter experience has taught us that the quickest way to cross the mountain is to go round it. Christ, however, did everything "straightway." Physicians use means and require time—they physic you and diet you, and accomplish their purpose gradually. But the Redeemer never physicked or dieted His patients—"straightway" He cured them. "Straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up." How did she know? "She felt in herself she was healed of that plague." The difference in feeling between robust health and extreme exhaustion is great. The languor, the faintness, arising from lack of vital energy, left her suddenly, and lo! life was throbbing in her system, and she felt she was well. Well, after twelve years' lingering illness; well, after twelve years' exclusion from synagogue and temple; well, after twelve years' separation from the sweet society of relatives; well, after twelve years' steady gazing in the grim face of Disease: *Well, WELL!* Oh, the silent joy which glowed in her heart, and wanted to blaze into publicity! "She felt in her body she was healed of that plague."

2. Her cure was moreover *perfect*. "She was made whole." Not better, but whole; she was made sound every whit. An alleviation of her suffering would have been much prized by her; but the text declares that she was restored to perfect health. All traces of the disease at once vanished. She felt as if

she had never seen illness. Doctors at best can only accomplish partial cures; vestiges of the old sickness still remain. Weakness, scars, furrows in the face, greyness in the hair, rigidity in the limbs—something to indicate that disease had planted its venomous tooth in our too sensitive flesh. But Jesus Christ “straightway” effected complete cures. He healed the ear of Malchus with a touch, so that not a scar was left behind. In the verses immediately following our text we read that He raised from the dead Jairus’ daughter. “He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise.” “And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; and He commanded that something should be given her to eat”—a complete, perfect, instantaneous cure; the damsel arose, walked, and ate the next moment.

V. The cure she had received demanded CONFES-
SION on her part.

1. Having been touched by the woman, though on His way to the house of Jairus, the Saviour paused, *turned round*, and asked, “Who touched me?” Rationalistic writers have striven to make much capital out of this incident. There, they say, your Saviour is not divine, your Jesus is not omniscient; He knew not who touched Him in the crowd. We answer—Jesus is to be judged by His object, which is at present not to display His omniscience, but to strengthen the faith and draw out the confession of this bashful, timid creature, who has just touched Him. It does

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not prove His divinity, say they. We answer, Who ever said it did? We do not base His divinity upon this, but upon other passages; what we base upon this is not His proper divinity, but His proper humanity.

Two traits prove His superlative humanness. First, He does not ask, Who is she? but, Who is he that touched me? He did not like to pounce upon the poor woman and cause her a sudden shock; He, therefore, changed the gender—Who is he that touched me? When you have occasion to elicit a confession from one of your children, you frame your question in the most general way possible, to create heart-searchings in the little one, but not to cow him with a too pointed query. Who is he that touched me? Doubtless it excited quick thought in the poor woman, but the gender served to take off the edge a little. The second trait of humanness is this—"He looked round about to see her that had done this thing." He could, doubtless, have fixed His piercing eyes upon her in a moment; but that would overawe her and overwhelm her. What then did He do? He let His eyes wander about in the far distance, as if He were looking into the outskirts of the crowd for the person who had furtively touched Him. That is exceedingly human. When you want to draw forth a voluntary confession, you ask a question and seem to look in the wrong direction for an answer. The blessed Jesus was most considerate in His feelings and actions. The woman was abnormally shy, nervous, and timid; it would never do to swoop suddenly down upon her, like a hungry hawk upon its

prey. Accordingly He asks, Who is he that touched me? and professes to look to the outer rim of the throng, as if one from there could have touched Him. "He is able to have compassion on them who are out of the way."

2. He turned round because there was a *specialness* in the touch. The disciples remonstrate with Him on His question. "Thou seest the multitudes thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me?" Judged by human sense, Divine wisdom is often arraigned with folly. "Nay," answers the Master, "somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." *Somebody*: it is not the touch of the thoughtless crowd; there is peculiarity in the touch; there is want in it, there is faith in it. Oh no; it is not the touch of the excited throng—"somebody hath touched me." This kind, sympathetic language of the Saviour administers strong consolation to us. Amid the countless multitudes who crowd around His skirts this evening, He distinctly feels the slightest touch of faith. "Somebody hath touched me." "He immediately knew in Himself that virtue was gone out of Him." This virtue flowed not to the crowd, because they could not receive it—they had not the spiritual capacity to take it in. They were necessitous enough, as necessitous in their way as the poor shrinking invalid; but it is not need that draws out the virtue, but the sense of need; not want, but faith.

3. His urgent appeal brought the woman to her *knees*. "The woman, fearing and trembling, know-

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ing what was done in her, came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth." Why did He not allow her to go away in secrecy? There are two reasons. The first is to strengthen the faith of Jairus. This nobleman, was in much anxiety concerning his little daughter; probably he wavered between faith and unbelief. But as he listened to the woman's story, and learnt the marvellous cure clandestinely wrought upon her, his eyes must have brightened and his faith gained additional strength. The Man who cured an inveterate disease of twelve years' standing, cannot He heal my little daughter? His soul must have bounded at the thought. Honest, sincere confession on our part will bring blessings to others.

The chief reason, doubtless, lay in the spiritual benefit the woman herself would derive from confession. Jesus Christ is a rare discerner of character. In the same chapter we read that He gave sight to two blind men. "Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it." These blind beggars, like blind beggars generally, were given to talk and chatter a great deal, making up in speech for what they lacked in sight; and too much babbling on the present occasion would dissipate the solemnity of the impression the Saviour had made upon their hearts. Therefore He enjoined silence. But the mental temperament of the woman with the issue of blood was vastly different. She was fearful and retiring, and instinctively shrank from a public confession of the miracle of healing performed upon her.

The very mention of her ailment fetched the burning blush to her cheek. Is she then to nurse her shame and hide her faith? Nay; the Discerner of hearts inquires for her, induces her at once to avow the cure. "She told Him all the truth." "She declared unto Him, before all the people, for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was immediately healed."

What good is to be derived from open confession? Peace. Faith brings health, confession brings peace, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole." She probably imagined that magic virtue lodged in His garment. "No," says He, "thy faith hath made thee whole"—I sanction the cure—"go in peace, and be whole." Did He demand a high fee? No; she had spent all she had upon others, and had nothing to give Him; and, blessed be His name, He claimed nothing. Never was there such a poor man's friend as Jesus—He laid all the poor of the world under obligation to Him.

According to tradition, she was once more visited with temporal prosperity, but she continued a steadfast disciple of her gracious Benefactor. Two or three years afterwards, as He walked up the *Via Dolorosa*—the Way of Sorrows—to the top of Calvary, bearing on His bent shoulders the heavy, cumbersome Cross, the blood and the sweat trickling down His wan but sacred face, there stepped out of the mocking crowd a woman, and with her handkerchief tenderly wiped the hallowed countenance. Who was she? Tradition answers, St. Veronica, the woman

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with the issue of blood, who was so marvellously healed by touching the hem of His garment. Years after she erected in front of her house in Paneas—so further runs the tradition—the other side of the Sea of Galilee, a marble statue to the Saviour commemorating the miracle of our text. The Saviour stands erect, stretching forth His hands in sweet benedictions; prostrate at His feet is the figure of a woman, fearing and trembling, but gathering courage as she hears the words—“Go in peace and be whole.” St. Eusebius, the oldest of Church historians, says the statue was extant in his day, and that he saw it with his own eyes. Be that as it may; but she did put up in her soul a monument to her Deliverer and Redeemer, a monument more precious than that of glowing marble or solid gold, a monument which will outlast the finest monuments of earth. “Thy faith hath made thee whole,” said He. He always attributes the cure to men’s faith; but they always attribute it to His goodness and power. He puts the crown upon their heads; but they take the crowns and fling them at His feet.



X.

Hearing the Word.

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”—ST. MATT. xi. 15.

YOU are all familiar with this verse. It recurs so often in the teaching of Jesus Christ that it has burnt itself into the memory of each one of us. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The commentators tell us it is a proverb. May be; but whether it is a proverb adopted by Christ, or invented by Him, is more than they tell us. At all events, it is a proverb which I have not met with on the lips of any other teacher, inspired or uninspired, a proverb distinctive of the teaching of the Lord Jesus. In the text we come across it for the first time; a fitting opportunity, therefore, presents itself to us of eliciting its meaning. If we can only crack the outer shell, we shall no doubt find a nutritious kernel within—empty nuts never grow on the Tree of Life.

Three points: I. Take heed **THAT** ye hear. II. Take heed **HOW** ye hear. III. Take heed **WHAT** ye hear. The fact, the manner, the matter.

I. Take heed **THAT** ye hear. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

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I. This implies *willingness* to hear; it presupposes a mind exempt from prejudice. The mischief in many quarters in the present day is lack of candour, the judgment being subtilly biassed in favour of infidelity. As we read the Gospels, we discover two species of unbelief. The first occasions sorrow to the mind; the man would gladly rid himself of it, if he could. This type you will find in the man to whom the Saviour addressed the question, "Believest thou?" "Yea, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." What a strange answer! The end contradicts the beginning. "I *believe*; help Thou mine *unbelief*." His doubts caused him keen anguish; he contended hard against them, at last dragged them to the presence of the Saviour, to be settled there favourably or adversely as the case might be. Other men's doubts drove them from Christ; his doubts drove him to Christ.

"There is more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds."

Not in doubt, but in honest doubt; not in scepticism, but in the integrity at the bottom of scepticism. "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." The best place to decide for or against infidelity is in Jesus' presence, and not in His absence, as, alas! is too often the case.

The other species of unbelief vaunts itself, gives itself superior airs, and prides itself on its manifold accomplishments. Instead of striving to solve objections, it always strives to raise them. It exaggerates

difficulties which exist, and creates difficulties which do not exist. Some of you have probably heard of the cuttle-fish. Whenever it is in danger of being caught, it emits from its mouth a dark fluid, which troubles all the water, thereby successfully concealing itself from the eyes of the angler. And there are cuttle-fish doubters. The moment they approach a passage of Scripture, they vomit their doubts; they trouble the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," and charge the Bible with difficulties entirely of their own creation. God preserve the Church from cuttle-fish doubters!

2. The words further imply a devout *earnestness* to hear. It is to be feared that our time is so taken up with our commercial and literary avocations that we have but little leisure left to hear or peruse the Word of God. Christian, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," turns in to a shady bower on the mountain side to rest; he unfolds the roll which Evangelist gave him to guide him on his journey; but, says Bunyan, he soon feel asleep. A faithful representation of many Christians in the present day—we soon fall asleep over our Bibles. The Gospel acts as a mighty soporific on certain constitutions; men who never find sleep anywhere else, generally find it in the house of God. In the fifty-eighth Psalm the writer charges sinners with dumbness and deafness—dumbness in the first verse, deafness in the fourth. "Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?" More correctly, "Are ye dumb when ye should speak righteously, O congregation?" And not only

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they were dumb when they should speak for God, but they were also deaf when they were spoken to by God. "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." All serpents are more or less deaf, the construction of the ear being very imperfect; but when they do hear, they are singularly susceptible to the sweetness of melody. Some, however, are so deaf that they hear not the voice of the charmer; or so malignant that, when they do hear it, they refuse to be subdued by it. In like manner sinners make themselves deaf to the music of the Gospel, defiantly resisting the most vehement pleadings of the ablest ministers. This country of ours has reared cunning charmers: "they have piped to you, and ye have not danced; they have mourned to you, and ye have not wept." "Ears ye have, but ye hear not." The deafness, however, is not natural, but moral, and consequently highly reprehensible in the sight of God. The Saviour gives utterance to a parallel truth in the memorable words—"If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." Sinners are not blind, but blinded. Were they blind, they could not be held blameworthy for not seeing; but as they have wilfully blinded themselves, their responsibility continues intact, "and their sin remaineth." Their health may be lost, their friends may depart, their reason may go, but "their sin remaineth."

II. Take heed **HOW** ye hear. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

1. This means that we should seek to *understand* the Gospel. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." Here the Divine Teacher borrows a comparison from sporting life. You have seen the dog hunting the rabbit: how earnest his endeavours, how vigilant his movements, how persevering his efforts. He scents in the hole, he seeks in the bush, he rests not till he discover his prey. Thus should we study the Scriptures—diligently, earnestly, prayerfully. It is not enough that we hear them drowsily or read them lazily, we must hunt cunningly for the meaning. We should study attentively verses of the Bible to see the Divine ideas coming forth like rabbits from their holes. "For which things the prophets inquired and searched diligently"—another illustration borrowed from mining life. You have observed miners digging for the ore; they carefully remove the earth, violently blast rocks, till they reach the metallic vein. So ought we to dig in the field of Holy Writ, forcing our way down through the petrified incrustations both of learned orthodoxy and learned heterodoxy, till we come at the Divine truth underneath. Some are able enough to discover large nuggets of truth, adding sensibly thereby to the spiritual wealth of the collective Church. Others of us are not sufficiently learned to do that; but we can gather the dust, and the dust of verses, like the dust of gold, has made the fortune of many a man.

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2. We should further endeavour to *experience* the Gospel, to verify its truth in our own personal history. According to the philosophers, knowledge comes to us from two sources—reflection and sensation, the faculties of thought and the organs of sense. And full Christian knowledge is the combined result of the cogitation of the intellect and of the processes of inward experience. “Wherein He hath abounded towards us in all knowledge and judgment”—on the margin, “in all knowledge and sense.” No doubt, the spiritual sense is an important factor in Christian science. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” The logical faculty may employ itself in demonstrating His existence, but the Christian is not left entirely to its guidance—he sees God. To him the Divine existence is not a matter of pure speculation, but of experience. The knowledge of God comes to him by the organ of spiritual vision. Take again the character of God. The understanding may, indeed, concern itself about His goodness; but it can come to no definite, settled conclusion. The believer, however, is not shut up entirely to the operation of the understanding; he has a fine spiritual sense which comes to his aid. “O taste and see that the Lord is good;” “If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;” “Having tasted the heavenly gift and the good Word of God.” Your knowledge of the graciousness of God comes to you, not by hearing, reading, or reasoning, but by tasting. “Thy word is sweeter than honey, yea, than the droppings of the honeycomb.” You may write erudite essays on the

properties of honey; but a cartful of essays cannot convey to the uninitiated an adequate impression of what honey really is. What then to do? Let him taste it; one grain upon the tongue will convey a more vivid notion of what honey really is than a score of essays on the subject. Thus, really to know the good word of God we must experience it. The reason may pronounce on its beauty and symmetry, the taste alone can pronounce upon its sweetness. "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate both day and night." To meditate here signifies not to meditate in thought but in words; hence St. Augustine very properly translates thus—"in His law doth he chatter both day and night." He meditates; and his meditation finds broken utterance in half syllables and unconscious soliloquies. See the bird on the branch of yonder tree: he chirps merrily all day long to his associates, if they are near; and if not, he chirps merrily to himself—twitwit, twitwit, tweetwee. Thus the godly chatters in the Divine law; he chatters to his friends, if they are near; if not, he chatters to himself. "In His law doth he chatter both day and night."

3. We should further hear with a view to reduce what we learn to *practice*. A few verses before we read that "the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Whatever else these words teach, they evidently teach that we must exercise a kind of holy violence in our pursuit of the Divine Life. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Strive—agonise. In one sense to be saved is

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easy enough—you have only to believe; in another sense it involves a terrible conflict. You are to strain yourselves even unto the point of agony. “Agonise to enter in at the strait gate.” And after you have effected an entrance, your labour is by no means ended, “for strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.” The way is as narrow as the gate is strait; therefore the same strenuous endeavour must continue unto the end. “I keep under my body and bring it into subjection”—“I make my body black and blue.” The Apostle was afraid that the lusts of the flesh would impede his progress in the Divine Life; he, therefore, made his “body black and blue”—he severely curbed the unruly appetences of the animal nature. Monasticism is not to be encouraged; but is there no risk that we swing to the opposite extreme, that of unbridled indulgence? Full fiery blood is inimical to heavenly-mindedness. The Lord Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount exhorted His disciples to “fast”—an exhortation, however, which Protestants have purposely disregarded, lest they be found mimicking the Papists. “This kind goeth not out except by prayer and fasting.” You pray God to be delivered from your sins, and you do well; but there are sins from which you cannot well be delivered by merely praying—you must fast, you must purify the blood, you must reduce the grossness of the flesh. Proper diet much helps the growth of religion in the soul. Who will favour the Church with a course of sermons on Christian dietetics?

III. Take heed WHAT ye hear. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "And all the people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God."

1. You should therefore desire to hear the *Word of God*. And if the Bible be the Word of God, as we all believe, then it is of paramount authority in the domain of faith and morals. A disposition is observable in Roman Catholicism to subordinate it to tradition; and a disposition is observable in Protestantism to subordinate it to private judgment. Men judge the Bible by the commentaries, instead of judging the commentaries by the Bible. We interpret St. Paul according to the Thirty-Nine Articles, instead of interpreting the Thirty-Nine Articles according to St. Paul. We understand St. John according to the Creed, instead of understanding the Creed according to St. John. Let us by all means consult the fathers, the reformers, and the modern theologians, and get what assistance we can from them. At the same time, let us beware lest we devote so much attention to the "aids" as to forget the Book intended to be aided.

2. Desire also the *pure* Word of God. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." Literally, the unadulterated milk. In ancient as in modern times milk was much adulterated, especially the milk of the Word; and the Apostle cautions his readers against these compound admixtures. I am not without my fears that Divine Revelation is much tampered with in the present day. Only yesterday I was glancing

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over a volume of sermons by a man of distinguished ability, who has made for himself a considerable name in certain circles of religious thought; and I could not help noticing and lamenting the great prominence he gave in every sermon to his doubts. No matter what the subject was, he must preach the difficulties which he and others experienced; he seldom ever preached his convictions—he always preached his doubts. Instead of being the advocate of Christian Faith, he seemed to me to be the exponent of Christian Doubt.

3. Desire further the *plain Word* of God, especially the doctrines which make directly for salvation. What I want you and other congregations to guard yourselves against is, a morbid craving after novelties, subtleties, and flashy elegances in the pulpit. Never grow tired of plain truths—the guilt and depravity of man, on the one hand, and the all-sufficiency of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus on the other. Never grow weary of sermons which insist upon repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. What would you think of the man who would complain that he was daily fed with the best bread made of the finest wheat in the land? Is not bread the staff of life? And is it not more conducive to health and longevity than delicate confectioneries and sweet sugar-plums? But, alas! congregations nowadays loathe the Bread of Life, and cry out for the sweet-smelling flowers of superficial rhetoric. I say nothing against these latter; I dearly love them, though I cannot grow them. But I tell you this—

you cannot live upon flowers; bread is the staff of life. "And this is the Bread of God, which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world."

Am I opposed to the exposition of the great truths of our Redemption? Certainly not. The plain truths *are* the great truths. And whereas I want you, on the one hand, to "hold fast your profession," to cling tenaciously to the fundamental doctrines, I want you, on the other hand, to be tolerant of new views, and to encourage rather than oppose any attempts at further exploration. Orthodoxy is a most misleading term, changing its meaning at least once every hundred years. The Pharisees supposed that they had explored all the Old Testament, and that, therefore, whatever did not dovetail with their fantastic theories deserved excommunication. Accordingly, when Jesus Christ and His apostles, possessed of the holy violence of which the verses before the text speak, ventured on new voyages of discovery, they were angrily branded as dangerous heretics—the revelations of God were impiously labelled the revelations of the devil. Again, when Luther and his zealous coadjutors disdained any longer to travel in the beaten paths of the reputed orthodoxy of the centuries, they were hunted and persecuted like partridges on the mountains. The vital doctrine of justification by faith was deemed the hugest falsehood of the ages. Were it not for their spiritual violence, their fearless intrepidity, this rich province of grace would not have been annexed to the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. And is the whole continent of Divine truth

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already explored? Nay, certainly; new light will yet burst forth, new truths will yet be disclosed. Be conservative of the old, be generous to the new.

4. Inquire diligently after the *sure* Word of God. The Bible speaks of the "*sure* word of prophecy;" but men now often think, write, and act as if no certainty were possible in religious things. Religion is peremptorily excluded from the realm of the "positive sciences." This, however, is a delusion and a snare. Certainty is possible in religion. "Things most surely believed among us." The words are borrowed from a ship sailing into port, with all the flags flying and all the sails hoisted, filled with the winds of heaven. Thus the Gospel story sailed into the minds of primitive believers—no need to fold a single canvas. "That thou mightest know the certainty of the things in which thou hast been instructed." "Know intensely the certainty"—no room for doubt there. Let philosophers account for it as they may, or fail to account for it, as is most probable, thousands of the best men and holiest women in the land enjoy an unwavering certitude in respect of the doctrines of the Gospel. "That thou mightest know intensely the certainty." Do I believe in the existence of God? Yes, without a doubt. Do I believe in the Incarnation? Yes, without a doubt. Do I believe in the Atonement? Yes, without a doubt. I cannot explain these doctrines to your satisfaction, perhaps; I cannot always explain them to my own satisfaction. But what for that? Though I do not understand the geology of the

rock, yet I feel it under my feet. And strange to say, this certainty grows upon believers as they approach the Valley of the Shadows. Whereas the sceptic beholds his misgivings multiply and his doubts thicken, the believer as a rule sees them all vanish. Schiller, the great German thinker, goes to his study, sits down as usual to his desk, writes with that masterly ability which distinguished him, begins a new sentence, writes the word "But," and then—dies. A faithful portraiture of unsanctified reason. The great advocates of scepticism always die with a doubt, expire with a But. The Christian, however, grows in faith as he approaches death. "I know whom I have believed." "I am persuaded that neither life nor death can separate me from the love of Christ." "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes behold and not another." The marginal reading is more beautiful, and, I believe, more correct: "I shall see Him and not a stranger." "I know that my Redeemer liveth"—my Goel, my kinsman, my nearest relative; and when I arrive in the land of spirits I shall see Him, my kinsman, my nearest relative, and not a stranger. Oh, blessed faith! The first face you will behold in eternity, on your arrival there, will be that of your kinsman, your Elder Brother, and not that of a stranger.

5. As I speak, I hope you feel it to be a *living* word, and a living word is full of warmth. "My

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words, they are spirit, and they are life." I trust "our hearts are burning within us, as we talk of these things by the way." Mine is. There is heat enough here to warm the coldest heart, light enough to dissipate the densest darkness. Some of our popular preachers have been descanting of late upon what they call "Bibliolatry"—idolatry of the Bible. The people they come in contact with, I conjecture, make too much of the Bible. I wish I knew where such people live. I should like to go and live amongst them. The people I know make too little of the Bible, a great deal too little. They read it too little, study it too little, believe it too little. I would travel far to see an idolater of the Bible. I have not seen one yet. The truth is, that, as to love Christ supremely is not idolatry of His human nature, so to believe the Bible intensely is not idolatry of mere thoughts and words. Through the Bible and in the Bible I find my Saviour. Look at the gas—whence has it its light and heat? You answer, From the coal. But whence has the coal them? Science answers, From the sun. The light and heat of the gas are only the ancient light and heat of the sun, shining on the earth millions of years ago. The trees imbibed the light and heat, and locked them in their soft fibres; they were submerged and transformed into coal, but they still retained the light and heat with a firm grip; and, in the nineteenth century, science emancipates them from their prison of millenniums. And devoutly studying Holy Writ, we see its light and feel its heat; we grow warm, we

grow luminous. Whence the light and the heat? Oh, they are the ancient light and heat of the Sun of Righteousness. "My words, they are spirit and they are life." May we continue to behold more of the light and feel more of the heat concealed for our use in verses of the Bible!



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XI.

The Parable of the Tares.

“ Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field : but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.”—ST. MATT. xiii. 24-30.

“ ANOTHER parable put He forth ”—propounded He unto them, and it required considerable thoughtfulness and not a little ingenuity on their part to discover the meaning. “ Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field.” The people had lost all knowledge of spiritual realities, and the only way of imparting that knowledge to them was by telling them what those things were like. They had lost all comprehension of the Kingdom of Heaven, a spiritual reign of God in the world; the Saviour, therefore, tries to enlighten them by informing them what it was like. Not

what it was, but what it was like. They could not understand what it was till they had first learnt what it was like. "The Kingdom of Heaven is *likened* unto a man which sowed good seed in his field." "The Kingdom of Heaven is *like* to a grain of mustard seed." "The Kingdom of Heaven is *like* unto leaven," and so on. "What do you think of the sermon?" asked one of Robert Hall. "A good sermon, sir," was the reply, "but it would be better if it had more *likes* in it."

But to return to the parable of the wheat and the tares. We discern three stages in it. First, the sowing. Second, the growing. Third, the reaping.

I. THE SOWING.

"A man sowed good seed in his field." "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." You will observe that the field originally had no seed in it, that it could not produce any seed; it was necessary to sow the good seed in it. In like manner goodness is not innate to human nature; there are not inhering in it any germs of goodness. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," not even a good seed. This is true not only of fallen man, but of man in his pristine integrity. Whatever goodness Adam had must have been infused into him from without; the seed must have been sown in him by his Maker. "He that soweth good seed is the Son of Man;" there is not one sound seed in your nature but it has been deposited there by the Son of Man. You may grow the seeds; but you cannot make them—you

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must receive them. "Every *good* gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." Everything that is good has its origin, not in human nature, but in the Divine nature; not in man, but in God. I do not aver that there is no good *in* you, but I do aver that it is not *of* you; you did not make it—you received it. I do not say that there is no light *in* you, but I do say that it is not *of* you; you did not kindle it—you received it. "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man."

"The field is the world." More controversy, I am told, has been waged over this sentence than any other sentence in the Bible. "The field is the world," says Jesus Christ; "the field is the Church," say the commentators. Assuming the field to be the Church, the parable teaches that the bad as well as the good should be allowed to remain in it; what then becomes of Church discipline? Upon that hinges the violent controversy which has been carried on from before the days of Augustine down to our own. But you see that Jesus Christ teaches clearly that the field is the world; therefore, it cannot be the Church. Within the Church discipline must be upheld; the bad, so far as practicable, must be separated from the good, believers from unbelievers. That is often taught us in the New Testament; the apostles cast men out of the communion of the saints. It is about the world, and not about the Church, that Jesus Christ is speaking. He does not say, Do not cast bad men out of the Church; but, Do not cast

them out of the world. In other passages both He and His apostles prescribe that ungodly men should not be allowed to remain in the Church; but they everywhere teach they should be allowed to remain in the world. You may discipline them, if they belong to the Church; but under no circumstances are you to kill them. "The field is the world."

"The good seed are the children of the kingdom." According to the preceding parable, the Parable of the Sower, the good seed is the Word of God; according to this parable, the good seed are the children of the kingdom. Any inconsistency? Not the slightest; there is, however, a marked advance. The Saviour here contemplates the seed in its full growth. It is quite right to say—The acorns are the seed of the forest. But it is equally right to say—The acorns are the trees of the forest. In the first stage the good seed are the good thoughts sown in your mind, the good principles instilled into your nature; but in the last stage the good seed are the good men. Good principles must grow into good men; holy thoughts must develop into holy women. The good seed are good thoughts, says the parable of the sower; the good seed are good men, says the parable of the text. The time comes when goodness must be identified with your will, when it must become part and parcel of your nature. In its preliminary stages religion is goodness in the man, you feel that it is not quite identified with your will; but the time approaches when goodness will appropriate you as its own, when the idea of goodness will be fully

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incorporated in men of goodness. "The good seed are the children of the kingdom."

But another is sowing. "While men slept his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way." "The tares are the children of the wicked one." The sowing here, too, begins with evil thoughts and ends with evil men; it begins with wicked principles and ends with wicked persons. "The tares are the children of the wicked." Evil has become identified with their will; wickedness has become part and parcel of their nature. At first man feels that sin is foreign to his nature, he is conscious that it is not a thing indigenous to his heart. He distinguishes between himself and the evil that is in him, between his true self and his false self. But by degrees evil eats its way into the very core of his being, it becomes incorporated with his inner soul; he is evil, wholly evil, and only evil continually. "The tares are the children of the wicked." This broad classification of men is to be found in the opening chapters of Genesis. "I will put enmity between thee and the serpent, and between thy seed and her seed." In that verse mankind are divided into two classes—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. One portion is, as it were, cut off from humanity; they are not worthy to be classed with the seed of the woman, they are a degenerate race, they are the seed of the serpent. And in the text they are called "the children of the wicked." The use of the article here shows the word to be emphatic. "*The* wicked one"—one the ground of

whose being is evil, one whose core is corrupt.

“The tares are the children of the wicked one.”

“The enemy that sowed them is the devil.” Wicked men are of the sowing of the devil, they are of the planting of the evil spirit. I said just now that good is not indigenous to our nature, that it has been implanted in us by the Son of Man. Neither is evil indigenous to our nature, it has been sown in us by the devil. An awful consideration! The devil comes into personal contact with us; his spirit brushes against our spirits; he drops evil thoughts into our hearts; at last he claims the men that yield to his sinister suggestions as his own offspring and property. “The children of the wicked.” The Son of Man sows good seed; the devil sows bad seed. The devil is always mimicking the Saviour. In the words of St. Chrysostom, “After the prophets, the false prophets; after the apostles, the false apostles; after Christ, Antichrist.” When God became incarnate, the devil became incarnate too; the very land and the very age which saw God dwelling in human nature saw the devil also dwelling in human persons. The God-filled Man has His counterfeit in devil-possessed men. The text shows the Son of Man sowing good seed in the field of humanity; it also shows the devil going after Him, and sowing tares in the same field. “The wicked one”—one the ground of whose being is evil, one who is identified with the principle of evil. “He abode not in the truth, neither is there any truth in him.” It may be said of man as of the

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devil, that he abode not in the truth. God created man upright, but he found out many inventions; and his first invention was sin. He abode not in the truth; but it cannot be asserted indiscriminately of him what Christ asserts of the devil, that "in him is no truth." There is a little truth in the worst man I know; not much perhaps, still there is a little. But there is no truth in the devil, not an atom; he is evil, wholly evil, and only evil continually. There is a little conscience left in the worst man I ever met; not much perhaps, still there is a little. But there is no conscience in the devil—not one bit: he has suppressed it altogether; he sins with all his mind, with all his might, with all his being, not one faculty protesting. The devil of the Scriptures is a very different one from the huge creation of Milton's imagination. The devil of the "Paradise Lost" is a grand, magnificent, and on the whole magnanimous spirit; he is a hero, every inch of him; and I defy any one to read the poet's sublime description of him without more or less sympathising with him; we look upon him as an unfortunate rather than a criminal demon. The poet had the best of the theologian in Milton's conception of the evil spirit. But according to the Scriptures there is nothing magnificent or magnanimous about him. He is the sum total of the refuse of the creation. He is a perfect theological devil without a touch of poetry about him. "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he

speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." The devil is the "wicked one," the ground of whose being is false; and the tares are his children. Bad men are of the planting of the bad spirit. "An enemy hath done this;" "and the enemy is the devil."

II. THE GROWING.

"When the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also." The difference between the wheat and the tares became manifest only after a period of growth. In the seed the difference was scarcely perceptible; in the bud, the difference was exceedingly small, you could hardly tell one blade from another; but when the season of earing and ripening arrived, the difference was perceptible to all. When a theory is propounded to you in the abstract, it is extremely difficult to tell whether it is right or wrong; it is only in the growing and ripening that you can discern the inner nature, and pronounce emphatically upon it. Take much of the current philosophy of the day. Certain principles are enunciated; their propounders argue ably concerning them; they almost persuade you their views are sound and wholesome. But wait for a couple of centuries; give them time to bear fruit in life and institutions; and "by their fruit shall ye know them." It is hard to distinguish between trees in their roots. Did I show you a piece of the root of an oak, and a piece of the root of an ash, and a piece of the root

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of a fir, some of you would be considerably puzzled to distinguish between them. But if I brought you a branch of an oak, and a branch of an ash, and a branch of a fir, you would be able to tell them in a moment. By the branches, the leaves, the fruit, ye know the trees, and not by the roots. Thus you know philosophies: to distinguish between them in their root principles is hard; but give them time to develop, and the difference will be obvious to all. Much of the vaunted philosophy of the day is overrun with tares.

These remarks are equally applicable to persons. At first you can hardly tell between him who serves God and him who serves Him not. In early youth the wheat and the tares are very much alike. No one would venture to go to the Sunday-school this afternoon and pick out the wheat from the tares—the resemblance is too great. At the age of ten the two boys look to the eye of man exactly alike; they have been brought up in the same family; they have enjoyed the same religious and educational advantages; there is no difference apparently between them. But let the years fly past, and the difference will be patent to all. One grows into mellow age, to be esteemed and loved of all men, and angels will gather him at the last, and count him as the wheat of the kingdom. The other grows also; but, alas! the evil nature triumphs; he is avoided as an abomination; angels will cut him down as a poisonous dandelion, and tie him up with the tares which the enemy has sown. In the growth the inner difference is made known.

When the servants discovered the tares, they said to the householder, "Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?" The servants were sorely perplexed concerning the tares. They were sure that wheat was sown, whence then came the tares? That is the ever-recurring problem of the servants in every age. Is not God good, and did He not create man good? whence then has sin come? Men are much amazed at the presence of evil in a field of God's sowing; we are much astonished at the presence of sin in the universe of a good and Almighty God. Didst Thou not sow good seed in Thy creation? whence then the tares of the ungodly? .

The same difficulty presses upon us when we contemplate the Church. It was founded in the Incarnation and Sacrifice of the Son of God; His conversations and sermons are the good seed sown in the Christian field; whence then come the tares? whence the controversies, the heresies, the persecutions? "Didst Thou not sow good seed in thy field? from whence then cometh the tares?" The invariable solution of the Bible is—"An enemy hath done this;" "and the enemy is the devil." Other solutions have been attempted; but the scriptural solution is the only satisfactory one, that there is an evil spirit in the creation going about sowing tares. In the first and second chapters of Genesis we see God sowing good seed in His field; in the third chapter we see the devil following after and sowing tares. In the Gospels we behold the Son of Man sowing good seed

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in His field ; in the Epistles we discover that the devil followed after and sowed iniquity ; and from that day down to our own the two have grown together.

“The servants said unto him, Wilt thou that we go and gather up the tares? He answered, Nay ; let both grow till the harvest.” Here is brought into proximity the human method and the Divine method of dealing with sin. What is the human method? It is to destroy sin at once. Man has no patience with the tares ; he wants to root them up and burn them forthwith. That, I am sorry to say, was the method pursued by good men for many a long century. Did any dare entertain views different from the mechanical majority? The Church decreed that he must be forthwith burnt. Does Servetus cherish views different from those self-styled the orthodox? Even Calvin thinks he must be slain. Think of the vexations, and persecutions, and martyrdoms which have occurred : what were they all? The servant’s method of destroying sin—plucking up the tares at once by the roots. That also was the way in which both Judaism and Paganism acted. Inasmuch as the early Christians differed from them in their religious views and practices, they resolved that the Christians should be killed, and kill them they did by the thousands. When the Church got the ascendancy it followed the same method—if a man did not in all particulars conform with the prescribed doctrine and ritual, he must be either excommunicated or martyred. The Church has the right to cut a man off from its fellowship if there be adequate cause, such as flagrant immorality ;

but under no circumstances has it a right to cast out from the world. I once heard a preacher say: "I often wonder why God leaves the ungodly to flourish like palm trees on the earth; were I in the place of God," said he, "I am afraid I should kill all atheists and infidels before sundown." "Wilt thou that we go and gather up the tares?"

That is man's way of dealing with sin. But God's way is not our way, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. "He said, Nay; lest, while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." Good men and bad are wonderfully mingled in the world; you cannot destroy the bad without seriously damaging the good. They are mingled in the family; you cannot kill the father without hurting the mother. They are mingled in society; you cannot shoot the tenant without injuring the landlord. They are mingled in the same church and congregation. Were God to commission His angels to come and gather up the tares in this congregation to-day, many saints would break their hearts in consequence. Let us go and kill the wicked, cry the servants before the Throne. Nay, says He who sits upon it, let the evil and the good live together undisturbed at present; I could stamp out sin before the morrow's dawn, but it is better for men that I should not crush it out at once—I could not do it without vexing the hearts of thousands of my children.

III. THE REAPING.

"Let them grow until the harvest," "and the har-

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vest is the end of the world." A hint is thrown out here that at the end of the world good and evil shall have attained maturity; good will continue to grow better, and evil to grow worse, till the harvest time. Good men will grow meet for heaven; bad men will grow ripe for destruction. Goodness is growing every year; good principles are embodying themselves in good institutions; and the process will continue till every good thought will be incorporated in a good deed and every good purpose will bear fruit in a good life. Every good seed will bear an ear of good corn. At last the wheat will be white for the sickle. But simultaneous with the development of good will be the development of evil. I do not know that evil will continue to grow in bulk, that is, by the multiplication of bad men. I hope not. But it will grow in intensity, in bitterness, in subtlety, in poisonousness. There will be a cunning and a depth in evil in centuries to come far exceeding anything that has ever been witnessed in the past; the tares will grow till the harvest, and the harvest is the end of the world. The future of evil is depicted in dark gloomy terms in Holy Writ. You remember what St. Paul says in 2 Thessalonians ii. 6-10 about the "mystery of iniquity," literally, "the mystery of lawlessness." Evil will go on working, says he, more bitterly and intensely till the coming of the Lord, or, in the language of the parable, till the harvest time.

Three dispensations are observable in the history of God's Kingdom upon earth. The first is the dispensation of the Father; the second, the dispensation of

the Son; the third, the dispensation of the Spirit. In the first the authority and dignity of the Father are asserted; in the second the authority and dignity of the Son; in the third the authority and dignity of the Spirit. As already stated, the devil always mimics Jehovah; and accordingly we have three dispensations in the history of the kingdom of darkness. The first is a counterfeit of the dispensation of the Father: the despotisms of the ancient world were a flat denial of the authority of the Father; the huge empires and unmitigated tyrannies of olden times were a direct contradiction of the sovereignty of the Father, under the semblance of imitating it. The second is a counterfeit of the dispensation of the Son: the imposing hierarchy of Catholicism was a practical denial of the headship of Christ; over against the Christ, in imitation of Christ, is the Antichrist. But the third will be a spurious, damnable counterfeit of the dispensation of the Spirit. Political despotisms, such as flourished in ancient times, are things of the past. Religious despotisms, in the form of privileged and compactly organised hierarchies, are destined soon to fall. Then will come what may be called mob-despotisms in imitation of the dispensation of the Spirit. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." But false ideas of liberty will prevail and triumph for a season; already they are seething and fermenting in society; communism under ever varying disguises is striking roots; and spurious freedom, false liberty, will be the terrible bane of the future. Men will despise authority, will

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trample laws under foot, and evil will ripen for the judgment. "The mystery of lawlessness."

When good and evil shall have fully ripened, then will begin the process of separation: "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity." "Things that offend;" on the margin, "scandals." Many scandals prevail in the kingdom now; but, thank God, scandals shall be taken away. Many a good heart is sore oppressed with scandals; but scandals shall be destroyed and they who do iniquity. Wicked men, do you hear your fate as set forth by the Lord Jesus? "The angels shall gather them who do iniquity, and tie them in bundles, and cast them out into a furnace of fire, and there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." That is figurative, you say. Suppose it is, the question is, Does it mean anything? My friends, believe me, hell is a terrible reality.

Some see in the language the same idea that Dante has wrought out with terrible realism in his "Divine Comedy." "Bind them in bundles and burn them." Is there here an intimation that in eternity sinners shall congregate together according to their sinful propensities? that misers shall be gathered to misers, drunkards to drunkards, adulterers to adulterers? "They shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth,"—extreme heat and extreme cold. Here again some perceive the idea of Dante, that in hell the damned are one moment plunged in hottest fire, and the next thrust out to

extremest cold. I do not mean to convey to you—neither did Dante, neither did Christ—that hell means corporeal punishment; but it is an attempt to depict to you in graphic language—the only language we can understand—the awful sufferings of the lost.

Now, young people, do not try to explain these words away as if hell was not such a dreadful place after all. I know that able, excellent men question the doctrine of the eternity of punishment; but they all agree, nevertheless, that the punishment, so long as it lasts, is awful in the extreme; none of them make light of it. Whether hell be never-ending or not, I shall not discuss to-day; but under any circumstances, it is a dread, incomprehensible reality.

The congregation now before me is composed of wheat and tares; but I rejoice to think that to-day the tares may be made wheat. Many critics believe that the tares were only degenerate wheat. Many Oriental scholars affirm, on the testimony of native farmers, that bad weather will so change the character of the wheat, that instead of the golden grain there will develop the black darnel. The tares of the text are a species of degenerate wheat. But I have not discovered that the tares may be improved into wheat. But spiritually both processes are possible. The good man whom God created in Eden became a bad man—the wheat degenerated into darnel. Good man became bad. Is that all I have to tell you? No; thank God, no; bad men may become good, sinners may be made saints, the children of the wicked may become children of the kingdom: the tares may be converted into wheat, and thus escape the burning.

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XII.

Christ in the Storm.

"But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."—ST. MATT. xiv. 27.

THE miracle of feeding the five thousand men, besides women and children, deeply impressed the large multitudes which had gathered together in the desert to hear the Saviour preach. At the impulse of the moment, they conceived the bold idea of listing under His standard and proclaiming Him King. Whereupon "He constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him into the other side, while He sent the multitudes away;" and thus by prompt action He frustrated the crude intentions of the people. "And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a high mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone."

The sequel of the story you all know. A serene beginning is not a sure harbinger of continued calm. A sudden hurricane set in, and the disciples were in peril of their life. "The night was dark; the wind was contrary; and Jesus was not come unto them." But in the fourth watch—about three o'clock in the

morning—He came unto them, *walking on the sea*. The participial form here used suggests the probability that to tread on the waves of the sea was not an unusual exercise with Him. The same form is used in St. Matt. iv. 18: “And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother.” Oftentimes before He had taken a walk along the shore of this sea—it was His favourite resort; and the two brothers, Simon and Andrew, had been often in His company before; but on one of His walks He bade them forsake their secular avocation and follow Him. The participial form suggests this train of thought, and, as it appears, purposely. The verse in the context is capable of the same rendering—“as He was walking on the sea!” Perchance He had crossed it, dryshod repeatedly before in the same fashion in order to overtake His disciples, who had travelled on whilst He was engaged in solitary communion with His Father.

This narrative divides itself into two branches:

- I. The history of the disciples in the storm.
- II. The history of Christ in the storm.

I. The history of the DISCIPLES IN THE STORM.

1. You will please notice that the party caught in this terrible tempest were the *disciples* of Jesus Christ, the dear objects of His solicitude and love. If the boat were full of malicious, narrow-minded Pharisees, the Saviour's bitter enemies, we should not be surprised to find that they were in imminent risk of their life. But inasmuch as it was a boatful of dis-

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ciples, the only faithful ones God had on the earth, we confess to a feeling of amazement. To obviate this, some of the older commentators had recourse to the supposition that the storm was produced by the agency of evil spirits. We need not take the trouble to formally confute this fanciful interpretation; for undoubtedly it was God that sent the storm. The winds are the blasts of His nostrils, says Moses; the clouds are His chariots, says David; and depend upon it, He would never allow the devil to ride in the Royal chariot.

God is the principle of motion in Nature. Inertia is the property of matter—motion always of spirit. And if you behold the elements in motion, you may rest assured that the Divine Spirit is at work. The winds would not blow did He not fan them; the clouds would not fly did He not stir them. What is a tempest? God moving the elements. Storms, no doubt, are God-sent. What then shall we say? Shall we look upon them as sure manifestations of His anger? God forbid. The unbeliever may interpret God by His works; he may argue—Nature frowns, therefore God is angry. But the Christian must begin with God, and descend to His works; he must reason—God is good, therefore all the dispensations of Nature and Providence must be conducive to my ultimate welfare. Given the character of God, we must arrive at the conclusion that He has a worthy object in view, to the attainment of which the storm is necessary. The disciples are the party exposed to

the tempest; God it is who sends the tempest. How to explain it? Only by looking at the object in view.

The puzzle which confronts us in this history, we find continually reproduced in Providence. What is Providence? God in motion—nothing more, nothing less. History, profane and sacred, is only the faint echo of His marches through the world. Who are the afflicted? God's own people. Did we see the ungodly cast down, we think the difficulty would be removed. But that is not the case. "They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me." The facts are these: Providence is only another name for God in motion; His movements seem to spare the wicked, but to cast down and break in pieces His own favourites. Surely a riddle hard to be solved. What is the clue to it? The end He has in His eye. We are assured over and over again that He has a noble end in view; and consequently afflictions must be looked upon as indispensable means to the attainment of that end. What then is the end? Not happiness but holiness, not worldly success but pure lofty manhood. And in order to the realisation of this noble purpose, God finds it requisite to insert much tribulation in the programme. You may call it a misfortune or

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a calamity; it is neither the one nor the other, but a necessary process in the construction of character. You do not call dressing the stone for the edifice a misfortune—it is part and parcel of the process of building. And afflictions are only edged tools in the hands of God to dress us, to prepare us to fulfil our functions in the world to come. In our natural state we are coarse rough stones, and we must undergo the operation of chisel and hammer. Walking among the blocks of marble in his studio, Michael Angelo cried out to his servant—“Bring me my tools; I see an angel here in chains, and I must release him.” Under sudden inspiration from above, the renowned sculptor saw the imprisoned form of a cherub or a seraph; and with the sharp rendings of the chisel, and the heavy strokes of the hammer, he proceeded to release him from his bondage, and to develop his goodly proportions. In like manner, but with a clearer insight and nobler design, does the God of Providence perceive within the rough material of our humanity the perfect form of a man of God, and then proceeds to fashion it after the image of His own Son. Yes! there is an angel of God asleep in the vessel with every man. An angel of God, did I say? I beg your pardon—there is a Son of God asleep in the bosom of every man, and God must send storms to awake Him. May it be ours to hear His voice, saying, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

2. Another thing that strikes us is, that the disciples were caught in this fearful storm in the

very act of obeying. Jesus “constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and go before Him into the other side;”) and having set forth, “the sea rose by reason of a great wind that blew.” If they set sail, like Jonah, in disobedience to their Master’s injunction, we should not be so much surprised that they were exposed to imminent danger; but here in the very act of yielding obedience they are surrounded with difficulties.

This passage on the face of it serves two purposes. For one thing, it flatly contradicts the opinion which had obtained currency in society from the earliest ages—that the path of duty is always smooth, and that the path of disobedience alone is beset with obstructions. This fallacy seems to pervade a great deal of the argument in the Book of Job. His friends inferred his criminality on the supposition that the virtuous never suffer such dire calamities as he was called upon to endure. This notion had spread far and near. That religion was a shield to ward off adversity, was the universal belief of the primitive ages. Now the whole tenor of the Gospel runs counter to that opinion—the disciples in the very act of yielding obedience are overtaken by a wild hurricane. No; the path of obedience is not always smooth. That one’s career is tempestuous is not a proof of his criminality and guilt. An aged and venerable preacher in the Principality was wont to say—“If a man only breaks his leg, some of his neighbours shake their heads, and say that there was something in him calling for

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this sad visitation of Providence; but," added the old preacher, "if it be according to that in us which calls, there would be no sound legs in the whole country." The most virtuous man in the community may be also the most afflicted, for our relation to Christ does not frighten sorrows away. "And Martha said unto Jesus, If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And Jesus answered and said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; believest thou this?" As though Christ had said, Martha, thou misjudgest of me and my mission; I am not come to save *from* death, but *out of* death; I am not a Saviour *from* the grave, but a Saviour *out of* the grave. "I am the resurrection and the life; believest thou this?" And His religion contains no guarantee against evil. "He hath led them out by a right way to the city of habitation." You are thinking of the smoothest way, God of the rightest. Your road may be rugged and bleak; but let this comfort you—it is the right road; and if you take the word right in its etymological signification, it is also the straightest; and if the straightest, then the shortest to the city of habitation. Let not difficulties, disappointments, and sorrows damp your ardour, as if they marked you out as the victims of the Divine displeasure—the path of duty is often dangerous.

This passage answers another purpose—it serves as a test to the spirit of obedience. Jesus "*constrained* His disciples to go into a ship and get before Him into the other side." He had to press hard; this

implies that they were very loath to go. They possibly participated in the feelings of the crowd and wished to proclaim Him King. They thought the right moment had arrived, that everything was ripe. But they are told to get at once into the other side; their hopes are dashed to pieces—no wonder they are reluctant to hoist the sail. Or perhaps as experienced mariners they saw indications of a coming storm, and felt unwilling to hazard a voyage in foul weather. Be that as it may—He pressed them hard to go, and go they did; and the wind broke loose and lashed the sea to fury. “The wind was contrary.” But on a small lake like that, why not alter the course of their voyage? Why not turn back and steer with the wind for the shore they had left? The reason lay in the command, which was “to get into the other side.” The order is explicit—do they possess the right spirit to obey? The storm is sent to test them—will they stand the test? Yes; they will continue to row right in face of the wind; the storm shall not bend their spirits nor change their course; they will reach the other side or die in the endeavour. They could obey in the face of difficulties.

Thus we also are often tested. Obstructions arise; we cannot tell whence, whither, or wherefore. Why does God permit them? What purpose do they answer? They answer the purpose of testing us, if none other. We must persevere in the face of opposition. Luther is persuaded by his friends not to go to Worms. The counsel of friends and the hostility of foes go against him—“the sea rose by reason of a

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great wind that blew." Now is his spirit tested. Is he the right man to go through with the work of the Reformation? Yes; "he will go to Worms though as many devils set at him as there are tiles on the housetops;" he will row on though there be a demon on the ridge of every wave. Yonder young man has embarked in the vessel of Christianity at the bidding of the Master. At first he glides smoothly along, but anon the wind blows contrary; public opinion is opposed to him. Now is the season to try him. Will he row against the storm? To many public opinion is well-nigh almighty. It would be easier to them to fight Waterloo over again than do battle with public opinion. What will *you* do? Will *you* go forward? If this Book forbids gambling and drinking, if this Book prohibits your nightly visiting theatres and singing saloons, you must stick to it at the expense of being made the butt of the sarcasm and spite of your thoughtless companions. Pontius Pilate was a slave to society; in the trial of Christ he said, "I find no fault in Him." The crowd answered, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Pilate could not resist the current—he rested on his oars—and Christ was crucified on Calvary to Public Opinion. Oh, my Saviour and God! I am afraid Thou art daily sacrificed in Britain too to Public Opinion. Many disciples turn their backs in the day of tempest—they forget the command to "get into the other side."

3. This narrative teaches another lesson—that *we cannot understand the meaning of the storm till it is over*. The question occurs to us, and no doubt it

presented itself to the disciples—Foreseeing the storm, why did Christ compel His disciples to set sail? Why not permit them to abide on shore in safety? “He *constrained* them”—there is something strong, almost coercive, in the language. The disciples, I am sure, could not answer the question till the storm was past, till Christ had manifested His glory unto them. When the storm had cleared up, having witnessed this sublime miracle, “they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.” I feel very confident that none of the disciples in after-life regretted that storm. Notwithstanding the imminent danger to which they were exposed, they would not for anything have lost the opportunity of witnessing this magnificent spectacle—Christ coming to them walking on the sea! The end of the story explains the beginning and the middle. This is a faithful portraiture of the doings of Providence—we cannot explain the beginning and middle apart from the end. Providence like Hebrew must be read backward. *All* God’s works are inexplicable till you reach the end. Why does God afflict me? Why commission the raging tempest to shatter my tiny bark? I cannot answer that question quite satisfactorily to-day, but never mind—the end will clear up the beginning and the middle. The disciples, while the storm was going on, made a grievous mistake. They beheld an object approaching them at a distance, and in their bewilderment cried out—“It is a ghost.” But when He neared them they discovered

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their sad mistake—in the ghost they found a Saviour. In like manner you see trouble looming in the future—next week or next month or next year; you writhe in agony, believing it is a ghost come to cast its deadly blast upon you. But wait patiently a while, and probably the trouble will turn out to be a Saviour, “and you will receive Him gladly into the ship.” A cloud darkens the distant horizon; it looks heavy and flies swiftly. Men cry out in dismay, “It is a spirit—it is charged with thunderbolts—God comes to pour the vials of His wrath upon the earth.” Wait patiently a while; let the clouds begin to rain, and you will find that not judgments but blessings are lodged therein.

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.”

“God rides upon the wings of the wind”—He and He only. You are apt to imagine when you see lowering clouds traversing the sky like maniacs, that they are ridden by Fate or Wrath or Destiny. But be ye not deceived—it is Love, it is God that is driving along; and if the winds blow higher than usual, it only shows that He is in greater hurry to bless. God it is who passes by you in storms and tempests, in thunders and lightnings. Submit therefore graciously to His sovereign will, knowing that the end will clear up the beginning and the middle. “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”

II. The history of CHRIST IN THE STORM.

I. The first thing which arrests attention is His deep watchfulness over the disciples. "And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing." They were about three miles from shore in the midst of the sea: and He was on land, on a mountain top close by; and it was night—a night of unusual darkness; and yet He saw them. He saw them at a distance of about four miles through the thick gloom. This is certainly most marvellous, and in one way or another forms an integral part of the miracle. The body which could counteract the law of gravitation could also transcend the science of optics. The bodily senses were, for a season at least, supernaturally refined in Christ. I have no wish to transmute humanity into Divinity in His Person; but then we cannot conjecture in our present sinful condition how high our senses may be refined without doing the slightest violence to our nature. "The ship was in the midst of the sea, and He was alone on the land, and it was night"—"and He saw them toiling in rowing." There are degrees of power in the physical senses among men. The faculty of vision in one man is incomparably stronger than the same faculty in another. And if men differ in degree in the exercise of this power, it is quite consistent with analogy to believe that angelic vision is more excellent still, that angels can see clearer and farther than men. And if this be true, what about

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the power of vision in the God-man, especially in a supernatural state as He was that night and is now in heaven? "He saw them toiling in rowing."

If His power of vision was so remarkable, is it out of place to suppose that His sense of hearing was commensurate? Degrees are observable in the acuteness of hearing among men, and if there be degrees among men, is it incongruous to believe that angels are much quicker than men in this power also? I speak hardly high enough for man to hear me from the street. But if the theory of sound be correct, that it is caused by ripples of air breaking on the auriculum like waves on the beach, it is quite possible that an angel is endowed with a sensibility so delicate as to hear me this moment from Holyhead or Land's End. But what about the power of hearing in the God-man? No doubt He heard them as well as saw them. And if we will not agree to attribute this power to His humanity, then we must agree to ascribe it to His Divinity—we must contrive somehow or other to put the crown upon His head. He saw them and He sees you; He heard them and He hears you. "Fear ye not, therefore; the hairs of your head are all numbered," and the wind shall not blow one away "without your Father." The disciples supposed themselves unseen by the Master. Their unbelief whispered—We are at the mercy of the waves; faith ought to answer—No, but at the mercy of the Master. Their unbelief was saying—The winds and the waves rage at their will; faith ought to say—No;

they rage at the will of the Master. All the elements are under His control. "He maketh the winds His angels, and the flames of fire His ministers." They have not broken loose or abandoned His service. He is not bound to the laws of Nature, but ~~the laws~~ of Nature are bound to Him. The Being that made the sun the fourth day, created light the first day. Why? To teach us to bind the sun to Him, and not Him to the sun; to teach us that the laws of Nature must conform with His will, and not His will with the laws of Nature. Believe, therefore, in His vigilance—"He saw them toiling in rowing."

2. Another thought deserving our consideration is, that He came to them in a *way they never imagined*. "In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them; *walking on the sea*." The disciples, doubtless, looked upon the foaming billows as an impassable barrier between Him and them; but what they deemed an impediment He converted into a highway.

The unexpectedness of their rescue is seen in two things. First, a miracle was wrought on their behalf—"He went unto them, walking on the sea." It signifies not much whether the water was congealed into a solid mass under His tread, or whether His body was etherealised and thereby shorn of its weight—I say, it signifies not much which view you take so that you firmly believe in the miracle itself. And this miracle has a message to us. The Saviour interposed miraculously in their case: but bear in mind—the

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miracle consisted in the *form*, not in the *power*. Miracles manifest not an extraordinary amount, but an unusual form of power. We are not warranted in looking out for miraculous forms in Providence; but we are justified in expecting a full display of the miracle-working power. The same power is exerted on our behalf as was exerted this night on behalf of the disciples, though not in the same manner. I am anxious you should firmly grasp this truth. No greater degree of power was exerted in the performance of miracles than is constantly exhibited in the daily sustenance and government of the world. The same Divine might which was brought to play on the Sea of Galilee to deliver the alarmed disciples, has been a thousand times afterwards exerted to save the saints in troubles innumerable.

The miracle, moreover, assumed a shape they never anticipated. Christ did not from the mountain top command the storm to quell—"He went unto them, *walking on the sea.*" Who would have expected it? When they saw Him they cried out, "It is a spectre." We also have His promise that He will not forsake us in adversity. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Therefore cry unto Him in your distress; He will come to you, "walking on the sea"—in a way you have never imagined. "For the Son of Man when He cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" He came to the

succour of His disciples, and they cried, "It is a spirit." He found no faith in that little ship, shall He on the earth? For He comes in a way peculiar to Himself, from a point in the compass we should never expect. When He works He always works in circles. When He made sun, moon, and stars, He made them all in circles. When He made a Bible, He made it in a circle: the end thereof returns upon the beginning, the same subjects are treated of in the closing chapters of Revelation that are discussed in the opening chapters of Genesis. In Genesis I see a creation coming up; in Revelation I see a creation coming down. In Genesis I see a river watering the garden; in Revelation I see a "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." In Genesis I see the Tree of Life in the midst of the garden; in Revelation I see the Tree of Life in the midst of the street and on either side of the river. In Genesis I see Paradise Lost; in Revelation I see Paradise Regained. Thus the Bible is round like a circle. And when God comes to the aid of His people in answer to their supplications He generally moves in circles; and one property of a circle is this—there is a way from every point in the circumference to the centre. You pray God to deliver you; you expect Him to come from a certain fixed point; and if He choose to come from another you are frightened, and cry out, "It is a spirit." You expect Him to come from the point in your front; but He comes, perhaps, from a point behind your back—in a way you never imagined.

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“The Son of Man, when He cometh,” in answer to prayer, shall He find the man who made the prayer believing that He comes in response to his earnest cry? Thousands of prayers are answered without our knowledge, from other points in the circumference than we expected. An old lady in Cardiganshire had two sons on the sea, captains of vessels. She used to pray morning, evening, and midday for their safety and prosperity. But on a certain occasion, when one of her sons was leaving England for Gibraltar, the other was leaving Gibraltar for England. Now if the aged Christian prayed that the wind would blow with the son who was leaving home, it would go right against the son who was coming home. For some time the perplexed mother was at a standstill before the Throne of Grace—she had never been in such perplexity before. But at last it occurred to her that, instead of praying for *fair* wind, she had better pray for *side* wind; and I am told the side wind was favourable to both captains. That is just an illustration of the manner in which God comes to your relief. You complain that trade is bad and you fear bankruptcy; you pray God to send you more customers; but you do not consider that He cannot send customers to your shop without taking them from the shop of your neighbour, who is struggling quite as hard as you in face of much adversity. What will God do? Turn a deaf ear to the cry of your supplication? Oh no; He will answer you by side winds, from a point in the circumference which you would never imagine.

He will come to you "walking on the sea"—in a way you would never guess.

3. We finally see that the *example and presence of Christ inspired the disciples*. They had been toiling in rowing all night long, and the fury of the tempest did not seem to abate one jot—a heavy sea was still rolling and a high wind still blowing. No doubt they were on the brink of despair, expecting every minute to be engulfed in the yawning deep. At this critical moment an object appeared on the sea, white and glistening amid the surrounding gloom; they were at first terrified, but soon terror gave way to confidence and joy. It was the Saviour. Peter, always the representative of the rest, in the strength of faith descends from the ship, treads the waves, and hurries to meet Him. His enthusiasm buoyed him up and kept him from sinking: but "when he saw the wind boisterous" he feared and began to sink. No wonder—men always sink when they fear. So long as he gazed on Jesus he could walk; when he looked away from Jesus he sank.

What a valuable lesson to us! You, my friend, are in trouble; your frail skiff seems to be the laughing-stock of the elements, the sole object of their gibes, derision, and spite; the waves dash against the groaning sides and fill the air with clack and clamour; the winds madly shriek in the sails. The little vessel in which you have always lived and floated is about to be shattered—you believe you must sink. To you the Divine voice comes—"Be of good cheer; it is I, thy tender Sponsor and Guardian; I narrowly watch

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the complex operations of Providence; the storm is sent, not to sink thee, but to give thee a fair opportunity to swim, yea, to walk on the Sea of Trouble. Any ~~one~~ can walk on the solid earth, but I want to teach thee, my disciple, to walk on the sea, when thy hopes and comforts and riches are whirling around thee, when thy circumstances are surging like the angry deep. 'Lord, bid me come to Thee on the waters. And He said unto him, Come.'" "It is ~~is~~ thy Teacher and Exemplar, come to rescue thee from the dread and slavery of materialism; it is I, come to teach thee to ascend superior to worldly adversity and worldly prosperity; I am not dependent upon Nature and its laws, and I want thee to acquire, if not the same, yet a similar superiority. On dry ground and on the surging sea, be the master and not the creature of circumstances. 'Lord, bid me come to Thee on the waters. And He said unto him, *Come, COME.*'" March forward with a steady eye on Jesus, and you will walk on the sea of circumstances. Faith mysteriously appropriates the power of God—His moral, if not His physical power. Let storms assail the believer, he has a power within which successfully resists every onset. The stronger the wind, the higher soars the eagle—he never mounts so high as he does on the day of tempest. And the Christian takes advantage of the power of the hurricane; his faith outspreads her pinions and flies heavenward. Break his nest—he can live on the wing. Sink his ship—he can walk on the sea. "Being strengthened with all might,

according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." What does that verse teach us? That the Christian is Almighty in suffering, that he possesses a sort of omnipotence to endure tribulation. "Strengthened with *all might*"—the first two syllables in the Almighty Him-self. In the face of such a truth as this, shame on our fretfulness. Why should we complain though Alps of sorrows be piled upon us, provided we have an Almighty shoulder to carry them along? Why murmur though Himalayas of troubles be heaped upon us, provided we have Omnipotence to bear them aloft? "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Our Saviour is Almighty, and that is the same to us as if we were Almighty in our own persons. What therefore has the believer to fear? Let the storm play in savage fury around him; let the winds lift the sea from its bed and pour it on the mountains; let a mad lightning cut the sky in twain and set the earth on fire; let a clap of thunder herald Doomsday; what has he to fear?

"With Christ in the vessel,
He smiles at the storm."

The terrible din, shall not hurt a hair of his head;
after the turmoil will come the—*Hush.*

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XIII.

The Son of Man—The Son of God.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”—ST. MATT. xvi. 13-16.

As we read this history in the Gospel according to St. Luke, we are told that Jesus Christ prayed. The habitual state of His mind was a prayerful one; but the fact is recorded only before some eventful occurrences, which served as transition points in His life. And if the Son of God had need to pray, how much more have we?

We are not informed what He was praying for: that is left to the unerring divination of the religious instinct of the reader. He was about to ask His disciples a very momentous question, on their answer to which depended their future history and usefulness. He was going to experiment upon them, and the issue would prove to be either life or death. “But whom say ye that I am?” Upon this question, and the answer it will elicit, hangs their future destiny. Christ, therefore, prays—He

prays that Divine light may illumine their hearts, and that the right answer may be evoked.

He here brings His disciples to a test. He had been in their society now over three years, endeavouring to establish them in the fundamental truths of the Kingdom He came to set up on the earth. It is, therefore, high time they should undergo an examination. And in the text the examination is being held. There are only two questions, but then they are test questions—"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" and "Whom say ye that I am?" If they have not, in their former intercourse with Him, apprehended Him on the Divine phase of His being, then it is obvious there is no point of contact between the human mind and the Divine. Now the connecting link is to be tried. The world's weight is tied to one end to drag it down—"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Will the link snap? If so, salvation is impossible. Will it hold? If so, man can be drawn up to God. The Divine Sower went forth to sow. He let Christ drop like a seed from heaven into the human mind. Did it fall upon barren soil? If so, the world must die from sheer hunger. Did it fall upon good ground? If so, it is time for it to show good fruit. In the text, accordingly, the Lord Jesus goes in quest of fruit. As the gardener shakes the apple-tree, so He gently shakes the spirits of His followers—"Whom say ye that I am?" "Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The truth was

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hanging like ripe fruit from the outspreading branches; Jesus Christ is now conceived in the *mind* of man. He was conceived over thirty years ago in the *nature* of man, but in the text for the first time is He conceived in the *mind* of man; and the conception in the mind was as necessary to our salvation as the conception in the nature.

Herein then lies the reason of Christ "praying alone." The issues of the present transaction were to tell upon the future destiny of an entire planet. Benjamin Franklin made an experiment, one of the most daring ever made by mortal man. Seeing a cluster of thunder-clouds hanging overhead, he let fly into their midst a paper kite, to which was attached a metallic chain. As the kite was flying among the clouds, anxiety weighed heavily on his heart. At last he presumptuously applied his knuckles to the chain and called forth sparks of wild lightning; and had the stream of electricity been a little stronger at the time, the philosopher would have met with instantaneous death. He has left on record, that so surprising was the discovery to him, that in the ecstasy of the moment he expressed his willingness to die there and then. In like manner there were clouds of opinion afloat in society respecting Jesus Christ, indeed the thunder-clouds were gathering fast. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" "Some say that thou art John the Baptist"—that is one cloud. "Others, Elias"—that is another cloud. "Others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets"—that is a cluster

of clouds. Everything seemed mist and haze, vagueness and uncertainty. Jesus Christ prayerfully and anxiously flies a question into the midst of these dark clouds. What will the result be? His heart trembles, therefore He prays. See the question fly—"But whom say ye that I am?" What answer will be called forth? "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The right reply is given; the preliminary teaching, therefore, has not failed of its end. So satisfactory is the answer that the Saviour fails to suppress His emotion; He bursts out into a joyful exclamation—"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona—it is the first time for me to hear my name distinctly articulated in the world; and now that there is one at last who understands me on the Divine phase of my being, I feel more than half ready to die." "From that time forth"—the Evangelist takes care to note it—"began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priest and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." This is the first time for Him to speak clearly of His death. He had given dark intimations of it before; but this is the first time for Him to speak unambiguously enough for His disciples to understand Him. As soon as He saw that He was conceived in man's *mind*, He spoke of departing from man's *world*. Till then His departure was morally impossible.

Having cleared the ground thus far, let me have

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your attention, if you please, to a closer analysis of the passage under consideration. It naturally divides itself into three parts.

I. The question of Jesus Christ. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

II. The answer of the world. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; others, Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

III. The answer of the Church. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

I. THE QUESTION OF JESUS CHRIST. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Sir Matthew Hale, the eminent lawyer, once said that more could be learnt from some people's questions than from other people's answers. And certainly more can be learnt from the questions of Jesus Christ than from the answers of other authors; more can be gleaned from the problems of Christianity than from the solutions of philosophy. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" In order to get at the meaning of this question, we must emphasise two or three words in succession.

I. The first word we shall emphasise is the word "*men*." "Whom do *men* say, that I, the Son of Man, am?" Not whom do the Jews, or Scribes, or Pharisees say, but "whom do *men* say, that I, the Son of Man, am?" Jesus Christ is now in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, on the border dividing Jews from Gentiles. His mind naturally soars above all national distinctions, and He contemplates

men not as Jews or Gentiles, but in their bare capacity of human beings. "Whom do *men* say that I, the Son of Man, am?" There are many questions in heaven and earth concerning which it would be barefaced presumption in the majority of men to hazard an opinion. We are not called upon to pronounce judgment on the geological construction of the globe, or to calculate the momentum and velocity of the stars. Those are questions which the learned must decide among themselves, and whichever way they settle them, it will not interfere much either with our temporal prosperity or spiritual happiness. But we are all called upon to answer one question—"But whom say ye that I am?" You are asked to answer that, my friend, and you, and you; you *must* answer it, and upon the answer you make will depend your weal or woe throughout the endless eternity.

2. The other word we shall emphasise is the word "*Son of Man.*" "Whom do men say that I, the *Son of Man*, am?" He is humanity condensed, the second edition of our nature revised and amended by the Author. He is not an excrescence of our nature. No poet He, no philosopher He, no man of science He. He was all these in one, He was man, thorough man, growing out of the depths of our nature. The sea on the surface is divided into waves—go down and you will soon come to a region where there are no waves, where there is nothing but water. And humanity on the surface is broken into nationalities and individualities. But go

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down a little way, and you will soon come to a region where differences give place to resemblances; force your way down and you will soon arrive at the region of human unities, where every man is like every other man. Now Jesus Christ emerges from the profoundest depths of our nature, from the region of unities. No Jew He—no Greek He—no Roman He—but Man. He touches you and me not in our branches but in our roots. Show me an oak and show me an ash tree: it is easy to tell the difference between them in the branches, but not so easy in the roots. Show me a rose and show me a tulip: any one can tell the difference between them in the leaf, but only a very few can tell the difference between them in their seeds. And Jesus Christ is the “*Root of Jesse*,” “the *Seed of Abraham and of David* ;” and all nations and all men in their roots and seeds are very much alike. The Saviour touches us not in our branches, where we differ, but in our roots, where we are all the same.

3. We shall next emphasise the two words together—*men* and *Son of Man*. “Whom do *men* say that I, the *Son of Man*, am?” *Men—Son of Man*. The Saviour in the question presents Himself on the level of our common humanity, and appeals to our common sense, nay, to our common nature, to say who He is. Every man, in his bare capacity as man, has within him the faculty to know Jesus Christ and to pronounce judgment upon Him. Wherever, therefore, a human being may be found with faculties underanged, we need not be afraid to preach to him.

the Gospel. I do not say we may preach to him our Bodies of Divinity or Systems of Theology, but the Gospel. Many public teachers of religion, I am told, in preparing their discourses, study the capacity and culture of their hearers. For my part, I rather study my subject. I am never afraid my congregation will not understand my sermon, if I understand it well myself. Obscurity arises, not from lack of intelligence in the pew, but from lack of intelligence in the pulpit. Young preachers are often cautioned by their well-wishers to avoid erudite disquisitions, and to shoot *low*. I am not aware the Scriptures anywhere give the exhortation. Do not shoot low; do not shoot high. 'How, then, should we shoot? Shoot level, and you will be sure to shoot a man. "Whom do *men* say that I, the Son of *Man*, am?"

The Apostle Paul never consulted the cultivation of the heathen he visited. As soon as he could muster a company of them together, he would dwell with fervour and unction on the great facts of the Gospel—the beneficent life and atoning death of the blessed Saviour. You may point to the oration on Mars Hill as a refutation of my statement. On that occasion, I readily admit, Paul had the weakness to consult the educational advantages of his hearers—he delivered a harangue upon philosophy to philosophers. But he ever afterwards regretted it, and determined never to give way to the temptation again. You demand a proof. Here it is: Paul failed to establish a church at Athens. Dionysius, Damaris,

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and a few others believed, but not enough to constitute a church. You read of his Epistle to the Romans, of his Epistle to the Corinthians, but nowhere of his Epistle to the Athenians. Why? Because he mistook the subject of his preaching. Read his sermon at Athens, and the bulk of it is taken up with natural theology, only about half a verse is devoted to revealed theology—no wonder, therefore, that he failed. After his sorry adventure at Athens, the history says he came straight to Corinth; and on his way to the latter city he himself tells us he saw the mistake he had committed, and resolved never to commit it again. "For I determined"—on my way from Athens to Corinth after my bitter disappointment in the former place—"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." He knew a great many other things at Athens—he spoke of philosophy to philosophers, and consequently made but a slight impression. But in Corinth he persisted in preaching Christ, and as a consequence men believed by the score. It is a dangerous experiment to regulate our preaching by the educational advantages of our hearers. Rather let us preach the Gospel with as much power and clearness as we can, being fully persuaded that it will not be too low for the learned, nor too high for the illiterate. Why—the great Chalmers would preach the same able discourses to a Highland assembly that he would to the polished society of Edinburgh, and they seldom or never fell upon a listless crowd. The Gospel is as sweet to the palate of a barbarian as it is to that of an English-

man—sugar is sweet all the world over. A negro, reading of the love of God, could exclaim, "If the crumbs here are so sweet, what must the great loaf in glory be!" Every mother in this congregation can understand as well as your most learned divine that verse—"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." What is necessary to understand it? Light in the intellect? No, no; but love in the heart. Every man, in his bare capacity as man, has within him the faculty to understand the Gospel.

II. THE ANSWER OF THE WORLD. "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; others, Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

I. "Some say that Thou art *John the Baptist*"—John the Baptist risen from the dead. By this class the Saviour was looked upon as an apparition from eternity. It is Arianism in embryo. To this the disciples made reply, "No; Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He is not a departed spirit revisiting the earth, but God Himself taking up His abode here. Jesus Christ is not a *preternatural* being as the Herodians supposed, nor merely a *supernatural* being as the Arians held, but emphatically a *Divine* being. You think, sirs, could you behold a spirit from the other world, you would believe. In Christ you see more—in Him you see not a ghost but a God, and do you now believe? "If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they

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be persuaded though one rose from the dead." If a ghost pushed aside the veil of eternity and stood up in this pulpit to preach to you, you would not be one step nearer believing. Indeed, we read that after the resurrection of Christ "many bodies of the saints which slept arose and went into the holy city and appeared unto many." A frightful spectacle—a company of ghosts walking to town together—corpses fresh from the cemetery—and appearing unto many! Well, did any believe? No, not one. Why, young people, you would rush to perdition through a battalion of ghosts. But I am here to tell you that not a ghost, but a God, has placed Himself between you and destruction. Will you pause and consider?

2. "Others say, Thou art *Elias*." These people thought that Jesus Christ was Elias returned from heaven, or, perhaps, they supposed He only intended to assume the character of Elias. Either way it comes practically to the same thing. What, then, was the character of Elias? It may be summed up in one word—*Reformer*. And a considerable portion of society believed Christ was only a Reformer. Many modern writers adopt the same view. They class Him with Moses, Elias, Cakya-mouni, Confucius, and Luther—the worthiest of the lot, nevertheless of the same class. No, say the disciples, He is more than a Reformer, He is a Revolutionist. "I came to send fire on the earth." "Think not that I am come to send peace; I am not come to send peace but a sword." What meaning does such lan-

guage convey? That Christianity is not a Reformation but a Revolution. You can picture to yourselves a body of men sunk so low that no reformation could adequately meet their case. Am I wrong in supposing that France in the last century had descended to such an abyss of irreligion and vice that only a revolution could effect the salvation of that unhappy country? Be that as it may, one thing is certain—society in the time of Christ was too bad to be reformed, it absolutely needed to be revolutionised. And we also as individuals must experience a power from above, coming down from the skies, and entering into the depths of our nature, and turning our whole being upside down. And even that view is not extreme enough to set forth the whole case: Christianity is a *new creation*. Humanity must be “created anew in Christ Jesus.” “Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye must be born again,” unmade to the very foundation and built up all new. “And now also the axe is laid unto the *roots* of the trees.” Elias and other reformers lopped off withered branches, Christ lops off withered roots. And every one of us must experience feebleness—a kind of utter helplessness at the basis of our personality; we must feel the axe cutting at the roots, nay, cutting *through* the roots of our being; it must dis sever us from the old corrupt stock in Adam—it must loosen us in our old sockets—that we may be lifted bodily and grafted in Christ Jesus. Have you felt this power of the axe? The ministry of the present day, it is to be feared, is a ministry of superfine penknives—we just scratch

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3. "Others said, Thou art *Jeremias, or one of the prophets.*" They believed Him to belong to the honoured line of seers. And you will please notice that all these people, of whom mention is made in the text, thought well of Jesus Christ. We know there were many others who thought ill of Him, who went about the country saying He was a "gluttonous man and a winebibber," that He performed His miracles through undue intimacy with "Beelzebub, the prince of devils." But no mention is made of these people here. Why not? I know not, unless it was that the disciples were ashamed to look Jesus in the face and tell Him what some people were saying about Him behind His back. Be that as it may—all the people mentioned in the text thought well of Jesus Christ. They thought Him better than the ordinary run of the race, they classed Him with the prophets. And yet they were not saved! Why not? Because, though they thought well of Him, they did not think well enough; though they spoke highly of Him, they did not speak highly enough. Alas! there are many like them in the present day—people who come to church or chapel every Sunday, people who teach in our Sabbath schools. They think well of Christ, they speak highly of Him. They would be shocked if they heard His greatness questioned, and yet they are not saved. Why not? Because they do not think well enough of Him. They must see His

head towering above the stars; they must see His glory melting into the glory of Divinity; they must see Him taking His place in the Triune Godhead between the Father and the Spirit. Any view short of this fails to effect our salvation: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

III. THE ANSWER OF THE CHURCH. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

1. Here we have the *fact* of Christ's Godhead taught us. At the time of Jesus' birth human thought was perfectly still. But no sooner did He come than a vast excitement blazed up throughout the land. He set in motion the whole machinery of thought in friends and foes alike. Strike the sonorous brass—it will not resound unless it vibrate. Jesus Christ, descending from heaven, smote the human mind, and all of a sudden it began to vibrate and peal forth various sounds. "When Herod the king heard these things, he was *troubled*, and all Jerusalem with him." And when, in the heyday of His fame, He came to Jerusalem, "all the city was *moved*, saying, Who is this?" "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; others, Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." All were giving forth sounds—erroneous and uncertain. But gathered together around Christ's person was a small band whose minds He oftentimes touched. He kept them near Himself, that the vibration of His own nature might thrill and modify theirs. As the leader of a choir throws the vibration of his own voice to the

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voices around him till he can get them to emit the same sound, so Christ was throwing the vibration of His own mysterious Being to His disciples till He could get them to sound the keynote—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Everybody was trying to hit the keynote. The keynote of some was John the Baptist; of others, Elias; of others, Jeremias. Then amidst all these discordant voices He turns to His disciples, saying, "Whom say ye that I am? Let me see if you can give the keynote of my religion." "Then Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." "Yes," replies the Saviour, "that is the keynote, Peter; it is music to my ears; it is the first time for me to hear my own name pronounced by human lips. Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona! Because thou art the first to sound the keynote of Christianity, to thee I give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Thy confession is the key to unravel the mysteries of my kingdom, and whosoever rejects this key shall not be able to open and enter."

2. In subsequent ages we discover the *analysis* of the fact. Peter here simply states the doctrine; the exposition of it is the work of following generations. Does this surprise you? It is only a repetition of one of the well-known laws of history. History is made up of two continually alternating periods. One period is creative; it gives birth to new truths and new forces, it is full of energy and power. Then follows a period of reflection: no new thoughts are born, but the old thoughts are examined and re-

arranged. The ideas of the creative period are opened and constrained to show their contents; they are put on the dissecting table, and every joint is examined, and then they are compacted together into a new system.

The age of Moses was creative—new, glorious, powerful thoughts were born into the world. The age of the Judges was reflective: no new truths were produced, but time was given for the old truths to sink and germinate in the national mind. The age of the Prophets again was creative: new, large, fiery thoughts were born into society—fresh forces were introduced into the world. The age of the Scribes was reflective: no new ideas obtained currency, but the old ideas were carefully examined, the writings of Moses and the prophets minutely studied. The Scribes were adepts in analysis—they could split truths with marvellous precision. They could not compose, but they could split! Again with Jesus Christ and His apostles came a creative period—new truths of ineffable beauty were born, novel forces introduced. The newest of all the truths, and the most potent of all the forces, was that to which expression is given in the text—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." If you asked Peter what he meant, if you asked him to analyse his answer, if the human and Divine natures were mixed or distinct in the person of the Saviour, he would have looked at you in blank astonishment, he would not, at this stage in his tuition, have understood your language. The text does not express in

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a scientific way the constituent elements in the person of Christ or their relation to one another. Such treatment belongs to an age of reflection and analysis, not to an age of creation and imagination.

How, then, could Peter be said to believe that Jesus was the Son of God? Can you not tell that man is man without subjecting him to a process of vivisection? Can you not tell that a rose is a rose without first analysing it, and ascertaining how much of earth, of water, and of air go to compose it? It did not occur to the impetuous Peter just now to analyse his idea—analysis was not necessary to make the confession. It did not occur to him to take the Rose of Sharon to the laboratory, there to learn how much there was of earth, how much of sky, and how adjusted; it was enough that he knew it to be a rose. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Many good, pious, useful Christians are to be found in all our churches who cannot answer our hard questions touching the metaphysics of Christianity, and who in an examination on the Person of Christ would fall into all manner of heresies, Arianism, Sabellianism, Eutychianism, Apollinarianism, and other errors which have never had a name. Whether Divinity tenants His body to the exclusion of the human soul they cannot tell, and have never thought of it. Enough that they have seen a beauty in His face which is not of the earth, that they have felt a power flowing from His life which is not of the will of man. Why, how, and wherefore they know nothing at all about; of one thing alone they are

sure—"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Following the creative age of the Apostles came reflection with the ecclesiastical Fathers. They began to discuss the constituent parts of the Person of Christ. The result of their labours is embodied in the Athanasian and other early creeds. Then followed a period of great sterility. But with Luther came again a creative period, not in the sense that new truths were born into the world, but that new truths were born into the consciousness of the Church. Then followed an age of reflection and analysis, an age famous for its Catechisms and Bodies of Divinity. We live, it appears to me, in the beginning of a creative period. The old landmarks are being removed, the old creeds are being torn up. In one sense I am not sorry—I am glad to see the present generation of Christians going straight to the New Testament for its ideas. Not that I wish to disparage creeds, or treat them with disrespect. Creeds embody the ripest and most advanced thoughts of the ages they represent. It is not against the use of creeds that I speak—we cannot very conveniently do without them—but against their abuse, against setting them up in every jot and tittle as infallible standards for all subsequent ages. If you look at a picture of the sky in our picture galleries, you will find that with rare exceptions it has been rendered too hard and too material. The sky on canvas is a ceiling beyond which the eye cannot wander. But if you go out of the gallery a

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very different sky will open itself before you—a sky which seems to recede for ever before your vision. The sky of painters is too often a thing to be looked at; the sky of nature is not a thing to be looked at, but a thing to be looked through. In like manner, the truth concerning Christ as rendered in creeds and systems is hard and dry—it is the sky of the picture. The truth concerning Christ as presented in the Gospels is deep, living, infinite—it is the sky of nature. And I greatly rejoice that men try to understand the Christ of the Gospels and not the Christ of the creeds, the Christ of the evangelists and not the Christ of the schools. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

A great deal of controversy rages in the present day on this important subject; old systems are rent asunder. But let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid. There will soon come in the natural order of things an age of sober, calm reflection. The chaff will be sifted from the wheat, and it will be found that we also have contributed our quota towards the clearer exposition of Divine Truth. The confession of Peter has gained ground in the past, and it will gain ground in the future. Let sceptics rail and authors quarrel, they will never dim the brilliant light of the Gospel. Shall storms blow out the sun? They may blow out street lamps, but a breeze has never fanned the face of the sun. Shall theological controversies extinguish the “Light of the World”? They may extinguish creeds, but Jesus Christ—never! They may raise clouds of dust, and the

clouds may for a while conceal the Sun from sight; but a breeze from the Everlasting Hills will sweep them all away, and the Sun will continue to shine with increasing brilliance, and children yet unborn shall rejoice greatly in His light and heat. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."



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XIV.

The Foundation of the Church.

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter. and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."—ST. MATT. xvi. 18.

IT is a remark worthy of our notice that Jesus Christ makes use of the word "church" only twice throughout His entire ministry. The first time is in the text: "upon this rock I will build my Church." The other time is in St. Matt. xviii. 17: "Tell it unto the Church, and if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." This startling fact administers a severe rebuke to that class of religious teachers who are always endeavouring to magnify the Church even at the expense of the Saviour. I have in my study several sermons by clergymen of a certain type, in which the word "church" occurs almost in every sentence, but the word "Christ" very seldom or not at all from beginning to end. But if in any ministry more frequent references are made to the Church than to Christ, you may rest assured that that ministry is drifting away from the simplicity of the Gospel.

What, then, is the true position of Christ in rela-

tion to the Church? He is the foundation thereof—that I take to be the teaching of the text. “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church.” The judicious discrimination of the terms here used seems to me to lead to this conclusion. “Thou art Petros (a stone), and upon this Petra (a rock) I will build my Church.” *Petros—Petra*. The Petros is only a fragment of the Petra, the Petros rests on the Petra. But here we encounter an objection. In the Greek a slight difference is observable in the termination of the words; but in the Aramaic, the vernacular of Galilee, and the language in which Christ probably carried on this conversation, the two words are precisely the same; the distinction which occurs in the Greek does not exist in the language which the Saviour then spoke. The objection is admittedly very specious. But the objectors forget that if the Aramaic was the language of Jesus Christ, the Greek is the language of the Holy Ghost; and if the Holy Ghost makes the distinction, we are not at liberty to ignore it. The Holy Ghost best knows what the mind of the Saviour was.

I take then that the teaching of the text is—*Jesus Christ the foundation of the Church*. And even if this were not the exact signification of the passage, we are still warranted in adopting it as the subject of our discourse, for no one will deny that it is clearly taught in other passages of Holy Writ. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

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I. The Church is built on CHRIST.

1. It is built on *Jesus Christ*, and not upon any idea or representation of Him. Efforts have been made within this century to rob the Church of the Saviour; books have been written to present us with Christianity without Christ. What then is left us? The ideas embodied in Christ, but not Christ Himself. The ideas, like the grave-clothes, are neatly wrapped together; but when we seek Christ, we find Him not. The Church is said to be built on an ideal, but not on a real, Christ. This, however, is not the teaching of the New Testament. The Church, according to it, has not ideas, but facts as its basis; and the greatest of all the facts is Jesus Christ Himself. It is the facts, and not the ideas, which save us; the fact of the Incarnation, and not the idea, which elevates us; the fact of the Atonement, and not the idea, which redeems us; the actual, personal Christ, and not any phantom of Him, who is the Redeemer of the world. Sin is not a mere idea, but a fact; depravity is not a mere idea, but a fact; guilt is not a mere idea, but a fact: and to meet the facts of the Fall we must have the facts of Redemption. To those who look upon human sin and its adjuncts as mere ideas, a Gospel of ideas will suffice. But to those who know sin to be a dread reality, and have agonised under the burden of its guilt, a Gospel of ideas is miserably inadequate—their conscience imperatively demands a Gospel of facts. For an ideal Fall, an ideal Gospel will suffice—an idea always suffices to save

an idea; but for an historical Fall, we must have an historical Gospel. A person only can be the Saviour of persons.

2. It follows, therefore, that the Church is built upon the *historical* Christ. Not upon the Christ of criticism, but upon the Christ of the Gospels; not upon Christ as portrayed in the brilliant pages of more than one of the recent "Lives" of Him, but as He is painted by the four evangelists. No uncertainty must be allowed at the foundation of our faith. The "things concerning Jesus were most surely believed" among the early Christians. "Most surely believed:" the word is borrowed from a ship driven into the harbour by a strong stiff gale filling the sails. Thus the story of Christ was so abundantly verified that it sailed with ease and carried conviction into the mind; its outspread snowlike sheets were so filled with the testimony of eyewitnesses that it entered the soul without once foundering. The disciples not only had faith in the facts of Jesus' life and death, but "full assurance of faith;" the evidence was more than ample, it was overwhelming.

The Church is built upon the historical Christ—not exactly upon the history of Christ, but rather upon the Christ of history. Christ is infinitely greater than any history of Him, however well authenticated; the foundation of the Church is broader and deeper than even the four Gospels. The very titles of the Gospels are significant—"The Gospel according to St. Matthew," "The

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Gospel *according* to St. Mark," and so on. Matthew caught a few of the rays which emanated from the Saviour, and reproduced them in his pages; Mark caught a few others which escaped Matthew, and so on of the other evangelists. But between them all they did not catch the half. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books which should be written." Indeed, the books already written have well stocked the world; they have more than filled the human mind—the world of thought could not contain more. The rays flung upon us by the evangelists are quite as much as we can comfortably bear—a few more and we should be confounded with the transcendent glory, we should grow blind with the excess of light.

3. But if it is built on the historical Christ, then it must be built on the *theological* Christ—the Christ as represented in the doctrines of the Church. The material universe found its unity and centre in man—every other idea was suspended and regulated by the idea of man. Fish, bird, animal are only counterparts of man, they are framed on the human model. Fish, bird, animal—the human idea penetrates and unifies them; physiologists perceive in them a rough imitation of man. In other words, every member of the human body may be traced in embryonic form in the lower animals. Take, for instance, the human hand. Man has five fingers—physiologists will point out to you feeble indications

of them in every living creature. Any stableboy can show them to you in the leg of the horse or ox, only he does not, in these abortive efforts, perceive infallible signs of the unity of creation. Or contemplate it in an inverse method. Man, they tell us, lives the lives of lower animals before he attains his proper human condition. So in Genesis we have the Hebrew idea of creation—it finds its centre and unity in man. But in the New Testament we have the Christian idea of creation—man and the creation find their centre and unity in the Word Incarnate. In Genesis we see “man made after the likeness of God.” Every other creature was made “after its kind,” that is, after a Divine idea. But man was created, not after his kind, but after another kind; not after a Divine idea, but after a Divine Person. The human model God found, not in His thoughts, but deep down in His essence. “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” The words seem to intimate that the human has its essential archetype in God—the Divine Heart has a human heart at its core. The Divine Essence has a Divine Man at its centre. Now this truth of the Creation is explained and consummated by the greater truth of the Incarnation. Man was made after God in the Creation; God was made after man in the Incarnation. The hidden properties of the Divine Nature are evolved, and the innate capacities of human nature demonstrated. Jesus Christ is the vital root of the universe, men and all living things being only branches growing out of Him. But there can be no

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life in the branches which was not first in the roots, and there can be no life in the creation which is not derived from Christ. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." "In Him all things consist"—stand together. The Church or the new creation, consequently, is built upon the first and deepest foundation of the old creation; not upon God, and not upon man, but upon the juncture of both. As a Divine-human society, the Church rests its weight upon that point in time when, and that point in space where, the forces of the Creator and creation became eternally and indissolubly wedded.

II. This leads us to the second point—the Church is built upon Christ as the GOD-MAN. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"—"Upon this rock I will build my Church:" this second thought is clearly involved.

I. It is built upon the *God-man*. And you will please observe here the difference between the Christian Church and the Jewish Church. You are all aware that there has been one true Church in the world besides the Christian—the Church of the Hebrews. What, then, is the essential difference between them? As already intimated, the truth lying at the foundation of the Christian Church is "God manifest in the flesh." What was the fundamental truth of the Jewish Church? A careful perusal of the Old Testament will show it was the oneness of God and His distinct existence from the world. Judaism was instituted to maintain the

distinction between God and the world. God and man are one, says Christianity: God and man are two, says Judaism. The Jews were solemnly and repeatedly warned against falling into the delusion of the surrounding nations by identifying God with sun, moon, or stars; they were cautioned not to merge or lose sight of the essential distinction between God and the creature; they were severely admonished against the deification of nature. That was the vital truth at the core of Judaism. The first commandment taught the nation there was but one God,—one, not many. The second taught them that all objects cognisable by the senses were creatures and not gods, and consequently unworthy of adoration: it even forbade the cultivation of art lest it should prove to them a snare as it did to other peoples, which explains the striking fact that though the Jews have produced names of world-wide reputation in jurisprudence, philosophy, music and commerce, yet they have never produced a great painter or a great sculptor. Moses, Spinoza, Mendelssohn, and Rothschild suffice to maintain their celebrity in the former departments of thought; but no great name is forthcoming to show their aptitude for art. The third commandment forbids familiarity with the Divine Name—He is too great to be mentioned with levity or irreverence. The fourth taught them to partition off a portion of time to the worship of a God separate from the world. The God of Judaism is thus a Being with a wide gulf fixed between Him and the creature.

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But He is represented as holding communion with men and inspiring prophets, you say. Yes, and there Judaism stops. The inspiration of prophets was on purpose to testify to the distinction between God and the world. The people sometimes lost sight of the distinction and fell into idolatry; the prophet was raised and inspired on purpose to reclaim them by testifying that God is not nature, that God is not man. The Incarnation is fundamentally different from Inspiration. Inspiration testifies to the distinction between God and man; the Incarnation proclaims the union of God and man. Inspiration made the prophet keenly alive to the distinction within himself between himself and God; he was painfully conscious of a duality of voices within him. The Incarnation, on the other hand, harmonised the Divine and human; one personal pronoun "I" represent the God and the man in Christ Jesus. The distinction between the Divine and human is the truth lying at the foundation of the Jewish Church; the union between them is the truth lying at the foundation of the Christian Church. Jesus Christ is the Son of Man at the same time that He is the Son of the living God.

Here precisely arose the greatest impediment to the success of His ministry and the establishment of His Church. The Jews were familiar enough with the idea of a prophet—they were always ready to believe in a prophet of the Highest, in a man taught and inbreathed by God. More than once they evinced their willingness to receive Jesus Christ in the capa-

city of a prophet. "A great prophet hath arisen among us." They were willing enough to accord Him the honours due to a prophet. But He claimed to be something more than a prophet or a man inspired by God—He claimed to be God. No one ever before claimed to be God. Many set themselves forth as His prophets, and the nation was only too ready to be led astray by them. No one in all their history or in all the history of the world claimed to be God. Jesus alone advanced this astounding claim, and the Jews, shocked at His pretension, took up stones to slay Him. The fundamental truth of His teaching is—the union of God and man in His person. God and man are two, says Judaism: God and man are one, says Christianity. A great gulf separates God from man, says Judaism; the gulf has been bridged, says Christianity. "He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one." "Great is the mystery of Godliness—God manifest in the flesh."

2. The Church is built upon the *God-man*, and not upon the *Man-God*. What is the radical difference between Christianity and Paganism? In a word, it consisted in this—Christianity taught that God was man, Paganism averred that man was God. That was the first fallacy sin introduced into the world, and it continues to be the great fallacy underlying all the other religious fallacies of mankind. "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The religions of Europe all started with the notion that man either was or could be God. Most of their gods were deified men. They reached their fitting

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climax at the time of the Incarnation in the apotheosis of the Cæsars. At the epoch when the God of heaven was being made man, the Cæsars of Rome were being made gods. The religions of the East did not start with this notion, it is true; but in their later developments they failed in observing the distinctions between God and the world, and ended in practically making man God. God is man, says Christianity; man is God, says heathenism: two statements perfectly antagonistic. The God-man is the foundation of the Christian religion and the Christian Church; the Man-God is the foundation of heathen religions and all their grand sacerdotal organisations.

If you examine Christianity pure and simple and Christianity as corrupted by man, Christianity as taught in the New Testament and Christianity as exhibited in the dogmas and practices of Rome, you will discover the same fallacy pervading the latter. Rome has not doctrinally denied that God is man—of course not; why, then, do we find fault with it? Because it makes man God. The sovereign Pontiff “as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” Divine properties are ascribed, and worshipful homage paid, to mortal man. The Church of Rome strives to hold the two propositions that God is man and that man is God, but they cannot hold together long, they are mutually destructive of each other. Whilst we strenuously maintain that God is manifest in our nature, we must beware not to deify that nature. This is the poisonous error which

vitiates the whole religious organisation of Popery—it drifts more and more towards idolatry. Pagan Rome found its natural climax in the apotheosis of the Emperor; Papal Rome will find it too in the apotheosis of the Pope.

To the same pernicious conclusion comes the science of the present day. It is well known to students of philosophy that the most seductive and imposing form it wears among our contemporaries is Pantheism. Indeed, one might venture to say that Pantheism is now the regnant power in several schools of no mean pretensions. And what is the upshot of Pantheism? That man is God. It leaves off just where Satan began—"ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Modern science scorns religion, it holds it up to ridicule and contempt. But we have often heard that extremes meet: and it is remarkable that the extreme of European science should meet the extreme of European superstition, both proclaiming in their different dialects that man is God. Of the two I prefer the Romish superstition. The devotees of Rome deify only good men and holy women, good and holy at least in their estimation. They would shrink with horror from pronouncing the thief, the liar, the murderer infallible; they must have the best men under heaven, so far as they can judge. They would shrink with horror from canonising the dissolute woman—they must have a Virgin Mary to do her Divine honours. The Romish Church undoubtedly evinces a strong tendency to deify men and women; but they must be

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good men and holy women, at least in its opinion. But Pantheism, the fashionable philosophy of the day, draws no moral distinctions; it deifies the wicked as well as the good, the criminal as well as the saint, the strange woman as well as the Virgin Mary. All is God, cries Pantheism. I am not ignorant of the nice distinctions and fine abstractions in which its accomplished votaries indulge; but its practical upshot seems to me to be—the deification of man.

The same tendency is observable in Positivism. It begins by forswearing all religions and denying all worship; it ends—where? In the worship of humanity. I am not sure but I perceive in its illustrious founder an irresistible impulse to worship himself. It begins by denying God and all revelations of Him: it ends in the opposite extreme, even the deification of man. The doctrine of the Christian Church is—God is man. The doctrine of Antichrist, whether he wear the name of pope or philosopher, of religion or science, is—Man is God.

3. It is built on the *God-man*, and not upon any theory. This indicates the superiority of Christianity to all systems of thought, such as Deism. Whilst these give us an idea to build upon, Christianity gives us a person; whilst they give us the conception of God as a foundation, Christianity gives us God Himself in the nature of man. The Gospel it is that converts Deism into an operative factor in the daily affairs of life. Deism gives us the idea of God, and beyond question the idea is grand, sublime, majestic; never-

theless it was not the idea of God that mankind needed, but God Himself. "Oh that I knew where I might find God!" The idea of God? No; I have the idea, I have not lost the idea, it is the Being represented by the idea that I need. The idea of bread will not break your hunger—you must have bread itself to do that. The idea of water will not quench your thirst—you must have water itself to do that. In like manner the idea of God will not satisfy the cravings of the immortal spirit within us—God Himself must do that. Deism gives us the idea, Christianity gives us the Being. It is well to have the idea: the idea bare and naked, no doubt, exerts considerable influence upon society. But after all, it is but little the idea can do—it is God Himself that is Almighty. The idea cannot save you and bear your burden of sin and sorrow—it is God Himself that is your Saviour. The idea cannot check sin: many have the idea and sin on much the same; but let God Himself enter the mind, and the man instantly ceases from sin. Remember that God is the foundation of the New Testament Church, not God outside our nature, but God within it. "Upon this rock I will build my Church."

III. The Church is built upon Jesus Christ as the God-man SLAIN. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

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necessary He should be *slain*. Had men kept their estate of primeval innocence, the Incarnation alone would have sufficed as an adequate basis whereupon to build the living temple of humanity. But men are sinners; hence the Incarnation must be followed by the Atonement—the God-man must be slain. It was in death that He was fitted into His place as the foundation of men redeemed. The foundation must be under the building, and Christ must get beneath humanity—not humanity in its integrity, but humanity in its guilt. And “from this time forth” we behold the blessed Saviour treading down the slopes of death, down “to parts lower than the earth.” He sinks out of sight in the terrible darkness. Where goeth He? Oh, sinners have descended that way, Mary Magdalene and the thief, and He must descend lower than the lowest, that they may be able to roll themselves on Him and be uplifted by His Divine power. “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious.” But to lay it God must excavate the mountain, and dress the stone to fit it for its place. The God-man must die. The weight of humanity with all its sins was laid upon Him. Under a burden so heavy any other being would have been crushed. Before our persons be built upon Him, our sins must first be put on His shoulders. He alone can bear the weight of our persons who is first able to bear the weight of our sins.

2. This idea of the God-man slain seems to be the *foundation of all the thoughts* of God. “The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.” How

slain? Not actually, but in the Divine thoughts. The "Lamb slain" was the central idea in the Divine counsel, and around it and hanging upon it all the other ideas revolved in their prescribed orbits. It seems to have governed the Divine Plan in the very construction of the planet. Scientists tell us the geology of Mount Zion is different from that of all other known mountains; the strata of rocks cross and recross each other in curious shapes, forming manifold subterranean passages, opening upon the valley of Jehoshaphat. How to account for them? Geology confesses its inability. But where geology fails, may not theology shed a ray of light? "The Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world." Foreknowing Mount Zion to be the scene of the temple, where thousands of beasts would be weekly sacrificed, God provided in the very make of the planet natural aqueducts to carry away the blood and the offal, so that, whilst the spirits of men were being healed, their bodies should not suffer from decay. God planned the world with a view to its redemption.

3. And as the "Lamb slain" was the centre of the Divine thoughts before the creation of the world, so will He be the centre of the myriad *thoughts of redeemed humanity* after the creation shall have been burnt up and reduced to ashes. All eyes and all thoughts will turn to Him "who is a Lamb, as it had been slain, in the midst of the throne." He has seven horns and seven eyes—seven horns to denote His power, and seven eyes to denote His knowledge; and by means of the horns and the eyes He

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carries on His reign on the earth. But His reign is founded on His death—His sceptre is none other than the wood of His cross. And the thousands of thousands of redeemed men around His throne “sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.” But the “new song” suggests an old song. Where is that? You will find it in the preceding chapter: “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.” The old song is about God creating, the new song about God dying; and God dying fairly eclipses God creating.

In conclusion, let me urge upon you to make sure of your foundation. Build upon Christ. Let nothing intervene between you and Him. The function of the apostles was precisely similar to that of John the Baptist. “The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through Him might believe.” It was not intended that men should believe on John, or in John, but through John. John possessed not a sufficient volume of being to be the object of faith; the man who would put his trust in him would forthwith strike *through* him. And what is true of John is equally true of the apostles—they bore witness of the Light that “men *through* them might believe.” Occasionally an effort is made to thrust St. Peter or some other saint between us and

the Saviour. We should, however, respectfully but firmly bid them all step aside and "not stand between us and the sun." "Who then is Paul, and who Apollos, but ministers *by* whom ye believe?" They are the instruments of our faith but not *its* object. We must pass by them and beyond them, and lodge the whole weight of our being on a personal Saviour.

Build upon Christ, and not upon *creeds*. Creeds do not uphold the Church, rather does the Church uphold them. "The Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The Church is composed of persons, and persons must have a person to rest upon. Christ's teaching, doubtless, would suffice as a basis whereupon to construct systems of theology; but His person only can suffice as a basis whereupon souls without number are to be built up a living temple unto God. Believers find rest, not so much in the Gospels of Christ as in the Christ of the Gospels. Many seek the truth and find it, without seeking and finding the Christ. You may be perfectly orthodox in your theology, you may musically recite the creeds every Sunday, and yet not be built upon the Rock. Not the truth apart from Jesus, or the truth about Jesus, but the truth *in* Jesus it is that saves. You must not stop at the Divine Truth; tear your way through it till you find the Divine Person. "The violent take it by force."

Neither must we assume the *Bible* to be our true and ultimate foundation. Think not for a moment that I depreciate the Bible—I esteem it above all earthly treasures. But still it is possible to look

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upon the Bible as an adequate substitute for Christ, and worship the Word of God instead of the Son of God: The Bible is only the rule of faith, whereas it is to be feared that many make it the object of faith; it is only the standard of belief, whereas many make it the foundation of belief. The Bible was never designed to take the place of Christ, but to lead to Christ. The Bible is not the Saviour—it only shows the way to the Saviour. "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." Search not so much to seize their meaning and discover their ideas, though doubtless that is good; search them rather to find the Divine "Me" underlying them all. You must get behind the Book to the living Christ, through the Book to the personal Saviour. Nothing whatever should intervene between believers and their foundation, not even verses of Scripture. You must get back of all the verses and come into warm personal contact with the Divine Person therein exhibited. Dr. Alexander, the celebrated commentator, on his deathbed requested a friend to repeat for his comfort a portion of Scripture. The friend, complying, began in a low, subdued tone, "I know in whom I have believed," &c. "No, no," gasped the dying divine, "not I know *in* whom I have believed, but 'I know whom I have believed.' I cannot allow even the little word *in* to go between me and my Saviour." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

XV.

The Transfiguration.

“ And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them : and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here : if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles ; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them : and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ; hear ye Him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.”—ST. MATT. xvii. 1-9.

WE are confronted at the outset with the question—What mountain is here intended? Tradition, dating from the third or fourth century, points to Tabor in Galilee. The primitive Christians, therefore, to show their devotion, built three churches on the top, in allusion to the three tabernacles which Peter wished to set up. A strange way certainly of honouring the Lord, to erect three churches where the apostles were not allowed to construct three tabernacles. Most writers of the present day, how-

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ever, dispute the claim of Tabor: first, because the narrative rather points to the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi; second, because Tabor in the time of the Saviour is proved to have been the site of several Roman fortresses, occupied of course by imperial soldiers. For these and other reasons too recondite to be discussed in a sermon, the honour that is denied to Tabor is ascribed to one of the horns of Hermon. Let us now "turn aside and see this great sight;" may we do it with the reverence becoming the occasion!

I. The WITNESSES of the Transfiguration: Peter, James, and John—why these three?

1. Because three could *keep a secret*, but twelve could not. The context shows that it was of extreme importance that the Transfiguration should be kept hid till after the resurrection. On their descent "Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." Not only they were not to declare it to the promiscuous public, but they were not to disclose it to the remaining nine, for they were in a spiritual stage too low to make proper use of it. His deepest experience, whether of joy or sorrow, the Saviour always concealed from the obtuse crowd, and even from the undiscerning among His personal retinue.

2. Because probably these three were in *deeper sympathy* with the Saviour. Peter is the only one of whom it is expressly stated that he loved Jesus; John the only one of whom it is particularly affirmed

that he was loved by Jesus; and James was the first to testify to the sincerity of his attachment by martyrdom. Such a vision as this of the Transfiguration was not designed for unprepared or unsympathetic souls, but for those specially trained to gaze reverently upon the Divine mysteries. This law always regulates the Divine procedure—revelations according to the spiritual capacity. Every man sees as much truth as he is morally fit to see.

3. But notwithstanding their sympathy, the authorised version represents them as *falling asleep*. "Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were awake, they saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him." Trench proposes another translation—"Having kept themselves awake throughout, they saw His glory and the two men that stood with Him." The authorised version teaches that they slept at the commencement of the scene, but awoke before it was over. But according to the other rendering, they were eyewitnesses of the whole transaction. Either way the language implies that they felt drowsy, that they wanted to sleep. Was this drowsiness natural? Not altogether; the excessive splendour around them produced a sensation of heaviness. Abraham, in the midst of the vision granted unto him, fell into a deep sleep. Daniel also, consequent upon the vision of the Almighty, fell on his face and slept. Zechariah fell into the same state of inspirational clairvoyance, and required to be roused by an angel, "as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." Upon the same prin-

ple are three disciples too much comforted by sheer effect. "They kept His glory,

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principle are we to account for the heaviness of the three disciples—supernatural radiance always proves too much for human nature in its present infirmity comfortably to bear. Nevertheless, says St. Luke, by sheer effort of will they managed not to succumb. “They kept themselves awake throughout, and saw His glory, and the two men that stood with Him.”

II. The PRINCIPLE of the Transfiguration.

1. One of the evangelists notes that as “He *prayed*” the marvellous change in His appearance was effected. In communion with His Father such intense rapture possessed His soul that it visibly glowed through the dark covering of the body. “As He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.” Are we to perceive in this notable occurrence a principle illustrated or a principle defied? Is there anything in it for the race? I believe there is; it is only a marked exemplification of a universal principle—that the outward form receives its lustre or its baseness from the spirit. A pure soul, penetrated by Divine light, will make a plain countenance look beautiful; a sensual soul will by degrees stamp its own uncleanness on features the most classic. Again, sudden disappointment will make the face turn pale; Divine inspiration, says Daniel, made his face turn pale too. Physicians tell of a disease which imparts delicate luminosity to the body: extremes meet—life at its lowest and life at its highest agree in producing corporeal translucency. “Be ye transformed in the

spirit of your mind"—the same word that is used in the text for transfigured. The Spirit of Christ in prayerful fellowship with His Father became imbued with a celestial glow; gradually the inner radiance burst through the grossness of the flesh as the golden sun through the lowering mantling clouds, converting them into pictures of beauty and joy. In exact proportion as prayer transfigures the soul, the soul transfigures the body.

2. The word "transfigured" means literally "*metamorphosed*." Matthew and Mark use it; but Luke, writing to the Greeks, among whom the word was prostituted to base ignoble purposes, avoids it, using circumlocution in preference. "He was metamorphosed before them"—a term signifying that the change began at the innermost centre of His being, and gradually spread therefrom till it glorified the remotest extremities of the body. The transfiguration of Moses and Stephen proceeded from without to within, an external reflection of the Brightness which shone upon them from the Unseen Holy. But the transfiguration of Christ proceeded from within to without, an overpowering outshining of the Radiance at the core of His personality. "He was metamorphosed before them." "His face did shine as the sun; His raiment was white as the light." A spectacle never to be forgotten by the three disciples! Around them the ebon curtain of night; yonder the virgin snow capping the peaks of Lebanon; and right before them "a face shining as the sun," illuminating the landscape with more than meridian

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brilliance. For a while He laid by "the body of His humiliation," and appeared in a body similar to that which He now wears in heaven. His whole form glowed with Divine lustre like burnished gold smitten by the sun—in this a pattern of the resurrection body. Matter for the time being was spiritualised, the body sweetly attuned to the high temperature of the soul. In the stone wall you behold matter in a state of exceeding grossness; in the window you behold the same matter refined and made transparent. Thus the body is now in a state of opacity and consequent corruptibility; but in the resurrection it will be changed, refined, transfigured, "and made like unto His glorious body." "Then shall the righteous shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." The soul will flash into visibility through the external covering of the body spiritual.

3. Many critics of no mean ability maintain that the emphatic words in the verse are—"before them." "He was transfigured *before them*." Professor Tayler Lewis, for instance, says that the tense of the verb suggests that transfiguration was not a rare exception in the Saviour's career upon the earth. That He should be transfigured was not at all strange; the strangeness was that He should be "transfigured *before them*." Communing night after night with His Father on solitary mountain tops, it was not unusual for Him to be transfigured; the sweet joy of His soul often pierced like sunbeams through His frail tenement of clay; the extraordinary thing on this occasion was, that He permitted the Divine Ecstasy to be witnessed

by others. Professor Godwin in his "Notes" throws out a similar hint. « This was not the only transfiguration, he supposes, in His history; and Moses and Elias were not the only inhabitants of heaven who visited Him during His lowly sojourn in our world. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad." Twice it is here stated that he saw, and twice that he was glad. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day"—that is the joy of anticipation and the seeing of faith. "And he saw it and was glad"—that is the joy of fulfilment and the seeing of the reality. According to this interpretation, Abraham also must have visited Christ at an earlier stage in His history, as Moses and Elias visit Him now on the Holy Mount. Who knows but we shall hear of many transfigurations in the Gospel of Eternity?

III. The celestial VISITANTS at the Transfiguration—Moses and Elias.

1. These departed saints appeared probably as representatives of the *ancient economy*. Moses was the founder of Judaism, Elias its reformer. Now the system, which the one inaugurated and the other ratified, was about to undergo a change, not indeed of destruction, but of transfiguration. That which was glorious under the Old Testament was to be made more glorious under the New. And the Founder and the Reformer of the ancient cultus came down to witness its glorification in the new religion. Moreover, the Jewish Church could boast

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of Divine origin—it had received Divine sanction, it had enjoyed Divine protection. All this could not be controverted. But Jesus also claimed to be Divine. Here, then, is the Divine Church about to reject the Divine Man—how to solve the riddle? The Transfiguration explains the difficulty. Moses, the founder of the Church, and Elias, its reformer, receive Him. The Divine Church, therefore, receives the Divine Man; only the apostate Church rejects and crucifies Him.

2. They further appeared probably as representatives of the *other world*. Jesus is on the eve of His passion; in less than a fortnight He will be nailed to the Wood. Consequently the attention of the other world is concentrated on this—two appear as a deputation to convey to Him the sympathy of the saints already made perfect. Presently one from among the angels also will appear at His side in the agony of Gethsemane, to whisper words of cheer in His ear, thereby “strengthening Him.” He stood in extreme need of sympathy, egregiously misunderstood as He was by all around Him; and the grandest purpose of this scene was to gird Him for the hour of His agony and death. Our world is small, yet the centre of attraction to more worlds than we often imagine, “that now unto principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God.” It is incredible, people say, that a small world like ours should be of such importance to the universe. But I cannot see what its bigness or smallness has to do

with the question. Was it big enough for the Son of God to be born in it? Big enough for Him to live in poverty in it? Big enough for Him to die in it? If so, it was big enough for all intents and purposes. The size of the planet is a no more valid objection to the truth of the Gospel than the size of the slate upon which Sir Isaac Newton wrought out his logarithms is a valid objection to the correctness of his computations. His tables have been transferred to every work upon navigation, and are the confidence of mariners far off upon mid-ocean. And God in the Gospel of His Son solved problems in this world relative to sin; the results probably enter into the practical knowledge of innumerable worlds. "Upon these things the angels desire to look." Waterloo did not prove too small a field to have decided upon it the destiny of Europe; and Calvary is not too small a mount to have settled upon it the doom of a universe.

3. "They appeared unto Him in glory, and spake of the *decease*," literally, exodus or departure. What a strange commingling of colours! "They appeared in *glory*, and spake of the *decease*." Glory and decease, heaven and death, are brought into closest juxtaposition. This goes right against the myth theory. Man, painting a scene so transcendently Divine, would never fling Death into the midst of Glory.

As already pointed out, "decease" here means exodus or departure. Christianity has changed the vocabulary of the world concerning death. "Sleep"

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is one word it has inserted in the dictionary as a synonym for death; but of that you have heard upon other occasions. "Ascent" is another word. When the Saviour spoke of death, He was wont to say—"I am ascending to my Father." The disciples could not understand His language; and no wonder—the language was perfectly novel. Death was a descent according to the world, a going down into Hades. He, however, never speaks of it as a descent, but always as an ascent—never as a going down, but always as a going up. Another new word is introduced in the text—"exodus" or departure. This at once connects the work of Christ with that of others who had preceded Him, the work of Redemption being progressive, stretching like a suspension bridge from the promise of the First Advent in Eden to the fulfilment of the Second Advent in the Judgment Day. "The exodus which He should accomplish:" this refers to an exodus begun elsewhere, the exodus which Moses commenced but was not able to finish. Joshua resumed it where Moses left it; but neither did he lead the people into rest, "for if Jesus had given them rest, he would not have spoken of another day." But what Moses commenced and Joshua continued, Jesus Christ was destined to accomplish. Death is an exodus: not a going to captivity, but a going from captivity; not a leaving home, but a going home.

4. "They talked of the decease which He was about to *accomplish* in Jerusalem." Not the decease

which He should suffer, but the decease which He should accomplish. In death others are passive, save as they struggle against the dissolution of the nature; but He was active, focussing the everlasting energies of His being upon its performance. He strove, endeavoured, strained to die. His decease was more the result of strength than of weakness.

An interesting question and often debated is this: What was the direct physical cause of the Saviour's death? How came He to die before the malefactors on each side of Him? How came He to die so much sooner than men generally crucified? The answer has been returned that He died of a broken heart. Be it far from me to deny the impressive pathos of this theory—the Saviour dying of a broken spirit, dying because the heart, unable to bear a heavier weight of sorrow, burst its sides and let the life-blood flow out! A very touching picture! But still it must be confessed that the language of Holy Writ seems to indicate greater activity of moral will on the Saviour's part. All the verbs used are active ones, denoting the triumph of strength and not the defeat of weakness. In Matthew's language (xxvii. 50), "He dismissed His spirit," or sent it away. In John's language (xix. 30), "He gave or delivered up His spirit." Mark (xv. 37) and Luke (xxiii. 46) say, "He breathed out the ghost." Therefore it has been inferred that He breathed hard and breathed long, and thereby breathed His spirit out of His body. He died, not because of a sudden rupture of the heart, that is,

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because He could live no longer; ~~but~~ because by a long, deliberate, determined expiration of the breath, He "dismissed" His spirit to His Father. But be that as it may; what I want to impress upon you is this, that in His death He exercised the mightiest activity, that He died because He purposely willed it, and not because He could not help it. He did not suffer death, but He accomplished it. Men, dying, give up the ghost and then bow the head; but Christ, dying, first bowed His head and then gave up the ghost. Stephen, dying, said, "Lord, *receive* my spirit;" but Christ, dying, said with a loud voice, "Father, into Thy hands I *commend* my spirit." He was a priest as well as a sacrifice, "having power to lay down His life;" and He voluntarily deposited it on the altar of Atonement.

IV. THE WITNESS OF THE FATHER at the Transfiguration.

I. "A *bright cloud* overshadowed them"—a cloud made luminous by the Divine effulgence within. Moses and Elias drew near in the nakedness of their celestial splendour. But God durst not so approach—"no man can see me and live." He is obliged to shroud Himself in clouds to attemper His glory to the weakness of human vision. The Shekinah-cloud which hovered over the gates of Paradise, which brooded in the Tabernacle and the Temple, now gently alights on the Holy Mount, and settles on Christ, Moses, and Elias, whilst the disciples remained outside the

encircling halo, and the latter three feared as the former three entered into the cloud.

2. From out the overshadowing cloud came a voice, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." In this exclamation one brilliant thinker sees the climax of the Divine education of the race—from *man*, through *servant*, up to *Son*. In Genesis we behold Man: in the prophetic books we behold the Servant of the Lord—man pressed into the Divine Service: in the Gospels we behold the Son of God—man rising, through the discipline of service, to a clear consciousness of his Divine Filiation. Jesus Christ is the consummation of human history, the crown and flower of the human race.

The words further denote progress in Christ's own life. He is now entering upon His work as a priest. At His baptism similar words were uttered by the Father to inaugurate Him to His prophetic office; from that time forth He began to preach and to teach in their synagogues. Now they are uttered to inaugurate Him to His sacerdotal office; forthwith His passion will begin. Similar words will be again uttered to instal Him in His kingly office after His resurrection—"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee." He may be considered from His birth as being virtually invested with the three offices; but from His birth He did not actively exercise them. At His baptism did He enter actively upon His work as a prophet? at His transfiguration did He enter actively upon His work

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as a priest? at His ascension did He enter actively upon His work as a king? This, then, throws new light upon the Transfiguration scene. The untarnished glory was only the investiture of Him in the white robes of the priest to qualify Him to enter the Holy of Holies, in the name of His brethren, "through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant," there to make expiation for the sins of the world.

3. Seeing that He is the beloved Son of God, it is our paramount duty to "hear Him." In Him as its organ the Divine Revelation has reached its climax—His word is an end of all controversy. We look to "Jesus only." Not to Moses or Elias, Socrates or Plato, but to "Jesus only." The love and holiness we contemplate in Jesus are our highest manifestations of God, highest because belonging to a nobler sphere than the wisdom and omnipotence displayed in Nature. There is a ritualism of the imagination as well as of ceremonies, upholsteries, and millineries, a ritualism appealing to the mental as well as to the bodily eye, as, for instance, when we demand physical glitter and display to help us to conceive of the majesty of God. God pure as Jesus, gracious as Jesus, patient as Jesus: that is the highest revelation of the Infinite Love the human understanding is capable of receiving. Fix, therefore, your thoughts and affections upon Jesus. "Hear ye Him."

V. The EFFECT of the Transfiguration.

1. The effect upon the *disciples* was to exhilarate them, to throw them into a rapture of wonder and

joy which they could hardly restrain. "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." What did Peter mean? How can we tell when he did not know himself? Strange that commentators should labour hard to discover his meaning when the Bible expressly declares that he had no meaning. But if he knew not what he thought, he knew right well how he felt. "It is good to be here." His experience was vastly different from that of the Israelites at the transfiguration of Moses. They feared; Peter and his fellow-disciples rejoiced. How to account for the difference? Doubtless by some subtle difference in the transfiguration of each. There is a white, dry, withering, electric light destructive of all life, vegetable and animal; it kills the fairest rose, blinds the keenest vision. There is another kind of light, cheering, inspiring, comforting, the cherisher and nourisher of all life. The first is lightning light, the second is sunlight. Thus the glory shining on Moses' face, like the Dispensation he introduced, had a tendency to terrify, depress, kill: it was the reflection of the lightnings which shot through the gloom of Sinai. But the glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ tended to elevate, ennoble, stimulate: it was the light of the Sun rising upon the world with healing in His wings. "It is good for us to be here; let us build." Do not many of you sympathise with the wild exclamation of the bewildered Peter? You also have seen His glory, you have seen Him attired in shining robes of ineffable beauty; and you were sorry

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the vision should cease, you were reluctant to come down from the Mount. You have seen, if not Moses and Elias, yet saints dearer to you than either of them. You lived with them from day to day, you associated with them in secular and spiritual service; the society was growing daily sweeter; at last you perceived signs of departure, the spirit fluttering its wings as if to take the final flight. You cried out in the sudden excitement of the moment, not knowing what you said, "Let us build—pity the fellowship should cease; the communion is sweet—let us build." But before you had time to begin, a cloud overshadowed you. A cloud of darkness? Nay, a cloud of glory, and the wife disappeared in a flash of brightness. "I am alone," cries the desolate husband in the sore anguish of his heart. "No," answers a Voice from the cloud; "I have only taken away a saint, my Son is still with you; I have only withdrawn Moses and Elias, my Well-beloved still remains." "This is my Well-beloved Son; hear ye Him."

2. The effect upon the *Saviour* was to gird Him for the coming conflict. "They were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed they were afraid." Such determination to suffer possessed Him, in consequence of the interview on the Holy Mount, that it imparted extraordinary solemnity to His countenance, unusual dignity to His movements, unwonted grandeur to His step; His disciples were filled with astonishment, and timidly slunk behind.

They could not bear His lofty gaze. "How I am straitened till it be accomplished!" Others are straitened because they must die; He was straitened because He wanted to die. Others are distressed because of the approach of death; He was distressed because it did not approach fast enough. "How I am straitened till it be accomplished!" He stretched forth the arms of His desire in the direction of the Cross more eagerly than the racer on Olympus ever stretched his towards the winning-post. "Peter said unto Him, Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee. And Jesus turned and said, Get thee behind me, Satan." "And Jesus turned"—turned His head, say modern expositors; but turned His colour, says Thomas Goodwin, the eminent Puritan divine. "This shall not be unto Thee, Thou shalt not die," remonstrated Peter. "Not die, Peter, having come all the way from eternity on purpose to die; not die, having come out from God for the express purpose of laying down my life; not die, having set my mind steadfastly upon it from days of old, ere ever the earth was!" And He changed colour, grew pale at the very thought!

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XVI.

The Judgment.

“When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.”—ST. MATT. xxv. 31-33.

IN the preceding chapters the Lord Jesus foretells the destruction of Jerusalem, and with it of Judaism, “the world which then was.” The end of the Jewish economy by the demolition of Jerusalem suggests to His mind the end of the Christian economy by the dissolution of the world. These two events float before His mental vision till they seem to overlap each other; and, therefore, commentators find it difficult to trace with exactitude the line of demarcation between them. It is a long recognised characteristic of prophecy that in it events hang in time as the worlds hang in space, which makes it extremely perplexing for the untrained eye to judge of their relative distances. Most commentators, however, agree that the words of the text refer to the final judgment; and to this momentous theme I now solicit your attention.

Three points:—I. The Judge. II. The Saved. III. The Lost.

I. THE CONDITION OF THE JUDGE.

1. The Judge is the *Son of Man*. "God hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." His fitness to judge the world is based, not on His divinity, but on His humanity. "He will judge the world by that Man whom He hath ordained." This is the fundamental principle of the administration of justice in the British realm, and is the foundation of the jury system—man must be judged by his own compeers.

2. The Judge will appear in *glory*. The first time He came, He came in the garb of His humiliation. "He made Himself of no reputation." He had great reputation in eternity, His fame was blazoned upon every star. But when He came into our world, He travelled beyond the boundaries of His renown. True, He was a prince still, but a prince in disguise, royalty in rags. Or take the marginal reading—"He emptied Himself." Strange language to be used in such a connection: the Son of God coming empty into our world! His First Advent, therefore, was in shame; but His Second will be in glory; and it is only becoming that the magnificence of the second should be a recompense for the dishonour of the first.

And not only He came to the world in shame, but He also left it in shame. He was hung on the tree of ignominy, He made His grave with the wicked. He departed this life in deep dis-

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d. grace, but He will return in ineffable glory. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin." This implies that He came the first time under sin, "bearing the sins of many." Accordingly, He had "neither form nor comeliness that we should desire Him." The ploughers ploughed His back and made their furrows long. But He will "appear the second time without sin," the burden being cast down, and His frame having recovered its elasticity. He will appear in glory, surrounded by the dazzling sheen of the Divine Shekinah. St. Paul in one of his Epistles compares the wreaths of glory to flames of fire.

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3. He will be attended by a grand *escort*—"and all the holy angels with Him." Only on two occasions do we read of all the angels paying a simultaneous visit to our earth. The first occasion was the First Advent—Jesus coming to save. "And when God bringeth in the first begotten into the world, He saith, Let all the angels of God worship Him." Not one or two, but all. "The angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them." "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God." The scintillations of their glittering pinions flashed light over all the meadow. The next occasion when heaven will be again vacated by all the angels will be the Second Advent—Jesus coming to judge. "And all the holy angels with Him." What must be the dazzle of their holiness!

In the Apocalypse St. John beheld an angel descend from heaven, "and the earth was lightened with his glory;" the flight of one angel athwart the firmament illumined the globe like a lightning flash. The prophet Ezekiel saw another angel, "and the earth shined with his glory;" his brightness was seven times the brightness of day. And if the brightness of one be so great, what must be the glory scattered from the wings of ten thousand times ten thousand! In the presence of such a flood of radiance "the sun will be darkened and the moon turned into blood."

4. Amid this blaze of triumph, the Son of Man "will sit upon the *Throne of His glory*." Under the weight of grandeur here described language groans, hence the frequent repetition of the word "glory." The Lord Jesus now sits upon the Throne of Grace to dispense pardon to all sincere suppliants. Presently He will sit upon the Throne of Glory, not to dispense pardon, but to execute judgment. May it be ours to see Him on the Throne of Grace, before we behold Him on the Throne of Glory! This Throne is described elsewhere as "great and white"—great to denote its majesty, white to denote its purity. No stain shall ever dim the glow of its marble. Earthly thrones are by no means white; the best of them show the dark blots of injustice and the red spots of persecution. No vigilance will ever secure perfect righteousness in the administration of this world's affairs—drops of blood will often splash on the whitest thrones of earth. But here is a Throne without

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5. No sooner is He seated than "all the nations of the earth are gathered before Him." "We who shall be alive shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Him in the air." The original omits the definite article before clouds—not in "the clouds" but in "clouds." We shall be caught up in clouds, soaring thick like flocks of birds. But that is not all; the dead also shall be there, the dead of all the generations of mankind, not one wanting. "Every eye shall see Him." Myriads have not seen Him yet; but God intends that every soul in His wide universe shall see His Son and gaze in His holy face. "Death and Hades shall give up the dead which are in them." Departed souls will be returning to earth, as doves to their windows, to be reunited to their bodies. There will be bustle and excitement throughout the vast expanse of creation, through this world and the next; bustle in the grave, wild excitement in hell; the whole creation eagerly pressing to the great assize! Picture the uncounted millions of earth of every clime and age, all the family of Adam without one missing, meeting for once in a vast congregation which no man can number, meeting once having never met before, meeting once never to meet again. "All the holy angels" face to face with "all the nations of the earth!" The Christian dispensation is a dispensation of gathering—of gathering all things together in Christ to be saved; and, failing that, of gathering all

things together before Christ to be judged. What an awful gathering! What a solemn concourse! "And He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left."

II. THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

I. Notice the *ground* of their blessedness as here set forth—deeds of kindness to men in want and distress. Justification is by faith, but judgment is by works. In other words, faith it is that makes our persons acceptable, but works it is that make our lives acceptable. The Judgment will go according to our serviceableness or otherwise. "Every man according to his works, whether they be good or evil." We are apt to imagine that true religion consists in extraordinary frames of mind, ecstatic moods. It consists in nothing of the kind, but in the faithful discharge, in the spirit of Christ, of the human duties of our every-day existence. Many are the legends concerning the Quest of the Holy Grail, the traditional Cup of Healing from which the Saviour drank the sacramental wine the night He was betrayed. But the prettiest of them all, prettiest because truest, is that which represents a bold knight of the Round Table travelling far over mountains and through deserts in search of the mysterious Grail. His protracted and exhaustive journeys, however, turned out fruitless. At length, wan in countenance, depressed in spirit, and fatigued

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in body, he resolved to return to Arthur's Hall, a sadder but not a wiser man. However, as he was nearing the gate of Camelot, he saw a poor man writhing in the ditch, evidently in the last agonies of death. Moved with compassion, the sworn defender of the rights of the poor and the weak dismounted from his steed, sought a cup of water, and handed it to the suffering man; when lo! the cup glowed as if it were a thing alive, flamed as if it were the sapphire of the New Jerusalem. The knight at last saw the Holy Grail, not, however, in traversing barren wildernesses or performing deeds of prowess, but in succouring the poor and forlorn. "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of these little ones, ye have done it unto me." "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." A little gift to a little one—it will be honourably mentioned in the Judgment Day.

2. The *nature* of their blessedness. "Come, ye blessed of my Father." Doubtless this blessedness consists chiefly in the spiritual temper of the soul. "Heaven is principle," said Confucius. "A good man shall be satisfied from himself." "The water that I give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life"—*leaping up*. There is such force in the spring that its water leaps up. This blessedness even now makes the believer dance in anticipation. "Wherein ye rejoice greatly"—*exult, leap, dance*. Dancing religion, I know, is

unfashionable, but it is not unscriptural. David danced before the ark of the Lord: his wife charged him with madness, whereas she ought to have charged him with gladness. David was not a mad-man, but a glad-man. "I can speak religion," said an old saint, "I can sing religion, I can dance religion." "Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"—a joy glorified, a joy made transparent with Divine lustre, a joy shining like rubies in the sun. And if the joy here be so glorious, what will it be yonder when purified from all the dross of sin? "To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day."

These words reveal to us two features in the future state of believers. They shall "rest," the word signifying relaxation of the muscles. In this life we are all screwed up to our highest tension, every faculty is strained to its utmost capability. Welcome, therefore, shall be the season of relaxation, when we shall unbend the bow and enter upon our holiday. But in addition to rest there will be glory—"when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." Their persons will be glistening with the reflection of the Divine brilliance. "The glory which Thou hast given me I have given them:" that is one kind of glory, a glory which the Saviour will communicate to His people, a glory which He intends to share with us. "Father, I will that they also,

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whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me : ” that is another kind of glory, a glory which He cannot share, but which He can show. He will impart all the glory He can ; and what He cannot impart He will exhibit. “ Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. ” Did one of the saints made perfect return to earth to-night, his appearance in the sky would be like the rising of the sun as beheld from the top of Snowdon—grand, glorious, poetic.

3. The *consummation* of their blessedness. “ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world. ” “ Come ”—a sweet word, full of encouragement and cheer. “ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden ”—the same “ come ” that is used in the text. “ Come, inherit the Kingdom. ” Now believers are heirs under age ; then they shall attain their majority, and enter upon the possession of their heritage. “ We are begotten to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. ” Here is presented to us a double keeping. First, we are kept by the power of God, carefully guarded as if in a fort against mishap ; we are “ garrisoned ” by the Divine protection. But not only are we kept for the inheritance, but the inheritance is kept for us. What sort of inheritance is it ? “ Incorruptible ”—it will not originate corruption. “ Undefiled ”—it

will not contract corruption. "Unfading"—all the trees are evergreen. "Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you;" hence I infer that the human is the dominant type of the universe, visible and invisible. Even the eternal world is prepared for man, fashioned on the human model. "He gave all judgment to Jesus Christ, because He is the Son of Man."

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED.

I. They are here blamed for works of *omission*, for their habitual neglect of opportunities to show kindness to their fellow-men. They did a great many other things; but, lacking deeds of benevolence, they fail to come up to the standard of judgment. They were eloquent preachers—prophesying in His name; famous miracle-mongers—in His name doing many wonderful works; originators of grand schemes of social improvements—in His name casting out devils. But lacking genuine philanthropy, the philanthropy which relieves the trivial ills of the world, they are sternly repudiated by the Judge. Their acquittal or condemnation will be determined according to their relation, friendly or inimical, to Him in His human brethren. But that does not hold true of the heathen nations of the earth, you say. Perhaps not; but it holds true of you. "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;" and as many as have sinned under the Gospel shall be tried by the Gospel. In our country two kinds of measures are recognised—the common and the impe-

rial. The customs of the material is always in the Divine different spirit pagan pop common st advantages law, they p by the imp Gospel. V before we "And tha prepared m will, shall b knew not, shall be bea

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rial. The common varies according to the prevailing customs of different neighbourhoods; but the imperial is always and everywhere one and the same. Thus in the Divine administration of the universe there are different standards, the common and imperial. The pagan populations of the earth shall be tried by the common standard, in strict accord with the lights and advantages they respectively enjoy. Sinning without law, they perish without law. But we shall be tried by the imperial standard, the standard set up in the Gospel. We had better measure ourselves by it now, before we be measured by it in the Day of Doom. "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

2. Notice also the *nature* of their punishment. "Ye cursed." Not cursed of the Father, but cursed in and of themselves. Their heaviest calamity is their own sinful depraved nature. Every man carries within him the materials of his own heaven or hell; the fire which will burn you must find its fuel in your own nature.

"The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

This you have to dread above all things—the hell which you carry in your own bosom. Peradventure there is a material hell, a hell of wind and fire; but, if there be, it is not to be compared in the anguish of its terror with the hell you carry in your own heart.

The great peril of the earth lies in the fires smouldering at her core. The winds may beat upon her from without, and the rains descend, and the thunders roll, and the lightnings flash, yet the earth will remain steadfast and immovable, and wheel in her orbit with her usual composure. Its great danger lies in the central fires within it, which occasionally make continents quake, and which rive the sides of the everlasting rocks, sometimes threatening to burst the sides of the planet. And your greatest danger lies in your own heart, latent for a season perhaps, but when the smallest spark will alight upon it, there will ensue a terrible explosion. Now and again, in the silence of your solitude, you hear the muffled rumble of suppressed thunder deep down at the foundation of your being; ever and anon you are obliged to heave awful sighs; and if you only narrowly watch yourselves you will frequently discover your spirits quailing with fear. "Conscience makes cowards of us all." "For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

3. But in the Judgment Day the sufferings of the wicked will reach their terrible *consummation*. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." The internal state will find a corresponding external condition. Some people deny the material fire; but on any supposition the agony is fearfully, incomprehensibly

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intense. Hell on any hypothesis is a horrible place, so horrible that it signifies but little whether it be material or spiritual or both. "Prepared for the devil and his angels." Heaven is prepared for man, fashioned with a view to man's comfort and progress. But hell is built on a different plan—man will for ever feel out of place there; hence uneasiness, pain, mortification. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." It is foreign to my purpose to-day to discuss the problem of the duration of punishment; but this I will venture to say—punishment will last as long as you sin. The extinction of hell-fire will be simultaneous with the extirpation of hell-sin—not a moment sooner, not a moment later. Do not, therefore, delude yourselves with the infinite mercifulness of God. He is merciful, I know, merciful enough to save all the damned. But their salvation is possible only on two conditions: that a sacrifice has been or will be offered for their sins, and that they cease from their sins—two conditions very problematical indeed. Hell will burn as long as man will sin—the eternity or non-eternity of punishment will depend on the eternity or non-eternity of sin. If you want to escape hell, flee from sin. But men differ in their opinions on this subject, you say; what are we to believe? Well, if we differ upon what you are to believe on this particular article, we all agree about what you are to do—feed the hungry, clothe the naked, rescue the dissolute. By so doing you will secure the favour of the Judge. Trouble not yourselves overmuch about the metaphysics of

theology; have faith in goodness, and let your faith show itself in works. The only way to serve God is to help man. It is not one way among many, it is the only way. If you do not serve man you do not worship God. However fervent your prayers, however hearty your singing, however devout your deportment, if you are not kind and helpful to your fellow-men, you do not render God service. To you the Judge will say in the last day—"I know you not; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." On the other hand, if, in the name of a disciple, you help your fellow-men; if you speak words of gentleness to the downcast, and of encouragement to the desponding, and of purity to the polluted; if you allay suffering and assuage grief, you render God true and genuine and acceptable service, and you will be ranked among the righteous in that day.

"Abou Ben Adhem—may his tribe increase!
 Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
 And saw amid the moonlight in the room,
 Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
 An angel writing in a book of gold;
 Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
 And to the vision in the room he said,
 'What writest thou?' The vision raised its head,
 And with a voice made of all sweet accord,
 Replied, 'The names of them that love the Lord.'
 'And is mine one?' asked Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
 Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
 But cheerily still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,
 Write me as one who loves his fellow-men.'
 The angel wrote and vanished. The next night
 He came again with a great wakening light;
 He showed the names whom love of God had blest,
 And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

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XVII

The Great Commission.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,” &c.—ST. MATT. xxviii. 18-20, and ST. MARK xvi. 15.

SOME time before His death the Saviour made an appointment with His disciples to meet them after His death. The place was a mountain in Galilee; the time is not specified in the history, but was well known to the disciples. The tragic events of the Crucifixion had, however, made them forgetful of the appointment; and not till they were reminded of it by the angel did they give it the attention it deserved. “He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him.” This announcement spread with great rapidity among the disciples in all parts of the country, and on the appointed day, and in the appointed place, more than five hundred brethren were gathered together. A strange appointment to make, a stranger appointment to keep! And in this interview He delivered the commission which I have read as a text, a commission to go to the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. The subject is—*The Great Commission.*

I. "Go ye and preach:" this teaches us the NATURE of the Christian ministry. This word "preach" is a great word under the Christian Dispensation. What, then, does it imply?

1. It implies *enlightening* the intellect. "A bishop must be apt to teach." Jesus Christ "taught the people." Not He amused them or entertained them or affrighted them, but He "taught" them. Men's understandings are darkened; and it is a prime duty of the preacher to dissipate the darkness. No ministry answers the true purpose of a ministry if it does not furnish the mind with solid, substantial instruction. Sermons besprinkled with a few touching anecdotes may sensibly affect the animal nature, but they do not permanently edify the "inner man"—they flare, but they neither illuminate nor burn.

2. It also implies to *warm* the affections. This constitutes the main difference between a sermon and an essay. An essay is only intended to shed light on the subject; but a sermon is intended both to shed light on the subject and to engender heat in the heart. The angel in the vision took a "coal of fire" from off the altar, and with it touched the lips of the prophet—the angel wanted to set the prophet on fire. And certainly the Christian minister should be on fire, and should endeavour to kindle fire in others. The successful preachers have always been men noted for their fire. Baxter's biographer says that Baxter would set the world on fire whilst others were lighting a match. He preached

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It is said of Hugh Blair, the author of the lectures on “*Bélles Lettres*,” that he took so much pains to embellish his thoughts that they lost all their heat before they left his lips. But John Angell James says somewhere that even Blair grew a little warm as he approached the Cross, which, however, he too seldom did in his published discourses. Preachers should sow light and engender heat, teach knowledge and produce warmth. Sermons are essays all ablaze, illuminating and enlivening.

3. It further implies to *train* the life. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” The ultimate purpose of the Gospel is not simply to teach men to understand and to feel, but also to do. Christianity is not speculation or emotion, but life: so declare the authors. Better still did they say: it was all three together—speculation, emotion, and life. The preacher should denounce sin and enforce virtue. He should brandish his sword and strike every living thing that lifts itself against the knowledge of God. It is an exceedingly easy task to strike an obsolete sin, to smite a dead lion; it is quite another thing, and much more difficult, to resist a present sin, to fight a living lion. For instance, in bygone years when slavery was rife in America, few ministers, to their shame be it said, were courageous enough to raise their voices against it. Now that it is dead, there is not a preacher in the land but thinks it his duty to give it an occasional

blow. But that is only killing the dead lion. The ambassadors of Jesus Christ, however, should be ashamed of such cowardice. They ought to defy the living troops of the Prince of Darkness, to direct their keenest shafts against present sins, to attempt to kill the living lions which go about devouring, ruining, devastating our own country and our own century. Hence it was customary among the great preachers to conclude their sermons with applications. This was a characteristic feature of the great Methodist Revivalists in England and Wales. They did not discover any new truths; they have not left their mark on the history of theology; they were illustrious not for their power of expounding truth, but for their power of applying it. Whitfield and Wesley were great preachers, not great theologians. The Apostles, Paul and John, were remarkable for their power to reveal truth; the Reformers, Luther and Calvin, were remarkable for their power to expound truth; but the Methodist Revivalists, Whitfield and Wesley in England, and Harris and Rowlands in Wales, were remarkable for their power to enforce truth. The age of the Apostles was the age of revelation; the age of the Protestant Reformers was the age of exposition; but the age of the Methodist Revivalists was the age of application.

II. "Go ye and preach the Gospel:" this teaches us the SUBJECT of the Christian ministry.

1. The *Gospel* is the great theme, for in the Gospel is made fully known to us God's purposes respecting

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sinners. In the Gospel is revealed to us the Divine Heart. In Nature we behold the Divine Hand. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His *handy* work." "I consider the heavens, the work of Thy *fingers*." Belshazzar in the feast saw a hand writing on the wall, a strange hand, a detached hand, a hand from eternity—nothing but a hand. In like manner, when we look upon Nature we behold writing upon its walls a Hand, a strange Hand, a strong Hand, a cunning Hand, a Divine Hand—still nothing but a Hand. In Judaism again we behold the Divine Back. "And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by; and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my *back parts*; but my face shall not be seen." God showed His Back to the children of Israel, a strong Back, a broad Back, upon which He carried them for forty years long; but still only His Back. But in the Gospel He reveals His Face, and in His Face His Heart. "He shineth into our hearts in the *face* of Jesus Christ." "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God also." His Hand in Nature, His Back in Judaism, His Face in the Gospel: He has thus turned Himself completely round in the sight of humanity and revealed His whole Being.

2. Not the Gospel in parts, but the Gospel as a *whole*. The Apostle Paul declared unto the Ephesians the "*whole* counsel" of God. During his three years' ministry in that city he expounded the Gospel in its completeness. This does not mean that

every truth is to receive equal prominence—proportion must be observed in theology as in architecture. Some truths are to be always urged upon the attention of the hearers, others only occasionally—they act upon the Church as physic does upon the constitution. Truths touching Church government and Church discipline are to be expounded and vindicated in special emergencies. The doctrines concerning the Divine decrees are to be declared only occasionally, when there is a special danger of men derogating from the free grace of God. These are to act upon the Church like medicine upon the body, fortifying it in grace and driving out spiritual maladies. But men do not live upon such doctrines—bread, not physic, is the staff of life. “And the bread of God is He who cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world.” Jesus Christ is the spiritual sustenance of the Church; He, therefore, should be the centre of every sermon; and if He be not in the text, it is worth our while to go through hedges and over ditches to find Him.

Of course, here, as in everything else, judgment must have its perfect work. The faithful and wise minister “rightly divides the word of truth.” He divides it—breaks it up into small digestible portions. To fling a bulky truth before men, without explaining it as they are able to understand, is labour thrown away. To place a loaf on a table surrounded with infants is not enough—they would starve with the loaf before their eyes. If it is to nourish them, it must be cut and rightly distributed. In like manner,

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the Gospel truth must be wisely divided, that men may eat thereof and live. Not only Christ came down from heaven as the Bread of God, but on Calvary the Bread was broken.

3. We are to preach the Gospel, the whole Gospel, and *nothing but* the Gospel. All attempts to associate human speculations with it must be sternly resisted. Repeated efforts were made in the first centuries to effect a compromise between it and heathenism. The Romans were prepared to assign Christ a place in the Pantheon, to acknowledge Him as a god—one among many. But the proposal was indignantly rejected—Christ could not give His presence in any heathen temple, except on the sole condition that He had it all to Himself. A compact between Christ and Jupiter was an impossibility. In the nineteenth century, on the other hand, ingenious efforts are being made to effect a compromise between Christianity and philosophy—that is the essence of Christian Rationalism. The New Testament must abjure its supernaturalism, and philosophy will, on its part, make liberal concessions in return. But I seriously protest against any such scheme. As no compact could be effected between Christ and Jupiter, so He will abate none of His claims in favour of Plato. Christianity, like the Saviour's coat, is seamless and all of a piece; but as exhibited in the Rationalistic writings of the day, it is full of seams, and, like Joseph's coat, of many colours.

I for one enter my most serious protest against this ruthless mutilation of the Gospel. A stained

window may attract greater notice and command louder admiration; but a plain window is best adapted for the manifold purposes of daily life. A sermon patched up of a little Scripture and much philosophic jargon, glossed over with dreamy sentimentalism, may elicit loud applause. But of this we are convinced—a plain sermon, containing sound evangelical doctrine, is the best adapted to save men and to satisfy their moral and spiritual cravings. A desire is manifested in many quarters to hide the Cross under gaudy garlands, gathered in the garden of human wisdom; but I see no reason why we should strive to make the Cross more ornamental than God made it. Why conceal it under a heap of roses? Rather let the Cross be seen, though every rose wither and die. The Roman Catholic missionaries to the far East, knowing the Cross to be a stumbling-block to the human mind, suppressed, it is said, all mention of it, and preached bare, dry, barren morality. That, I believe, to be also the drift of the teaching of some of the most eminent writers of the Broad Church party. Preach the truths in common between Christianity and other religions, say they, if you want to succeed. Nay, say I, rather preach the truths which are distinctive of Christianity, which differentiate it from all other religions; its strength lies not in the truths which it possesses in common with others, but in the truths which peculiarly belong to itself. "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Constantine the Great, on the eve of the memorable

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battle which was to decide the fate of the Roman Empire, saw in the heavens a fiery Cross, and heard a voice from above say to him—"By this conquer." That is the legend, and doubtless it embodies a valuable truth—if the Church is to conquer the hoary idolatries and shocking immoralities of the world, she must do it by the Cross. "By this conquer."

III. "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel:" this teaches us the AREA of the Christian ministry.

1. They were to preach the Gospel to the *Jews*. "Beginning at Jerusalem." And it is satisfactory to know that many believed, not only of the common people, but also of the priests. "And the Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient unto the faith." A little further on the figure is put down as myriads. "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (literally, myriads) of Jews there are which believe."

2. They were to preach it to the educated *Greeks and Romans*. No wider difference can well be conceived than between the unpolished Jews and these highly-civilised European nations. But the same Gospel that satisfied the moral and spiritual cravings of the former, satisfied the moral and spiritual cravings of the latter. And as the Gospel subdued the civilisation of the ancient world, so will it prove more than a match to the civilisation of the modern world. The title written over the Cross of Christ in Hebrew,

Greek, and Latin, had more than a superficial meaning—it was in a special sense prophetic of the future destiny of the religion He came to establish. “This is the King of the Jews.” “This is the King” in Hebrew, the language of the world’s religion and theology. “This is the King” in Greek, the language of the world’s philosophy and literature. “This is the King” in Latin, the language of the world’s politics and commerce. The hour is advancing with a steady though a slow step, when Jesus Christ will reign supreme in the theology, the philosophy, and the politics of the world, when He will be acknowledged King in the religion, the literature, and the commerce of the earth.

3. They were furthermore to preach it to the *barbarous* tribes afar off. Celsus, and contemporaneous scoffers generally, objected that the same religion would never meet the requirements of the high-bred Romans and of the swarthy savages of Africa—they looked upon a universal religion, equally adapted for the whole world, as a wild chimera of some overheated brain. But what says history? That Christianity suits the extreme of culture on the one hand, and the extreme of barbarism on the other. It is a religion for that part of humanity where the sage and the savage are one, for that region too deep for culture to improve, and too deep likewise for barbarism to utterly destroy. Europeans as a rule have blue eyes, and Africans as a rule have dark eyes. Physiologists might argue beforehand that the same sun would not suit such differently coloured eyes,

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that certain modifications in the light-rays would be absolutely necessary. But experience teaches that, notwithstanding the difference in the colour of the eyes, the same sun meets the requirements of the inhabitants of the two continents. And men might argue *a priori* that the same Gospel could not suit all nations alike, the civilised and the savage; but experience confutes this reasoning as it does many other reasonings besides—the same Christ wants all and is wanted by all. Religions of human invention are local and temporary—limited to times and places; but the Gospel is universal, above time and above place. Bread-corn will grow anywhere. Certain growths are exotics, thriving only within certain degrees of latitude; outside these they languish and die. But wheat is confined to no zone—it will grow, thrive, and ripen all the world over. And all religions of man's device are exotics, strictly confined within certain definite belts of the globe; but the Bread of Life acclimatises itself everywhere—it is needed everywhere, and it will grow everywhere.

The Saviour compares the "Kingdom of Heaven unto leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." Why did He mention "three measures"? Some answer that He meant to predict the spread of the Gospel over the three continents then known—Asia, Europe, and Africa. Others suppose that the three measures refer to the three sons of Noah, who severally populated the three continents—Shem populating Asia, Japheth Europe, and Ham Africa; and that the

Saviour wished to foretell the ultimate evangelisation of the whole human race. Others again perceive in the words a setting forth of the influence which the Gospel exerts over individuals, and see in the "three measures" a mystic allusion to the threefold nature of man—spirit, soul, and body. In these different views, however, there is a point of union. The three continents were populated respectively by the three sons of Noah—Shem, Japheth, and Ham. These three again represent the threefold nature of man—the spirit, soul, and body. In Shem you see the development and degradation of the spirit—Asia is the theatre upon which religion worked out its problems. In Japheth you see the development and degradation of the soul—Europe is the platform upon which intellect worked out its problems. In Ham again you see the reign and degradation of the passions—Africa is the field in which the body worked out its problems, and finally exhausted itself in abominable lusts. Asia had to solve the religious problems of the world; Europe had to grapple with its intellectual problems; and Africa demonstrates to what length the physical appetences may rush, and to what ignominious depths the race is capable of sinking in its mad pursuit after sinful indulgences.

But take what view you please, and it answers my purpose. Christianity is to subdue the spirit of man, the religious sentiment in you and in me—it is to pervade Asia, overturn its colossal idolatries, and bring the religion of Shem into its sweet captivity. It is to subdue the soul of man, the intellectual factor in you and in me—it is to permeate all

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Europe, humble our unsanctified reason, and bring us low to the foot of the Cross. We behold a great deal of unsanctified intellect in England at the present day; but Divine Grace will, leaven it by and by—the soul will be subdued to the Saviour. We read in the Bible of cherubim and seraphim. The seraphim are represented as a flame of fire, the cherubim as being full of eyes; the seraphim have more heart, the cherubim more intellect; the seraphim more love, the cherubim more knowledge. In the seraphim I behold the religious sentiment brought in subjection to the throne—in them I see the children of Shem, all heart, all fire, all flame. In the cherubim I behold the intellect brought into the captivity of the Gospel—in them I see the proud children of Japheth, all intellect, all knowledge, all eyes. Is that all? No; the Gospel not only sanctifies the spirit and claims all Asia to itself. It not only sanctifies the reason and claims all Europe to itself. But it sanctifies the body likewise, and claims all Africa to itself. The Gospel aims at spreading itself throughout the world.

IV. “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” This teaches us the *intensiveness* of the Gospel, the particular care it bestows upon individuals.

1. The Gospel is to be preached to *every man*. As the phrase “all the world” teaches its broad universality, so the phrase “every creature” teaches its minute individuality. It is to be preached to all, and offered to each. And, perhaps, the ministry of the

nineteenth century fails in nothing more than in personal dealing with individuals. Jesus Christ preached to individuals. Two of the most interesting chapters in the whole New Testament and most fraught with momentous truths—the third and fourth of John—were spoken to individuals. It would probably be a healthful exercise to modern ministers to preach occasionally to a congregation of one—it would strip our discourses of their elaborate showy trappings, and make us speak simply and naturally as men to men.

2. I am not sure but the words further imply that literally "*every creature*" will advantage by the propagation of the Gospel. When man fell, the lion and the tiger fell with him—human sin entailed untold misery on the irrational creation. To suppose man's sin brought death upon the brute animals is a mistake; science teaches us that death reigned in the animal creation thousands of years before man was created. The Scripture doctrine is that human sin brought death on the human race. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." "Death passed upon *all men*," but it had passed on all animals before. But though Adam's Fall is not the cause of death among the beasts of the field, yet it is the cause of much pain and wretchedness. Think what the domestic animals suffer because of human cruelty!

The Gospel, however, brings the animals "glad tidings of great joy." Into whatever country the Gospel is introduced, sooner or later it enacts laws for "the prevention of cruelty to animals." Into

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whatever family it enters, it ensures the kindlier treatment of all animals employed in the services of the household. "I would not give a fig," said Rowland Hill in his quaint fashion, "for that man's religion whose cats and dogs are not the better for it." "Are you converted?" asked a gentleman once of a cabman. "Ask my horse—he knows," was the strange reply; but though strange it was true. Before the man was converted he treated his horse harshly, lashed him unmercifully, exposed him cruelly to the cold winds, whilst he was drinking away his reason and his heart in the public-house. Since he is converted, he speaks to his horse more gently, uses the whip more sparingly, and is more careful that he be comfortably stabled. The horse knew that his driver had been made a new creature, because he received a new treatment. The Gospel alleviates the lot of every creature, and in proportion as it will be practised at home and disseminated abroad, will the curse of suffering be lifted from the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. Some theologians conjecture that many of the now carnivorous animals were graminivorous in the normal state of creation; that many of the beasts which now live by slaughter, lived in the world's pristine and unfallen condition by eating grass. Be that as it may, the Scriptures predict a time when another great change for the better will come over the animal creation—the carnivorous beasts will again become graminivorous. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little

child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." A marvellous change! But the language is metaphorical, you say. Perhaps; but metaphorical or literal, it pictures a marvellous improvement to be brought about by the Gospel of Christ.

3. Nay, more; it will lift the curse from the very *ground*. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; briars and thistles will it bring forth." Man's sin has impoverished the very soil on which he treads; and in proportion as man will recover his holiness will the ground recover its fertility. The best manure for the soil is—goodness in the hearts of its cultivators. A period of great fruitfulness is predicted, when a harvest of wheat will be gathered on the tops of the mountains. When? When holiness will be inscribed on the bridles of the horses. Christianity is the infallible panacea for all the maladies of the world, spiritual, intellectual, and physical. Many medicines are advertised in the present day, and each one is recommended as a cure for all the ills to which flesh is heir; and reading the advertisement columns of the newspapers, one wonders that there is any sickness, or death either, in the world. But I may say with confidence of the Gospel that it is the universal remedy—"it heals all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." Yea, it will also deliver the earth from its groanings and travail, and make it share in the joy of the children of God. Oh! glorious day, when will it come?