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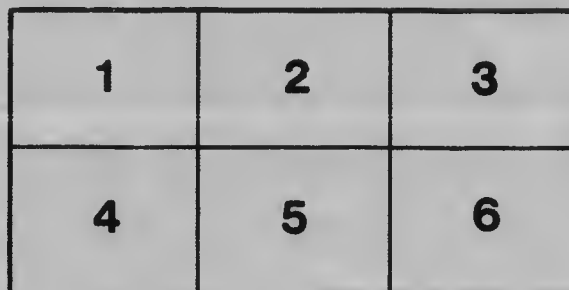
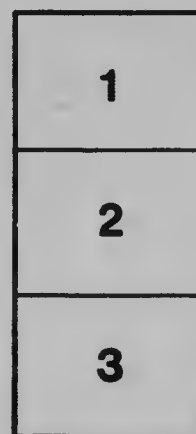
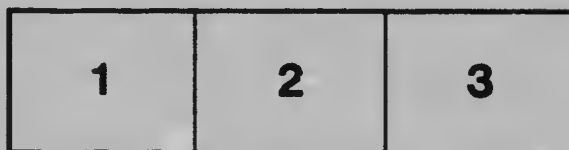
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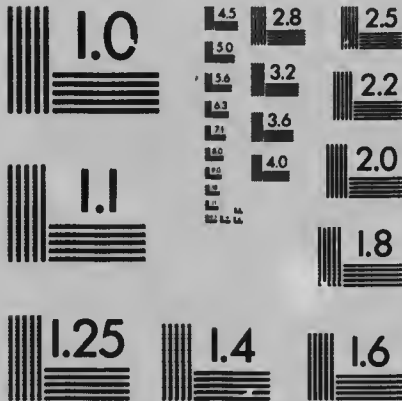
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J. PATERSON-SMYTH

B.D., LITT.D., D.C.L.

*Archdeacon of St. Andrew's, Montreal; Late Professor of Pastoral Theology,
University of Dublin*

AUTHOR OF "THE GOSPEL OF THE HEREAFTER," "HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE,
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I

A SYRIAN LOVE-STORY

THOUGHTS ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE

GENESIS xxiv.

OUR study brings us to-day to a Syrian love-story, telling how in the strange fashion of that olden time a young Syrian bride was wooed and won 4,000 years ago.

We have studied ¹ God's call to Abram and the faith which sent him out from home and kindred into an unknown life for the sake of God and duty.

Then we came to the sacrifice of Isaac, that pathetic scene on Mt. Moriah, where a father in his awful agony forced himself to offer up his only son for what he believed to be the will of God. Was ever such a scene in human history?—except the far greater scene on Mt. Calvary afterwards, where the Father of us

¹ This sermon was one of a series of studies in the Book of Genesis.

all gave up His only Son to die upon the Cross for us men and for our salvation.

I

Now we come to the next picture. Many things had happened. More than twenty years had elapsed. Isaac was now a full-grown man, and he and his father were alone in their desert home. For, one awful day when Abraham was away, it came to pass that Sarah died in Kirjath-Arba and Abraham came back to the encampment "to mourn and to weep for her." He of whom no weeping is recorded when he left his home, nor when he set out to offer up his son—the poor old man breaks down utterly now, mourning and weeping as he came back to his desolate home. No one any more to sympathize with him as she had done for fifty years in all his adventures and all his trials. No one any more to talk to about the old home in Ur, which they had left together in their young start in life long ago. And for Isaac, too, it was lonely, for he loved his mother dearly, and it took long to comfort him after that mother's death.

And so in the loneliness of the camp we see Abraham and his old steward closeted together planning about getting a wife for Isaac. It should have been easy enough.

Isaac was heir to a great estate. There were doubtless plenty of nice Hittite and Canaanite girls, daughters of Aner and Eschol and Mamre, the old chiefs of Canaan, who had been so friendly to the Hebrew—rich girls, too, who would bring flocks and herds and wealth and power and a valuable alliance in the new land. Yes, but the question of religion came in, and with Abraham that was the supreme thing. "Put thy hand under my thigh and swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and earth, that thou wilt not take a wife for my son of the daughters of Canaan."

Would all Christian parents of marriageable sons and daughters be so particular? Is it true that it is one of the last questions of some Christian parents to-day: "Will the girl that my boy is choosing help him upward to a noble life?" "Is the man who is marrying my daughter the man to help her closer to her God?"

Oh, don't you wish that question were more frequent? When a father sees in later years the rich, unhappy marriage of his girl who has "done well for herself"—when he sees his son, who was a good, religious boy in his youth, growing worldly and careless through the influence of a careless wife—don't you think he sometimes feels that it was a miserable bargain? Surely it is no cant, but

simple common sense to say that birth or position or beauty or wealth is but as dust in the balance compared with the aim that two young lives should start off hand-in-hand in the path that blesses all life about them and ends at last at the feet of their Lord.

At any rate Abraham thought so, and Abraham had a very fair insight as to what was of value in life. His son, who was the heir of the promises, must be married to a good woman, even if she were poor. So he committed the whole thing undoubtingly to the Lord. Doubtless he had prayed much about it, and now in quiet faith he trusted in God's care. "He shall send His angel before thee." Thus Eliezer started on his strange mission, strengthened by his master's faith.

II

The next scene is in far-off Mesopotamia. The old steward, with his train of camels and gifts, has travelled wearily on for many days; and now, in the sunset light before him, he sees at last the little town of Haran, the city of Nahor, and the girls of the town out laughing and chatting and gossiping by the wells, as is usual in the evenings, and filling their pitchers for the morning use. The sigh of the girls reminds him how critical and delicate is his

business. "How can I, a dull old man, choose the sort of wife that my young master needs? Is it to be one of the maidens yonder at the wells? Who is she, and where is she, that shall be the young mistress in our encampment and mother of the future people of God?" Don't you think he might well be puzzled and frightened at the task before him?

But a man could not have lived for all those years as Abraham's servant without learning something of Abraham's faith. Eliezer believed that the world did not go by chance, that God was interested in this expedition which he and his master had so often prayed about. And as he turns to prayer in his perplexity you get a reflection of the deep real religion that reigned in the camp at Beer-sheba. I wish we could all feel that our servants were thus influenced by their master's home. He is stopping the camels and watching the maidens, and silently the prayer is rising from his heart, "Lord, send me good speed this day." Surely a beautiful prayer for any day!

Notice the guidance he asks for in choosing the maiden. Not a mere arbitrary sign—that the girl should stumble at the well, or that she should wear a certain colour in her dress. No. "Lord, reveal to me the character of the girl. I want to find a generous, kindly,

courageous girl. Lord, bless my little experiment. Let it be the girl who replies to my request for water, 'Drink, and I will give to thy camels also.'"

Amongst those laughing girls on the way to the well comes one just at this moment, a very pretty girl, and evidently a bright, lively, pleasant girl, too. Her winsome appearance attracted the old steward. The Bible speaks very frankly of the attractiveness to men of women's beauty. The old steward was no exception. But it was only the first, the surface attraction. Eliezer was too wise to trust it far. He would like a beautiful woman to be mistress in the place of the very beautiful old chieftainess who was gone. But beauty was not everything. He must test her further.

I think it is Herbert Spencer who points out that the first beauty which attracts us in woman is beauty of face and form. Afterwards we notice her beauty of mind. Last of all on further acquaintance we find out beauty of character. But, as he truly says, their value is in the inverse order. Yes, we all feel that. As years go by, the pretty face may change and the cleverness and brightness may degenerate into shrewishness. But right on to old age the attraction of the beautiful soul remains, and the dear old face is growing dearer and lovelier even to the end,

Eliezer, then, is not content with prettiness and brightness. He tests her further, and his whole heart warms to her as with delight he sees his test fulfilled. With glad heart he gives thanks to God. In his modesty he thinks God did it for Abraham's sake only. I think the prayers of that simple, lovable, unselfish old man would have brought down a blessing if there were no Abraham at all.

III

Rebecca could not wait till he had done his thanksgiving. Just like a girl, she was off at once at a run to tell them at home: "Who do you think is coming? You told me about our rich cousins in Canaan! Well, their steward is outside. What do you think he has come for? To ask me to be the wife of his young chief. Look at the ear-rings and bracelets he has given me." And then she told the whole story. And her brother, Laban, came to invite the old man in. You know how covetous Laban was in the later story. I am amused to read here that it was when he saw the ear-rings and bracelets that he called to Eliezer, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord."

Then, can't you imagine what a night of talking they had, and how they sat up listening unwearied to the story of their kinsman's

greatness, and the errand on which he had sent his steward; and how the girl, with bright, eager eyes and parted lips, sat listening to this wonderful romance that had come suddenly into her life; and how they started off in state next morning; and how Eliezer beguiled the weary way for her with descriptions of the new home, and stories about Isaac, especially that story of the day when the boy had gone up Moriah, and loyally offered his young life as a sacrifice to God? How a generous girl's heart would throb at such a tale, especially about her future husband! What a strange, wonderful home she was going to, and how awfully real was God's presence there!

When and how did she meet her lover? What was he doing? Was it not a beautiful beginning for their life together, that the first sight she got of her future husband was when he was at his evening meditations in the field? When you remember what Isaac was, and the holy household he had been brought up in, you will easily believe that they were holy meditations about God, as well as, no doubt, the young bride, too, that God was bringing into his life. Eliezer must have told her a great deal about him. She seemed to know him and love him already; and as she saw the young man crossing the fields to meet her,

and the steward whispered, "It is my young master," she alighted down from the camel, and he turned straight from his thoughts of God to his thoughts of her, or rather he mingled his thoughts of God with his thoughts of her—the most fitting attitude surely in which any man could meet his bride.

IV

I do not forget that this married life did not end as beautifully as it began. Thereby hangs another and different lesson. But it does not affect the lesson brought before us here, the beauty of a religious home life. Here there are two old men, master and servant, living together in God's presence, seeking together for God's guidance, desiring together, above all things, in the young mistress that was to be, that she should be one approved of God. Then the son, who had been brought up in that practical religion, not of religious talk, but of religious heroism and self-sacrifice, whose religion was so much a part of his life that even on the day that he was expecting his bride he did not miss out his devotions and meditation before God. Blessed is the home where religion is thus real. Blessed is the bride who goes to such a home.

It is the fashion of the world now to make

light of this. The girl brought up on the fashionable novel does not include religion in her ideal of the husband who is to come. Her hero is just a handsome, generous, good-natured fellow who usually thinks it rather a bother to go to church, or goes in laughing compliance with the wishes of his lady-love—not a bad sort of fellow at all, but certainly not a religious man in any real sense. He is a very usual type, and so is she. They are the type from which come the ordinary careless home and the children following in the parents' footsteps.

v

Young men and maidens whose minds turn lightly to thoughts of love and marriage, believe me it will not dim the beauty of your day-dreams if you should take them more seriously. True love and true marriage are serious and solemn and beautiful things. They are among the best of the good gifts of God. To take them lightly is dishonouring to Him and disastrous to yourselves. For it is thus that men and women fail to attain the best.

There are marriages and marriages. There are many which are sad failures, where in a few years the high hopes and enthusiasms of the wedding day have faded into the dullness of a married life flat, stale, and unprofitable.

And there are many, thank God, in which the two remain lovers all their lives long.

But for all that, it is not true that "marriage is a lottery." For there are reasons for this difference. True love goes a long way. But it does not go all the way. You need religion, you need high ideals, you need God. When two young people not only love each other truly, but are also hand-in-hand seeking God's best together, there and there only is the certainty of a happy marriage.

So solemn and beautiful is this union of hearts that I should advise every young couple to make the month before marriage a time of thought and resolve and prayer, just as I should advise a young student for the month before his ordination. You will be none the less happy or light-hearted for taking it thus seriously.

Resolve to be very careful for each other's lives. Marriage is the closest tie on earth, and your influence on each other will be strong and deep. Neither of you can "live unto himself." A man is taking a woman's life into his hands, a woman is taking a man's life into her hands. Neither can grow a little better or worse without influencing the other. What a poor thing to have to say in five years' time, "The one that I love best is in some degree worse for having married me." What

a happy thing to be able to say, "Thank God, we are still walking hand-in-hand on the path that leads up to Jesus Christ."

VI

Let me speak also to older people. My brethren, you who have homes of your own, with wife or child or friend to be influenced thereby, I beseech you go back for your model to this old-world home in Canaan in spite of its faults. Resolve this day, God helping you, that family prayer shall begin, that servants and children shall see that with all your faults you are really honestly caring to live for God. Let there be an effort after a holy home, and be together in that effort, husband and wife. Help each other, pray for each other. There is no such union of hearts as in that home where husband and wife are each thinking of the other's spiritual good and asking for it from God as the highest boon on earth. And I do not believe that the children brought up in that home can ever finally go wrong. Even through many sins and falls the holy memory of that dear old home goes with them, a continual magnet to draw them back to God. Fathers and mothers with homes, young men and maidens who hope to make homes, see to it that you resolve to make them such homes as that.

II

DAVID AND JONATHAN

A SERMON ON FRIENDSHIP

1 SAMUEL xviii. 1

I

THERE is a border-line between boyhood and manhood, between girlhood and womanhood, that young people must all pass one day, and we know that they sometimes look back regretfully over that line. David passed it that day on the battlefield of Elah, the day when he fought Goliath. On that day he made the acquaintance of the king, he was received into the palace, and the old life of the shepherd boy was over for ever.

On that day, too, he made the acquaintance of Jonathan. You remember the scene. The blustering giant, the frightened Israelites, the moody, despondent king. Saul had lost heart, lost trust in God. He would not fight the giant, and probably would not let any one

else fight him. Perhaps the earlier stages of that half-insane gloom and passion of his later life had come on him. Perhaps that is why we see beside him, for the first time, in his tent the young Prince Jonathan, who all through the after story is ever by his side till they both lie dead together on the field of Gilboa. Perhaps that, too, was why he would not let Jonathan fight the giant. Jonathan had already won his spurs in that daring expedition (chap. xiv.) when he and his young armour-bearer alone climbed the enemy's fort and left twenty dead Philistines lying "within half a furrow's length in an acre of land." He was a famous warrior like the Black Prince in English history. I fancy that the morbid despondency of the king made him afraid to let Jonathan go, and that Jonathan had to stand idly by, chafing and longing fiercely for some champion to wipe out the disgrace from Israel.

I picture him to myself thus chafing when the groups outside began to talk excitedly, and the shepherd lad was brought to the king's tent. At once the prince's attention is fixed on him. This lad actually believes in God's close presence. He is actually going to fight the giant! You can imagine how Jonathan listened, how he watched the fight, how his heart swelled within him at the

shout of the people when the huge Philistine lay dead upon the ground. Don't you think there was something very fine in that young warrior rejoicing that another should do the deed which he himself must not do? It is only great souls who can feel like that. And then when David came back with Goliath's head, and he heard his simple, modest replies to the king, the charm deepened. Further talk that evening showed him more of the lad's beautiful nature, until we read "the soul of Jonathan was knit unto the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul."

II

This is the beginning of one of the most beautiful friendships in history. I don't know why some friendships are sudden like that. There was much to attract these two to each other: they were both young—most of our friendships are made when we are young; both a bit lonely at home; both brave; both modest; and, best of all, both truly religious. I don't believe the truest, highest friendships are ever to be had without God in them.

There was also in these two another element in great friendships. They were each great-minded enough to love and admire the superiority of the other. Poor mean creatures that

like to belittle and detract from men greater than themselves can never make a deep friendship. David of course knew of Jonathan's daring deeds. Jonathan had looked now on a more daring deed than his own. And they could each admire and look up to the other. Nay, I think they could do more. They could each idealize the other and see him better than he was. I am sure Jonathan thought more of David than he deserved. And so did David of Jonathan. It is so with all beautiful friendships. People say that love is blind. Yes, thank God, in that sense it is. And it is good for us. There are some of us who feel honestly ashamed at times as we see what our dearest think of us. We know it is not deserved. We feel at times inclined to undeceive them. Better not. The best thing is not to break down their ideals, but to try for very shame's sake to be what they think we are.

Men and women, seek the gift of deep, true friendship in your lives; I sometimes think that we are getting too busy and too fussy now for deep, true friendships. We make many acquaintances—nice people whom we nod to in the street and ask to gatherings at our homes—many acquaintances; but I don't think so many friends as people in quieter ages of the world made—the sort of friends

who have the key to that little side door in our heart that admits into the secret rooms of life.

And seek friends that you can admire and look up to. Not the poor sort that flatter you and degrade you. Seek friends nobler than yourself, who will help to keep you up to what is honourable and good, who will not hesitate to speak to you straight when you are in fault. What better proof of friendship can there be than that? Especially try to get friends religious in the true sense, not goody-goody talkers about religion. Get God into your friendships if you can, that they may last for ever.

III

That is the first scene in this friendship. The battlefield of Elah. For three years they lived in happy comradeship, in court and camp; then came a change. The next scene is three years later in the king's dining-hall (1 Sam. xx. 24, etc.). King Saul is at the table moody and distraught. Abner is beside him, the captain of the host; Prince Jonathan is opposite, anxiously watching the face of his father as the gloom deepens on it. And it is easy to see there is constraint and embarrassment on them all. David's place is empty.

The meaning is this. For some time past there has been trouble in the air; David and Jonathan had had many months of companionship, but it would seem as if the end were near. David had risen very high and very fast since the victory over Goliath. In a few years he had won the king's favour, the friendship of Jonathan, the hand of the Princess Michal, the love and the enthusiasm of the people. "All Israel loved him, and he was greatly set by." A high place indeed for the poor shepherd lad. But high places are dangerous places. Kings whose power rests on military success cannot safely have popular favourites too near to the throne. So Saul became jealous. The trouble began with the tactless cry of the maidens, "Saul hath slain his thousands, but David his ten thousands." Saul became fiercely angry, then he became suspicious. Is this the rival threatened by Samuel? What can he have more but the kingdom? One day he flung a javelin at him. Another day he conspired to murder him. And every failure made him more determined, till at last he spoke openly of killing him. So David had to hide.

For two days past the king with irritation has marked his vacant place. Now the evil spirit of rage is rising, and he turns fiercely to David's friend. "Why cometh not the son of Jesse to meat?" Jonathan explained.

The king grew fiercer, and spoke cruelly. Then Jonathan stood up in defence of his friend. Eagerly he pleaded for him. Boldly he recounted his good deeds. Fearlessly he challenged the justice of the king in ill-treating a man who had done no wrong. His answer was the spear of the king flung at him, and a coarse brutal gibe about some shame of his mother, that we don't know of. "Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger." But before he left Saul launched his parting taunt. "As long as the son of Jesse liveth on the ground thou shalt never be established in thy kingdom." Ah! it was a black, bitter day for Jonathan—the spear, the coarse taunt about his mother, but deeper than all, the clear conviction that he and his friend must say good-bye for ever.

I wonder if there is any finer character in history than this princely friend of David. What a great King of Israel he would have made, if God had not needed him for greater things in the Unseen Land! See him not merely standing up for his absent friend at the risk of his life, but actually consenting to be deprived of the kingdom: "Thou shalt be king, and I shall be next unto thee" (1 Sam. xxiii. 17).

All that night he had to brace himself for the parting, and next morning he went out

to shoot the arrows (xx. 35), the prearranged signal to David that he should flee the court. It is a touching picture. Only two verses (vv. 41, 42) record the keen, agonized parting, how "they kissed one another, and wept with one another, and David exceeded." "Then David arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city." So they parted—to meet no more on earth except for one brief stolen interview in the after years (chap. xxiii. 16, etc.).

IV

Again the scene changes. Five years later. It is midnight in the forest of Ziph. David is a hunted outlaw with a price upon his head. And through the trees in the midnight Jonathan is stealing up to his friend from the camp of the king. For what? To "strengthen his hands in God." Is not that a beautiful office to do for one's friend? And it is only friends like Jonathan that can really do it. Ever since the "Day of the Arrows" they have been in opposite camps. David an outlaw fleeing for his life, Jonathan in the camp of the king, who was pursuing him. And yet as you read the story you feel that Jonathan was right, and also that David saw that he was right. Stronger than these ties of attachment to his friend were the ties of duty, of

sonship, of loyalty to the king, of care for that poor, passionate, half-mad father whom he dares not leave. It was bitterly hard. Yes. But it was right. And Jonathan elected to do the right at any cost. His father might sneer at him, gibe at him about his mother, torture him about his friend—never mind. His duty was there. And both he and David knew it.

Thank God for the friendships that are kept thus pure and high, and even for friend or lover will not swerve from the right. Remember you owe it to your friend to keep for him always your best self. Not even for his sake must you lower your ideals. Nay, all the more for his sake you must keep them high. One reads sometimes of a friend doing a mean thing to help his friend, or of a girl leaving imperative home duties rather than wait a year longer, to marry her lover. Ah! it is a pity that the beautiful high thing, God's good gift of love, should be thus tainted. The whole quality of it becomes lowered. The whole enjoyment of each other becomes spoiled.

Because Jonathan would not thus degrade his friendship he is able now, stealing up through the forest, to "strengthen his friend's hands in God." Young people, may God give you friends who will do that for you! May He enable you to do that for your friend!

For, be you sure of this, the deepest, truest friendship can never be had without religion. There are many friendships of kindly, generous people who would do much for each other but are unable to do the best. They have never shared deep, high thoughts together about nobleness of life here, about unselfish service hereafter. They have never prayed for each other, nor strengthened each other's hands in God. I don't suggest mere pious talking. Not so much talking, but being. David and Jonathan were the better men for their friendship. So should be you and your friend. I wonder if Jonathan had remained to strengthen the hand of David, would David have ever fallen into the great sin of his life?

V

The scene changes again. But we have no time for details of the story. Five years have elapsed. It is an anxious day for Israel. David is up in the rocks of Ziklag waiting for news. His band of outlaws are standing round him peering out into the valley. They are waiting. All Israel is waiting for tidings from the camp. For the Philistines have swarmed in from their five towns, and Saul with his army is surrounded at Gilboa. So David waits and watches. He knows that the

result of this expected battle will decide much for the nation and much for himself. He knows, too, that Jonathan is on the battlefield with the king, Jonathan whom he has never seen since that night in the wood.

So all that long day David thought of his friend, and watched and waited, and surely prayed for him. Now the watchers have sprung to their feet. A flying messenger from Gilboa! "The battle is lost, the army is routed—and *Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also!*" Jonathan is dead also! Jonathan is dead also! Do you know how a phrase like that keeps vibrating in one's brain? Ah! that would hit David hardest of all. The others would think of defeat, of national disgrace. David would think chiefly of that brave, sad face upturned to the sky on the distant battlefield. "Oh, I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan! Very pleasant hast thou been to me. Thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

There is one great comfort in his sorrow. He has none but noble memories of his dead friend. True to the last! He had done the right. He had guarded his father. He had fought by his side. He had fallen at his feet. Pierced by Philistine spears, the brave, true heart had gone back to God and Israel was sorely the poorer for the loss of Jonathan. Please God

your friends will have such memories of you when you die. It is the greatest comfort in any bereavement.

VI

Now we must close. But let us close on a bright note. Do you think we are done now with the story of that beautiful friendship? Ah, no! The scene changes once more. But I have not the materials to paint the next picture for you. The grass had been twenty-five years growing over the bones of Prince Jonathan when a weary old King of Israel laid down his poor soiled life and passed into the Unseen Land—and the two friends were together again. I cannot depict that meeting for you. I can only dimly imagine the delight of it. I can only vaguely guess that God helped the poor fallen king by the old friend's friendship again. But one thing I know is true beyond imagining and guessing—that the two friends *were* together again—*are* together again in God's everlasting kingdom to-day.

Do you ask, "How could one tell that they would meet—that they would know each other?" There was only One who ever lived on earth who could answer that question, and He answered it. He made a new friend as

He lay dying on the Cross—a poor, humble, penitent friend who could not bear to lose touch with Him ever again. “Lord, don’t forget me,” he cried, “remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” And that tenderest of all friends reassured him. “To-day we shall meet. To-day thou shalt be with Me.” Surely He meant to imply, “To-night, when our dead bodies hang stiff upon the Cross, we two shall know each other in the Unseen Land as the two who hung upon the Cross together.”

I think that is a hint from which we may gather much. Therefore do not talk of David’s and Jonathan’s friendship in the past tense. Not that they *were* friends—but they *are* friends to-day, growing doubtless closer to God and closer to each other through all the ages of eternity. Therefore we must cherish our friendships, cherish our loves. Keep them always true and high. Keep God in them. For every true friendship and every true love that has the nature of God in it will go on for ever and ever.

III

HOSEA'S WIFE

HOSEA i. 2.

I

IT is the eighth century B.C., in the reign of Jeroboam the Great in Israel. It is a time of great prosperity and luxury; and drunkenness and sensuality and other sins engendered by prosperity and luxury are rampant in the land. Nay, the people even join their heathen neighbours in the abominations of idolatry. Israel has shamefully forsaken the Lord. And their punishment is on the way. Already, just ten years ago, had come the stern prophecy of Amos that the nation for its sins should be carried captive into Assyria.

Now at the close of the great king's reign this catastrophe is looming large. All the prophets of the eighth century are occupied with Assyria. For the Assyrian empire was stretching out its arms like a giant octopus. Tiglath-pileser, the king, was the Napoleon

Bonaparte of his day—out for conquest, swallowing up small nations everywhere around him. Israel is trembling at the coming doom. The people knew well they had deserved it. Their own conscience told them that Amos's threat was a message from the Lord that punishment must follow sin. It was the message specially needed for these proud, dissolute days.

And yet that is not the whole of God's message. As the trouble drew nearer and men's hearts were failing them for fear, another side of that message was needed. Perhaps Amos in his stern, righteous anger had not a tender enough heart to see the other side—the tenderness and love and pain of God for His frightened people. It required a very loving heart and an awful training for the prophet who should reveal that.

And so, ten years after Amos, Hosea appears on the stage—Hosea, the first of the evangelical prophets, the man who foreshadowed the teaching of Christ, who taught the most touching lesson of religion—the love and tenderness and pain of God for men. Hosea had learned that lesson from God. But he had a sore time learning his lesson. This is his story, so far as the best interpreters of our day have worked it out.

II

The time is the close of Jeroboam's reign.

The scene is the wicked city of Samaria, where the filthy worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, whose rites cannot be spoken of in decent society, have degraded the morals of the nation, where in the fast society life, amid wine and revelry and voluptuous entertainments, the purity and chastity of family life are being daily undermined.

Here Hosea lived. He was no trained prophet. We do not know his previous occupation. He was clearly an ardent patriot, probably engaged a good deal in political life, full of deep interest in the national problems and national danger—a man of deep, devoted, passionate love for his country.

By and by there came to him a deeper and more personal love. Hosea loved a young girl—Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim—probably brought up in that society life which I have described. He wooed her and won her, and for a year they lived happily together till her first boy was born. But soon the young wife drifted back into the fast set from which she came. She had her lovers about her in her husband's home, and her many frivolous society dissipations and amusements. Thus the sorrow began. After the birth of

her second child Hosea became troubled and suspicious. Perhaps he left her too much alone. Perhaps he was too busy with patriotic speeches and schemes. At any rate, with deep, silent pain he watched the home life being spoiled and the young wife's love being alienated. An honest man's affection no longer sufficed her. And at last came the crash. One night he came back to find she had gone off with another man and he was left alone in his dishonoured and desolate home.

For many months I picture him—that loyal, tender heart—going out to his work and his patriotic efforts for his country; returning at night, trying to pray to God; lying awake all night with fierce and angry thoughts about the wife who had so shamed him before his people. It is the one sin that men do not forgive.

Then as the months pass he learns miserable tidings—her paramour has deserted her, she has fallen lower and lower in poverty and sin, till at length the "white slave" traffickers of ancient Israel have got hold of her, and she is bought and sold for pieces of silver.

And then a deep wave of sorrow and pity sweeps over that husband's heart. He remembered the old days, the girl wife, and the love of their espousals. He thinks of her bad

upbringing and her temptations, and perhaps his own neglect of her in his busy life. And a deep tenderness is stirring in his heart for that poor sinful, desolate, unhappy woman. Oh, if she had not sinned! Oh, if he could give her back her purity and peace! If he could do anything!

What was he to do? "Divorce her, of course," his relatives would say. "Divorce is open to you. Divorce is easy. Cast off the woman who has shamed your home." But somehow he could not bring himself to it. God, who refuses to divorce humanity from Himself in spite of its sins, was teaching him a nobler and tenderer lesson. That brave, true heart went forth "to seek and to save that which was lost." He went and sought his lost wife in the dens of the prostitutes, and bought her back for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley and a half homer of barley. So Gomer came home. No more could they live together as husband and wife. But he could at least watch over her and comfort her and surround her with tenderness and bring peace as far as might be to that broken life, and "with God be the rest."

III

That is the story of Hosea's life-tragedy. Not a nice story, some one says, to speak of so openly in a mixed congregation. But it is a real story of life as it is, and it is wholesomer to learn these ugly realities from the Bible than from the modern novel or the stage. The Bible never shrink from realism when it would show the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the exceeding power of God to redeem. To an age that treats of these things lightly in the novel or on the stage—to an age that is shown these things brutally in the revelations of the divorce court—this story of Hosea and his wife may teach a solemn lesson, a lesson also full of love and hope.

For through the working of the Holy Spirit in his troubled heart, Hosea learned the secret of the heart of God. I do not believe that Hosea had any idea at the time that God's good purposes and his own usefulness to Israel could be helped in any way by this misery of his life. Troubled he was over his country's sins and dangers. But now, as he thought and thought about his own great sorrows, and felt that he could not forget this wretched, sinful wife whom he loved, I think it gradually dawned upon him that God's sorrow and love for Israel must be like his own sorrow and

love for his wife. The more he thought of it the more strongly he felt it. God's Spirit stamped it on his heart. Israel had treated the Lord as Gomer had treated him. Israel had departed from the holy God to follow Baal and Ashtoreth and join in the horrible sensual worship of the idols. Therefore great national punishment must come. I can imagine him saying within himself some day, "Surely God must be at least as loving and tender as I am. I am but a poor ordinary sinful man, yet I can love and suffer when I think of my wife. I cannot forget her. Surely God is ever so much better than I. And if so, He must have ever so much more love, and feel ever so much pain for this people whom He is punishing for their sins."

The Bible says that the word of the Lord came to Hosea telling him that his loving tenderness to his faithless wife was but a faint shadow of God's loving tenderness to His faithless people. I think this word of the Lord came to him, not by dreams or visions or outward voices, but by God's Spirit speaking in his heart through the experience of his own life. So simply and naturally may come God's inspiration.

And the more the Holy Spirit taught him of that love of God, the more sure he felt that

God would not forsake His people even in the captivity and ruin into which their sins had brought them.

IV

So we have the prophecies of Hosea, stern and indignant at the wickedness of Israel, and yet full of pathetic tenderness. And through the whole book God's relation to His sinful people is presented as that of a husband to his adulterous wife. The prophecies begin at chapter iv., and there is prefixed to them a most startling preface, evidently hinting at the life-tragedy which had moulded his teaching. It seems the thought of a man looking back in his later life on the awful life-lesson of his youth. Most of us do not know the meaning of our life-lessons till we look on them long afterwards. We all know of people who have learned deep lessons through the strange discipline of life which they could not understand at the time.

So, looking back in after life, when he had learned in agony of soul the revelation of God's love, Hosea sees God's hand in it all. He sees how his own life-sorrow had been the means of God's teaching. God had let this sorrow fall on him for his country's good. And in the startling paradoxical manner of

an Eastern prophet, he gives the prologue to his teaching :

“ The beginning of the word of Jehovah to Hosea. Go, take thee a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry, for the land hath committed great harlotry in departing from Jehovah. And he went and married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim. And she bare a son, and the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel. And she bare a daughter, and He said, Call her Lo-ruhamah [not knowing a father's love].” (You can see the suspicion growing in the father.) “ And again she bare a son, and He said, Call his name Lo-ammi [no kin of mine].”

We do not know when Hosea told this strange story which prefaces his teaching, or whether he intended it to be published at all. But if our interpretation is correct, and if we try to put ourselves in his place, I think we can understand his putting his awful experience in this way. There is no other way that I can see of reading this preface. No one can believe that God told a holy prophet to marry a woman of public shame in order to point an analogy. Besides, the whole point of the analogy is that the wife had been pure, but had fallen away. And one cannot believe that it is all a mere prophetic parable, for he tells the very name and

parentage of his wife. Our best commentators and interpreters have explained the book on the lines which I have indicated.

v

The parallel was awfully true. It was common in Semitic religions to express the relation of a god to the land by the figure of marriage. Therefore when Hosea speaks of Jehovah as the husband of Israel, it is no new figure. But the imagery is pathetically moulded by the thought of his own experience. He sees his own tragedy acted out on the larger stage. He thinks of Jehovah who espoused Israel in her youth in the wilderness, but Israel has forsaken Him for Baal and Ashtoreth with their unnamable abominations. The Bride of the Wilderness is the faithless wife whose sin has destroyed her.

The children whom she bore were not her husband's. They were "Lo-ruhamah"—without a father's love. They were "Lo-ammi"—not my people—children of strange gods.

Following out the human analogy, we should now expect Jehovah to cast off his faithless spouse. But Jehovah reveals to the prophet that that is not His way. "For," says Hosea, "He is God and not man, the Holy One in

the midst of thee. . . . O, how shall I give thee up, Ephraim! How shall I surrender thee, Israel! My heart is turned within Me. My compassions are kindled together!"

Jehovah must seek the wanderer. But the process will not be easy. Israel cannot be restored without disillusion and chastisement. "Therefore, behold, I will hedge her way with thorns. And she shall pursue her paramours, and shall not find them till she shall say, Let me return to my husband, for it was better for me then than now." Poor Gomer was surely in his mind as he wrote this.

Ah, that is God's blessed lesson of the unsatisfactoriness of sin. It is His tender love that decrees, "No peace to the wicked." It is among the swine and the husks that the poor Prodigal cries, "I will arise and go to my father."

All through the book runs the pathetic note—God loves, God cares, God suffers in our pains. And the prophet feels that such love must triumph in the end. His deep faith in God breaks forth in hopeful vision. "Thus saith the Lord, I will woo her and bring her to the wilderness. And there (in her sorrow) I will speak to her heart. And there she shall answer me as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt."

“And her children shall be my children again. On Lo-ruhamah the unpitied shall come a father's pity. And unto Lo-ammi [not my people] I will say, Behold, thou art My people, and he shall reply, My God!”

VI

Not many years after came the threatened doom. One morning the city woke to find the hosts of Assyria hedging it in. Fiercely and bravely they struggled against their fate. The siege of Samaria was the bloodiest in their history.

But it was all in vain. The ten tribes were carried away into captivity and never saw the green hills of Galilee again. Their sin had brought its wages.

But surely they carried with them the words of their great prophet, who through his own love and pain had learned the love and pain of God. And thus in their misery would come the comfort of the Lord as one whom his mother comforteth.

Seven hundred years after came that Lord Himself to those same green hills of Galilee that Hosea loved. And over those hills comes Hosea's teaching again, no longer dimly or darkly. Beside Hosea's story of the Prodigal Wife, Jesus puts the story of the Prodigal Son.

And for Hosea's thoughts about God's love and pain He puts the agony of Gethsemane and the Cross of Calvary—God's own clear teaching how He could love and suffer for the sake of sinful men.

VII

My brethren, let that lesson teach our hearts to-day what Hosea brought to us with tears of blood, what Jesus confirms for us on the Cross of Pain.

Is there some poor sinner here who has deserted his Lord—who has spoiled his life, who is afraid to face to-day the holy sacrament of His love ?

Trust in the deep love and pain of God. Trust in the deep divine instincts in yourselves which faintly shadow forth the heart of the Father. If ye then being evil know how to feel love and pain for the child gone wrong, "how much more shall the Father which is in heaven."

Perhaps He can never give you now the best that He intended for you—for sin brings some results that even forgiveness cannot blot out. But He will give you the second best or the third best, the very best that you are capable of now. He will not, He cannot, give you up.

Listen again to the message of this old prophet of Galilee: "O Israel, turn to the Lord, for He hath redeemed thee!" And listen to its tender confirmation by our Lord looking out on a heavy-laden, sin-stricken world, "Come unto Me, all ye that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

IV

NOVEL READING'

Whatsoever things are true ; whatsoever things are honourable ; whatsoever things are just ; whatsoever things are pure ; whatsoever things are lovely ; whatsoever things are of good report . . . think of these things.—PHIL. iv. 8.

KEEP your thoughts high and pure. Guard them against pollution. Such is St. Paul's advice. It is possible by our reading to keep our thoughts high and pure. It is possible by our reading to pollute our thoughts. I want to preach to you to-night about novel reading.

I

"Novel reading!" Some one will say, "Much fitter that he should preach to us about BIBLE reading."

Well, I think that is a pretty frequent subject of speaking from this pulpit. But I

This sermon, written years ago, was suggested and helped (I know not how much) by a borrowed book whose author's name I have forgotten. I think it was entitled "Novels and Theology."

should be a very foolish pastor if I did not see that there is more novel reading than Bible reading going on in the world. That a good deal of novel reading will be done by you in these summer holidays. That some of such reading is good and some of it is evil; and that whether good or evil it is exercising a vaster influence than you know in forming men's opinions and moral tone.

An intelligent foreigner recently said this about the influence of novels and magazine articles in forming the views and moulding the character of the general public: "The novel in England is pretty much what the priest used to be in France before recent days of scepticism—the intimate of the home circle—the adviser, the tutor, the mentor, the family moralist and the family chaplain subtly influencing the moral and religious views of the people in a thousand unperceived directions." To a great extent I endorse this opinion, and I don't think people at all realize how much their general notions of conduct and religion are thus unconsciously influenced.

We boast that we live in the days of the open Bible and the teaching pulpit. But the open Bible is very often unread, and the teaching pulpit is very often dull, and there is a stronger tendency than is generally noticed to pick up our notions of life and conduct in an

interesting amateur way from novels and poems and essays and review articles. The author of a clever popular novel has an enormous audience—editions sometimes of 100,000 copies. No preacher, however great and famous, has any chance of influencing opinion to such an extent as that. Therefore it becomes a very important matter what tone is taken by these novelists and magazine writers.

It becomes a problem worthy of grave consideration for parents what novels and magazines should be admitted into their homes. And it becomes a matter of grave importance for the clergy in every educated congregation to speak to their people words of advice and warning on these matters. That is what I want to do to-day.

II

Now first note this. The object of the novelist is not necessarily to teach religion any more than it is the object of the writer on history or travel. His object is to interest and amuse, to hold the mirror up to nature and picture to us the ordinary, interesting, throbbing life of humanity about us as it is. Do you think that interest and amusement and sympathetic watching of human life is too low a purpose for religious men and women? I do not agree with you. I think in this world

of tired, dull people it is part of God's will that we should be amused and refreshed. I think with this sympathetic nature that God has given us it is only natural that we should be interested in the pictures of life as it is lived.

It is a great mistake to try to divorce from God the many innocent things which make life happier. It is a great mistake for religious people to deny what ordinary human nature strongly feels, that other things besides Morality and Religion are good and according to the will of God who made human nature. To say this does not make less of religion. Religion is like God's sun in the heavens. It should shine on and irradiate all the good things of life and make them better. But these other are good things too. The romping of merry children is a good thing. A well-played game of football or cricket or baseball is a good thing. The eager ambition in business is a good thing. Art and poetry and painting are good things. A splendid exciting drama is a good thing. And a stirring high-class novel is a good thing. The pleasure that people instinctively feel in these suggests at once their connection with that human nature which God has made. I think they are according to God's will. Nay, more, I think even Shakespeare and Dickens were better employed

in writing their plays and novels than they would have been in trying to preach the gospel. God gave them a great gift of doing the one; they would probably have done very badly in attempting the other.

The power to write a great novel is a great gift from God for the sake of a world of tired people.

III

But you say, some writers write very bad novels. Yes, and some butchers sell very bad meat. But a man should not argue from that that all novels are bad any more than he would argue that all meat is bad unless he happened to be a vegetarian. Some are harmless, innocent, amusing, and that in itself is a valuable thing, even though they may have no higher value; and some have very far higher value. Some present to us beautiful ideals of what noble lives should be. In the book world as in the real world we meet God's saints and kings. We meet many a prophet who points us to higher things, many an inspiring personality who gives life an upward bias and lifts us an inch or two nearer heaven. Thank God for all such help in this poor human struggle. When one thinks of the pleasure to tired workers of a good novel or a beautiful poem—when one thinks of the enormous circulation such litera-

ture gains—one feels thankful to God for the help that some of them are giving to the cause of righteousness in the world, for Browning, for Tennyson, for Dickens, for George Macdonald, for Edna Lyall, for Ian Maclaren, with his beautiful Scottish character sketches. Their work is not merely harmless, innocent, amusing, it is helping the great building of the Kingdom of God.

If there be any godly Christian people who feel that fiction must be evil—let me say to them with deep reverence, that there are works of fiction which even the poor careless world will never let die—given to us by the Lord Himself, *e.g.* the story of the Prodigal Son and the story of the Shepherd and his lost sheep. Surely these are works of fiction given by Christ for the teaching of the world.

IV

Let me emphasize one or two points before I go on.

Notice what I say, "God's gift to TIRED people"—tired people, people who work. Let no self-indulgent idler who merely gets through life killing time claim that this relaxation is a gift of God for him. That sort of person has no claim on God. His novel reading is as much a sin as all the rest of his life.

Notice too that I say that the novelist's business is to picture and study human nature as it is. If he be a true man he will make you feel that human nature as it is is not always human nature as it ought to be. Without any sermon on the subject he will make you admire the good and hate the evil in his characters. And I think in the main most of them do that in some degree at least. But some novelists have no high ideals and so their pictures of life have no elevating power. Some have low ideals and so their pictures of life are low and cynical. I think it only fair to say that these are not many. But the whole position makes it necessary to advise and to warn you.

And here let me add just this—that the best possible antidote to any mischief from low ideals in stories that you read is to keep in touch daily with God's high ideals by the daily reading of even a small portion of His Holy Word.

v

Now I would speak about the evils to be guarded against in the books themselves.

I am not going to waste time warning you against evil and impure novels. Such novels are written shamelessly in our day—and I am

sorry to say quite as often by women as by men. We get things put in print for our young people to read, for which instead of fame and money the writer deserves whipping at the cart tail. Thank God these are few. But let me add that a book is not necessarily immoral because it deals with certain forbidden subjects in the relation of the sexes. The story of "Adam Bede" does so without hesitation. But it leaves in the reader's mind a sense of shrinking and pain, a sense of sin and its inevitable consequences which cannot but emphasize for him God's attitude against evil. There is no danger in such books. No! The real danger is in the tendency of much modern literature to adorn sin, to veil its intrinsic hideousness, by surrounding it with the charms of literary romance; gambling and lying and lust and unfaithfulness to the marriage vow have, by dramatic skill, been shorn of their repulsiveness and made half excusable. The hero who habitually commits one or another of them is made quite attractive. He is a dashing handsome fellow with certain generous qualities. You can scarce help admiring him and condoning his sin.

And so you half unconsciously learn this modern gospel which John Ruskin so sternly attacks, this gospel which is for ever suggesting to you that evil things are pardonable and you

shall not die for them, and that good things are impossible and you need not live for them.

Such books have a paralysing effect on public opinion. They blunt the conscience and lower the whole moral tone. Never let such books enter your home. If they should get in, put them behind the fire.

VI

Next comes the danger from books with no directly vicious tendency, but where the author himself seems to have poor, low ideals of life. If a man never raises his life ideals by study of his Bible, if his only reading outside the newspaper is in novels of this kind, he will insensibly get low ideals himself. The general impression left by many widely read novels is something like this, that life is a certain brief span of existence to be idled away or sported away or sinned away, as seems good to the liver of it. No sense of duty, of responsibility, no feeling of solemnity with regard to this world or the world to come. Life is a mere tournament of worldly ambitions. Life is a mere picnic or pleasure party, an affair of dressing and promenading and gossiping and tea drinking and tennis and cards and billiards and theatres. When the author seems quite satisfied with this ideal for his heroes, the

reader of such stuff is likely to be satisfied with such ideals for himself. And surely the religious life must suffer by such teaching.

And then so many writers seem to have failed to grasp the simple truth, that happiness has its seat and centre within and depends not on birth or riches, or change of scene or such things. They seem to go on the famous saying of Becky Sharp in "Vanity Fair": "I think I could be a good woman if I had £5,000 a year," as if Our Lord had never taught that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

Ah, we want you, our young people, to get a nobler ideal than that. True happiness depends on what we are, not on what we have—on the beauty of our character, not on the riches of our possessions.

VII

I notice, too, even in books of higher ethical tone a complete and determined ignoring of religion. This fault belongs to the bulk of our present-day novels. Do not misunderstand me. I do not expect them to be full of sermons and passages of Scripture. That is not the function of a novel. As I said before, its legitimate purpose is not to teach religion, but to interest and refresh the weary mind. You

ought not to blame a novel for not teaching religion any more than you would blame an arithmetic for not teaching religion. But when the book persistently shuts out all high thought, when the whole tone of the book shows you that religion has no place in the writer's scheme of life, it must have an evil influence. We are told of a great Frenchman who, when some one spoke to him one day about religion and the hereafter, waved him off impatiently: "One world at a time, please." That is the tone. One world at a time. Live as if there were no other world, no God, no Christ, no divine law, no responsibility. God is never mentioned, not even in an undertone. The whole book is carefully guarded against the inroad of any higher ideals from another world like the inhabitants of Holland guard against the inroad of water from the sea. And to the man or woman who habitually occupies his mind with such books life must grow very mean. Cut off habitually from the vast unseen life, thought must lose its upward look, man must become shorn of his dignity, the world must gradually become to him only what his kennel is to the dog.

And the worst of it is that these books assume to present life as it commonly is. It is no harm to read novels picturing life as it commonly is. And if these books did so there

would be excuse for them. True pictures of life are worth having even if we disapprove of such life. But these are not true pictures of life. They picture people in general as, not exactly irreligious, but rather as non-religious—detached from religion. And that is not true to life. It is false art. The novelist's view is coloured by his own attitude or his own environment.

Many people are indifferent to religion, many sit loose to religion, but any picture of society in general in a land such as ours should not ignore the fact that there are many also to whom religion is very real. Therefore I charge the bulk of modern fiction with being untrue to life and leaving an impression that is false and mischievous.

VIII

Now I want to speak of the class of novel, so popular of late, that is not thoughtless and worldly, but serious and thoughtful in tone, and often dealing directly with some of the most important problems of theology. The Religious Novel it is called. Sometimes it is so, sometimes it is the very opposite. I think it is a hopeful sign that so much of modern literature is theological in its tone and that the clever religious novel is so widely in de-

mand. It shows the trend of the public mind, the vague craving after higher things, the dissatisfaction with mere material standards of life. So far it is good. But this religious novel, as it is called, may be very dangerous. In dealing with theological questions, it often deals with them from the point of view of the sceptic, and when the writer is a good man with high ideals, and very shaky beliefs, he may do grave harm to the faith of young people, especially if he be a novelist of great literary reputation. Unconsciously people will be impressed by his position in the literary world. So clever a man seems so likely to be right. That is the danger.

You see there are now before the public two rival teachers of religion, the preacher and the novelist. The novelist has the advantage of the larger audience and the more attractive way of putting his views. The people are more inclined to listen to him, and therefore if he be a well-taught spiritually-minded man his influence must be enormous for good. Owing, too, to the power of imagination and the wide sympathy which makes him a successful novelist, he is often more in touch with the throbbing heart of the world, with its cravings and longings and aspirations, than many a learned theologian.

But for the most part he has one great dis-

advantage in teaching theology. As a rule he knows very little about it. To teach the things of God requires a lifetime of study. If you knew the feeling of shame and incompetence with which some of us clergy address you on Sundays, you would understand my statement. After a lifetime of thought and study one feels like a little child gathering pebbles on the shore of the infinite ocean of God's truth. We know God's truth so little. We see it so imperfectly. We teach it so stupidly. We know that after twenty years more we shall be but a little more competent—just a little.

Now, when you meet a novel with high ideals but suggesting doubts about Christianity, don't let the reputation of the novelist carry you away. Remember that the brilliant novelist can claim no exemption from the common lot. He must remain ignorant on subjects which he has not carefully studied. When you meet a novel like "Robert Elsmere," showing how easily a good clergyman had all his deepest beliefs shattered by sceptical arguments, it may frighten you. And when you meet another well-known novel where clever people talk pathetically about the sweet sadness of poor humanity's mistaken fancies about a life to come, it may disturb you. But always remember that a man may be a brilliant novelist and yet have a very superficial acquaintance

with Christianity and Christ. Many men's faith has been shaken by forgetting this. Because the writer has a great name as a novelist they forget that he may know very little about Christianity.

Once more. It seems a shame to criticize the great noble novels, yet I fear that even the high type of religious novel which touches our heart with the deep sense of the eternal Fatherhood of God, and which helps to lift us up to a higher life, even this has frequently one great defect—it does not realize the “exceeding sinfulness of sin.” There is a tone as if we could hardly help sin—as if it were but a discipline through which we had to pass to make us good, and that God looks very leniently on evil in us. Do you know the prayer of Martin Elginbrod :

Have mercy upon me, Lord God,
On me, poor Martin Elginbrod ;
As I would do if I were God
And Thou wert Martin Elginbrod.

You see the mixture of good and evil there. The beautiful trusting faith in God as the kindly sympathetic Father—the feeling that we are to judge God by the best in ourselves, all so touchingly true. And yet the feeling too that God ought to judge us by our own low standards of life.

You see the novelist is writing from the point of view of human nature, not from the point of view of the Bible, with its deep horror of sin. He judges the strength of God's displeasure against sin by the weak, languid moral displeasure of our own hearts.

You know that you and I do not think so very badly of our sins. So often your novelists, even the noblest of them, make you feel not merely that God is infinitely compassionate with the repentant sinner, but that God is as lenient toward sin as we are, and that He ought to be.

It is a great blessing when a widely read novel is suggesting to hundreds of thousands the deep, touching tenderness and forgiveness of God. Yet there is so often the danger of making us lose the horror of sin and thinking of the loving God as a mere good-natured indulgent Father, to whom sin is not exceeding sinful, whose chief thought is to make his child stop crying and be happy.

IX

This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter. Do not hesitate to accept as God's gift to tired people a good novel written for your pleasure and amusement.

But do not let yourself go. Do not ac-

quiesce in low ideals. Keep yourself safe and keep your ideals high by contact with God's high ideals in His Word.

Some time ago I read a famous novelist's autobiography, and it was deeply touching to see her high ideal of the office God had called her to and her prayerful hope that she might lift men by her work. Ah, it all brings us back to religion after all. If real love and service of God were in our hearts the clergyman and the merchant and the lawyer and the doctor and the writer of plays and the novel writer would all feel they were in their separate provinces God's ministers for the helping of humanity, and the words of His apostle would ring out equally to all, "Brethren, let every man wherein he is called therein abide with God."

V

WORRY:

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him . . . and fret not thyself : for that tendeth to evil.—Ps. xxxvii. *part of vv. 7 and 8.*

I

DO you not think that some of us need that advice to-day? I am thinking not of serious troubles and sorrows, but of the host of petty little frets and worries, buzzing in like little gnats to spoil the comfort of life. So I thought of preaching to you and to myself to-day on the subject of "Worry." Both you and I need to think about it. Worry is a dangerous ailment. And I think it is especially so in this country. Perhaps I, a new-comer, notice that more than you do. Not only is work more strenuous here than in the old land, but also the climate is more exhilarating, more exciting. It excites a man to do sometimes more than is good for him, and then it rather gets on his nerves. It is worse in the States. But even here your busy men get a good deal of nerve strain. The rush of work,

the calls of the telephone—the continual alertness necessary in business is very exhausting, and you can afford less than people in quieter countries to let worry come in on the top of all the rest. I think worry is really your danger—not work.

I say this because one hears so much talk nowadays about the overwork and overpressure of modern life. Our newspapers and current literature frequently dwell on it. People say that this overwork and overpressure are the reason why we all need holidays more than our grandfathers did—the reason of the startling recent increase of lunacy in the world, the reason why the business man breaks down in the midst of his work, and the clergyman and lawyer and doctor suffer from brain fag, and women are puzzling doctors by all sorts of new nervous diseases which were not thought of or heard of fifty years ago. Overwork, they say, overpressure, too much strain on the mental and physical powers because we are living in a faster and more exciting life than was lived before us. I don't think that is quite true. There is a great deal too much talk about overwork as a cause of mental and physical breakdown. And it has a tendency to make us indolent and self-indulgent and satisfied with far less work than we are capable of without any injury to ourselves.

It is not overwork that is wrong with us. I do not at all mean that the pressure is not increased in our day. I mean that we could well bear the increased pressure and far more. If the wheels of life were working smoothly and easily and without friction the machine could stand a good deal more work without being injured at all by it.

I think it is worry rather than work that is our worst trouble. And worry comes not from too much work, but from petty disturbing elements intruding from outside and disturbing the machine. While the mind is working freely and pleasantly, and the wheels are going round smoothly and easily, work is a positive pleasure. Don't you know the days in your life when work is a delight and you want almost to sing and rejoice in the doing of it? Those are your good working days. They give the idea of what working days might be.

But on other days it is quite different. There is some undercurrent of vexation or secret anxiety, and the result is the feeling that we call worry. It is as if a machine were working smoothly and pleasantly and some grains of sand or grit got into the wheels so that they scrape and rub and make discord everywhere.

That is the disease that is puzzling the

physicians of nervous disorders in our generation. And a dangerous disease it is to mind or body. When the pressure of necessity forces you to go on with your work in spite of this disturbing grit amongst the wheels, then the danger is that, like a machine working with friction and heated bearings, the mind wears itself out and the breakdown comes which we hear about so much to-day, and which men so often attribute to overwork and overpressure of our busy modern life.

Ah, no! it is not overwork that injures us. It is worry that kills—not work. It is worry that makes men and women fretted and jaded and unfit for the ordinary duties of life. And in proportion as we can reduce the amount of this worry, in that proportion shall we increase the quantity and quality of our work and the happiness and enjoyment of our lives.

I do not doubt there are many here to-day who, while I speak, are, from their own experience, confirming every word. You are worried about business, about family affairs, about the future of yourselves or your children, about what somebody has said unkindly of you, about the failure and unsatisfactoriness of your religious life; not exactly troubled or sorrowful—that would take up your whole attention—but just worried, just the sand and the grit got into the machinery. Of course

worry is not peculiar to our day. Our ancestors were worried too. They had the sand and the grit in the machine as well as we. But the machine has so much more to do in our day, the wheels have to go faster, and so the danger is greater. That is the first thing I have to say to you. It is worry that is the trouble, not work.

II

So far for the diagnosing of the disease. But you will say: "Not much good in diagnosing for us if you cannot suggest a cure."

Ah! a man feels ashamed to talk of cure when unable to cure himself. And yet I know there is a cure. Some temperaments are easier to cure than others, and the nervous, excitable temperament is not of the easier. But God has His cure for us all. I am a worried man myself as well as you. I know I ought not to be. That is why I am preaching to you and to myself to-day. In times of deepest strain and anxiety, planning and keeping things going in a great parish, one has dim visions of what might be—of what will be, please God, as one keeps trying; visions of quiet methodical planning of one's work; of cheerily facing the fact that one can't do everything; of bravely forgetting self and selfish irritation; of peaceful, childlike commending oneself and

one's duties every day to the Father who gives them. That commending to God is the centre of the whole cure.

The Bible recognizes the disease of worry fully and repeatedly—though I don't suppose the easy-going Easterners had it as much as we; and this is the supreme cure it has to offer—religion, communion with God. Listen to its advice to the poor, fretted, worried soul:

“Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

“Take My yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”

“Acquaint thyself with God and be at peace.”

“Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, and fret not thyself: for that tendeth to evil.”

Yes, religion—more religion—deeper religion, that is God's cure for worry. I want to put it practically before you. I assume that I am speaking to people who believe in God—and believe that God has set them their life-work—and that God knows about their worries.

Now, then, first, I ask you to make three resolves:

1. “Believing that my daily duties come to me from God, I will arrange those duties methodically. I will have a time for everything and everything in its proper time. I

will arrange each night the duties of to-morrow in their order and bring them to God in prayer."

That is the first resolution about your work. That will save you from the worry of duties clashing with each other.

2. About your troubles: "Whatever cause I may have of fret or anxiety, I will examine it carefully. Can I get rid of it? If so, I will. Can I not get rid of it? Then I will take it as part of God's discipline and training for me and bring it to Him in prayer."

Let me repeat that: "If I cannot escape my trouble, I will take it as part of God's discipline for me and bring it to Him in prayer." That is the important part of the resolution. Where there is an anxiety that you cannot escape from, your common-sense friend will say: "Then what is the use of fretting about it, since fretting won't remove it?" That is good common-sense philosophy. But somehow it does not help you much. Religion goes farther. Religion says to you: "My child, if you cannot really escape that anxiety, then surely it must be part of the Father's discipline for you." Not merely, "You must put up with it," but the fact that you cannot escape it is an indication that it is part of the loving Father's discipline for your good.

3. "While making these resolves about my work and worries I will be very careful in my

private prayer, in my Bible reading; above all, in my regular communions in which I come to meet the Lord Himself at His altar and let His Divine strength pass into my life."

So you come to the philosophy for worried lives—

Two things you won't fret at if you're a wise man:
The thing you can't help and the thing that you can:

I am quite sure that these three resolves will help you. And to enable you to make them aright, let me close by trying briefly to lead you to (1) Truer thoughts about God; (2) Truer thoughts about self. Both, I think, should be considerable helps against worry.

III

1. Truer thoughts about God.

Do you think we should worry as we do if we even half believed in God's tender Fatherhood as revealed by Jesus Christ?

Listen to Him speaking to the poor worried fathers and mothers of Galilee, worried and flushed and excited just as you are about the children and the business and the anxieties of life. Listen: "If ye then being evil, know how to care as you do for your children, how much more does the Heavenly Father?" Fancy a mother here trying to bring that home

to herself. Her sick boy is on her knee and she fears the little lad may die. "Is there anything," she thinks, "that I would not do or bear for my little boy? In this life I would work my fingers to the bone for him, to save him from all troubles, except such as are needed to form his character. In that life I would go into the outer darkness for ever for him if it would only keep him from going there. If my little son dies, I think my heart will break. If he lives and goes wrong in life, O God," she thinks, "how life here and hereafter would be one endless pain, how heaven would be absolutely useless to me if my little son were cast out!"

Then slowly there creeps into her heart the little creed that Christ has taught, "If ye being evil, know how to care like that, how much more the Heavenly Father?" And in a moment the revelation has flashed on her: "Is that the meaning of the love of God? Does it mean a real, vivid, palpitating thing, like my love for my boy? That He cares as I do, that He must suffer as I do? Is my love only a faint reflection of His? Can no poor outcast escape His fatherly care? Will there be pain in His heart for ever for any lost child of man, as there would be in mine for my child? Did Christ mean just that? If He did not, I don't know what He meant. But if He did—if

He meant that the Father cares even as much as I do and by the necessity of His nature must for ever care, oh, thank God. It is good to be alive if God loves sinners like that !”

A cure for worry—I should think it would be, indeed !

Why, if we could believe that of God, we should not have a worry in the whole world except that we did not love Him enough and trust Him enough.

2. Then we need truer thoughts about self.

For our low thoughts about self are the chief cause of worry. Just think of the way in which we make self and its pettiness the centre of everything. One would think there was nothing bigger for immortal souls to dwell on than the small jealousies and selfishness and irritations and rankling little grudges and petty aims that so often fill our lives. How we pity ourselves for little pin-pricks that we shall have quite forgotten before three months are over ! How we manage before the end of that three months to find a new set to take their place ! How we let the chatter of the outside world annoy us, thinking what this or that one says about us, keeping open the windows of our souls for all the buzzing flies to swarm in and torment us. Ah, if we would let religion come to close the windows and to say : “ My child, God is thinking good thoughts of you.

Put aside your small worrying. Trust in the Lord and do right and never mind the consequences. Aim only at that ambition of St. Paul, 'whether present or absent to be acceptable unto God.'"

You know and I know that these trifles are unworthy of us, and yet we know in spite of all our philosophy how these trifles keep smarting and hurting us. I don't know any cure for our petty thoughts of life except letting in the grand real thoughts of life.

Just think of it! The destiny before us! The boundless ambition that God has for us! Wake up, and think of it! Say to yourself, "We simple men and women, worrying here in Montreal, are actually the heirs of the coming eternity! Eye hath not seen nor ear heard anything like the wonders that God designs for us! No dream of fairyland can touch it! God has spent millions of years in making this world for us to grow on and develop character with His love around us.

"After this life we pass into another, nobler and grander, with the same loving care and forbearance and ambition for us.

"After that an endless eternity of glad unselfish activities, with untiring health and strength, with abundant delight and intercourse in the company of our departed, with steady progress in nobleness of life, higher and

higher and higher, till we reach the great optimist ambition of the Great Father of us all, 'till we come to the stature of the perfect man, even to the stature of the fullness of Christ.' Why, one almost gasps at the thought!"

My brethren, we want these grand views of life. We want to look away from that little future where worry presides, to the great, glad future over which imagination reigns—the future of the Eternal City, with its gates that shut not day nor night; with its crystal river and joyous rest and glad, unselfish activities for ever and ever.

By our glorious destiny God appeals to us to rise above the little worries that spoil life.

Think of it! Dwell on it! Ponder your high destiny! And then go back if you can to spoil your peace over the bitter thing some one has said behind your back, or the servant who spoiled the dinner yesterday!

VI

THE DUTY OF BEING HAPPY

1. A cheery heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones.—PROV. xvii. 22.

2. Jesus said :

“ Be of good cheer ! Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

“ Be of good cheer ! It is I, be not afraid.”

“ Be of good cheer ! I have overcome the world.”

I

THE thought in my mind to-day is the Duty of being happy. Not merely the pleasure or the desirableness, but the *duty*. You have noticed, as well as I have, how much waste of human happiness there is, unnecessary waste. The world has not too much of happiness, even at the best. Surely it is a pity to waste it.

Now listen first to what this cheery old sage of the Old Testament says. He knew nothing of the happiness and brightness that Jesus our Lord has brought into life, but he knew that God was good and that the world with all its troubles had much of brightness and beauty

to be thankful for and to be cheery about. And he knew that the bright, cheery people who saw that, were the great helpers in life. "Be bright and cheery," he advises. "Thank God for His goodness, make others' life brighter by the brightness of your own. For a cheery heart doeth good like medicine, but a gloomy spirit drieth the bones."

II

Let us have a look at things from his point of view. See if we cannot fall in with it. Does some one say ?--"This is stupid advice. I am not responsible, for cheeriness and happiness are matters of temperament and circumstances. Very lucky for this Old Testament sage. Very lucky for people that can be happy. I cannot. I am not responsible."

Here I join issue with you. I think you are responsible. True, circumstances have a good deal to do with it. It is much easier for some than for others. But at bottom it depends on you yourself. To be of good cheer is a thing to be won by thought and discipline, like all the fine graces of Christian character. I think some of the most depressing people I ever met with had no real troubles at all, while some of the bravest, cheeriest hearts that have ever helped my life have been carrying heavy burdens that would have broken down many of us.

It is worth £1,000 a year to have learned to see the bright side of life. I remember the story of a cheery old sempstress living in a back room in the slums of Glasgow, just such a one as the writer of my text would have delighted in. One day she told a rich visiting lady of the lovely view from her back window. The lady looked out. "I see only a view of chimney pots and back lanes." "Oh," said the old woman, "I did not notice them. Look right across on the hill to that row of trees with the sunset behind them. I see that view every night when I come home from work, and it is one of my real pleasures."

That is it. It depends on your point of view. There is an old Arab fable of a prince imprisoned in a castle with thirteen windows, of which twelve looked out on the loveliest scenes, while the thirteenth looked down on the black city ash-heaps, and he always stood at that thirteenth window! Many people do that. Whether you carry with you an atmosphere of gloom and depression, or whether your presence calls out strength and courage in men, depends on your outlook. And the bright outlook is not always easy. The easy thing is to yield to anxiety and depression. Any poor whining wretch is good enough for that. The hard thing, the brave thing, is to be bright and cheery, to rise above our

worries and look up to God—to stand aside from our worries and bring brightness to men.

III

All this does not mean that you are to try to appear happy in order to make yourself so, like the little boy in the nursery picture wagging the dog's tail to make the dog happy. Even the attempt to wag your tail in hard times is a good thing for yourself and for others. And I think it is a thing pleasing to God because it helps others. But I think that the old sage in our text meant something better. He could see the goodness of God, and the daily sunrise and the yellow harvest and the fruits and flowers and the happy homes and the merry children and all the pleasures and beauties of this life, which some people seem to find out only when they have lost them. And he knew that if people thought of these things and thanked God for them, life would be brighter for themselves and for all about them.

IV

Now this cheery optimism is a great help in life, but see if the Christian thought will not help you still more. The Lord Jesus gets closer to us than this cheery optimism. He

does not merely look away from the dark things. When He says "Be of good cheer," He says it with the sympathy which had compassion on the multitude, which wept at His friend's grave, which called the weary and heavy laden around Him to give them rest. He knew the reality and the manifold nature of life's troubles that we often tell Him about :

Lord, some are sick and some are sad,
And some have never loved Thee well ;
And some have lost the love they had,
And some have found the world is vain,
Yet from the world they break not free.
And some have friends who cause them pain.

And so on. Jesus sees all these things and knows how sore they are. And seeing them all He says: "There is nothing much to fret about in them if you only come to Me for the comfort." Watch Him as He tells men to be of good cheer.

1. There is a poor paralytic let down from the roof before the Lord, miserable in his sickness, and evidently, from what Jesus says, still more miserable in his remorse. Picture him with the pain in his heart because of his sin and the helpless misery in his limbs perhaps a consequence of his sin. You do not dare to say "Cheer up" to such a man as that. But Jesus did. "Cheer up, my son," said

Jesus, "thy sins be forgiven thee." That is what He says to you if you are troubled and dissatisfied about your sins and wanting to be better. He does not merely say, Cheer up! but He tells you why you should. He has forgiveness for you, for the worst of your sins, and strength for you to make a fair and hopeful future.

2. Or if you say, "Lord, I have business frets and private vexations, and people are unkind, and the world is pretty rough to me with its many tribulations." "Yes," He says, "I know it." He is talking to His disciples in the deep pain of parting and of the tribulations before them. He does not make light of it. "In the world ye shall have tribulations, but cheer up, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world, and I will enable you to overcome it too. Only keep close to Me and keep up your hearts." And they did. And they were the happiest men in the whole wide world because of it. What mattered poverty and pain with Jesus to tell it to? What mattered death which was only birth into a fuller life? Look at Paul calmly recounting his list of what we should call crushing troubles (2 Cor. xi. 24) and listen to that jubilant note ringing through his epistles—"Rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice."

3. Or is it some approaching dread coming

in from the dark—deep trouble to yourself—death to one who is the light of your eyes, and you are frightened and troubled? His disciples were in an open boat in mortal dread one night, with the fierce storm raging, and they saw some unknown appearance drawing near and they were terrified and affrighted, till the voice of Jesus came across the waters, "Be of good cheer. It is I, be not afraid." How often that comfort has come to people terrified or affrighted. The mysterious appearance is on the horizon or the cloud is breaking on their lives. "Oh, we are frightened! It is misfortune coming! It is Death coming!" "Nay," said the Lord, "it is I, be not afraid. It is I who am coming in this strange thing happening to you. Hold close to Me, and you will be the better man for the trouble. It is I who took your little boy into the great beautiful Unseen Land. It is I who took your wife to keep her for you for ever. With Me there is nothing to fear. Be of good cheer. Be not afraid!"

Oh, brethren, if we really could see God's love and God's care over the least and the worst of us, and the good He can bring through the discipline of life and the destiny that He intends for us in the Hereafter, I think we could never do other than be of good cheer. It is no sham or pretence or mock optimism with

Jesus. When He says Cheer up, it is because there is good reason for so doing. We have every one of us good reason for being happy if we would take it from Him.

v

Now, shall we try to be of good cheer this week and ask Him to help us? Here are the two reasons for trying:

1. It is a duty to ourselves and to our work. The wheels of life's machinery cannot run easily if the sand and grit of worry and care are getting into the bearings. The happy, cheery man can do twice the work of another and never feel it. The happy, cheery woman keeps young when other women are old and wrinkled. I have met somewhere the curious fancy that in heaven people get a year younger every year instead of a year older. I suppose it means that if they fretted as we do on earth a few thousand years could make them feel very old. But living in Christ's presence and being always in good cheer they grow younger instead of older. I see advertisements in Ladies' Journals telling "How to Keep Young." I think that old sage of Palestine gave a better prescription. I think the Lord Jesus gave a better one still. Be glad—be kind. Love God and trust Him. Oh, my brethren, we cannot afford to waste happi-

ness. There is none too much of it to fling it away as we do. We need to cherish every glint of sunshine, to live in it, to bask in it, that life may be the splendid purposeful thing that God intends.

2. And surely it is a duty to others. We are all willing to allow that it is our duty to help others—to give bread to the hungry, or money to the destitute. But there is other help to give besides money and food. Only a few people want help in food and money. All the world around wants help to be happy. There is a power in a strong, bright personality which acts on men's spirits and makes them stronger, braver, more hopeful. We are greatly dependent for our happiness on the attitude of others towards us. The looks and tones at your breakfast table, the attitude of your fellow-workers and employers, the words that people say to you on the street, the letters that you get, the friends that you meet—these make up every minute of the pleasure or happiness of your day.

Turn this idea round—remember that just so much are you adding to the pleasure or the misery of other people's days. And this is the half of the matter with which you are concerned, which you can control. Whether any particular day shall bring strength and happiness to you is beyond your control.

Whether any particular day shall give strength and happiness to others rests with yourself.

VI

There are many people, I fear, who never think of this—many people who, without ever intending it, spend much of their time in making others miserable.

Here is a man coming home with his business troubles, and his face is gloomy and his temper short, and the light of his home is dimmed by his presence. Here is a woman peevish over some household worries. Here is a semi-invalid with a nervous headache or lowness of spirits, and everybody in the house is depressed by her presence. Here are a set of people taking the spring and the brightness out of the lives about them because they cannot conquer their whining spirit and forget about themselves for a while.

We have all met such. Take care that none of them are here. And we have all met too some few at least of the other kind—who carry gladness with them, who make the little spot where they live a brighter, warmer place for others to live in. They have faced big difficulties with a steadfast heart. They have borne heavy troubles and kept the sunshine in their lives. What a pleasure it is to be

with them! How they inspire and strengthen us to bear our burdens!

He never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break;
Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would
triumph:
Held that we are baffled to fight better,
That we fall to rise again,
That we sleep to wake.

Ah! that is the man, that is the woman with the strong, glad optimist faith in God that makes life brave and glad for all about them.

VII

I remember reading of Longfellow's home life with his children—how he entered into their joys and pleasures—how even after the great shadow of his life had fallen on him he still kept life bright around the children's path, and as I read I could well understand the description by one who had once been his guest. "I left that house," he says, "wherein the presence of its master was a perpetual sunshine, and I felt that it was good for me to have been there."

Should you not like to have that said about your home? Should we not all be glad if in

the days to come the servants and children should say about our homes—

The presence of its master was a perpetual sunshine.
The greeting of its mistress brought peacefulness and strength ?

You can all have it, but not without Christ in your lives. Trouble will come at times to all. The little cloud like a man's hand will rise in the bluest sky—and all your cheery optimism cannot get you over that. You want Christ specially then if you are to be brave yourself and help others to be brave.

How many here will go forth to their homes to-day with the resolve in their hearts : “ God helping me, I will try. I will try to win that happiness from God. I will try to diffuse that happiness to man.”

VII

LILY-WORK

Upon the top of the pillars was lily-work ; so was the work of the pillars finished.—1 KINGS vii. 22.

SOME of you will think this a strange text for a sermon on life and conduct, and as a general rule I confess that it is hardly a justifiable way to treat the Bible—to take words that are used in a certain sense and apply them in another sense not intended by the writer. As a rule I greatly object to letting the Scriptures be so treated. Yet sometimes it is allowable. Years ago, at a roadside inn in the German mountains, I heard an old friend use this phrase in conversation. At once it caught on to me. I have never forgotten it. And I want it to catch on to you, that you may not forget it. That it may be to you a centre for thoughts which lie scattered through the Bible—of the loveliness, the attractiveness which is the mark of every truly developed Christian character.



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I

Now, think about my text, "Upon the top of the pillars was lily-work; so was the work of the pillars finished." The words describe the two great pillars which held up the cedar beams in the temple, and all around the top the exquisite tracery of flowers. The chief requisite in these pillars was, of course, that they should be strong and firmly placed. They are called Jachin and Boaz, which mean Firmness and Strength.

They would have held up the beams if they had been erected in their clumsy roughness, covered with rugged bark without any attempt at smoothness and beauty. But the Spirit which moved Solomon to the building of the temple taught him what was becoming for the presence of Jehovah. He must consecrate to God what was best and most beautiful. Nothing uncouth or ungraceful must be there. The solid strength must be crowned with beauty. Then and then only would the work be complete. And so his most skilful artists carried out the tracery, "and upon the top of the pillars was lily-work; so was the work of the pillars finished."

II

Which things are an allegory. Carry the figure into your thought of the Divine. In

God is the strength of inflexible righteous will, and in God is the beauty which nature exhibits and the deeper inner beauty of His unutterable love. If you miss either you misconceive God. In Jesus is exhibited the perfect harmony of both.

Carry the figure into the temple of God's Church to-day, where inflexible righteousness counts most of all, where the strong, true men are the pillars. In the Epistle to the Galatians St. Paul speaks of James and Cephas as pillars of the Church. In the visions of Patmos St. John received the message of the Lord, which seems to have its reference to the words of our text: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of God, and he shall go no more out."

Who are the pillars in the temple of God, who uphold the power and stability of religion? Not the wavering Christians—mere pious talkers—the men of gush and moods, and sentimental raptures. No, but the quiet men and women of firmness and strength, to whom God, and Right, and Duty, and Principle are the watchwords of life—the great realities. The brave true hearts who are often misunderstood—who are fighting secret battles that no man knows of. There are many of them in this parish. These are they who uphold the power of righteousness on earth—these are

the pillars in the temple of God. You know some of them. You know their influence, whether you like them or not. They make you respect religion. They make you feel that there are things more real, more noble, more desirable than the paltry aims that the common crowd run after.

There are many such people in this city, honestly wanting to follow Christ. And yet somehow one does not always feel that these people are making religion so beautiful and lovable that people about them long to have it.

III

For with all this firmness and strength, and struggle after righteousness, these pillars in God's temple are sometimes very unattractive. On the top of the pillars is no lily-work. And it is such a pity—such a loss to the cause of religion. Some of them are gloomy and chilling—their children and their employees are a little afraid of them. Some of them are unsympathetic with young people and their pleasures, forgetting the time when they were young themselves. Some of them are wrapped up too much in themselves. Some of them are sharp and cynical in conversation. Some are narrow and uncharitable in their religious views. Their little view of truth is the only

one possible. And yet they are good and righteous people, honestly wanting to serve Christ.

You know the sort of Christians that I mean—the unlovable religious people—the pillars without the lily-work. Do you know who are most deterring young people from following Jesus Christ? The unlovable religious people. Not the atheists or the drunkards or the outcasts of society. No. The unlovable religious people. For Jesus is judged through the people who follow Him. And you know how they hinder the attraction of religion, especially to young people. I said one day to a thoughtless young girl, “Well, at bottom you do want to be religious, don’t you?” And she looked me straight in the face. “No,” she said, “I don’t think I do.” “Why, what do you mean?” “I mean this,” she said, quite seriously: “some of my relatives are really good religious people, but I should not care to be much with them.” And I knew enough to understand what she meant.

IV

Brethren, I ask you to think of the need of lily-work on the pillars. *On the pillars*, I say. The mere ornamented lily-work which supports nothing, and strengthens nothing, is not worth

wasting time about here. I speak only of those who are in dead earnest about God. Seek to have the lily-work on the top of the pillars. Thus only is the work of the pillars finished.

Remember this. The lily-work belongs to the religion of Jesus Christ.

The most beautiful thing on earth is that religion of Christ as it appears in some lives that some of us know. If Christ were truly lifted up in the lives of His people He would draw all men unto Him.

The Jews have an old legend about Nathan the Wise who had a magic ring, and the property of this ring was to make him who wore it beloved of God and man. The religion of Jesus is like that sage's ring—it makes him who truly possesses it beloved of God and man.

Therefore, if you are one of the unlovable religious people, do not lay the flattering unction to your soul that it is a mere matter of temperament. It is not. It is a matter of deficient religion. It is because you are not earnestly enough following your Lord, and, therefore, are not growing in likeness to Him.

You boast your rugged honesty and candour. You "call a spade a spade." He too had the rugged honesty and candour that you admire. He could be very stern with sham and hypocrisy. But underneath it all was the deep love,

and sympathy, and tenderness, and care for other men's feelings. People liked to be with Him. The children crept into His arms. The choir boys in the Temple shouted hosanna as He passed. The Magdalene wetted His feet with her tears. John leant against His breast at supper. Peter broke down at one reproachful look from Him. The dying thief could not resist Him in the agony of death.

Oh, brethren, what a beautiful world it would be if that Christ spirit were formed in us! "How I long after you!" said Paul, "till Christ be formed in you." Till Christ be formed in you—till that tender, loving, generous spirit of Christ be formed in His people. That is the whole object of our Christian religion—the whole purpose of churches and preaching and sacraments. Till Christ be formed in us. Till we become, not merely righteous, but loving and lovable as our dear Lord.

You know some few, at least, who are thus showing forth the Kingdom of God. "She thought to herself," writes a modern novelist, "how delightful it would be to live in a house where everybody understood and loved and thought about every one else." She did not know that her wish was just for the Kingdom of God on earth, for the lily-work on the pillars of the Church of God.



Don't you think we might exhibit more the life of the Kingdom of God? Don't you think we might make religion more attractive in our city?

Brethren, love is the lily-work on the pillars of God, therefore pray for love—pray to be lovable with the lovableness of your Lord—that you may help men towards Him. The highest contribution any man can make to the world's salvation is not by talking or preaching, but by living. By so living among men that they may be attracted to his Master.

There are men and women everywhere wanting to help and being disappointed in the result. The preacher is discouraged because his sermons have so little effect. The parent is discouraged because his children do not care for religion. Maybe if that preacher got closer to Christ, and the people saw in him the love, and gentleness, and humility that come from such closeness, maybe they would be touched by the sermon of his daily life as they would never be by the sermon of the pulpit. Maybe if that parent, instead of scolding his boys, would follow more the loving Lord himself, he might find when he looks back that his stubborn, careless boys were stealing shyly after him. We cannot drive people into the King-

dom of God, but if we are going in ourselves they will often follow.

My dear people, let us think of it in our families and in our homes. Let us pray at the altar to-day for more likeness to Him. "Grant us to be pillars in the temple of God— and upon the top of the pillars the lily-work."

VIII

GOD'S TALENTS

The Parable of the Talents.—ST. MATT. xxv. 14, etc.

THIS is Our Lord's Parable of Responsibility—His direct teaching as to God's relation to us and to our life.

Listen.

“The Kingdom of God,” He says, i.e. the Church of God—i.e., as far as we are concerned, this congregation in church to-day—is in its position toward God as when a man going into a far country called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods, to one five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent, to trade therewith for him.

Practically it comes to this for each one here.

That God sends each one of us into the world to accomplish a certain life-work, to help Him in pulling this poor old world straight.

That He endows each one with more or less ability for the accomplishing of this purpose.

That He will one day ask of each of us,

My child, how hast thou accomplished the life-purpose to which I set thee and for which I endowed thee? How much is the world better, how much is your own life better, for your having lived?

I

Here is how our Lord puts it. There is a rich householder owning slaves. "Pondservants" is the Greek word used, suggesting, I suppose, that because God has created us and preserved us and redeemed us and endowed us with all our gifts and powers, we of right belong to Him altogether, body and soul. Therefore, according to the parable, no honourable man has a right to say, My neighbour may lawfully choose to serve God and I may lawfully choose not to serve Him. No, we are not our own; we belong to God whether we like or not. You may agree or not agree with this point of view. I only ask you to judge if it be not our Lord's point of view in this parable.

The rich householder is going away on a journey, and before going he calls out those servants of his to set them their work. There is the picture. The castle gates are open. The chariot is ready. The long red-covered table is laid in the hall, dotted over with little piles of gold and silver—one talent, two talents, five talents—and the great householder stands

looking into the face of each servant, gauging his capacities, giving him more or less of trading capital according to the task set him. This is not quite our idea of slaves and their work. We think of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and the black slave sent out each day to work in the fields. But if your slaves are men of clever brain and poor physique, you would not get the best value out of them that way. Even in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," Harry, the skilful carpenter, is hired out to use his brains and his skill for his master's use. You certainly would not get most value out of Jews nowadays by working them in the field. The Jews are born traders. You know the large Jewish community in our own city. Most of them are traders, pedlars, hucksters, sellers of different wares. Some of them sell tapes and buttons and needles and thread; the cleverer ones sell watches and jewellery and valuable goods. Each according to his ability. So that if you had to teach this parable of responsibility to the Jews to-day, I can't imagine any way that would more appeal to them than this way in which our Lord puts it.

II

Now comes the first question. Watch the servants at the long red counting table as the

talents are handed across. Who owns these talents? Surely the Master. They are His stock-in-trade to be used for His profit. "Lord, you delivered unto me five talents, two talents," etc.

Then watch the servants at God's long counting-table here in this church to-day. Whose are the talents with which they are entrusted? Wealth, influence, position, intellect, business ability, beauty, attractive manners, health—all the long list of talents and gifts. Whose are they? God's. What are they given for? For trading. For His profit. What profit does He want? He has a tremendous work to do for this poor world, to make it happier, holier, nobler every way, and He will not do it except through His servants. If they will not work, the poor world's blessing must wait. There is no other way. Therefore are our talents given.

Why, if we would only think of it, this word "talents" should always carry that meaning. One of the most fascinating of studies is the study of words and their origins. Where is this word freely in ordinary life. Where did we get it? Out of this parable of Christ's. When we speak of a talented boy, a statesman, a lawyer, of great talents, what did it originally mean? What should it mean now? That that boy, that statesman, that lawyer, has

received great gifts from God, on trust, for God's use, to trade with them for God, for the sake of his brethren. Be you sure of this. No man, or woman, or Church, or nation, ever received any gift or endowment for himself alone, but that with it he might help others to make life better and nobler. It is as if I sent my two boys away to school and gave the money to the elder one to pay for tickets, get luncheon for his brother, etc. If he neglected to do these things with the money it would not be good for him to meet me when he came back.

III

And if that be so, that all the talents are God's endowments, see what follows :

What becomes of the wretched snobbery of wealth, or birth, or intellect ? " I was born rich. I was born of good family. I was born with intellectual gifts." Well, be thankful for them. These are great gifts, but they carry great responsibilities. And surely they do not justify any man in looking down upon another to whom the Father has given smaller gifts. You had no more right than the other to come into the world in that rich or well-born or clever family. The Father planned it so for you surely that you might help the more. *Noblesse oblige.*

Or how can a man dare to use these talents of the Master merely for his own gain, his own advancement, forgetting God, forgetting his brethren ?

Or how can a man comfort himself on his deathbed with the thought that he never had done much harm to any one ? In all the difficulties of diagnosing a man's spiritual state that is one of the most frequent that we clergy meet with. You try to probe the man, to find out his state, and he coolly tells you : " I don't think God can have much against me. I don't think I ever wilfully did any harm to anybody." Fancy a man talking like that ! As if God had sent him here and endowed him with abilities just that he might keep from doing harm. Fancy one of your big builders coming to see his work and finding a man that he paid and fed sitting idle on the scaffolding. " I'm not doing any harm," the man says, " I'm not dropping any bricks down on the people in the street"; as if the employer was paying and feeding him merely for that. Ah, my brethren, life would be very different if we realized Christ's teaching in the parable. We should feel more the words that we utter in the Confession, " We have left undone the things that we ought to have done."

That is the first point. All our talents were

given by the Master that we might use them for good.

IV

Now pass from that. I want you to face another thought. Somebody is saying in his heart: These talents seem very unfairly distributed. Why don't we start fair if God is making us responsible? We are not in the same position socially. We are not all equally rich, or strong, or clever, or attractive in manner. Two boys in the same class, two girls in the same home, two people in the same pew, differ enormously in ability, physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual.

Yes, even moral and spiritual. That is the hardest part of the mystery. It is really easier for some people than for others to be kind and generous, to keep their tempers, to make other people happy. It is really easy for one man to believe and trust in God, while another, born with a sceptical temperament, finds it very much more difficult. This is a deep mystery. I do not understand it. I shall not try to explain it. It lands us in the mysteries of heredity and other deeper perplexities. But Jesus tells us here that we need not worry over it. For the Gospel, the Good News in the parable is this—that it is not all mere

chance, that God knows, that God cares, that God discriminates, that by and by the man with the poor endowment will, if he be faithful, receive the same glad, hearty approval as the other. "Well done, good and faithful servant," God says. Good and *faithful*, not good and brilliant, not good and successful. We cannot all be that. But thank God we can all be faithful each in his own little part, and that is all that God asks.

That is the second thought. Don't lose heart. Don't complain. Don't say it is unfair. Don't think it is all chance. God has planned that one should have more endowments than another, but that means also more responsibility. Somehow it would seem as if this diversity of gifts were a necessity of God's working. Some time ago I watched the organ builders working in a church. All the pipes were scattered over the pews, from the great 18-ft. diapason down to the little shrill whistle the size of one's little finger. And I saw that the builder was as careful in the tuning of the little one as of the great. He did not want the little one to do the work of the great. Each made its own sound and so the music came out right. I wonder if it is so also with the great Master playing on the keyboard of the Universe. Does He get the music best by the diversity of the notes ?

v

Touch for a moment the next thought in the parable. The men went off to increase the talents. Two of them used them, and so increased them. One of them failed to use, and lost. From which arises at once God's law of trading with all His talents—God's law of Spiritual Profit and Loss. Here it is briefly stated: He that useth increaseth. He that useth not shall lose. It is the law of all God's talents—bodily, mental, and spiritual.

1. *He that useth increaseth.* All over nature it is true. Look at a blacksmith's arm, why is it so powerful as compared with yours? He that useth increaseth. Look at a blind man in his keen sense of touch distinguishing the black from the white cat by touching its fur. Look at the trader with the quick turnover. He that useth increaseth.

And so too in spiritual life. The old Christian man who has used his soul—his spiritual talent, his sense of God's presence, his need of prayer—sees all increase by using till at last his soul grows strong and noble and God becomes very near and real, and his Bible becomes to him his joy and peace, and everything that he does and everything that is done to him, everything that is done against him, all somehow deepen his spiritual life, all are bringing him near to God. Remember it when you find prayer or

Bible uninteresting and difficult. Use even the little of good within you. It will increase by using.

2. *And he that useth not shall lose.* That, too, is a law of God in all nature.

Look at the fakir's arm in India, shrivelled to the bone by disuse. Look at Dr. Manette, in Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities," losing his power of speech through not using it. Look at the mole living underground in the dark and losing its sight. There are in the Mammoth Caves of Kentucky whole races of blind fish and frogs living in the darkness. Their eyes seem all right until you touch them with a knife, then they go to dust. That is nature's law. Nature says if you don't use them you shan't keep them. *He that useth not shall lose.*

And that too is awfully true in the spiritual life. A man for years neglects prayer, Bible-reading, church-going, Holy Communion, meditation about God. Then he wonders that infidelity is growing in him—that he cannot believe or pray. It is the great law: *he that useth not shall lose.*

Carlyle tells a story out of the Koran of dwellers by the Dead Sea, to whom Moses came. They neglected Moses. They refused to use the teaching of Moses. And so Moses departed. When next they were found, says the Koran, they were turned into apes. By

not using their souls they lost them, and now they look out into the dreariest, most undecipherable universe. "Only once in seven days they remember that they had souls." And Carlyle mockingly asks, "Hast thou never, my reader, met with specimens of these, who only once in seven days remember that they had souls?"

VI

Now I come to the picture of The Master's Return. Note first the attitude of the servants, "*Lord, you gave me two talents, five talents.* Ah yes, all good work, for God has underneath, the glad grateful acknowledgment that it was God who had given all that they had to begin with. *Non nobis, Domine.* The faithful workers think of God as the great giver. The unfaithful think of Him as the great demander: "Lord, I knew thee to be a hard man," etc.

Then look at the attitude of the Master. Some of you are so despondent about God's judgment of you. It is so easy, you feel, to find grave faults in you, and to pick holes in you. And you think God must surely do that when you so deserve it. It must be hard for the Father that His children have such an opinion of Him. Don't you think we might try to believe that He is at least as kindly as

we are to our children? You forget that when your little one desires to help you in some blundering way and makes a mess of it, you catch him up in your arms and kiss him because he at least wanted "to help mudder." You forget that when the disciples fell fast asleep during the Agony in the Garden, the Master did not say angrily, "Much they care about Me in My trouble." He looked for the good in them beneath the appearance of evil. He knew it was not that they did not care, but that they were dead tired after nights of strain and sleeplessness. "Ah," He said, "the spirit is willing, it is only the flesh is weak." You forget, too, the encouraging attitude of the Great Householder in this parable. He loved to praise—He hated to find fault—He expected good things from these poor servants of His, and He is so glad that they have not quite disappointed Him. True, they are stupid and faulty, they might have done better. The man with his four talents would probably feel small coming after the man with ten. But listen to the generous, hearty praise, the glad, cheery "Well done!" of Him who delights to praise and hates to blame. Think of the heartening up that comes to a poor servant when a master unexpectedly puts his hand on his shoulders: "Well done! Well done!" Ah, that is the Master we have to do with.

Don't forget it in your despondent times. God is not looking to find fault or pick holes in you. He is looking for any good in you and rejoicing to find it.

VII

One thing more. When a man has developed his talents and abilities, what is God's reward? Is it to cease work, to sit down in a big church in heaven for all eternity? What is the reward for work according to this parable? The reward is more and grander and higher work. Just as on earth, when a man has done well in a small position, he gets a bigger position where he can do greater work.

"Well done, faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things—ruler over five cities—over ten cities." That is God's reward. Not sitting idle for ever in heaven. Not like the poor retired business man dozing in 'he chimney corner till he is sick of it. But eternal, untiring service of everlasting youth and vigour, giving oneself for the service of others, letting oneself go out in sympathy with others, helping and blessing the universe of God, perhaps going out with Christ into the outer darkness to seek that which is lost, if so be that we may find it. That is the joy of the Lord for him who will use his talents, the joy of unselfish service for ever and ever.

IX

DOUBT

A SERMON TO MEN

When they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted.—*MATT. xxviii. 17.*

I THINK that was certainly honest doubt—the unwilling doubt of men who doubted because they could not help it. And I like the frank way in which the Bible tells of their doubt. But I have no time to dwell on that incident further.

I want to speak to you to-night about honest doubts and perplexities about religion. Honest doubt, I say. Not the immoral doubts of those who doubt the Bible because they do not want it to be true. Not the mere sham doubts of your would-be clever young people, who think it looks thoughtful and intellectual to ape the sceptic, and shock their pious elderly relatives with their ignorant, second-hand scepticism.

No. But the honest doubts that trouble and

torture faithful men and women; the puzzles and perplexities that shut out at times from them the very face of God, and make them feel as if all their foundations were slipping.

For there are such doubts, true and honest, and they cause sore trouble and depression to the doubter. It is a sore trouble. Do you know the story of the three pilgrims meeting at a roadside inn, and telling of the losses and bereavements that had come to them ?

But when these tales were done,
There spake among them one—
A stranger, seeming from all sorrow free.
Sad losses have ye met ;
But mine is heavier yet,
For a believing heart is gone from me.

Ah ! some of us know in some degree what that means, and sore, sore trouble it is to an earnest soul. To prevent any mistake, remember it is of such, and about such, that I am thinking to-night, to try to help them—not about those others who are content to doubt, and deserve and need no help.

Every man who is earnest to help a doubter must make that distinction. In my younger days I had my own troubles with doubt and scepticism, and therefore must always sympathise with those who are in doubt. But in my early ministry I wasted a good deal of

sympathy and effort on men who doubted but did not care much about the matter. As I get to know men better I find that I must distinguish. Where there is a real, earnest doubter struggling after light—you will remember it, if such should be here to-night—if the poor, stupid efforts of a man who has been through the wood before you can avail in the least, I would do anything to help you. It would be a real pleasure to me if you would talk things out with me. But I instinctively know now if a man is only a mere intellectual, a mere sentimental, doubter, willing to argue for victory, but not greatly caring; and in such cases I usually ask him not to waste the time and the nerve-strain that are wanted for others.

For the others are there. Like the children in the old nursery tale of the Babes in the Wood; the children wandering through the trackless forest, seeking the path home. My brethren, our age has very many lost children in the forest, seeking that path home. You know some of them yourselves, and I want to teach you to comfort and help them if I can.

There are far more of them than many good Christian people think—more of them amongst men than amongst women, but very many amongst women too. I am often finding them

in quarters where I little suspected—amongst people who are regular in their places in church ; people who are honestly trying to live the life of righteousness.

There are very many grades of their doubt and unbelief. Some of them are only disturbed about certain very trivial things—a passage in the Bible—about Jonah and the whale, or about some revengeful expression in the Psalms. But some there are for whom the very foundations of Christianity are tottering ; who doubt the Resurrection, who doubt the Gospel, who doubt sometimes the divinity of our Lord ; aye, who almost question in their darkest moments whether there be a God at all over their heads. Do not be shocked about it. There is no use in shutting our eyes to facts. Such people are in all our parishes, in all our larger congregations ; and they are not always the least thoughtful and the least earnest after the life of duty and righteousness.

Some of them have lost heart and have given up their search. Some of them think that God is hostile because of their doubts.

What are they to do ? Aye, or what are any of you to do if some time, against your will, the dreary doubt should come whether Christ be divine ; whether the Gospel be a fiction ; whether heaven and the future life be a mere illusion of fanatics ? And if you cannot

shake off your doubt in spite of its pain, what are you to do ?

I will tell you what I think :—

I

Do not be frightened at your doubt as if it were sinful. Doubt that is unwilling cannot be sinful. If you cannot believe, what else can you do but doubt ? If it be honest doubt, God will not blame you for it—nay, He will pity you for it. If He is the all-loving Father, if you are the poor child lost in the forest seeking the path home, why should you be afraid to tell Him of your trouble ? Why should you fear that He would be angry ?

I have known doubters with whom the worst difficulty in their doubt was the thought that God was angry—that they had no one to pray to, no one to confide in. They had learned cruel thoughts of the Father—that He was ready to take advantage of His poor children, and to reject and condemn them for thoughts and doubts that they could not help, that arose from no wilful hatred of Him, that arose in spite of their desire to love Him and live for Him. And that notion has fastened their doubts on them more firmly than ever. Never believe that of God. He is the Father who pitieth His children. He knoweth our

frame and remembereth we are but dust—and He has nothing but infinite pity and love for the child who is with true and honest heart seeking the path home.

II

That is the first thing. Never be frightened away from God by your doubt as if it were sin. But this is the second thing. Do not imagine that it is no loss to you to doubt. Though many a soul is growing Christlike in the dark, though God pities you in the dark and loves and makes allowance for you, yet remember that this darkness is not healthy to live in. It makes a great difference in the colour of your life, that when you awake in the morning and enter upon the duties of the day you believe in God—that when you go forth to do your work or to face your big sorrow you walk as seeing Him who is invisible. It is in the light of God's presence, known and felt, that human virtues blossom into beauty—that human lives can rest in calm and joy.

Therefore it is a grievous loss to be in doubt about God—a very grievous loss for any man that he should go on for years and years wandering in the trackless forest without eager, earnest, constant effort to find the path to God.

It is very necessary to emphasize this. For I am frequently meeting people who have been in a state of doubt and haziness for many years and who are quite satisfied and rather proud of their doubts. Women, who talk sentimentally about their doubts, and feel themselves quite interesting spiritual invalids. Men, who rather plume themselves on the difficulties that they say "come to thinking minds." People whose souls are every day growing weaker and more attenuated, because they are willing to live without a sturdy belief in the presence and the power of God.

I want to speak plainly to such people if they are here to-night. It is not flattering, but it is often necessary to tell them that this does not so often arise from thoughtfulness as from indolence and worldliness. Frequently—not always—it is because these sentimental women are too indolent for real effort to get clear of their difficulties—because these sceptical men have their heads so buried in the newspaper and ledger that they will not spare time and thought to find the path to truth. They have dropped the habit of daily prayer which they had as little children, and which kept open for them the avenues of the Unseen World. They have dropped the habit of Bible reading, which keeps men in touch with God. They seldom or never kneel at the Holy Sac-

rament, by which the divine life flows into the human soul.

And so, very naturally, the gates of the Unseen are closing against them. The vision of the spiritual world is passing away. Their earthly world is growing more real and more important. Doubt and haze and fog are around them. What else can they expect? Those who find the light are not of this class. They are troubled and sorrowful in the tangles of the forest. They have girded up their loins with earnest determination: "If there be a path home to find, I am resolved to find it. If the light of God's presence and the calm of a strong belief are, at any cost, to be attained, I am determined, by the help of God, to attain them."

III

And to these it is that I address the third thing I have to say. "Be perfectly sure that there is a path home, and if with all your hearts you truly seek it, you shall ever surely find it."

I do not say that you will understand all mysteries and get rid of all perplexities. I do not say that God will show you a map of the whole forest. But He will show you enough, He will show you the path home.

I should like to emphasize this confident

claim of the Church. There is a path home. There is much that one honours and likes in our present-day doubt. It is fearless, and earnest, and determined to find truth. What one fears and dislikes about it is its agnostic attitude, which says, We cannot know anything; we are all as mere blind gropers after truth, with very little to go on. Speak for yourself! we retort, we are not all mere blind gropers. That is an utterly false idea. The Church of God is not a set of mere adventurous seekers after truth. It is a body which only exists because of the truth, because Christ is divine, because Christ has died and risen again from the dead. There is no other explanation of the existence of the Church.

We are not to think of these doctrines as a set of open questions, whose answers we as a Church are seeking. Rather our attitude is that these are great certainties, on which the nobler souls in the Church in all ages have rested, and that the discussion of them is only for the sake of the weaker brethren who do not see clearly yet. Notice that; realize that; it will help, for however difficult it may be to a man to believe, yet there is some anchorage in the thought that in all the centuries since Christ came far abler and more thoughtful men than himself have inquired into and accepted these great facts as their rest and strength.

Yes, I say with all confidence, there is a path home, and it is possible for true hearts to find it.

IV

Do you ask me, How are we to find it? Do we want great brains, great ability, great power of sifting evidence? No! in this search the moral attitude is more important than the intellectual. How are you to find the truth? In general I may say, begin by our Lord's method. "He that willeth to do the will of God," said Christ, "he shall know the teaching." That is to say, the desire to do the right when found is the first step towards finding it.

The answer for your particular case depends on where you are, how far you are away from the path home that you are seeking. Suppose you are very far, or suppose your friend is very far—doubting the Bible, the divinity of Christ, the Resurrection, etc. Very few of us, I trust, doubt so fundamentally. But if one does, what can you do with him? It would be useless should you try to prove anything out of the Bible. What can you do? You must remember that God has not left you dependent on the Bible, that there are some truths which He has inwoven into the very fibres of con-

science—truths that it is impossible for any man to doubt.

“In the darkest hour of unbelief through which a human soul can pass, whatever is doubtful this at least is certain: if there be no heaven, no future life, no Gospel, no Christ, yet even then it is absolutely certain that it is better to be generous than to be selfish, better to be pure than to be licentious, better to be brave than to be a coward.” It is impossible for any doubter to doubt that. That the very best thing in the whole world for any man is to be a good man, even if he were never to be rewarded for it. That the very worst thing for any man is to be a bad man, even if he were never to be externally punished for it. Follow that conviction; yield yourself to that, and more light will come. Surrender yourself to the best you know, and then God will show you better.

I was reading the other day of poor Thomas Carlyle's awful time of struggle and unbelief. It was through this method of *Christ* that he found the light. Call in question what he might, one thing admitted of no question: that it was always right to be sincere and faithful and truth-loving and brave; that one was always under perennial obligations to follow the admonitions of the conscience within.

“Thus,” he says (in “*Sartor Resartus*”),

“in spite of this the infinite nature of duty was present with me. If my mortal eyes could not see God, yet in my heart was He present and His heaven-written law stood legible and sacred there.” What brought him to the sunlit slopes was self-surrender to the best he knew—full and affectionate yielding to the best light he had. That is how you, and your friend, are to begin to win back your faith. Leave the doubts alone for the present. If you can't believe, then act. Try to do right at the command of conscience; try to be pure and gentle and unselfish; try to be true to the duty that you know. That must be right whatever else is doubtful, and many a poor doubter, when his moorings have shifted, has only these handgrips of God to hold on to. Follow these, have faith in these, trust yourself to these, and as sure as there is a God above you He will not leave you astray.

v

“That,” you say, “will get me only a little way.” Yes, but it is the beginning of getting you the whole way if you are determined to go.

To rest there, believing in a vague “power that makes for righteousness,” is a very poor business. For if that story of Christ be true

which we teach, if God has really come in contact with man—if the story of Christ's Resurrection and all the glad, glorious hopes set before us be true—you must never rest till you find Him. As I speak to you there rises before me an old memory of a close friend, a young medical student, coming to tell me in despair that he had lost his faith, that he could no longer believe in the divinity of Our Lord, and I could not help him. I could but let him go out into his life-work with these words of Christ, "He that willeth to do he shall know."

Yes; he was willing to do. He would follow the right, even without happiness in religion. He would pray to God though doubting whether He heard. He would read his New Testament without believing in Christ. He struggled on for years. He tried to keep his heart right. He tried to be helpful to others. He tried to get what guidance he could, and at length the light came, and to-day he is an earnest worker for Christ. That is what you must do if your belief is gone. That is what your doubting friend must do. It is important for you to get the intellectual guidance. But the more important thing is the honest and good heart, the desire to do the will of God if you can find it.

Seek intellectual guidance. Talk things

over with your pastor, or with some sympathetic Christian friend, who is clever enough and broadminded enough to understand you. Come to me if you think I can be of any use. At any rate I will be straight with you. If I do not know I will say so. Be perfectly straight with yourself. Do not accept any special pleading. Do not gloss over difficulties. I think it is a good plan to write down definitely on paper the things that you doubt. For much doubt is mere haziness. Many doubts vanish in the writing them down. When a man has to write, "I definitely doubt this," "I definitely disbelieve that," he often has to pause and to doubt that he doubts. In any case writing will clear his thoughts.

Remember, too, that we cannot have coercive mathematical evidence for spiritual things. Faith is a great venture of the soul on God. Make your venture. And oh, my brother, while sometimes telling friend or pastor of your difficulty, keep always telling God. Nobody cares as He cares. Tell Him that you want to do His will if you can find it.

And you will find it ; surely you will. I am less troubled than I used to be about the earnest doubter. I suppose because I am believing more in the deep tenderness of God's love. I believe that He cares for you infinitely

more tenderly than you care for your little boy sitting on your knee. I believe that He is watching you, sympathizing with you. I believe that this sceptical temperament may be part of His discipline for you. As He lets come to other men fleshly temptation and bodily pain, so perhaps He lets difficulties of belief come to you for your discipline and training. Can I doubt that He wil' guide you—you poor, troubled, honest struggler striving towards the light? Even if a man point out to you, as a man did some time ago to me, the case of a great, honest sceptic who seemed to have died without fuller light, even still I believe that he will find the path one day.

This life is not the whole of existence. God has a good deal of time to do things between this and the other side of eternity. In this life or in the life beyond—somehow, somewhere, somewhen—the promise of Christ shall surely be fulfilled. The earnest soul that willeth to do God's will shall surely know.

VI

As I close there rises before me the picture of a young American poet lying out on the country-side watching with wondering heart the wild migrating swan as she soared to distant

lands southward in the twilight. How could she find her way in that limitless expanse? And as he watched and wondered, God's inspiration touched the poet into song:

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,
The desert and illimitable air,
Lone wandering, but not lost.

He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will guide my steps aright.

Do not be frightened; you are not alone. "Fear not, little flock. It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." If your heart be true He will surely lead you home. Only—only—don't delay the coming. Get home. Get home. The dark wood is dreary and lonely. Get home into the warmth of the Father's presence, into the habit of prayer and Bible study, into the comfort and help of that Holy Sacrament by which Christ communicates Himself to the souls of men.

X

THE SECRET OF PEACE

In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—PHIL. iv. 5, 6, 7.

I

THAT is St. Paul's secret of peace—his remedy for the troubles and worries of life.

To prevent misunderstanding we must keep in mind that he is not dealing with the careless, godless man who is worrying through his life without religion. He is addressing Christian people, to whom God and Right and Duty, and the abiding presence of Christ, mean something real. And to them surely he has advice worth giving.

Listen :

1. "In *nothing* be anxious"—that is rather sweeping, is it not ?
2. "But in *everything*"—rather a wide sweep

again—"but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

8. And if you do that, he says, I guarantee to you that "the peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep your hearts and minds."

II

The peace of God which passeth all understanding—just the Church's prayer for us in the Benediction—only here it is not a prayer that it *may*, but a promise that it *shall*, keep our hearts and minds.

I am speaking to-day of men with business anxieties and women with household troubles.

Now, don't begin to think of this advice of St. Paul as unreal and sentimental—a something only fit for the pulpit on Sundays, but with no real power for the fret and anxiety that comes to men during the week in the wear and tear of life.

The man who gives this advice to you has a right to be heard. He is no foolish enthusiast, no man of emotions and soft sentiments. He is a more thorough man than any of us here. He had tried this remedy on sorer troubles than most of us ever felt.

His whole history is full of troubles. "Of

the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils amongst false brethren, in labour and travail, in fastings and cold and nakedness, and besides all these that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches."

Even this very letter to the Philippians was written in a dungeon cell, under the shadow of the scaffold, not knowing whether the prison would not open to the grave. And yet he has no shadow of anxiety. Here he commands them, "In nothing be anxious." A few verses on he tells them of the secret he had learned: "In whatsoever state I am therein to be content." Nay, through this whole epistle, in this dread crisis of his life, I have counted that the words "joy" and "rejoice" occur at every few verses.

Is it not contemptible to hear men, with their petty little troubles of a fit of sickness or a slight fall in their income, sneering at this great hero soul and his advice, and telling you, "That sort of sentiment is very little remedy for serious troubles like ours"?

Surely it is common sense to listen to such a man if he has a cure for life's worries. Surely

a remedy that brings forth such results as this is something at least worth thinking about.

And it is not St. Paul only who advises this remedy. Look at the peaceful calm of Our Lord's earthly life in the midst of the most troublous surroundings. Read His beautiful simile of the care of God "as a hen gathering her chickens under her wings." Hear His kind advice to the troubled and heavy laden, "Fret not yourself for the morrow. Your Heavenly Father knoweth."

Look at the old Hebrew poets in the Psalms running as it were to God continually like a set of little children. "Rest in the Lord," they say, "and wait patiently for Him. Fret not thyself lest thou be tempted to evil." See the many people in the world to-day affected in mind, body, or estate, and yet with this inner peace that passeth understanding keeping their hearts.

Brethren, believe at least this fact—that if you will use St. Paul's remedy you will enjoy St. Paul's freedom from fretting and anxiety, and that would be worth a great deal of money to some of us.

III

Let me spend a few moments in analysing this advice of St. Paul's about our anxiety.

1. He says, "Make it known unto God,"

whatever the anxiety be, about business affairs or home affairs, about great matters or small, go and relieve your heart by telling God about it. Never mind that He knows all about it before. There is a wonderful relief in putting the anxiety into words and telling Him about it. For while we are telling Him about it we are really telling ourselves that He knows all about it. It takes a great deal of telling to persuade ourselves thoroughly of that, but it is a great comfort to be persuaded of it. It is a great comfort to a man to feel that he has a right to speak to the Infinite God who made the heaven and earth—that he can come into God's presence and tell Him all his sorrows, doubts, sins, weaknesses, and that God will hear him, and, instead of striking him dead for his presumption or his sinfulness, will comfort him with a feeling of peace, of freedom, of being right and safe, such as he never had before, till all the troubles and anxieties of life begin to seem light and easy to be borne—till he feels as this same Apostle felt of old. If God be with us, who can be against us?

2. And then (St. Paul says) not only comfort yourself by telling God of your troubles, make your prayer and supplication. Tell Him what you want as you would tell it to any friend who had the power to help you. There is no trouble that He cannot help you in—no

difficulty that He cannot get you out of without disturbing the course of the government of the world.

Be quite sure of that. But don't be quite sure that He will do for you just what you think best. Come to Him fearlessly, tell Him just exactly what you want, like a poor, stupid, blundering child that earnestly wishes for one special thing, but is not quite sure if it is good for him or not, and then leave it all with Him. Think of the sympathy of Christ on earth. Take refuge by faith within His sacred heart. Say to yourself, If it be good for me He will give what I ask, and if He gives it not it is because that, too, is good for me and for others beside me.

I know it is not easy to say that. I am almost ashamed of giving you advice which I am so little able to take myself. But the more we study our Saviour's human life the easier it will be to say it, for then only can we get even a dim notion of what God is and how He feels toward men. Oh, I think if we could really find out what God really is, I think if we could know His thoughts about each one of this congregation to-day, we should not have a fret or anxiety in this world except that we did not love Him and trust Him enough.

3. One little thing more. We are to tell God about our troubles. We are to ask for

what we want done. But take care not to leave out the other little part of the Apostle's remedy, "*with thanksgiving.*" "By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." If you leave out the thanksgiving the remedy will fail, just as if you left out one important ingredient in a doctor's prescription. I'm afraid a good many people do leave this out. More than once I have told you of the advice I got from a godly old man long ago. "If you want to be happy and contented, make it a rule never to rise from your knees without thanking God for something, and if you can think of nothing else to say, say the General Thanksgiving."

I am sure that is so. And I fear there are many good people who forget it. They very often pray to God—they seldom stand up to thank Him with bounding hearts for the countless rich blessings bestowed upon them. Oh, brethren, think more of the goodness of God, and in the worst of your anxieties stop sometimes to think how much you have to be thankful for.

Look at the common gifts—light, air, and water. Do we ever thank God for these?—though a very brief deprivation of them would mean our destruction.

Look at the blessed gift of health that nearly

every one of us here, the poorest and wretchedest grumbler among us all, has received in bounteous measure. We think of it as if we had a perfect right to it. Seldom do we thank the good God who gives it to us. Now and then we do. When we have lost it for a while. When a man has been for months confined to his sick-room in helplessness and pain. When he begins to feel again the healthy blood coursing through his veins and the vigour coming back to his limbs and to his brain. When he gets out in God's beautiful sunshine and sees again how lovely the world is. And all life for the time seems bright and beautiful and hopeful before him.

Ah, he learns then to realize how precious is God's gift that he had prized so lightly before. He feels that if God will but continue it to him he will be ashamed to fret about smaller worries any more. I read some time ago of a man who dreamt that he had lost his sight, and in his agony and misery woke up to see the morning light shining through the window. Oh, how thankful he was to God!

And these are but the commonest of our blessings. What of the true friends that make life so enjoyable—the happy home, the wife, the husband, parents, the little children, the yearly blessing of the harvest to support us, and all the blessings of this life, and then, as

we all said to God a few minutes ago, "above all for Thine inestimable gift in the redemption of the world, for the means of grace and for the hope of glory."

There was once a man who smiled
Because the day was bright,
Because he slept at night,
Because God gave him sight
To gaze upon his child ;
Because his little one
Could leap and laugh and run.
Because the distant sun
Smiled on the earth, he smiled.

He toiled and still was glad
Because the air was free,
Because he loved, and she
That claimed his love and he
Shared all the joys they had !
Because the grasses grew,
Because the sweet winds blew,
Because that he could hew
And hammer, he was glad.

IV

Oh, brethren, get the habit of thanksgiving. It is worth £1,000 a year to a man to be able always to look at the bright side of life and to keep his heart warm with gratitude to God. Never rise from your knees without some word of thanksgiving. Even you who have lost much that made life joyful thank God for all that is still left you. I do believe if we took

the trouble of daily thanking God for His blessings we should hardly have time for our anxieties at all.

And now I have done. Will you try to follow this advice? If you do you have the definite promise attached, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The peace of God, the supernatural peace that Christ bequeathed to His people: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." The peace that passeth all understanding. Does it not pass all understanding that this prisoner, with death staring him in the face, should be kept in perfect undisturbed peace; that history should tell of a martyr standing at the stake and saying to the officer in charge of the execution, "Lay your hand on my heart and then on your own and see which of them is beating more peacefully"; that in countless homes of trouble in the world, just when you would expect a man to be overwhelmed with anxiety, you find this perfect, beautiful peace? Surely it is a marvel that passeth understanding.

Brethren, seek that peace. You cannot ex-

pect in a world of trouble that you will escape causes of anxiety. You cannot expect the sun to be shining always. May God send you grace now to acquire the habit of running to Him like little children with every anxiety. And may the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds for ever. Amen.

XI

THIRSTING FOR GOD

My soul thirsteth for God—for the living God.—Ps. xlii. 2.

I

I WISH you would read over the 42nd Psalm some time to-day. Try to enter into it sympathetically. Get in touch with the author—that poor, wounded, sorrowing spirit, in his weariness and craving, reaching out his hands helplessly to the only Comforter that could satisfy him now. “My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.”

We don't know who he was. Commentators suggest that it was David when fleeing from Absalom. Perhaps so. We do not know. But whoever it was, he was a real man, with a real craving, deep and strong, that nothing on all this earth could satisfy. And he felt that God could. “My soul thirsteth for God.”

Blessed is the man who has that conscious longing for God. For God is very near to satisfy it. “Blessed are they that hunger and

thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

II

But I am not thinking of such godly men to-day. I have a larger, wider thought, in which at first you will probably disagree with me.

Do you think that that thirsting for God is something peculiar to a few saintly souls here and there? I do not. If I thought so I would not have preached about it to-day. Nay, in a very real sense I think it belongs to us all. I think that old Psalmist was voicing the eternal cry of humanity all the world over. We are all thirsting. We are all craving. We all want God, if we only knew it. That is where the old Psalmist is ahead of us. He knew what he wanted. But it is true of us all, whether we know it or not. We are thirsting for God, even the living God, whether we know what we are craving for or not.

That is the thought in my mind as I think of that poor restless Psalmist 3,000 years ago, and as I turn from him to look into your eyes to-day, with your restlessness and cravings and dissatisfactions in life,—that the soul has its hungering and thirsting as well as the body, and that the only satisfaction for the craving of the soul is God, even the living God.

Some of you will feel that this is not a true view of life. Well, I am going to appeal to your own experience in a moment. But first I want to show you that it is the Divine view of human life all over the Bible.

III

In the Bible the soul of man is regarded as a living, hungering thing, wanting its proper sustenance and restless without it.

Listen to the Psalms. "My soul thirsteth for God. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

Listen to Isaiah calling to his fellows, restless and thirsting amid their pleasures and sins. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

Hear our Lord in the parable telling of the soul away from God, with its memory of the bread in the Father's house, trying to feed itself on husks that the swine did eat.

Jesus on earth seems to feel Himself in a region of famishing souls that hardly have the sense to know what they are famishing for. "I am the bread of life." "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." "He that drinketh of earth's water shall thirst again.

He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

Need I go on multiplying proofs that the God who made the soul and ought to know its wants looks on it as a something with its own special craving which causes it dissatisfaction and restlessness?

IV

Now see if your knowledge of life fits in with the Bible view. Surely you will allow the existence of the restless dissatisfaction in life without God, however you account for it. Only last week I read in the daily paper a plea against the prevailing restlessness and dissatisfaction of modern life. All around you—amongst rich and poor, high and low, prosperous and unfortunate—people are looking forward to satisfaction, but never quite getting it—never resting in the present, always reaching forward to something not yet attained. And when the new object is attained, unresting still—reaching forward to some other object, pursuing it with the same eagerness, only to be dissatisfied again when they have gained it.

Men find many objects to place before them to ease their dissatisfaction—they thirst for riches, for honours, for pleasure, for success in life—and they gain them—and still they thirst.

Here is a man who has longed and laboured for wealth and has attained it. He sits down in his princely mansion or looks out over his broad acres and tries to say within himself, "I have much goods stored up for many years: soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But his soul will not take her ease for all that. Somehow he is not satisfied.

Here is a woman who would satisfy herself with pleasures and forget her disquiet. Her days are spent in travelling and sight-seeing, her nights in rounds of pleasures and amusements,—and she wakes in the quiet morning to find it is in vain.

Or success is sought—business success and honours and position: the man's highest hopes are realized, he has got all he aimed at,—and he turns away like a child weary of the glittering toys he had so longed for before.

I do not want to paint any gloomy view of life—life is full of pleasant things—but the soul made in God's image cannot rest in these. So comes dissatisfaction. We all know it. We have our proverbs and aphorisms about life's dissatisfaction. Our most beautiful poetry is an expression of this craving. One of the truest novels in our literature closes with the weary sigh—"Vanitas vanitatum. Which of us gets his desire, or getting it is satisfied?" That is the cry of a world without God. So

true it is what Jesus has said, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again."

v

Now, then, why are we thus—with restless instincts, with unsatisfied cravings? Because God has so made us. But again why?

Don't you think it may be for the same purpose as our bodily cravings—because Reason alone is not enough to impel us to perform the functions of life. Take hunger and thirst. However much Reason may teach us the need of food and drink for supplying life, and however much we believe it, yet often when excited and interested in other things we should neglect the rule and forget to feed our bodies. Therefore in mercy to us the instincts of hunger and thirst were added to make us uneasy and dissatisfied when we are neglecting the laws of life.

So also in the life of the soul. We know that the soul needs God. Reason and Revelation bids us seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. But we are so occupied with the cares and pleasures and lusts of other things that we neglect to do so. Therefore it is God's mercy that creates in us this restless dissatisfaction which can never find its fruition but in God, even the living God.

VI

Brethren, this is no light matter I am asserting to-day. You ought to face it straight out, and either accept it or deny it.

I am asserting that humanity is restless for God without knowing what is the cause of its restlessness. That the soul of man all over the earth has an inborn instinct for God. As the young sea-gull is restless in its instinct for the sea, so is the human soul in its instinct for God.

You may make your caged sea-gull moderately content by pleasant surroundings and attractive food. You may make a human soul moderately content with riches and comfort and the pleasures of life. But the restless instinct is underneath.

By keeping the sea-gull away from the sea, by keeping the human soul away from God, you may puzzle him as to what his restlessness means. But it is there.

That is why my newspaper told me last week of the restlessness and dissatisfaction in modern life. That is why Thackeray tells us in his great novel of the Vanity Fair of unsatisfied desires. But neither Thackeray nor the newspaper told me of the pathetic meaning of it. The poor sea-gull away from the sea does not know why he is restless. The poor human soul

away from God does not know why he can't be satisfied. Long centuries ago St. Augustine felt what was wanting, "Thou, O God, hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."

Ah, that is it. It is an attribute of an immortal soul to need a living God—to be restless without Him. This restless uneasiness we never can satisfy with the world that lies around us. There is only one object in which it can reach its satisfaction and its rest—and that is God, even the living God.

And so in a real sense it is true what I said at the beginning—that poor humanity to-day in its unsatisfied cravings is really thirsting for God, even the living God.

VII

Now, is not that thought worth thinking about? Is it not a lovely thing—a hopeful, encouraging, ennobling thing—this hunger of the soul, this relation to God? Man is the only animal that cannot rest in his surroundings. The ox and the ass are perfectly happy with warmth and food and the comforts of life. Man is not, for he is related to God. His restlessness is a result of his greatness. Thanks be to God.

And is it not a sad, sorrowful, mysterious

thing, that men in their restless dissatisfaction will not learn the reason ?

Are any such here to-day—with famished souls thirsting for God and being fed with husks ? Oh, you dissatisfied men and women, go home and thank God that He has made your lives dissatisfied—not in anger, but in tenderness—to draw you to Himself. Do you know George Herbert's poem ?—

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
“ Let us,” said He, “ pour on him all we can.
Let the world's treasures that despised lie
Contract into a span.”

Then strength first made a way,
Then beauty flowed, then riches, honour, pleasure.
When nearly all was gone God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all His treasure
Rest at the bottom lay.

“ For if I should,” said God,
“ Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me
And rest in nature—not the God of nature—
So both should losers be.

“ Yea, let him keep all these,
But keep them with repining and unrest,
So that at last, if goodness lead him not, his weariness
May toss him to My breast.”

When you sit down at night, restless and dissatisfied, in spite of all your comforts, try to tell yourself the truth. “ This is my soul's

restlessness. God has made me with the thirsting for Himself, and in Him only can I find my rest. I did not know what I was thirsting for. I think I know it now. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.

Ah, yield yourself to the Divine instinct and thank God that He has made you restless. And don't be discouraged. If you honestly desire to become nearer to God you will become so, however dimly you perceive God as yet. Only keep true to these higher instincts. Only do not quench the divine hungering and thirsting. Only pray on. Only struggle on. And God will take care of the results of the struggle. And to him that overcometh He will give to sit with Him in His Kingdom. And there, there shall be no more thirst.

Unto which blessed Kingdom may He vouchsafe to bring us all. Amen.

XII

THE QUESTION OF QUESTIONS

What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?—
ST. MATT. xxvii. 22.

I

IT is the question of Pontius Pilate. He is puzzled, perplexed, frightened. Before him stands the most mysterious, extraordinary prisoner—a weak, exhausted man, all white and tired from the agony of Gethsemane and the long night of torture and insult in the soldiers' hall—a poor prisoner in his power for life and death. And yet, somehow, he feels half afraid of Him. He has never seen any one like Him before. There is a look in those eternal eyes which he cannot understand, attracting him towards something beautiful and high, yet repelling him with a sense of awe and mystery.

There are strange rumours too about this man—that He claims to be a king, that he claims to be the Son of God, that He can heal the sick and raise the dead. Pilate could ignore

these foolish claims if they stood alone. But they rise in his mind now as a background of thought as he looks into the face of his mysterious prisoner, so calmly facing death. He is disturbed. His conscience is stirring uneasily.

Already he has been questioning Jesus about this mysterious kingship. "My kingdom," said Jesus, "is not of this world." Already has come the frightened message from his wife, "Have nothing to do with this just man. I have suffered many things this night in a dream because of Him."

Now he is watching the priests and elders clamouring with their fierce accusations. But Jesus answered not. Pilate is getting nervous. "Why don't you speak? Do you not hear the things they are witnessing against you?" But Jesus answered not a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.

What is he to do with this mysterious prisoner? He would like to stand by Him. His conscience tells him he ought. But it might cost him the favour of the people, the favour even of Cæsar. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." It is a perplexing question.

At last he thinks, Perhaps I can throw the responsibility on to Herod. So he sent him to Herod. Perhaps Herod of Galilee would be

interested in the Galilean. But that wily old Jew was too clever for him. He mocks the prisoner and he puts an old purple horse-cloth over Him in the insult of His kingship and sends Him back to Pilate. There is no escape that way.

Then he appeals to the mob. Perhaps they will relieve him of his responsibility. "If ye will have Jesus I will also." "Ye have a custom that I release one to you at the feast. Will ye have this Jesus of Nazareth?" "No!" cried the mob, with a fierce angry shout. "Not this man, but Barabbas!"

So Pilate is baulked again. The responsibility is thrown back on him. He must decide. And in his frightened perplexity he lets out at last the question that has been all day tormenting him, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"

The mob knew very well what they wanted done. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and have done with it. Ah! but they have not had the troubling experiences of Him that Pilate had.

I need not go on. You know the end. How the poor coward, with the loving eyes of Jesus resting upon him in this great crisis of his decision, gave up the struggle. Yet he would not consent to crucify Him. He washed his hands before the multitude. "Crucify Him

yourself," he cries. "I will have nothing to do with it. I find no fault in Him." And so having scourged Jesus he delivered Him to be crucified.

That is what Pilate did with Jesus which is called Christ. And for that cowardly betrayal his name has been branded with infamy all through the ages wherever the Christian creed is said, "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

II

But I am not here this morning to talk about Pilate and his perplexities. I am thinking not of him, but of ourselves. For Jesus the everlasting Lord is on His trial to-day before the people of Montreal, A.D. 1913, as He was long ago before the people of Jerusalem, A.D. 33. He stands in our midst invisible to-day, with the eternal eyes still looking upon us and wanting to bless us, wishing to win our love and loyalty. Many are disbelieving in Him; many are rejecting Him. For each of us that question of questions is awaiting its reply, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"

And brethren, mark this: the question is far more serious for us than it was for Pilate, for we have to answer it with full knowledge of what Jesus was and is. What will *you* do

with Him, and *you*, and *you*? What *are* you doing with Him?

Is there any one here trying to ignore Him—to escape the question? I have been thinking a good deal last week about those who seem to me the careless people in our parish, and I think they try to escape the answer by trying to ignore the question altogether. Ignore it altogether! Brethren, it cannot be done! And in the bottom of your hearts you know it cannot be done.

You don't believe that? You tell me men can ignore Christ and ignore His question, and the preacher does not know much about men if he thinks otherwise. I tell you that in a Christian land men cannot ignore Christ, cannot get away from the question, and the preacher knows perhaps more than you do about men's efforts to do that.

Yes, I know all about that man who you think is ignoring it, who has accepted all this week God's good gifts of health and intellect and happiness and all the blessings of this life, and without ever a prayer or thanksgiving in his home is away somewhere to-day to amuse himself and forget God.

You think he gets away from the question altogether? Not he. Thank God for it. He can keep it under a good deal. But whenever in a wakeful night he thinks of his boyhood

and his mother, when he meets an old friend who is living for the highest things, when he hears the church bells calling to him on Sunday, again and again through the mercy of God there comes the feeling of disturbance and the stirring down deep of troublesome questions. The stern, tender love of God will not let him escape.

III

Nay, I will give you a worse case than this respectable sinner. Here is a young man that I read of lately, a rich young man in New York. He is an atheist, or thinks he is. He is a drunkard, and knows he is. He has had a bad trouble, and starts to get drunk. A friend tries to check him. "Get out of the way," he cries. "I am on the broad downward road to the devil. There is nothing to block that road."

"Nay," said his friend, "Christ will block that road and make it very hard for you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this—it is the result of a life's experience—no man can be as bad as he wants to be."

"Do you mean that I can't be as bad as I want to be?"

"Yes, for God will block that road with picks and goads, with torment and remorse,

and miserable mysterious longings for better things at times."

That expression caught me at once, *No man can be as bad as he wants to be.* That is the result also of my own life-study of men. I have watched many men on that road, and I have learned that the eyes of Christ and the loving, stern hand of Christ is never off them. Therefore it is that no man can be as bad as he wants to be.

It is not only to Saul of Tarsus that Jesus said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the goads." I tell you the worst sinner in this city to-day is not escaping the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" WHY?

Because God wants to torture him? Nay, but because Christ wants to save him. Because the Good Shepherd is ever out on the desolate mountains seeking that which is lost if so be that He may find it. That is why men cannot escape the question, "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?"

I have often felt on holy ground as the poor drunkard and outcast told me of his remorse. It was as if I could hear the voice of the Lord, as if I could see around this man the footsteps of the Divine Seeker, seeking that which is strayed. Oh, is it not good of that rejected Lord to care more than the man himself cares

for his salvation? The man himself is indifferent about his salvation, but the Lord is not indifferent. That is why. Oh that patient, untiring love of Christ following ever on our godless path!

Tramp, tramp, on the downward way,
 With seldom a stop and never a stay.
 Loving the darkness, hating the light,
 Our faces set towards eternal night.
 Each has answered back to God's cry
 "Turn ye! turn ye!" "Not I! Not I!"
 We have bartered away God's gems and gold
 For empty husks and shadows cold.
 We have laughed at the devil's tightening chain
 and bid him forge it strong,
And Christ still keeps on loving us, loving all along.

And still His voice pursues each one,
 "My child, what more could thy God have done?
 Thy sin hid the light of Heaven from Me
 When alone in the darkness I died for thee;
 Thy sin of this day in its shadow lay
 Between my face and One turned away."
 And we stop and turn for a moment's space
 To fling back that love in the Saviour's face,
 To give His heart yet another grief and to glory
 in the wrong,
Yet Christ still keeps on loving us, loving all along.

IV

What will you do with Jesus? Crucify Him? Cast Him away altogether out of your life? No, few of us have the wickedness or

the courage to do that. No great thanks to us. Even Pilate refused to do that.

Or will you try, like Pilate, to throw off the responsibility on Herod or on the crowd? I think some in this parish do it. Send Him to Herod, to the clever people who can give clever reasons for disbelieving in His divinity. You are a busy man, or have not time to settle such questions.

Or will you throw off the responsibility by appealing to the crowd? "Most people around me don't want to stand out on the side of Jesus any more than I. I would go with them if they all elected to choose Him. I am as good as they are. I don't feel responsible."

Ah, Pilate did not escape that way. Neither will you.

You know in your heart that that is all wrong. You can't throw off responsibility. Decide against Christ if you like, but do it straight out. Don't try to shirk responsibility. Each man is responsible for his life-decision as if he stood alone in the universe. Some day he will feel it. When he stands at the grave of child or wife, taken away from him to get a better chance of growing toward the right. Or on his own sick-bed, with death staring him in the face. Or five minutes after death, when he stands within the veil in the presence of his rejected Lord. No doubt then

about the deep conviction, "Truly this was the Son of God." No doubt then about the responsibility for the question, "What have I done with Jesus which is called Christ?"

Or will you patronize Him and admire Him as Pilate did? "I find no fault in Him." Only the other day I heard some respectable sceptics speak of Him. They thought He was a great Teacher, His Sermon on the Mount was so noble. No name in history could be set side by side with His, etc. Think of the colossal impudence of these superior persons, rank outsiders, patronizing the Christ of God, and never taking the trouble to be serious about Him!

Or will you do what some others are doing? They dare not drop Him out altogether. But they keep Him for Sundays and special occasions. Like the Chinese, who take their idol out of its case on festival days and then wrap it up again. So some people seem to worship Christ. But as for devotion to Him—as for any real heart-throb of gratitude, of love, of loyalty,—as for misery about the failure that would disappoint Him, and eager desire to watch over His interests—as for any comfort in His presence in prayer or sacrament—as for any real feeling of any kind at all about Him—it is not there.

There are some who touch still lower depths,

contemptible coward souls who would go on in their sin and break God's laws and grieve God's heart, but hope some day to be able to cry when death draws near, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Therefore they will not utterly break with Christ lest evil should happen.

This is the lowest-down type. I heard once of an honest infidel teacher who for years on Sundays in the London parks preached against Christianity. On his deathbed, after weeks of thought, he said one day to a companion: "I think I was wrong. I believe that the whole story of Christ is true." "Then," said his comrade, "had you not better make your peace with Him quickly, for the time is short?" The dying infidel drew himself up in his bed. "No," he said; "I am sorry for the past, but after spending my years of health in fighting against Him, I'm not mean enough to go whining now. I would rather take my chance."

So would I. I think any honest man would rather take his chance with that poor infidel than with those that I speak of. Think of using the Eternal Son of God like that!

v

What will you do with Jesus? Will you

follow Him, worship Him, love Him, serve Him, place yourself at His feet as your Master and Friend—the dearest, tenderest Master and Friend that ever man had? There were some in that crowd before Pilate who could give that answer. “Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest.” There are many in this parish saying the same, more than some of you know.

Oh, my dear people, that is the only true answer to the question about Jesus, the only response that will help us for time and eternity. Why can't we all give it?

What do you want coming here at all for, if you are not wanting Jesus Christ? What are you keeping up your church for? Is it a mere club to hear sermons in on Sunday? What is the good of doing all this playing with religion?

I pointed out lately what is meant by a successful parish. A successful parish is not merely where you have crowded congregations and eloquent preaching and beautiful music and large collections. A successful parish, if it was only twenty people in an old shack, is that where souls are being saved, where poor struggling seekers after Christ are encouraged and helped. Don't you want that in your parish? Won't you help to make it so? Had not some of you better begin with yourself?

What will you do with Jesus which is called Christ ?

What shall I do with Jesus ? Nay, rather, what shall I do without Jesus ? In the times of dissatisfaction, in the times of aspiration after better things, in the times of sorrow, in the time of bereavement, in the hour of death, and in the Day of Judgment, what should I do without Jesus which is called Christ ?

XIII

FELLOW WORKERS WITH GOD

ANNUAL SERMON TO THE PARISH WORKERS AT THEIR CORPORATE COMMUNION

The Father worketh hitherto, and I work.—JOHN v. 17.
Fellow workers with God.—2 COR. vi. 2.

I

I HAVE lately heard of a little boy who asked his mother, "Mother, what is God doing all day?"

Did you ever think what God is doing all day?

God is working all the time—working every day and every hour. That is the idea which is growing more and more prominent in religious thought to-day.

People used to think of the great Master Workman who made his countless worlds and sent them rolling out into space—and made this earth after ages of growth as a platform

for human souls to grow, and made men and women with lungs and heart and brain and soul, and then sent out His great complicated machine to go ahead while He sat outside and watched it go.

We have much nobler and more intimate thoughts of God now. We believe that He not only set the machine on wheels, but He is every moment making the wheels go round—that He not only made this earth by His divine energy and sent it on its course, but that that divine energy is throbbing through it all the time, making the sun to shine and the rain to fall, making the little grains of wheat to throb and swell and grow to feed the world. His divine energy is making the lungs to rise and fall and the heart to open and close, and the brain to stir with thought. That divine energy is making the soul to move with high thoughts and enthusiasms.

“What does God do all day?” asks the little boy. Ah, my boy, that is what God does all day and all night, and if God stopped doing it for a moment the universe would vanish into nothingness.

God is working—God is very near to us—

Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands or feet.

II

My second text comes from a little passing expression of St. Paul, as he thinks of the eternal working. He speaks in 2 Cor. vi. 11 of "fellow workers with God." Who are they? Angels and archangels sweeping through the universe? Powers and spiritualities painting in the red sunsets "with brushes of comet's hair"?

No! he means just us and people like us.

What a presumption it seems to use such a title of any human beings!—to look up at the countless worlds at midnight moving in perfect order in the Great Workman's hand, to look at the earth with its yellow cornfields and trackless forests, and the mighty ocean sweeping on the shore—to think of the mysterious works of God in the body and brain and memory and reason and soul of human beings—and then to speak of any poor mortals as fellow workers with God!

And yet that is just what the Bible dares to do. St. Paul, inspired of God, is here speaking especially of the sacred ministry—the ambassadors of God—but there is nothing unreasonable in stretching it to all who are engaged in any ministry for God and for the good of men. Fellow workers of God, not in the lower work of making oceans and forests

and worlds and stars, but in the higher work for which oceans and forests and worlds and stars were made: in the highest work that even God Himself can engage in—the helping human souls upward in their high destiny.

Therefore I dare to apply this title to all of us who are banded together in the spiritual work of this parish—the clergy and choir and Sunday-school teachers and missionary workers and wardens and vestry and the many faithful helpers in all the many organizations of this parish—I dare to call you all fellow workers with God. I dare to rouse you by that title to a deeper enthusiasm and a nobler sense of your position and a deeper resolve that you will be worthy of the great name which belongs to you.

This year as usual I have called you together by letter during the week to meet on this Sunday morning to think and pray over your work for the season and to reconsecrate yourselves by kneeling together in corporate communion at the feet of Our Lord.

My brethren, there ought to be more seriousness in this parish, more individual prayer for your clergy, for yourselves, for your work, for each other—I want that you should all realize what your parish stands for, what your parish exists for. This is not a sort of Church club for a set of idle people to meet in on

Sundays and go through their service and listen to a sermon, and go home and do nothing. It is not a place for people merely to get edified in their own souls. This parish exists to help on the Kingdom of God.

One sometimes hears of the "success" of this or that parish. My brethren, the success of a parish does not consist in large congregations or satisfactory finance or beautiful music or eloquent sermons. The success of a parish is to be measured by the conversion of souls, by the growth of spiritual life, by good work done for God. And if we have not such results we are a shame and a failure and deserve only to be wiped out.

If our clergy with all their faults are not at bottom men of God—poor humble strugglers, trying to get near to Christ themselves and to help their people there; if our choir and Sunday-school teachers have no close sense of God's presence; if the many workers in all our many organizations are not honestly living and working and praying with the thought of God's work in their hearts; if sinners are not being converted to God; if poor strugglers are not being strengthened for a noble life: then I don't care what else we are or how far outsiders may think us a successful parish—we are failures, failures.

Oh, I do trust we are not that. I do wish

I knew what the Lord is thinking about our parish and its poor clergy and people.

III

First of all I ask the praying people of this parish what I have often asked before. Keep your poor faulty clergy in your prayers. At any rate on the Sunday mornings make it a rule to pray for them. It would pay you to do it. It would be "good business." For if we were better men we should be more helpful to you. I believe some of you are doing it, for something is helping us.

I remember one day before I left home to come out here, a poor old invalid telling me with tears in her eyes, "I have never missed any week asking God to help you." Don't you think it would make a difference if even one hundred people did it? I do hope one hundred are.

I sometimes doubt if we are not in more danger than you: the danger of over-familiarity with holy things; the danger of having to stand here and talk about Christ and about spiritual life whatever mood we happen to be in; the danger of frequent celebrations of the Holy Sacrament, and quick unexpected calls to the dying and to the poor souls who are missing Christ and going wrong. Grave dangers indeed if our lives are not in earnest.

Brethren, pray for us. Hold up our hands, as they did to Moses on the mount. And when they held up his hands Israel prevailed, and when they did not Amalek prevailed.

IV

I remind you men and boys of the choir that you are ministers of the sanctuary, leading the prayers and praises of the people. I remind you of your danger—the danger of the clergy—over-familiarity with holy things. You are a good and faithful choir. People criticize you as they criticize us clergy. It is good for us. Probably we deserve it. But it is only fair to say that I never saw any choir in any parish so faithful in their attendance at practices and in church, and in the name of this parish I publicly record our deep gratitude to you. But you know your danger. You have to practise and drill in the singing of sacred words, and if you are careless they may lose all meaning for you. My dear brethren, you need your own prayers and the prayers of the people lest you get familiar with words and forget their meaning, and so take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

I heard lately of an old man's dream about the parish church of his boyhood. He saw it in his vision crowded with people, with a great

choir and beautiful music, and the whole congregation joining in the hymn. And a voice came to him, "Wouldest thou know how much of all this rises into the ears of God?" Instantly fell a deep silence. The organist's fingers still ran over the keyboard, the choir with open mouths seemed to be singing lustily, but no sound came from that whole full church except the voice of one little boy, ringing and clear :

Jesu, my Lord, I Thee adore,
Oh, make me love Thee more and more.

v

You who are Sunday-school teachers are especially in my mind. Oh, you need to live very close to God for the children's sake. It is a great opportunity, this plastic, impressionable time of life in which you get your pupils. Many of these children come from irreligious homes. It is not every home that is fit to bring up a child of God. Many get no other teaching than that half-hour with you, and if you do not love the children, and if you do not study to make the lesson interesting, and if you are not yourself in earnest about your Lord, you cannot do much good.

I ask you every one to bring each of your children regularly in prayer to God. Carry

their names on your heart like the High Priest of old. That is the secret of all successful teachers.

And when you do that do not be discouraged. You are working for a loving, considerate Master, who is looking for every bit of good in you and rejoicing to see it.

And your influence may be much greater than you think yourself. Do you know the old poem, "The Noisy Seven," the thoughts of an old Sunday-school boy of long ago?—

I wonder if he remembers—
Our sainted teacher in heaven—
The class in the old grey schoolhouse,
Known as the "Noisy Seven"?

I wonder if he remembers
How restless we used to be,
Or thinks we forget the lesson
Of Christ and Gethsemane?

I wish I could tell the story
As he used to tell it then;
I'm sure that, with Heaven's blessing,
It would reach the hearts of men.

I often wish I could tell him,
Though we caused him so much pain
By our thoughtless, boyish frolic,
His lessons were not in vain.

I'd like to tell him how Willie,
The merriest of us all,
From the field of Balaclava
Went home at the Master's call.

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I'd like to tell him how Ronald,
So brimming with mirth and fun,
Now tells the heathen of India
The tale of the Crucified One.

I'd like to tell him how Robert,
And Jamie, and George, and Ray,
Are honoured in the Church of God—
The foremost men of their day.

I'd like, yes, I'd like to tell him
What his lesson did for me ;
And how I am trying to follow
The Christ of Gethsemane.

Perhaps he knows it already,
For Willie has told him, maybe,
That we are all coming, coming
Through Christ of Gethsemane.

How many besides I know not
Will gather at last in heaven,
The fruit of that faithful sowing,
But the sheaves are already seven.

VI

I need not address in detail the various bands of faithful workers—the Men's Association, with its fine work for men; the St. Andrew's Brotherhood; the Sewing Circle; that great Band of Hope with its crowd of children; the Women's Mission Auxiliary; the Mothers' Meeting; the Dorcas; the King's Daughters, with their Parish Nurse; the

Chancel Guild, helping the beauty and dignity of worship; and last, but not least, the Wardens and Vestry, with their present anxieties looking after the business end of things in the parish.

Brethren and sisters, I ask you all to realize that you are engaged in holy work, looking after the interests of Christ, fellow workers with God! I exhort you to remember your high calling, to be in earnest, to pray for grace to be worthy of it, to resolve, God helping you, to make this a very successful year in the parish.

VII

Is that all? Does some one say—what of all the rest of us in this great congregation? Are the parish workers the only “fellow workers with God”? Nay, brethren, I am thinking of you all. I hope that there are none of you outside the scope of my title. I am thinking of all who are contributing this month to our great missionary collection. God bless you in your giving. And I am thinking of all the parents, and especially the mothers, who are doing the highest of all fellow working with God in bringing up little children in His fear and love. I want these expressly included. God give you grace, my brethren, in that holy

work. May He bless and reward you richly in the days to come in the noble lives of your children.

And outside these are the band of loyal, righteous business men who are going out from this parish every week to do something more than make money for themselves—men who are lifting up the business tone and business morality of our city, doing the work which God has set them, making the shop counter and the office desk pure from evil as is the altar of God.

And outside these, may we not hope that there are many too who stand by their comrades a bit, who by their influence and example help a friend who is tempted and weak and encourage him to try again. There are so many of these poor strugglers wanting help—

Never telling hidden sorrows,
Lingering just outside the door,
Longing for your hand to guide them
Into rest for evermore.

I should be sorry to think that there is any one amongst you all who is not doing his little part among the fellow helpers with God. It would be a poor business to go through life no use to any one, and that the world should be none the poorer for us when we die.

So I ask that we should all realize our re-

sponsibilities and privileges, and with thankful hearts go out into life glad that God will allow us to help Him. I ask you to kneel together at the holy table to-day to pledge yourselves again to His service, and then to go out with honest prayerful resolve that this poor world shall be a little bit the better for our having lived in it.

XIV
WHAT WE SHALL BE

AN ADVENT SERMON

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.—1 JOHN iii. 2.

I

ST. JOHN is looking out towards the Advent into the wondrous life of the Hereafter: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

What we shall be! What we shall be! Is not that one of the chief delights of being young? Guessing and hoping and wondering what we shall be. That gives the chief zest to life.

The dreariest thing in life is dullness, monotony. I want to lift you out of that. The brightest thing in life is outlook, visions of the future. I want to lift you into that.

For life is full of latent possibilities—of outlook, of romance, of exciting futures. God

has made it so, if we would only see it. Look out into God's world of nature around you, with its continuous progress, its ever new and exciting stages. God's caterpillars in their next stage are going to be soaring butterflies. God's acorns will be mighty oaks. God's little corn seeds in the granary to-day will next year be alive in the yellow harvests of Canada. God's world of nature is full of romantic possibilities.

II

And God's world of man is fuller still, and one of life's delights is to know it and look forward to it, guessing what we shall be. Outlook. Visions. That is what we need to make life bright and beautiful.

I see a group of small boys sitting in the playground, and their eyes are bright as they look into the romantic future. They are going to be soldiers and sailors and circus riders and Indian chiefs and all sorts of things. Because they are boys, with the glowing enthusiasm of boyhood, they may be anything—all the possibilities of boyhood belong to them. It doth not yet appear what they shall be, but it is delightful to look forward and speculate about it.

I see them again a dozen years later. They are starting in life, just left college—the

young soldiers and lawyers and curates and business men—still with their visions and outlooks and dreams of the future. It doth not yet appear what they shall be, but, because they are young men with energy and ability, all that belongs to young manhood lies before them as they look forward in their day-dreams. What countries they shall live in, and what sort of girl they shall marry, and what positions and what work and what excitements and what pleasures are before them! Ah, it is lovely to be young. It is a true pleasure realizing the possibilities of life—dreaming of what we shall be.

· III

Now, I know what you are thinking.

“Most of us here are no longer young—we are middle-aged or elderly. And we have lost the vision. We have not become as great as we expected—nor even as good as we expected. We are fairly comfortable—we have not much to complain of. But somehow the path is a bit monotonous. We have traversed most of it. We can see to the end now. There are no more romantic possibilities—no more visions of what we shall be to make life exciting.”

Don't believe it! Not a word of it. The visions are there all right at the next turning.

Grip with both hands the fact that this life as you know it is but the first stage—the kindergarten stage—the caterpillar stage of your existence. That in five thousand years you will be living still, feeling still, thinking still. That what you call death, the end of this career, is but *birth* into a new and more exciting career, stretching away into the far future, age after age, æon after æon, whose prospects should stir the very blood within us.

There is nothing which so touches some of us as a thing with “makings” in it—a thing with untold possibilities in it—that may come in the future to God only knows what. Talk of the caterpillar which is to become a butterfly or the acorn which shall one day be a mighty oak! Why, these miracles are but child’s play compared with the miracles that are before you. No wildest fairy tale can suggest the wonder of your possibilities as you pass into the adventure of the new life beyond.

You are not elderly. You are not middle-aged. These are but comparative terms. A house-fly is elderly in twenty-four hours. An oak tree is young after a hundred years. And you, children of eternity, with ages and millenniums before you—you are not even one-year-old babies in the light of your great future.

I am not talking unreal sentiment from a

pulpit. I would say the same if I were sitting with you in your business office. I am talking of solid fact. I am quoting from early Christians who had as much common sense as you have. I often sit myself looking out into the void, wondering what we shall be in the big new life.

IV

Now I want you to think yourselves back into that first century of the Church, when the world was younger and the enthusiasm about Jesus was fresher in men's hearts. See the aged apostle looking forward as boys look forward, and cheering his disciples to look forward too into the exciting vista before them. Is it not beautiful, that confidence and the affectionate way in which he groups himself and them together in their hope. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and we don't know yet all that we shall be."

Can you see any reason why we should not take that position? Why I, all unworthy, should not say to you to-day: "My beloved, we are the sons of God, and because we are that God only knows what we shall be in the big exciting life of the Hereafter."

Are you afraid to say you are sons of God? Why? What had the Father done, what had Jesus done to these early Christians that

He has not done to you? Has not God made you, blessed you, loved you? Has not Jesus died for your sins and risen again for your justification? Has He not placed His sacraments at your disposal to feed you with the Divine life? What is wrong with God's Fatherhood and your sonship?

Let me put the question in another way. How did the world outside differ from that joyous little Church? Just in this. That they had lost the sense of God's Fatherhood. They did not believe it, they did not know it. And what Jesus did was to reveal it to them and to bring men back where they belonged. By revealing to men the tender love of God for them—by dying upon the cross to show the pain and solicitude of God for them, by blessing the little children and comforting the heavy laden, and doing it as the eternal Son of God revealing the Fatherhood—he showed men their sonship.

And all who believed Him could not help being touched by it—touched into penitence and effort, touched into living as a child of God. Don't you see it? Here is a young man who has run away from home, having disgraced his honourable old father. He believes his father is cursing him for the shame he has brought on the family name, and he goes on defiantly in his evil life. One day

comes to him the revelation of fatherhood. One day he creeps back to the old home, and from the darkness outside he peers into his father's room and sees the old man on his knees crying in his pain, "Oh, my boy, my boy! God keep him safe and bless him and send him back to me!"

All in a moment the fatherhood is revealed to the lad, and he is touched into penitence and loyalty and love. That was what Jesus did for men. He made them sons of God by revealing God's Fatherhood. On those who did not believe Him or receive Him it had no effect. But "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

You have everything that the early Christians had in the revelation of the Father. If you will only believe it and accept it and be thankful for it you will be back where you belong, every one of you sons of God. Fearlessly I say to every one of you: "Beloved, we are the sons of God." Take hold of it. Rejoice in it. Test its power on you. Accept His Fatherhood, accept your sonship. Then go forth to-morrow morning, saying to yourself, "I am a child of God and therefore I thank Him, and therefore I will go forth in His strength to live as a child of God to-day."

v

Test it, I say, and all life will grow large and beautiful, and this beautiful present will open into an infinite future, and you will begin like St. John to wonder what you shall be. All that God's sonship contains is waiting for you. Here in this life your daily tasks will be redeemed from their littleness, for you are working not as a mere drudging merchant or lawyer or school teacher or housemaid, but as a son or daughter of God, knowing that all work for Him has infinite issues in the unknown future. As character grows you know not yet what you shall be even in this life.

And then for the great Beyond, where the real existence begins, you will believe with wondering joy what God has revealed of the new, exciting, adventurous life beyond you. Oh, He has good things for you. Five minutes after death you will be alive, in full consciousness and hope and love and memory of the old home on earth. You will have begun your new stage of being. Like the caterpillar who has sprung forth into a butterfly, so you begin the new stage. And you will be the same self, the same conscious personality, but with possibilities of reaching—God only knows what.

Now do you see why that aged apostle of Ephesus did not feel aged or elderly—why he

looked out like an eager boy into the mysteries before him. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and we don't know yet what we shall be." Aye, we don't know. No more than the small boys laughing in their play and going to be soldiers and sailors and Indian chiefs and all wonderful things. We don't know. But it is all before us. And it is all going to be good, because it is in the Father's presence.

So I bid you do what I often do myself—look out into the void and guess like the children what you shall be when you are older than Methuselah.

Shake off the dullness and monotony of life. Don't talk as old or middle-aged any more. Be children again, for you are only children, and with happy hearts keep guessing what you shall be.

VI

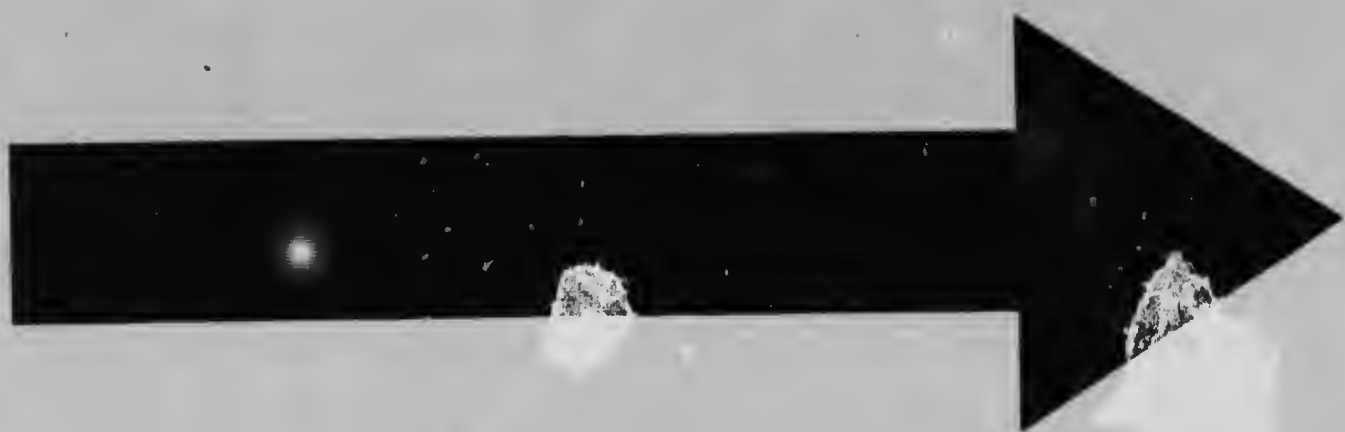
Just one thought more in the text. "We know not yet all that we shall be," says St. John, "but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him."

Is not it worth while getting a gospel like that to preach?—"One day I shall be like Him—I who am so disappointed with myself, I who hate and scorn myself, I who can't be good, who can't love God, I who am longing

and aspiring and hoping and yet failing. I shall be like Him ! ”

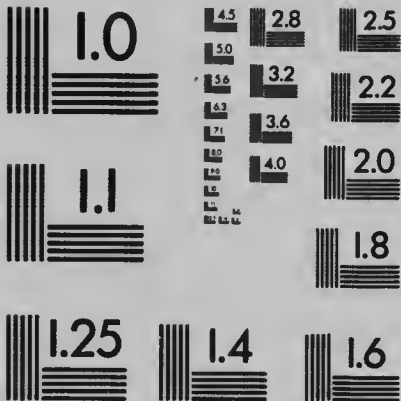
Brethren, rejoice in that promise of the Advent. When tired and discouraged at the frequency of your failures, look forward to that day when failures shall be over. When you are longing to hate sin, when you are longing to love and trust God, when you are desiring to love others and make life beautiful for them—one day you are going to have all you want—when He shall appear.

Now don't you think that is a gospel worth thinking about ? Don't you think you might get out of your dullness and monotony and get back to the delightful guessing of the children and the guessing of the early Church when the world was young—guessing what we shall be in the romantic adventure of the Hereafter ?



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XV

A WORLD WITHOUT CHRISTMAS

A CHRISTMAS SERMON

If I had not come.—ST. JOHN XV. 22.

I

“**I**F I had not come,” said Jesus. “If I had not come!”

Did you ever think what it would have meant to the world if Jesus had not come?

Strange thoughts have been stirring in my mind this week as I look forward into a far-off imaginary future. Listen.

An old man, gloomy and thoughtful, is sitting in his room, gazing into the dying fire—seeing pictures in it—pictures of old days, of old memories. It is midnight of the 24th of December. But it is not Christmas Eve. There is no Christmas Eve now. There is no Christmas. There is no Christ, and the children are silent and the world is desolate and sin remains and death is eternal. Therefore is the old man sad.

It was not always so. Long centuries ago there was Christmas, and the story is still told of the beautiful old superstition, the family gatherings and the Christmas tree and the merry children tying their stockings to the bed-rail, and the dear little mother coming in when they were cuddled up in bed to tell them the old, old story when "shepherds were abiding in the field keeping watch over their flocks by night. And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not, for behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy; unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'"

And the little ones fell asleep, knowing that God loved them, that this was the birthday of the Son of God, who took the little children up in His arms and blessed them.

But all that was long ago before the world grew weary of Christ. Gradually year by year they grew tired of hearing about Him, tired of thinking about Him. The majority of those for whom He gave His life lived without ever a thought of Him. Others came to church in a patronizing way and said the prayers to Him—as few as possible—and heard the sermons about Him—as short as possible—and then went away to forget Him and neglect Him.

And God in heaven kept silence.

Then as they did not care to keep Him in their thoughts they soon began to doubt and disbelieve. And the children grew too wise for the story of Bethlehem, and clever men proved that He had never left the tomb, that He was only a very good man, that the astounding miracle of God coming to earth was but a foolish dream that had to pass away.

Then in the pride of intellect they criticized the Christ. He who would not break the bruised reed could never accomplish the proud destiny of humanity, for the bruised reed must be broken and flung aside, the physical and mental failures must be painlessly destroyed lest they become a dragging chain on the progress of the race. And men must learn that breach of law has no forgiveness—that they must obey God, not appease Him. Love of the failing and the helpless would be unworthy of God, a weakness in the grand scheme of life. The Christ was a mistaken dreamer.

And still God made no sign.

So centuries passed. Then came the crisis!

One night of dread, when the world was quivering with an earthquake shock and the awful thunder was crashing in the air, it was said that men had seen the heavens opened and the angels looking sorrowfully on the earth.

And in the midst of the seraphim the Lord God arose in His indignant wrath: "Since they care not any more for the Son of My love, be it unto them even as they will. Let the spirit of unbelief seize upon the world! Let there be no more Christmas! Let there be no more Christ!

For a moment the world was startled into dread. Then men took up their Bibles to read again the story of the Christ. On every page blank spaces faced them. Nearly all the New Testament had faded out—the story of the Shepherds and the Sermon on the Mount and the weeping over Jerusalem and the Lost Sheep and the Prodigal Son and the Cross of Calvary and the Dying Thief and the wonder of the Easter morning. Every great story that used to help the world—every word and act of Christ was gone!

And all over the earth every picture of Him faded out of sight. Men went to the great galleries of Europe to see the famous paintings. There was the picture of Christ blessing the little children, with a little boy in His arms and all the others looking wonderingly up to Him. There it hung in its golden frame and the children were looking up—but Jesus was gone!

There was the lost sheep and the Shepherd with bleeding hands seeking it on the desolate

mountains. The mountains were there, darker and more desolate than ever, and the poor frightened sheep stood trembling on the precipice—but there was no good Shepherd with bleeding hand seeking that which was lost until he found it.

There was one of the world's best-known paintings. All over the broad plains of earth the countless multitudes in every land holding up their hands in passionate appeal to One who hung on a cross with arms extended as if to embrace them all. The light fell softly on that glorious canvas. The multitudes were there with all their sickness and misery and trouble and sin, and their hands were still flung out in passionate pleading. But the Cross had faded out of the picture and the Lord who hung thereon had vanished with it.

Then dark unbelief settled down upon the world. The story of Bethlehem was a dream and delusion. There was no Christ, and the world must live without Him.

II

That was centuries ago. The old man looking into the fire has been studying past history and somehow feels his heart stir yearningly over the old story of the dead dreamer, the carpenter's son, who dreamed he was the Son of God and could lift humanity. It was a

noble dream. - He wishes it might have been true.

He is thinking of the old Christian churches of the city. They are all still standing and all still crowded. The people who found it impossible to believe the miracle of the Incarnation now listen greedily to the miracles of all sorts of freak religions—Spiritualism and Esoteric Buddhism and sun worship and transmigration of souls, and all the mad beliefs of human minds gone wild.

In some there is a nobler teaching. He is remembering a recent experience. The preacher told of a high and holy God who moved in distant grandeur outside His world, who spoke to men through nature and conscience. "And," said the preacher, "though the fable of the dead dreamer Jesus has passed out of men's lives, yet should they do right without such fancies. And if men did the right it would in some way be well with them."

"But what if we fail?" rang the eager questioning. "What if we fail?" Ah, he did not know. There seemed no hope if men failed. Men could only expect to reap as they sowed. Humanity must turn from its soft deceptions. It must build no longer on sands of mystery and sentiment. The Gospel of Science, our only gospel, knows nothing of forgiveness. Nature shows God grand, majestic, beneficent

to all who obey. But nature shows no pity for disobedience. Whatever sentimental people may imagine, we have at any rate no knowledge of any forgiveness of sins.

Memory goes on making its pictures.

It is a dreary tenement room down town—a workman's home. The man is a consumptive, and the brave wife is fighting the battle for them both. She gets \$1 per dozen for sewing shirts for a sweatshop, and night after night she works wearily on. There are no hospitals for consumptives now; consumptives and failures are painlessly wiped out. She must conceal her trouble. There is none to share it. Unselfish thought for others has disappeared with the lost Christ.

And oh, the loneliness and desolation of her. The ceaseless struggle—the bleak outlook. And nobody on the whole earth cares. And nobody in the whole heaven cares either, so far as she can see. The great God who guides the universe has more important things to think of. No one would presume to tell Him about their troubles. There is no divine call to the weary and heavy laden—no divine pleading for the help of the helpless: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these ye have done it unto Me.”

Now it is a woman's face again—a very different one—a fast woman of society who has fallen to be a thing of shame and now has come to him, her father's old friend, to pour out her misery and remorse.

“Have you any hope for me? I would like to be good, but it is hard to climb out of the pit. Is there any use trying? I have broken my father's heart. I have polluted my soul. I can never be pure again. I can never undo the past. If there is a God and a life beyond, I do not see what I can do but to send me to hell. I have been reading that beautiful old fable of the Christ who was born of a woman's pain, of the Christ who lifted up the poor adulteress and forgave her. O God, if these things were true!”

He remembers how her agony wrung his very soul. But the man could say no word of hope unless he lied. And he would not lie.

Now it is a gathering of gay women, rouged and powdered, laughing, and with a hollow ring in their laughter. It is one of the Divorceds' clubs of the city. Divorce is no shame now. Every second woman is divorced. Holy matrimony has become a mutual arrangement to have and to hold while the man and woman attract each other, or rather while the woman attracts the man. And men have become

tyrannical and women have become degraded, each struggling at any cost to hold her man.

The old days are gone when Jesus, born of the Holy Virgin, lifted up woman to a noble position, and consecrated the pure union of man and maid. The holy law has vanished from the earth—"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh."

Once more the picture changes. With deep dull pain he sees a darkened room and a still white face—the face of his dead wife. And a man beside the bed—himself—sobbing in his agony. All these years bound together in a deep, passionate love, and now—parted for ever and ever. She had cried to him as she died, "Tell me, my husband, that death is not the end—that our love must somehow survive?" But he will not lie, even to comfort her. "Perhaps," he said, "but we know not. There is no evidence at all. Would to God it were true, that old fable of Jesus, that He rose from the dead and told men of the wondrous life at the other side. But it is not true. Jesus was but a dreamer, and all is dark and unknown."

So his beloved went out with frightened eyes and took her questions into the darkness to

ask God. And he remained behind in his desolation.

His life pictures have ceased. They found him next morning dead in his chair, gone out to seek the lost Christ.

III

I feel that I have not succeeded. I wanted to startle you by contrast into realizing your position to-day in a world with Christ and Christmas.

For just as men do not value the blessings of health and friendship because they have never known what it is to be without them—so men often do not value Christ because the world of to-day has never known what it is to be without Him. I wanted to make you realize what it would be to be without Him. "If I had not come," said He, "if I had not come." But I cannot make you realize it. You would have to live in a world of children without Christ, in a world of discouraged strugglers without any knowledge of His sympathy in the struggle, without any sacrament of His body and blood conveying His strength into their lives. You would need to know

personally the great human crowd in its manifold times of trouble —

Falling with its load of cares
Upon the great world's altar stairs
That lead through darkness up to God,

and finding only a distant righteous God, silent and unapproachable, who has never shown His face and never shown His heart to men.

Still, perhaps my poor picture may help you a little bit to appreciate and be thankful for Christmas. Boys and girls, there are at Christmas higher things for you than sports and presents and holidays. The Son of God has come to earth at Christmas, and thereby you know that God loves you and rejoices in His ambitions for your young lives.

Men and women who have been forgetting Him and scorning His love, will you try to remember what the world would be without Him who came at Christmas.

Poor sinners, disheartened, sorry about your past, think what it would mean but for Christ and His atonement.

And you especially, dear friends, who are bowing down in loneliness to-day, thinking of the vacant chair and the touch of hands that are still—who have yourselves been telling me this week that it is doubly hard to bear at Christmas—oh, I beseech you to think what

it would be if there were no Christmas—if there were no Christ—if there were no revelation of the Father's love and the beautiful life into which your dear ones have gone.

But—oh, thank God for it—Christ has come! The Eternal Son of God came down at Christmas with the flesh of very man wrapped round His Godhead. My dear people, to every one of you I dare to wish Happy Christmas in spite of pain and loneliness and sorrow and sin. Lift up your hearts this Christmas Day. Lift them up unto the Lord. Thank God for the message that sins may be forgiven. Thank God for the bright hope of your dear ones in Paradise. Thank God for the angel message of that Christmas long ago: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

XVI

AN OLD MAN'S EASTER MEMORIES

ST. JOHN XX. 1-10

I

ST. JOHN, you know, wrote his Gospel many years after the other Gospels. He was then an old man, living far away from the scenes of his boyhood. The young peasant of the Lake of Galilee was now the beloved bishop of the Church of Ephesus. But the old man's eyes are ever turning back to the past—above all to those three wonderful years when he had walked the fields of Galilee with Jesus—"the disciple whom Jesus loved." How wonderful were those years, looking back on them through the golden haze of Resurrection and Ascension, "when we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The old comrades were gone, James and

Peter and Andrew and Philip were long ago departed to be with their Master in the Unseen, and he was left alone of all that band, brooding as an old man will on the precious memories of the past.

I'm growing very old. This weary head,
That hath so often leaned on Jesus' breast,
In days long past that seem almost a dream,
Is bent and hoary with its weight of years.
I'm old, so old, I cannot recollect
The faces that I meet in daily life ;
But that dear Face and every word He spake
Grow more distinct as others fade away,
So that I live with Him and with the dead
More than the living.

And how his people loved to hear the old man's memories of those years ! They had probably, at least, one of the other Gospels in writing. But it was so different to hear their dear old bishop telling what he remembered—and he remembered so many things not written in their book. Year after year he told them what he knew, and as he told it repeatedly the story grew into shape, and so there came to us the Gospel of St. John, the gospel of an old man's memories.

II

How many things he had to tell his people outside their gospel story ! His first meeting

with Jesus—the marriage at Cana—the mysterious sacramental teaching about “the Bread of God that cometh down from heaven”—that precious discourse and prayer of the Master after the first Communion—the story of that awful day of desolation when he saw Jesus dead and all hope seemed gone for ever, and then his personal memories of the Resurrection and of the great forty days after it.

In this gospel of his memories he does not tell of the Resurrection itself, but here in this passage he is recalling the day when his despair and desolation for the death of Christ was suddenly changed into joyous belief that the dear Lord was back with them alive.

Something happened that forced immediate conviction, “Then I saw and believed,” he says.

“Master, tell us,” they would ask, “what did you see? why did you believe?”

“I will tell you. It was this way. ‘On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalen went early to the tomb while it was yet dark. She saw the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, and she rushed back to tell Peter and me. We ran full speed to see. I was the younger, I got there first and I looked into the tomb and saw it was as Mary had said. But I went not in. Then as I looked Peter arrived and went straight in, and I saw him beholding,

gazing, staring at the empty grave-clothes and the napkin lying rolled up away by itself.

“ ‘ Then I went in, and when I saw what Peter had seen—*then I saw and believed.* ’ ”

Now, what do you think made St. John believe? Empty grave-clothes would not make him believe any more than they made Mary believe. The body might have been taken away. Why did Peter stare so at the appearance of the winding sheet and the napkin apart by itself? And why did John—when he saw what Peter had been staring at—immediately believe?

A very interesting light has recently been thrown on this question.

III

Some ten years ago the master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, was in Constantinople; while visiting the cemetery he saw several funeral processions come in. The corpses were carried on biers on men's shoulders. They all lay face upwards. The grave-clothes were all alike. The face, neck, and upper surface of the shoulders was in every case uncovered, so that between the grave-clothes and the napkin that enveloped the top of the head, a space of a foot or more, the body was wholly bare.

Remembering how slowly customs change

in the East, and how especially slowly burial customs change everywhere, it seemed a very probable assumption that this was exactly how Jesus' body was dressed when it was laid in the grave.

Now picture to yourself that dead body laid in the grave, the winding sheet reaching up to, say, the top of my surplice, and then the bare shoulders and neck, and the napkin around the crown of the head. Picture it clearly in your mind. Then ask yourself what appearance would the winding sheet and napkin present suppose the body turned to dust, or vanished, or exhaled or spiritualized without disturbing the wrappings.

IV

This is the discovery. The sepulchre was hewn out of a rock. You entered by a low doorway which was afterwards secured by a heavy stone rolled against it. There were two ledges, one on either side. When the body was brought in, it was laid on one of these ledges. And the head was allowed to rest on a step, a little higher than the ledge for the body, at the farther end from the door.

Now, when Peter and John heard in the early morning that the body of Jesus was gone, they ran both together toward the

tomb (John xx. 4). John outran Peter and came first to the tomb. The stone was rolled away, but he did not go in, he only stooped down and looked in. What did he see? Very little indeed. The place where the head had lain probably he could not see, for it was farthest from the door. But he saw the linen cloths lying, and he saw that there was nothing within them.

Then came Peter and went into the sepulchre. At once he saw that something most unusual had taken place. The linen cloths were lying—lying as if the body were still in them, except that they had fallen flat, for the body was not in them, but was gone. The body was gone out of them, but it had not displaced them. Moreover, he saw that the napkin that had enveloped His head was lying on its raised step by itself, still with its "roll" in it; it too had fallen a little flat, for the head was gone, but otherwise it was undisturbed. Indeed the evangelist uses a word which properly applies to the head around which the napkin is rolled, not to the napkin itself. It was a "rolled-round" napkin, he says.

All this arrested Peter's eye. John looked in and only "sees," but Peter, when he went in and was arrested by this remarkable phenomenon, "beholds" (a different Greek verb) the cloths as they lie and the rolled-round napkin

in the place by itself. If he had seen that the linen cloths had been unwrapped from the body, and then had been folded up and laid on the ledge, and if he had seen that the same attention had been shown to the napkin, he would have gathered no more from that than that the body was gone, and he saw that in any case. Any hands might have unwound the cloths and folded them up so carefully. But, from what he saw, it was plain that no hands had been there at all. The body had simply moved out, exhaled itself out of the cloths, without disturbing them, and then they had fallen flat; the head had simply moved out of the napkin without disturbing it, and then it also had fallen flat. It seemed plain to them that the body had not been removed; it had actually risen. No man's hand had done it; it had been done by the mighty power of God.

“Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.” He *saw and believed*. To see that the body was gone was not to believe. But to see that the body had gone out of the cloths without disturbing them, though they had been wound round and round, and that the head had gone out of the napkin, leaving it “wound round” still—that was to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.

The men were astonished, but they did not lose their heads. They had eyes to observe, they had a mind to believe. They evidently saw all there was to be seen, and they tell us. And it is remarkable that in doing so they say nothing of a heap of spices. For spices had been freely used about the body of Jesus. A hundred pounds of spices had been used, wrapped carefully within the folds of the linen cloths. Where were these spices now? If the cloths had been unwound from the body, they would have dropped in a great heap upon the ledge or floor of the tomb. It is plain that they had not so dropped. They were invisible to Peter and John. For the body has risen without disturbing the wrappings, and the spices were still concealed within its folds.

v

This I have gathered for you from the old bishop's gospel of memories. His story of his first realization that Christ had risen.

But I can imagine his people saying, "Is that all?"

"All! Why, no. I am only speaking of my first conviction that Jesus was risen. Over and over again we saw Him. Sometimes the others saw Him when I was about.

Peter, the eleven, the men of Emmaus, the five hundred in Galilee."

"But, master, tell us your own memories of Him."

"I remember how Mary Magdalen came in a few hours after in the midst of our excitement and told us how she had seen Him and mistaken Him at first for the gardener.

"Then I was with the rest of the disciples the next Sunday. We were all there except Thomas, when the doors were shut, where we were assembled for fear of the Jews, and Jesus suddenly stood in our midst and said to us: 'Peace be unto you. As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you,' and we disciples were very glad at seeing the Lord.

"I remember how we told Thomas that evening and Thomas would not believe us. 'I can't believe it,' he said. 'It is impossible; you must be mistaken. Except I shall see the wounds and the print of the nails, I will not believe.'

"All that week we went around dazed, like men in a dream, and then the following Sunday the Lord suddenly came to us again. We never knew when He would come, or from where. This time Thomas was with us. And I shall never forget how He talked to Thomas and how Thomas was so astonished and so broken with joy he could only fall down in

adoration and cry to him, 'My Lord and my God.'

"Ah yes! We saw Him at other times during the great forty days after the Resurrection. I remember especially one of these days—and Peter never forgot it to the end of his life.

"We had been out all night fishing in Peter's boat: my brother James and I and Thomas and Nathaniel and two others. But we had no success. All night we toiled and rowed and flung the nets, but we caught nothing. Just as the day was breaking we saw Him on the shore. Oh, I knew, I felt sure that it was He. But I could not speak. The others did not know Him in that dim dawn.

"Then we heard His voice clearly across the water. 'My children, cast your net on the right side of the boat, and ye shall find.' They cast the net wearily, without much hope. But the moment they tried to pull it in a great wonder and dread fell on them. They could not pull it in, it was so heavy with fishes. Then I could not keep quiet any longer. 'Oh,' I cried, 'it is the Lord, it is the Lord.' And Peter flung himself straight into the sea, for we were near the land, and we all got into the little boat and hurried after him. And, oh, there was Jesus, Jesus my Lord and my God.

"And when we had breakfasted off the fish,

Jesus asked Peter: 'Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?' 'Yea, Lord.' 'Then feed my lambs.' And again He asked him, 'Simon, do you really love me?' 'Oh, Lord, You know I do.' Then He asked the third time, and I could see Peter was hurt because He asked the third time, and he cried to Him, 'Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You.' And Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me.' Then He prophesied how Peter should die.

"I was just behind. Peter turned and looked at me. They used to call me the disciple whom Jesus loved, and Peter said to the Lord:

" 'Lord, what shall John do?'

"How I waited for the answer! I don't just know what it meant. 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'"

"Dear master, could He have meant that you are not to die at all?"

"Ah, I know not. I have lived so long now and they are all gone long ago, and that rumour did go forth among the disciples at the time that I should not die. Yet I know He did not say that, but 'if I will that he tarry till I come.'"

VI

Don't you think it must have been very beautiful, that gradual making of the Gospel of St. John, that gracious and tender and beautiful old age steeped in the sweet memories of the Master who loved him? And don't you think the crown of all was the glad memory of the Resurrection? His loving Master who had permitted Himself to be scourged, spitted on, and mocked and crucified had come back to him in a strange, new, wondrous life. Tender and loving as before, but oh, so different. No longer the intimate friend on whose heart he could rest at supper, but "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," to be revered with adoring gratitude and love.

From that quiet little story in the memory of St. John you can gather the deep, sweet conviction in the heart of all the apostles. They each had his own experience, and there is the explanation of that mighty power: the early church that turned the world upside down. We have to account for the startling change that passed over the disciples a few days after the death of their Lord. We have to account for cowards turned into heroes, for that powerful faith which changed the course of history, for the building of the

world-wide Christian Church by twelve ignorant peasant fishermen.

And there is no possible accounting for it but that Easter story—the deep, great conviction that changed all life for the disciples.

Don't you like the quiet, matter-of-fact way in which they talk of it? No hysterical rhapsodies, no laboured proofs—just the great unshakable conviction. "We know it. We saw it. Again and again we saw and talked to our risen Lord. We are as quietly sure of it as of our own existence, and these things are written by us that ye may believe."

VII

That deep conviction transformed all life for them. In the light of it, this poor human life grew and expanded into the infinite.

Jesus was there in the infinite life, their Lord and their God, and also their brother and dear friend. See how He associates them with Himself. "Go tell My brothers that I have not yet ascended to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God. Because I live, ye shall live also. Where I am, there shall also My servants be. I go to prepare a place for you."

All life grew splendid. What matter that John should be banished to Patmos; that

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Peter should be crucified head downward; that James should be beheaded? Death mattered little to men who knew that Jesus was at the other side of it in the endless life beyond.

They knew that this life was but the first stage of the endless one. They knew that Jesus had burst the bonds of death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospels.

And we know it too. Thank God for it. That quiet conviction of the old Bishop of Ephesus has come down to us through nearly nineteen hundred Eusters.

Therefore we can face death with fearless heart. Therefore we can trust our beloved ones to die. Therefore we sing our glad hymns to-day and offer our thanksgivings to the risen Christ. We are honestly gladder, we are honestly happier, because Christ our dear Lord has risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept.

Never more than now have we needed this Easter comfort. All this past week we have been bowed in horror and pain since the news came in on Monday of the loss of the *Titanic*. God comfort the dear friends amongst us to-day mourning their beloved gone suddenly into the Unseen!

We cannot help the horror and pain just

yet. But, brethren, let us not exaggerate what has happened.

To some the chief horror in this tragedy is the fact of death, as if Jesus had never brought the Easter gospel.

To some the chief trouble is that many were cut off suddenly and unprepared. They seem almost to think God capable of trapping men suddenly in their sins. They seem to forget that the loving Christ, so patient with them in life, would still be there at the other side of death, the same Christ still.

I want to comfort you with the thought that in that dread crisis of last Sunday night we can see God in their midst with loving care for them all.

We can only see God by the exercise of His power, as we can only see electricity by the exercise of its power. "Every good and perfect gift cometh from above." Courage and heroism and utter self-sacrifice are among the noblest of the gifts of God. They can never come in any man but from the Spirit of God. And He gave them in rich abundance to His poor sinful children last Sunday night.

Amid all the pain and horror of that story runs the quiet undercurrent of our satisfaction and pride that the age of heroes is not over yet. That poor human nature should be thus helped by God—that even careless, thoughtless

men should in a great crisis rise towards the attitude of the great Lord Himself. "Greater love hath no man than this," He said, "that a man lay down his life for his friends."

And they did it. They did it because God was with them. Since the famous story of the old *Birkenhead*, with the soldiers drawn up on deck as the ship went down—nothing nobler has been told in history than this sinking of the *Titanic*. Seventy feet above the waves she stood as the boats were launched, steadily she sank till but ten feet remained, and all the time those men stood on the deck helping the women and children across the rails—waving good-bye for ever to their dear ones—then standing still, to die.

For they *knew* that they must die. The women, we are told, did not know, but surely the men did. Ah, the Spirit of God is very near when such things happen. I heard it said last week of a little group of these men, including some very dear to ourselves in this parish: "They are not the sort of men to escape unless all escape."

We are not boasting of the heroism of men. We are thinking of the loving Presence that inspired them. To me the deck of the *Titanic* was a holy ground from which men passed suddenly into the unseen.

Even the poor bandmen in their kindly

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thought played their brightest music to cheer the others. Some people don't like this story of merry ragtime music at such a time. But think of the kindly thought that prompted it, and the quiet heroism that kept time and tune just then—and think of the solemn close as the touch of the death angel and the sight of eternal things came nearer. The ragtime music changed into the sacred death-song as they went down with the ship :

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

And thus they died.

Into the hands of the merciful Father we commend them all with quiet hope.

And all the more because they cannot hear
Poor human words of blessing, will we pray,
Oh, true brave hearts—God bless them ! wheresoe'er
In God's great universe they are to-day.

Aye, God bless them !

You will tell me that many of them were probably careless, and neglected God, that some of them had never prayed since they were children long ago. I know it.

You will remind me of the danger of any human soul who has neglected Jesus Christ. Yes, I know it. But I know also what transforming influence may come to a human soul

through the divine impulse to a noble deed. I know that such impulse comes only from God, aye, and I know, too, that the Christ who died for men may be trusted to judge the men who died last Sunday night for the women and children.

Or perhaps some of you will gloomily say, Well, at any rate they are dead. Nay, they are not dead. That is Christ's Eastertide message to us all. There is no death. Death is but birth into a fuller life. As the baby's eyes open from the darkness of the womb to sunlight on this earth, so will the eyes that have closed in the darkness of death open on "a light that never was on sea or land."

Take to yourselves, therefore, the Easter message, "Christ is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept, and all them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

XVII

AFTER EASTER

Him God raised up, and gave Him to be made manifest, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead.—ACTS x. 40, 41.

ON Easter Day we think mainly of the **FACT** of the Resurrection of Christ. But the Church does not drop the subject then. Week after week she keeps on the teaching on the Sundays after Easter. To-day we are to think of the appearances after the Resurrection.

Notice especially the words of my text "Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen of God." To-day I want to study with you not so much the Resurrection of our Lord as the manifestations after the Resurrection—the manifestations of the new strange risen life—so very like the old and yet so very unlike it.

We have not very much material for our study. Very little is told us. Of the many

appearances which probably took place in those forty days before the Ascension we have records only of five or six. Of all the things which He spoke in those forty days concerning the Kingdom of God¹ only a few sentences have been committed to writing. We know there was much more to be told. We have tantalizing suggestions of teachings which He gave. We have tantalizing glimpses of appearances not described. Think of the interest that would have centred in that meeting with poor penitent Peter, or the meeting with James, which we are told of; or probably the tender sacred meeting with His mother, which we may feel almost sure took place, but of which no word is vouchsafed to us. Doubtless there was some wise design in this reticence. At any rate we must only learn what we can from the material that we have.

You remember the separate appearances recorded. First to Mary Magdalene; second, at Emmaus; third, to the disciples when the doors were shut; fourth, to the disciples with Thomas; fifth, on the beach in grey dawn; sixth, to five hundred brethren on the moun-

¹ Acts i. 3.

tains of Galilee ; seventh, the going out with them to Bethany to the Ascension.

I think we may assume that one main purpose of these appearances was that of training the disciples to understand the mystery of Christ's risen life, to believe and realize His future and abiding supernatural presence with them. The first thing that we notice is that it was not a revelation to everybody—not to the enemies or the careless crowds of Jerusalem—but to His own followers. It was not intended to overawe and convince gainsayers and outsiders, but to assure, comfort, discipline, and teach the men on whom the whole future of His Church's great work depended. In any case the outsiders and the careless crowd would not have been able to understand or appreciate these revelations. It required a certain preparation—a certain fitness. A mere coarse physical miracle the crowd could understand, but not the miracle of Christ's new life. If Christ had been raised to the old natural human life as Lazarus was, it would have been easy for any one to understand and to test that. All the common, careless crowd could be made witnesses that Jesus, who had been crucified, was alive again, the very same man.

But that was not what happened at all. Thank God for it. That would have been no pledge of a new, endless, glorified life. The

chasm between the seen and the unseen would have been still unbridged. There would have been no revelation of the mysterious life that lies beyond this present life.

No! What is revealed to us is not the continuance of a mode of existence with which we are already acquainted, but the indication of a new mode of existence for which we look after death; a new mode of existence which before that time was undiscovered and unknown. As we fix our thoughts upon it we slowly and wonderingly begin to see that it reveals to us how different was the Resurrection life from the poor, ordinary natural life of men, and the wonder of Jesus' risen life helps us to see how our life is independent of its present conditions; how we also can live through death; how we can retain old thoughts and feelings without being bound by the limitations under which they were shaped.

II

Now notice that these appearances fall into two groups—those of the Easter Day itself—those of the following forty days. (1) That the appearance on the Easter Day seems to have created AN IMMEDIATE PRESENT BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD. (2) Those of the following days seem to have estab-

lished A BELIEF IN CHRIST'S FUTURE AND ABIDING SUPERNATURAL PRESENCE WITH THEM.

The first was easy enough. You will easily understand that. The second was by no means so. The wild delight of that Easter Day seemed to have no room for any further thought than this: "The Lord is risen. The old Friend and Master is back with us. He that we saw dead is alive again. He that we trusted should have redeemed Israel has not failed after all."

Oh, the deep, overmastering gladness of it, when they had utterly lost heart; when they had seen His enemies conquering; when they had seen Him dead; when they had prepared spices to keep the dead body from decay. The wild, overmastering delight of finding that He was alive; that He had conquered death and come back as a victor into the midst of them again.

They did not stop to think whether it was a simple coming to life under the old conditions like Lazarus. They did not know, and I suppose they did not care that day to know, that it was a new, mysterious, supernatural, glorified life to which the Lord had risen.

But they had to be taught this, else they never could grip the great thought of His constant and continued presence all the days

to come—not with them only, but with the whole Church of the future.

III

Though they probably did not see it at once, yet if we study carefully we can see it now that in all His appearances step by step He was teaching them of that new life as they could bear it. You remember at the very first appearance (it was to Mary Magdalene) that lesson was begun. In the first wondering joy she throws herself at His feet: "Rabboni—my Master." She had found again the friend that she had lost, but she had found *no more*. She had no loftier title than the old one. My Master! My Teacher! He is to her but the same Jesus in His humanity. His Resurrection is only the return to the old life. She would clasp His feet with reverent, loving hands. Therefore, in His reply He corrects, disciplines, and raises her thought. Tenderly but firmly He tells her: "Touch Me not. Don't take hold of Me. Don't cling to Me. Things are changed."

And so with the men at Emmaus that evening. They felt the mystery. Their hearts burned within them. He walked with them and talked with them, but He did not reveal Himself. Their eyes were holden, and when

their eyes were opened that they should know Him He vanished out of their sight.

Then He appears in the midst to the assembled disciples suddenly when the doors were shut. The doors and walls made no obstacle to Him, and they were terrified at the sudden nearness of one from beyond the grave and thought they had seen a spirit. But He comforted them and showed them that it was He Himself though no longer subject to earthly conditions. And so through all the other appearances. The continuity, the simple former intercourse was gone. He is seen and recognized only as He wills and when He wills. He appears in the midst and no longer is seen coming. He appears unexpectedly and as suddenly vanishes. He arranges to meet the disciples in Galilee, but does not go with them. When they are there He suddenly appears. He speaks to Thomas words that show that He was present and listening unknown to them all when Thomas expressed his doubt of the Resurrection. Thus, I think, the conviction of His unseen presence gradually grew on them.

As the forty days went by, the awe and wonder deepened. Then they see too He was no longer subject to human needs nor bound by natural laws of earth. How tired He used to be ; how hungry and thirsty ; how glad H

was of shelter in the Bethany home! All this is changed. The risen Christ needs neither shelter nor rest. Forty days He lingers in the world, but in no earthly home. Steadily the conviction grew on the disciples that the Lord was moving in another and higher sphere of living than in the old days on earth.

And so gradually, we notice, there is a difference too in the relationship of His disciples to Him. A new reverence and awe has come into it. They used to be like a band of brothers together, in easy familiar intercourse. They would talk to Him of their plans and hopes and ask Him their simple questions. They would sit with Him and eat with Him—one would even recline on His breast. Now all that freedom and familiarity is over. We hear now of their worshipping Him—of their recognizing Him as their Lord and their God—of a solemn awe and reverence mingling with their love. Surely they were learning the great lesson—that their loving Friend was the Eternal Son of God—they were beginning to realize the possibility of His constant and enduring presence with them.

IV

And yet, in spite of all the differences, He was the same Jesus. With all this wonder

and awe there was the deep, strong conviction of His identity; a conviction so strong that, in spite of the fact of His death, they dared everything in insisting that He was alive. They were so positively certain of it that cowards turned into heroes and laid down their lives for their conviction. So positive that they founded the Church on it (see Acts of Apostles). So positive that they challenged priests and Sadducees and soldiers in the very city of Jerusalem where Christ had died a few weeks before. "Ye killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead."

He was felt different and yet the same. He retained the little peculiarities of voice and manner, the little unconscious gestures that distinguish one man from another.

Did you ever notice they are the first things by which we recognize long-absent friends? Your friend coming back after twenty years in India, his face bronzed by the sun and weathered with years, and changed perhaps by a great beard, looks so different from that of the smooth-faced boy from whom you parted that at first you pass him without recognition. But by and by you catch a glance or a smile, you hear an old note in his voice or see some unforgotten trick of his manner or gesture—some trifle that would tell nothing to a stranger, but makes you quite sure of your

old friend. So it seems to have been with Christ. Mary recognized Him by the tone of His voice, John by some peculiarity of manner, the disciples at Emmaus by His solemn breaking of bread. One wonders if this gives us some little hint of the way in which perhaps the dear ones gone from us and changed in the wondrous Resurrection life shall be recognized by us in the great life hereafter. Not merely in Resurrection, but I think in the waiting life before it.

And the same heart beat in His breast: the love of the old days was strong and unchanged; the memories of the old days were clear and distinct. The general impression left on us is that the old themes of conversation between Jesus and His followers were quietly resumed after He rose, as if the chasm of death and the three days in the Hades world had not intervened at all.

Before His death He told them: "After I am risen I will go before you into Galilee." One of the first messages sent to them on Easter Day was: "Go, tell My brethren that they go into Galilee; there shall they see Me," *i.e.* the arrangement holds good which I made with you before I went away. Before His death He told them: "If I go, the Holy Ghost will come to you." After His Resurrection He told them to wait on in Jerusalem for the fulfilment of

that promise which, said He, "ye have heard of Me." Other instances will easily occur to you. He had not forgotten the old memories.

To impress more on you the sameness before and after, look at the similarity in His treatment of men before and after Resurrection. Peter, for example. Watch His gradual training of Peter in His earthly life. Watch His further treatment of him after the Resurrection—(1) the solitary interview; (2) the threefold question, "Lovest thou Me?" corresponding to the threefold denial—and you must feel that it is the same treatment continued, the same skilful and tender hand that is carrying on the education of that disciple. So also in the case of Thomas. Everywhere it is impressed on you that though He was now worshipped as divine, He was the same to His friends as ever. He stoops to their feeble faith with equal gentleness. He rebukes with the old tender gravity. In every act we recognize the heart of the earthly Jesus, unchanged by death.

v

My brethren, the Easter message comes to teach us the disciples' lesson. Not only the great message to the Church: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore"; "Lo, I am with you always,

even to the end of the world"—but also the lessons to humble individual lives.

The first thing I learn for our INDIVIDUAL needs is this. That the kindly, generous, holy human Christ, who used to take the children in His arms, and speak words of encouragement to the publican and harlot, is the same Christ still. That wherever God's throne may be, or whatever great and glorious hosts surround it, there is somewhere in the centre of it One whom the eyes of men have seen and the hands of men have touched. And His nature is unchanged. Up into His kindly eyes a man can still look with trustful gaze. Beside His great sympathizing heart a poor penitent can feel "He will make the best of me as He used to do to the publicans and sinners of old." The same Jesus who was so kind to the doubter, so gentle to the tempted, who actually tried to find excuses for the mob who crucified Him. "We believe that Thou shalt come to be our Judge."

And the second piece of Easter comfort for the individual is this. As far as we can gather from the Easter story and Christ's appearance after death, we, when we die, and our friends who have died, will remain the same men and women, and yet become very different men and women. Our life will not be broken in two, but transfigured. We shall not lose our

identity, our memory, our love. We shall still be ourselves. We shall know and be known. We shall preserve the little traits of character which individualize us, but all glorified by an ennobling change of motive and aim.

We are generally told that these are foolish speculations; that in the great dim realm of the Hereafter life, all is, and must remain, obscure for ever. Nay, it is not so. True, we cannot know much. We have still to sit silent and awestruck as we see the dear ones go away from our homes into the great Unknown life. But it is not all unknown now. The Passion week tells of His comfort to the poor robber, "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." The Easter festival tells of One who was dead like our dead once; who went through the dark river as they did and reached its farther shore, yet when He came back to speak to His friends on earth was as human and as much their own as ever. The river of death had not washed out the memory of the old days nor destroyed the affection for the old friends.

Is it not delightful to know that of Jesus in the new, glorified Resurrection life? And does it not lead us to hope and believe the same of our dear ones whose hands we have folded reverently beneath the winding sheet?

For that and all the other reasons we rejoice this Eastertide, and deck our churches in fes-

tive garb, and tell our joyfulness in bright, glad
song.

God grant us grace to be grateful to Him
who gave us such gladness at Easter, who
brought life and immortality to light through
the Gospel.

XVIII

THE SEED CORN AND THE BABY SOUL

A HARVEST SERMON

Jesus said, So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow he knoweth not how. . . . First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.—MARK iv. 26-8.

THIS date is appointed by the Parliament of Canada for the national Harvest Thanksgiving. Unfortunately it clashes with the appointment by the Church of Children's Day for emphasizing our duty towards the children of the Church.

I think we shall best meet the position by taking the words of our Lord in to-day's Gospel, comparing the harvest of corn seed and fruits of the earth with the harvest of child souls growing for eternity.

"The Kingdom of God," He says, "is like the seed sown on the earth." What is true of the one is true of the other. They both spring up and grow of themselves, man knoweth not how—first the blade, then the ear, then the full

corn in the ear—till the fruit is ripe, and till the harvest is come.

I

Since He who is the Lord of both harvests said that, it must be worth while studying it. Look first at the harvest for which we give thanks to-day in this God's feeding-time of the world. The little seeds went down into the earth last spring. In each seed was a mysterious life. In each was traced a plan of God. In the heart of each was as it were the whispers of the Almighty: "Thou shalt bring forth a wheat plant or barley—a lily or a rose—or a mighty oak tree to bring forth oak trees for ever."

What a poor start they had! What insignificant beginnings! The speck of turnip seed, the piece of potato, the grain of wheat, lying one day in the wet spring-time rotting in the ground. Next week it was no better. It had disappeared in rottenness and slime. But with the experience of many harvests we knew that it was all right—because in its heart was a divine life and plan. So each little seed went into the dark, damp earth on a mission of the Almighty, to carry out God's plan.

And it has done it. In spite of set-backs and disappointments and vicissitudes of growth, the golden ears hang ready for the harvest,

the rich, ripe fruit hangs mellowing on the tree. The word of the Lord is accomplished through the land. Don't you see it this year? And all the years since Ruth gleaned the corn at Bethlehem, since the disciples of Christ rubbed the wheat ears in their hands. Therefore we who were helpless, waiting for that food, who would have starved and died if God had forgotten it—we lift up our hands in thanksgiving to-day. "Not unto us, O Lord, but to Thy Name be the glory, who hast fed us from our youth up until now, who hast blessed to our use the fruits of the earth that in due time we should enjoy them!"

II

But deeper than the thanksgiving should be the wonder and awe at the unconquerable power of God's design in the heart of the little seed. He spake and it was done. He commanded it and it was accomplished. He endowed each little seed with the divine impulse to grow. He whispered to the little acorn to produce a mighty oak. And it was done. No man could prevent it. You might trample and roll the ground hard above it. You might pile up stones and rocks to keep it buried in the earth. Silently, irresistibly, it will push aside the obstacles. It will burst asunder the very

rocks to accomplish its destiny. In this harvest of the earth at any rate God's will shall be done.

III

Now with that optimist thought about the sowing of the harvest I bid you turn to another sowing and another harvest—the sowing of little children's souls, the harvest of the Kingdom of God. All over the earth each day God is scattering little children's souls as a sower scatters the corn seed in the ground. Did you ever wonder whence came these baby souls? Did they exist beforehand? Did God create them in a moment? Did they spring into existence at a certain stage in the growth of the unborn babe in the womb?

At one time that was a question of deep interest in the Church. But we have given up inquiring. We can never know the mystery of that sowing and that harvest. But we know that for that sowing and that harvest all other sowings and harvests occur all over the world. For its sake the world itself exists, a platform for human souls to develop character. For its sake the Creation, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Bible. For its sake will be the Great Life of the Hereafter. And somehow one feels that with such stupendous preparation that harvest is not going to fail—any

more than the other. If the impulse of God in the heart of the little corn seed accomplished its purpose, surely the impulse of God in the germ souls of our race is not going to be the failure that some people expect. There is of course one great difference. In the harvest of souls the element of the will comes in, and this is the determining factor in character and destiny. But even so it is inspiriting to feel that the divine purpose is behind and the divine care is around in both the great harvests of God.

IV

Now go on with the comparison which Jesus makes. First we see the divine purpose, the divine impulse stamped on the young seed. Then we see the insignificant beginnings. As the little wheat seed or the acorn is the little baby at the beginning, with its little expressionless face and its little animal cries and cravings for warmth and food for itself—much like the young of any other animal of that age.

Yet in such baby souls that seem not souls at all are wrapped up the germs of conscience and intellect—all the great powers of the future. In them as in the wheat seed is the germinal expansive power, the divine nature waiting for opportunity to grow. As in the spring sowing of corn seed lies potentially the

yellow harvest—as in the bushel of acorns lies the future forest—so in the great sowing of baby souls in the world lies potentially the great harvest of God, the harvest of saints and heroes for this world and the world to come. “The Kingdom of God,” said Jesus, “is like seed sown on the earth. It springs up and grows, man knoweth not how—through the secret power of God in it.”

And then, too, as the seeds are of different kinds and develop on different lines—as the wheat cannot become barley or the rose a lily—so also is the Kingdom of God. Each germ soul is different from another and must develop on its own lines. The wise mother soon learns the solemn mystery that God sends His germ souls into the world as distinct from each other as the faces that are outside them—as distinct as are the seeds of wheat or oats or barley or rye. She soon finds out that she has not to deal with a blank tablet to be written on as she likes; not with a lump of clay, to be moulded as she pleases—but with a mysterious, self-acting, self-developing being. Her business is not to make an immortal soul nor to mould one to a particular pattern. No. But to watch over the growth of one whose germinal direction is there already. Just as the gardener cannot make his plant or change its individuality—he can only watch its growth

and help to keep the environment right. Ah, it is a wonderful thing to watch a seed grow, but it is a startling thing to watch a soul grow—to see the mysterious powers developing, to feel, as our Lord puts it—“that you sleep and rise night and day, and the seed groweth up you know not how.”

v

And it is a troubling thing to see the sort of gardening it often gets in its growing.

This brings us to the next comparison.

God wills for the seeds of the earth—that the sun should warm them and the rain fall on them and the fresh winds of heaven blow around them. Otherwise their growth will be thwarted.

And oh, brethren, it is a solemn thought for you who have little children in your homes. God wills for the little baby souls that they should be lapped in love, that through the human love they should learn the divine, that the air of heaven should blow around them, that the little child baptized into Christ should be brought up in a holy home as a member of Christ, a child of God, an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not every home that is fit to grow a child soul without withering or deformity. Three times the last week this troubling thought was forced on me—twice in

rich homes and once in a poor one: God help the poor little children! Oh, it is pitiful. The wonder that Almighty God can endure to leave the training of an immortal soul to human parents is only equalled by the wonder that those parents can accept the trust without a thought of its significance. Alas for the growth of the little child souls where the parents have forgotten the little children's Lord and Friend!

VI

Now I watch the growing as Jesus described it. First the blade, then the ear; then the full corn in the ear.

It is fascinating to watch the mental growth of a little child and to compare it with some dimly remembered experiences of your own when you were very young.

You remember nothing of the first stage after God flung your little soul in the scattering of germ souls on the earth. But all those first years God was caring for His seed, the thing of tremendous value which He had sown upon the earth. The unconscious mind was receiving impressions without knowing it, which all had their share in the character making by and by.

You did not even find out that you were a separate person for a long time. For the first

three years you never said "I, myself." It was only "Baby likes this," "Baby wants that." Until some day in the early bread-and-milk stage a new consciousness came on you, and as you looked down at your little fat knees you found out you were a separate personality. You don't remember it, but your mother found out that after that you got to call yourself "I" and "me." The little green blade was rising above the earth.

And from that day forth impressions came thick and fast—the breath of God breathing on the young soul, whispering good things, and you wondered why you often wanted to be good, and you wondered why it was easier to be naughty, and why you found some sharp thing inside hurting you when you were naughty. All around you were the influences of God, and especially in the morning when mother got you in her arms, and in the night time when she knelt by your cot and told you stories about Joseph and David and the young men that would not bow down before Nebuchadnezzar's big image, and the life of the child Jesus in the carpenter's shop.

That was God's great watering-time for His little plant, when the dews of heaven were falling on it to make it grow, and the breath of heaven was around it to make it pure.

And you lay awake after mother left you,

and you thought in that quiet little soul of yours thoughts that neither mother nor anybody knew about. The little plant was growing all by itself, and it was best not to be plucking up the roots to examine its growth.

I think any real student of child life must feel a sort of awe about a little child's nursery, where God's little seedlings are growing up and with the purpose of God stamped in the heart of them. And one feels so sorry when the little orphan child has to think things out without any mother to tell them to, and so angry when there is a father and mother in charge of the young seedling plants and never watering them with the dew of heaven or bringing to them the beautiful sunshine of God. I always think, though, that God will make up for it sometime and somewhere to these poor little souls.

VII

And so you grew to about eight years old, and you had many strange thoughts that would have startled the big people if they knew. And you asked awkward questions that puzzled them, and they told you it was all right, but that children could not understand. And you believed them—more or less—generally less.

Slowly, slowly, through the school time and

the play time and the solemn Confirmation time and the first communion and the days when the boy and girl were passing into the man and woman. The thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts. Slowly and patiently the Great Husbandman had been waiting. Corn takes time. Character is more precious than corn, and takes a longer time.

The Blade and the Ear. And all the time the Great Husbandman was waiting for the fruition—the full corn in the ear—the beautiful strong man's life—the tender, lovable woman's life grown close to God.

The tender blade is beautiful and full of interest. The blossom on the tree is beautiful and full of hope. But more beautiful still are the golden ears and the rich ripe fruit hanging mellow on the trees—the sweet and noble and lovable lives that bind the whole world to God—God's harvest.

VIII

I bid you include in your Harvest Thanksgiving to-day God's harvest of souls. I call you to greater faith and higher optimism for that spiritual harvest.

I am thinking of the millions and millions of noble lives throughout the earth garnered

into the great Garner of Paradise. I am thinking of the righteous men and loving women who have gone from us at St. George's. Aye, and of the poor faulty strugglers too who have passed from us into the Great Unseen. With comfort I feel that I cannot remember a single deathbed here in which I had no hope.

God forbid that I should think little of human sin. As I see in the world of nature dwarfed and stunted plants, and even seeds that for some reason have never started to accomplish their destiny, so I see, too, in the world of humanity. If I could shut my eyes to that the Bible would rebuke me. But oh, brethren, I think great things of the power of God and the love and care and pain of God for every poor soul that He has made.

I believe that God has stamped His divine purpose on every soul—that He is watching and caring and suffering to bring forth His harvest—that He has a good deal of time to do things between this and the other side of eternity—and I don't believe that He is going to fail.

I see a glorious meaning in that prophecy of His harvest, when "the great multitude that no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, shall stand before the throne to cry, Salvation to our God and to the Lamb."

Wherefore lift up your hearts. Lift them up unto the Lord. Watch with trusting hope over your children's lives. Think with faith and hope of your dear ones in the Unseen. And pray to Him for this poor field in this parish of yours.

Lord of Harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

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XIX

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphæus, and Lebbæus, whose surname was Thaddæus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.—*Mat. x. 2-4.*

LATELY I came upon an interesting old essay on the Apostles, written about fifty years ago, which set me thinking about those twelve comrades of Jesus—what an interesting set of men they would be to know, and how distinct and separate they were in character and temperament. I want to share my thoughts and the old essayist's thoughts with you to-day.

We generally think of the twelve apostles rather vaguely and impersonally—just a group of saintly men, all pretty much alike, perhaps with haloes around their heads as in the church windows. But to those who knew them they were much like ourselves, and they were by

no means alike. They were a group of living, warm-blooded men, quite diverse in appearance and character and temperament and disposition, and partly through that diversity they were, you may be sure, a very interesting set of people to know. And I think if we would try to know the apostles like that we might learn to understand them better, and perhaps learn also how Jesus can attract to Himself all sorts of people and wants all sorts of people to serve in His Kingdom—even people like you and me.

I

I find that there are four different lists of their names in the Gospels and the Acts. At first one would not think that there was much to be learned from lists of names. But there is. I see first that though the lists are in different order, yet Peter is always first and Judas Iscariot always last, and you can see a natural reason for that. They were thought of that way. First the great, impetuous, warm-hearted disciple, who so loved his Lord in spite of his denial; and last and lowest, the treacherous disciple who betrayed Jesus to His foes.

Between these are ten names of men of very varied character and temperament. They, too, stood apart in groups in the thoughts of their friends. For I find that though the dis-

ferent lists place them in different order, yet the same groups of men are always kept together.

1. Peter and Andrew and James and John.
2. Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas.
3. The three sons of Alphæus, James and Jude and Simon Zelotes, with Judas Iscariot.

And again there seems to be a reason for this. The men in each group are put in different order, but the same four are always kept together. The early disciples associated them that way in their minds. Just as if I who know them were thinking of the men of this parish, I would naturally think of them in groups—the men who were alike, or the men who were most prominent, or the men specially associated in some work together.

II

In the first four are naturally the biggest men—the enthusiasts, the leaders, the men of most force of character and most eager devotion to Jesus and His great purpose. They were two pairs of brothers—Peter and Andrew, James and John. The four were close friends. You remember their first acquaintance with Jesus. If you read the call of the apostles only in the first three Gospels, you might think that all that happened was that Jesus one day

seeing two young fishermen (James and John) mending their nets called them to follow Him, and another day seeing Matthew at the receipt of customs called him to follow Him, and so on. I suppose that is what many of the early Christians thought, having only the first three Gospels. But it does not seem natural that He should thus call strangers or that they should at once follow Him. One of these four lets us into the secret in a most delightful way. He is writing in his old age the great Gospel of St. John—the Gospel of an old man's memories. He tells that Andrew and himself were disciples of the Baptist, who had set them thinking and wondering about Jesus. One day as they talked they saw Jesus passing. "Behold," said the Baptist, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." Immediately the two young fishermen started after Jesus—shyly, timidly, half hoping, half fearing that He might speak to them. And Jesus hearing the footsteps turned round. "What seek ye?" The poor lads hardly knew what to say. "Master, where are You lodging?" Ah, Jesus knew what was in their hearts. "Come with Me and you shall see." John never forgot that moment. Seventy years afterwards he records in his Gospel that "it was about four o'clock in the afternoon (the tenth hour)." Jesus took them to His

little lodging and they stayed all the evening with Him. Think what it meant to be all the evening with Jesus, sharing His supper—talking to Him, questioning Him, listening to Him. Think of the two rough youths coming out that night to go home, their hearts swelling with a great new love and hope and enthusiasm. The world was for evermore changed to them.

“And one of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He findeth his own brother Simon and brought him to Jesus.” And I suppose John brought his brother James, though he does not tell it. Do you wonder that these men were enthusiastic for Jesus? Very different men they were, but all enthusiasts—Peter the impetuous, John the contemplative, Andrew the affectionate, and James.

James we know least about. He died young. But we know that Jesus named him Boanerges, the son of thunder, and we know that he was important enough for Herod to cut off his head. Herod got hold of two of the group, James and Peter. And God allowed James to die, while He saved Peter. Perhaps he might have been the greatest of all if he had lived. But God had other use for him in the life beyond. And he and Peter know now why God let him die then. Surely they must often have talked of that when they met in the larger life forty years later.

So much for the first group—the big men, the passionate, enthusiastic men. James, the fearless man, who died for Christ, Andrew, the practical man, who worked for Christ, John, who thought deeply without speaking, and Peter, who spoke often without thinking—the impetuous, blundering Peter—the most human of them all. I like to think how Jesus was drawn to him, though he was a blunderer and for three hours was a coward. It makes me hopeful for some of us, who are also blunderers and cowards, but who deep in their hearts can feel with poor Peter, "Lord, thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

III

That is the first group.

Some of you are saying, "Ah, well! I am not of that type. I am not an enthusiast. I am a dull, cold man. I often have doubts about Christ and about myself. I am sometimes afraid I don't belong to Him at all. And yet I would not give Him up for all the world. I don't belong to Peter's group at all rate."

Well, wait a bit. Perhaps Jesus has a place for you too. Let us see the next group—Philip and Bartholomew and Matthew and Thomas. These are very different men. They love Jesus too. But they are smaller men

useful men, practical men, but not capable of being leaders. They are thoughtful, rather sceptical. It took some of them a long time to learn that Jesus was divine. They could not help it. They were built that way.

Look at Philip. One day Jesus asked him, "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" And this He said to prove him. But Philip did not rise to the test. Instead of saying, "Lord, You know You can do all things," he begins to calculate the price in the baker's shop. "We can't do it. It is not possible. It would take two hundred penny-worth of bread." Another day Philip appeals for proof. "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." And Jesus turns with the gentle reproof, "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." That was Philip. Wanting proofs—wanting to see. Not a bad thing either if not carried too far.

His comrade Nathaniel was a different type—yet in some degree similar. He too was a slow, cautious man and somewhat doubting. Philip comes one day to tell his old friend about the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Nathaniel had his doubts about it. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" But the moment he met Jesus his doubting was over. He was a silent, meditative man, who thought

much, who under the fig tree in his private garden read and prayed and thought about God. In such a man the spiritual insight grows rapidly. He had not been five minutes face to face with Jesus before he cried, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel!" I think Nathaniel was a very lovable friend for Philip to have—an honest, pure-minded man who could sympathize deeply and speak candidly. You remember how the Lord described him: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!"

Thomas we always think of as a doubter. "Lord," he says, "we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" And again, when Jesus was going back into danger at the death of Lazarus, Thomas doubted. He could escape being killed by the Jews if He went. And you know how he refused to believe in the Resurrection on the testimony of his fellow apostles. He would give all the world to believe it, but it was too good to be true. Thomas was built that way. There are others built that way. All my experience shows me that it is far harder for some men than for others to believe in Jesus Christ. And there are often men of honest and good heart. And when they find Jesus they are the staunchest of all. Such was Thomas. Though he could not see the way, he would follow Jesus in it.

the end. Though he believed that Jesus would be killed if He returned, the faithful heart of the man clung to Him still. It was Thomas that cried to his comrades that day, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." And if he was slow in believing that Jesus was risen, yet when convinced his faith rose higher than that of any of the others. "My Lord and my God!" No one else had ever called Jesus God.

Matthew we don't know much about. He was one of four brothers, the sons of Alphæus, who all became apostles. But he had become an outcast from his family, a publican or tax-gatherer. The tax-gatherers paid the Government a lump sum for the taxes of the district and then squeezed all they could out of the people and made money on the deal. Naturally the oppressed Jews despised and hated them.

One wonders how he began his connection with the Lord. We are told that Jesus went to his office and called him—"Follow Me." But, as in the case of the others, you may be sure that there was much before this. Jesus did not call him till he was ready to be called. I wish we knew about their previous acquaintance. I have sometimes imagined to myself the young Carpenter going regularly to pay the taxes on Joseph's little lot and thus be-

coming intimate with this disreputable cousin in the tax office. Matthew could not help liking Him, for He was probably the only one of his cousins that did not despise him. But I think he always felt ashamed of his trade when Jesus came in. I picture to myself one day, while Jesus was in the office, a poor fisherman coming in who was in arrears with his taxes—that he pleaded with Matthew to give him time—not to sell his boats and nets, or the cottage that sheltered his wife and little child. I think Matthew wished that Jesus was not in the office that day. But he would not yield. Business is business. If he were soft with people he would never get on. And I imagine Jesus as He went out just looking at him—as He looked at Peter the night of the Denial—and that was all.

But after the fisherman had gone, somehow Matthew did not feel comfortable. And that night the thought of the fisherman's wife and child came between him and his sleep. And I don't think he foreclosed on the boat and nets next day. And I think he grew ashamed to meet Jesus, and gradually began to hate his money-gathering trade and to wish he could win the approval of Jesus of Nazareth.

This is only my fancy. At any rate I know something must have been stirring in the conscience of that publican to make him fit to

be an apostle. And the Lord knew it, as He knows every thought of shame or penitence or good desire in any of us. And so one day He came into the tax-gatherer's office and said unto him, "Follow Me." And he arose and left all and followed Him. But the stigma of the old life remained. Mainly on his account Jesus was sneered at as the friend of publicans, and poor Matthew humbly writes himself down in the list in his own Gospel as Matthew the Publican.

IV

I have not left myself time for the last group—Matthew's three brothers—James and Jude and Simon the Zealot. They seem to have been very strict Jews—all the stricter perhaps because their brother was a publican. James became later the Bishop of Jerusalem. Jude wrote that stern, gloomy epistle which we find in the New Testament. Simon was one of the Zealots or Nationalists who exalted Judaism. We might class them as intensely earnest—rather narrow, rather bigoted—the type of men that objected to Peter eating with the Gentiles, and had little sympathy with Paul's revolutionary thought of a world-wide Church where the Gentile and Jew stood equal. Narrow men—bigoted men—but intensely earnest. Such men will grow broader in their connection

with Christ. They need to grow broader. But they are valuable men in opposing errors and innovations. We know some of them. The Church has often had reason to be grateful to them.

And last and least of all is Judas Iscariot, the financial man, the man of affairs, who looked after the business end of the Mission. That is a very important work always in the Church. Some of our business men in Montreal who could not preach or teach are doing most useful work in the consecration of their business abilities to the Church, though I don't suppose they would be complimented by the comparison with Judas.

One wonders why the Lord chose Judas or why Judas cared to come. Certainly not for monetary reasons. There was not much picking or stealing to be got out of twelve poor missionaries. He must have been attracted toward Jesus. Perhaps the poor sinner thought he would be safer with Him. True, he fell to the lowest depths. But I cannot forget that he wanted to be with Jesus, and I cannot forget that in his agony of sorrow for what he had done he was a big enough man to fling back the bribe in the face of his tempters and go away and hang himself. A smaller man would not have done that. Jesus had a greater hold on him than he thought, and it drove

him mad to see Him crucified and to feel that he had betrayed Him. "Good were it for that man if he had not been born." But will Jesus ever forget him?

v

May we not take these twelve men as representing the many kinds of people in the Church?

What may we learn from our rapid glance over these twelve men—the representatives of many classes in the Church to-day? That in the service of Christ there is room and work for all sorts of people. That Jesus wants and calls all sorts of people—the geniuses and enthusiasts and blunderers and doubters and ignorant and stupid. There are elements of greatness in all of us which contact with Him will develop. There are elements of evil which contact with Him will destroy. Jesus wants us all, and calls us all, and by His grace can make all of us a blessing to the world.

He wants amongst the clergy those leaders whose praise is in all the Churches—the enthusiast, the spiritual genius, the prophet of the Lord. He needs too that poor awkward clergyman, without much genius or eloquence or power of organization, but whose loving life is a continual sermon.

Amongst the lay people He calls the glad, confident Christian, whose joyful assurance is a source of strength to all around him—and the poor doubter, struggling in the dimmer light, but yet struggling—determinedly, faithfully, to the end. He needs the genial, kindly man, who makes religion attractive—and the silent, reserved man, who is honoured for his stern sense of right. He needs the clever woman novelist, whose books are uplifting life—and the simple little mother, the sunshine of the home, whose children rise up and call her blessed.

Oh, brethren, Jesus wants us all and calls us all and can use us all, with all our varieties of character and temperament. He cannot bless the world without us, and if we will only yield to Him and get closer to Him, life will grow more beautiful for us, and the world will be richer for us. We are diverse in character and temperament. We are each ourselves. Jesus has room for us all.

And in the greater Kingdom to which He is leading us we shall still be ourselves, we shall still preserve the traits of character that individualize us here. So far as we can judge, in the life in heaven there will be the same delightful, infinite variety as in the life of earth—but all will be suffused and glorified by our union with Christ.

XX

THE CHURCH

A Sermon preached before the Synod of the Diocese of Huron

The Church of the Living God.—1 TIM. iii. 15.

IN view of the present widespread interest in Canada on the question of Reunion, I have chosen for the subject of our thoughts to-day The Church, its Divisions, its Projects of Reunion.

I. THE CHURCH

§ 1

First, the Church. First, I repeat, the Church. No use in discussing divisions or reunion till we have first cleared our thoughts about the Church itself, and the vastness of its importance in the plan of Christ.

I know some men whose attention is largely concentrated on hobbies, wise or otherwise. You know such men too. And you know that whatever subject of conversation you start with them, you are bound to come ultimately

to their favourite subject. I do not always admire these friends with the one unimportant, persistent idea.

But I have other friends with equally persistent ideas—which in their case I call enthusiasms, high, eager, unselfish projects for the good of men. And the more determined they are to force their projects on me, the more I cannot help honouring and admiring and loving them, even if I do not yet share in the enthusiasm myself. There are men thus eager about missions to the heathen, about temperance, about housing of the poor, about playgrounds for city children, and about the condition of those compelled to herd in a workhouse with the offscouring of humanity. I have one friend, who is now gone within the veil, who was so excited about the state of the helpless classes in his city, and especially about the slum children, that every talk with him was bound to end in passionate words against the apathy of the Government, and of the careless religious people who allowed these evils to go on. And you could not help loving him for it, if you knew him. He was a plain, humble man, but so earnest was he, and so persistently did he keep on about his pet enthusiasm, that he actually forced the hands of a set of us in that city to found a valuable Social Service Union. Truly this would be a

poor world if you took these great and urgent enthusiasms out of it!

With all deep reverence I say that men like that suggest to me the thought of our Lord. Did you ever think of His great central enthusiasm—the special subject that seemed to bulk so prominently in His thoughts that it seemed as if He—if we may reverently say it—could not help talking of the subject—that everything led up to it—His great ideal for the help of humanity?

What was it? Think. It was the centre-point of all His teaching. The vision that filled up His outlook into the future of the world. It was the subject of His very first sermon. The last instructions in the forty days after the Resurrection were pertaining to it. The Twelve Apostles were sent out to teach it. The seventy disciples took it as their first subject. His whole teaching bore on it. Almost every parable was an illustration of it. If you look through a concordance, you will find the title of it about one hundred times in the Gospels. It is just as I said to you.

Just as every great human teacher who is capable of enthusiasm about his work has some special central subject—temperance, or missions, or child-rescue, or something that is so prominent in his thoughts that he will continually talk of it—so, in all reverence, we

may say of the Divine Teacher that He too had one central enthusiasm, one central idea, for humanity.

Have you guessed what it was? He called this ideal of His "the Kingdom of God." You remember how His very first preaching was, "The Kingdom of God is at hand"; His very last teaching between the Resurrection and Ascension, "Being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things concerning the Kingdom of God." His disciples were sensible how almost all His parables were illustrations of it. The Kingdom of God is like mustard seed, like leaven, like hidden treasure, like a draw-net, and so on and on through the series. The Kingdom of God! The Kingdom of God!

That is my first thought. That Our Lord had one great central project that seemed to have been more important to Him than anything else, and that He called it "the Kingdom of God."

§ 2

Now, what did He mean by "the Kingdom of God"? Clearly some present thing. Something that first of all concerned this earth—that had to begin and grow and spread for a blessing to earth.

Remember how He illustrates it. It is like a little mustard-seed, a very small thing, to grow by and by into a great spreading tree, that the fowls may shelter in its branches. It is like leaven, which spreads in meal until the whole mass is leavened. It is like seed growing secretly. It is like a corn of wheat springing up, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Evidently it is some living, growing thing, spreading gradually on earth for earth's blessing and good. Remember how He puts it in the Prayer of the Kingdom, which His followers were to use: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done." Where? On earth—"on earth, as it is in heaven."

It is easy to see that He meant in the first place the little Christian Society which He was founding on earth. Of course He meant a great deal more. A Kingdom of God where God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven. The poor earthly Church is yet far from realizing our Lord's beautiful ideal. But it is the human attempt at realizing it. It is the best He could do to realize it with the material available. I think it is as if a great artist with a glorious conception in his mind has to work it out in rough stone. The stubbornness of the material thwarts him and makes the result but a poor approach to the

ideal in his mind. Yet it is the best attempt in his power to realize his ideal with such intractable material.

The few picked out here and there to form the nucleus of it were the little grain of mustard-seed to grow into a great tree; the little leaven that was to spread through all the ages to leaven the whole lump. That little group was all-important to Him. Everything, humanly speaking, depended on it. His beautiful plan for the lifting up of the world—for pulling the poor old world straight—was to be carried out by that Society when He had passed from earth. He would always watch over it. His Holy Spirit would dwell in it. It was to be the expression and the instrument of His love for humanity. And it was to be one unbroken body in long procession into the Unseen, and there be the Kingdom of God in the Eternal Future.

Let the sweet, fair vision arise before you. Christ's ideal for His Church. Not a selfish crowd whose supreme thought was that each for himself should escape punishment and gain happiness hereafter. No, but a band of knights of God going forth to sweep away the evil from the earth—to pull the world straight. All noble life should spring up around that little Society—cruelty and misery, drunkenness and impurity, all that was cursing men should

vanish before it. It should leaven the world ; it should give hope and courage.

That is the next thought I want to impress on you, that our Lord came, not to teach a philosophy, but to found a Society. Get hold of that word Society. Do you notice the way in which men are now founding societies for every great reform? They have made to themselves societies for this reform and that, and have perhaps sometimes thought that the idea of this working by societies is their own. Then they awake to the discovery that Christ was before them—that in their poor little conceptions of a society to accomplish a reform they are following the Lord, who founded the ONE SOCIETY from which all this blessing to the world has come.

§ 3

Now, have we gripped that thought firmly, that the great project of our Lord's life on earth was the founding of a Society—a Society for a great unselfish purpose, that men should grow noble, that God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven? The Society which is known to us as the Church of Christ.

Will you notice that His chief work for His three years of ministry was not so much preaching to individual people, or converting

individual people, but rather laying the foundations of that organization which should go on through all the ages preaching to the people and converting the people? In one day after Pentecost the number converted was 3,000. Put that side by side with the result of our Lord's work. After His death only 120 disciples in all Jerusalem. We know of only 500 Christians in all the land as the result of the united ministry of Himself and all His preachers. A poor result indeed, if converting individuals was His chief life-work. But you must never think that it was. His chief life-work was the founding the Church. Day after day for three years He was keeping round Himself a little group that He had chosen as the nucleus of the future Church—showing them His ideals, inspiring them with His thoughts, touching them with the beauty of His life, so that when He should ascend into heaven He would have ready for His purpose a trained, consecrated band of men on whom the Holy Ghost should come.

I want to impress this on you, so that you should have a great, high, reverential thought about the position of the Church. When you hear the common objection of uneducated people against preaching about the Church, you should know how to answer it. "We want you to preach Christ," they say, "not

preach the Church." Surely yes. To preach Christ is the supreme thing. And yet, when you think of it, I ask you : men of plain common sense how can we preach Christ without preaching the Church, the great project, the great enthusiasm of our Master's life, the great engine for preaching Christ through the ages ?

The saddest stories in history, I think, are those which tell how the beautiful inspiring ideals of reformers have been misunderstood and degraded and dragged in the mud by their followers. And perhaps the saddest of them all is that which tells how the ideal of the great divine Reformer has been degraded by His followers till it is hard to find the ideal at all. I think of His care and solicitude in founding a Church. I think of all He hoped from it ; of all He intended for it. I think of His promise to be present with it, and how He is watching its progress to-day in the world.

And then I think of His deep sorrow, of His wonderful patience, as He sees His great instrument being spoiled—split up into a multitude of conflicting sects, warring with each other—as He sees amongst a great part of its children the idea of that divine organized Society lost altogether.

§ 4

It is, therefore, necessary before discussing the evils of division or the prospects of Reunion that we—sons of the Church—should try to get some clear views about its purpose and its constitution. Let me try to impress on you some thoughts of importance.

(a) The Church is not merely an appendage to the Bible. The Church was before the Bible. Ponder carefully this fact, that Our Lord left to the world at His ascension not the Gospels and Epistles, but the divine Society, with its loving fellowship and its mysterious Spirit-guided life, whose members were afterwards inspired to write the Gospels and Epistles. God forbid that this should seem to lower the position of the Bible. No. It is but to put the Bible and the Church in their rightful connection. I want you to see that Our Lord did not first have the Bible written and then send forth His Apostles to lecture upon it. He first sent forth His Church; He made His Church; He inspired His Church; and the Church's Book, or Bible, came afterwards. Unless you realize this, you will never be impressed by the evil of our divisions.

(b) This Society which Christ founded was a definite, visible, organized Society. Take care not to lose yourself in vague abstractions,

It was not an indefinite or intangible set of isolated people who might have certain feelings or beliefs without anybody knowing of them. You cannot work big reforms that way. It was a definite, visible, organized Society, with its regular method of admission, and its regular way of appointing officers. It was He Himself carefully selected and personally commissioned the first office-bearers in it.

You see why I am saying this. Because of the vague notions so many have about the Church. People think that Christ was just a preacher of righteousness, flinging His good seed out promiscuously, and content that individuals, here and there, should be better men for it. There is a vague idea that the Church means an unknown number of holy saints in all religious bodies—an invisible Church known only to Christ. The Church, they say, consists not of the christened, but only of the Christ-like. There is a certain great truth at the bottom of this idea. There is such a "soul of the Church" invisible, unknown except by the Lord Himself—the high, holy lives that are keeping the Church high and holy. But this certainly is not the Church of the Bible. It was no invisible body. It was a definite group of converts formed into a Society for a special purpose—to pull the poor world straight. Holy Scripture knows of no Church in any city

or country of the world other than the visible community of the baptized.

(c) Again, be clear about this: It was to be one body. This needs special emphasizing in our day, when Christians seem to think they may split up as they like. It is all very well to talk of Christian charity. But you may rest assured that, no real Reunion can come from that sort of charity that belongs to mere haziness and want of conviction, that talks of rival separated communities as all regiments in Christ's army, and all Churches equally carrying out His purpose. Before you talk of Reunion, you must first of all settle the question: Are our divisions a sin against Christ? Was the Church of Christ intended by its Lord to be one body?

Can you fancy St. Paul looking at the state of Christendom to-day? Not one body, but two hundred bodies. Can you fancy what Our Lord would say to us as we thus break up His glorious Kingdom? But people are fairly happy over it. We are all right, they say. We are all loyal to Christ. We are only different regiments in Christ's army. There is, thank God, much of truth in this, for with all our faults and jealousies we, separated Christians, do love our common Lord, and want to serve Him. Yet the comparison is a very misleading one, and tends to obscure the evils

our separation. A precious army it would be where the regiments, though fighting for the same king, held little or no communication, recognized no common orders or officers, had no common plan of campaign, and fought each for his own hand; where the regiments, too, in the intervals of striking at the enemy in front made little side stabs now and then at each other as they went on. Much chance of victory in an army such as that!

(d) The Society was to be an educational one, and therefore had to have many faulty people in it. It was not merely a glass case for exhibiting saints; it was also an institution for making saints, even out of very poor material. The Kingdom of God was like a field, tares and wheat together. The Kingdom of God was like a net, gathering of every kind. So the New Testament knows of no branch of the Church which was not in some degree corrupt. St. Paul's Epistles sometimes exhibit a good deal of Church corruption. Though the purpose of the Church is to make men pure and holy, yet the Church on earth must be more or less impure and unholy, however strict its rules, however rigorous its discipline, because it is made up of imperfect men; because, moreover, it is made up of disciples learning to be holy, not of masters who are perfectly holy already. You will find certain

sects who have separated because they are seeking a pure Church to join. It is well to realize the ground of their error.

(e) It was to be a Missionary Church. It was founded because there was a great good news to be taught, and great privileges to be obtained. Therefore it was to be aggressive, going out into all the world to preach the good news to every creature, to bring every creature within range of its benefits.

(f) It was to be a Sacramental Church. Be clear about that amid the nebulous notions of to-day, when the very name of sacramental grace is often a name of offence. The Church had great gifts for men. It had the glad story of Christ, which it taught orally at first, and afterwards by means of its written Gospels which form the book of the Church. And it had special miraculous gifts for men that they could not get elsewhere. It had a sacrament of baptism, which was a real power in the spiritual life of men, not a theological abstraction. By means of it a real valuable gift came to every member of its society. And it had its sacrament of the Holy Communion, by means of which its unity was to be shown, by means of which also, in some marvellous way that we cannot understand, Christ communicated His own self—His own nature—His own self to the souls of men. Think of the tr

mendousness of that gift in the Church. I do not think it too much to say that a great part of the purpose of founding the Church was that it should convey to men this great gift. He came to infuse the divine into humanity. He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. His divine Society was the instrument for accomplishing this, and in no way more than by that holy sacrament. Be clear about that. If you are to be offered union at the cost of doing anything that would lower that sacramental gift of God—then do without union. You can't afford it at the price.

Let me briefly sum up :

1. Christ came to found a Society—the Church.
2. The Church was not a mere appendage to the Bible.
3. It was not an invisible Church of isolated units.
4. It was one body—one, undivided.
5. It was not merely a show-room of saints, but an institution for making saints.
6. It was a Missionary Church.
7. It was a Sacramental Church, feeding the spiritual life of men with the divine Bread which cometh down from heaven.

II.—DIVISIONS

Now, if I have succeeded in impressing on you the great importance of this Church as our Lord's great instrument for the salvation of the world, you will probably see the importance of keeping that instrument perfect and intact. To break up that instrument, to spoil its efficiency in any way, must be nothing less than a sin against Him. Therefore, you will see that we shall do little good in any schemes of Reunion until we have formed a strong public opinion that divisions in the Church of Christ are absolutely sinful as contrary to the mind of the Church's Lord. Perhaps the thought will suggest itself, "How could men help it if grave evils arose, if false doctrines were taught, if evil living were tolerated? Ought not men in such case to separate and find or found a purer communion where their souls would get more good?"

The answer is—Certainly not. Why not? For a simple common-sense reason. Because, if the good and earnest men who most feel the evil will leave the Church for their own selfish reasons, for the good of their own souls, is it not clear that through the loss of them the Church, for which Christ so much cares, must grow worse and worse? Clearly they should stay within it and fight for its reform. If any

man thinks that separations are justifiable in order to find a purer community, I refer him first to the Bible to see its attitude on the subject; and next to his own common sense, as he looks out upon this divided Christendom.

§ 1

First, to the Bible.

Look at the Old Testament Church—a Church complete with its priesthood, and sanctuary, and altar, and religious rites. It was a hopelessly unsatisfactory Church. If ever separation from the Church of God was justifiable, it would have been then. The Law and the Prophets ring with denunciations of the people and their priests. And yet, during 1,500 years of this wicked Church, even when most of her members had bowed unto Baal, such an idea as separation never occurred to any one, except Korah and Jeroboam. I don't suppose any one wants to quote them as examples.

Then our Lord was born into that Church. Its clergy and leaders were such hypocrites and formalists that He uses the most terrible names to describe them. He had no hesitation about the most solemn protesting and condemning, but separating He never thought of.

The Apostles had even more cause for separation. Not only were the Church leaders

hypocrites and formalists, but they rejected and crucified the Lord. Yet "they were continually in the temple"; they "went up to the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour"; they kept all the festival days of the Church.

By and by, when from the stem of God's old Church arose, like its flower and blossom, His new Christian Church, the full development of the old, was there any change as to the requirement of unity? If the Lord gave leave for separation, one would like to know where. He founds His Kingdom for a special purpose. Surely a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. He prays on the night of His agony that they all may be one, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Do you doubt that He is praying it still while Christians go on dividing and subdividing?

Why need I go on? Hear the Apostles rebuking the evil in the Church. See St. Paul cataloguing the faults of the early Christian converts. Why, it is enough to make one lose all hope of religion: theft, adultery, incest, lying, false teaching, everything that would seem to give a good excuse to earnest Christians to go out and start some purer communion for themselves. But it never entered his head or theirs that they might separate because of such things. See the sternness of the Apostle

even with the minor divisions and factions. "Mark them which cause schisms amongst you, and turn away from them." "I hear there are divisions amongst you." "One is of Paul, another of Cephas, etc. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?" etc. "Ye are the members of Christ." "That there be no schism in the body." "By One Spirit ye are all baptized into *One Body*." Being partakers of the one bread reminds them that they are all members of the *One Body*. And so on and on right through the Epistles. Can any one look out on the mockery of all this in the two hundred sects to-day without wondering how men can read the Bible and let such things go on?

§ 2

Next, I appeal to your common sense. With this great thought of the One Holy Catholic Society, which was the great central project of Our Lord's life, look out at the state of things to-day, and ask yourselves, Should these things be?

I. Look at our missionary work abroad. We all rejoice that Christ is preached to the heathen, by whomsoever it may be. But think of the waste of power, and think of the perplexity of the poor heathen as he looks at the multiplicity of Christian bodies who cannot

agree amongst themselves. And think of the divided Christendom that we are preparing for generation sunborn. We send missions to China. Yes. But by means of forty separate rival bodies of Christians. In Madras you can see the churches of nine different denominations from one place. In the Congo State there are eight different sects. Here is a statement from Australia: "In almost every township there are at least five separate houses of prayer, where five very scanty congregations are ministered to by five underpaid ministers, who ride on five underfed horses to preach what is substantially the same Gospel." So it is all over the heathen world. No wonder that missions are not more successful. No wonder that the poor heathen has to say, "Had not you better agree first among yourselves?" No wonder that earnest men, not merely of our Church but of all denominations, are complaining. "The world," says Dr. Milligan, a Presbyterian, "will never be converted by a divided Church." "In our present divided state," writes Dr. Williamson, a Methodist, "we shall never Christianize China."

2. And who does not know the similar condition at home—here at our doors in Canada the waste, the bitterness, the ungenerous rivalries, the little country towns, with only a few people, divided by "religious" jealousies,

shepherded by three or four ministers of different religious bodies, each of them half-starving on a miserable pittance, each of whom might be doing good work somewhere else but for these unhappy divisions ?

Look at the opportunities it gives to unbelievers. Look, too, at the barrier it places between us and the great Roman communion. Even in Rome itself the few thousands of Protestants are divided into several religious denominations, to be a laughing-stock and an obstacle to the spread of religious reform.

I cannot believe that faithful Churchmen or godly Nonconformists would make so light of the sin of division if even this simple common-sense view of the evil were pressed on them. And the worst of it is the startling fact that until a few years ago this evil has been steadily increasing through the loss of that ideal of the undivided Church. "Let things alone," men said ; "we all mean well, we are all regiments in Christ's army. Let us live in peace with one another, and keep our divisions and seek good to our own souls."

That is to say, men had come to deny that divisions are sinful. It was quite unpopular to assert it. The Christian conscience was growing paralysed on the matter ; and that which the whole Bible, Old and New Testament, is dead against, that which St. Paul

fought against, that which Our Blessed Lord prayed against, was regarded as a matter to be accepted quite complacently. A man was to think only of his own individual soul, and not of the good of the great united Church appointed for the salvation of the world. And so the natural result followed. Divisions multiplied on the most trivial pretexts, until to-day the number of sects in English Christianity has grown to over two hundred!

Thank God that the tide is turning at last, that for the past twenty years there is growing a strong public opinion amongst all bodies of Christians that this attitude is unworthy of our common Christianity. A kindlier feeling is springing up between us. Men are coming together to talk of this trouble. Tentative efforts towards union are being made. Much water will have flowed under the bridges before the great end is accomplished. But it would seem as if the first stirrings were being felt. It would seem as if the Spirit of God were moving on the face of the waters to help men at least to desire that unity which the Lord intended for His Church.

This desire will grow—and as it grows, there will be needed much kindness and sympathy and willingness to sacrifice our own self-love and self-conceit, but much firmness too, and wisdom and caution and careful study and

patience lest, through unwise haste and eagerness, we should lose part of the deposit given to the divine Society, and so prejudice the position of generations to come.

III.—REUNION

Therefore, in all humble diffidence, let me suggest to you what I think should be the attitude of our Anglican communion on this subject. I speak not of methods, but of the right attitude of our people to this great question.

§ 1.—STUDY

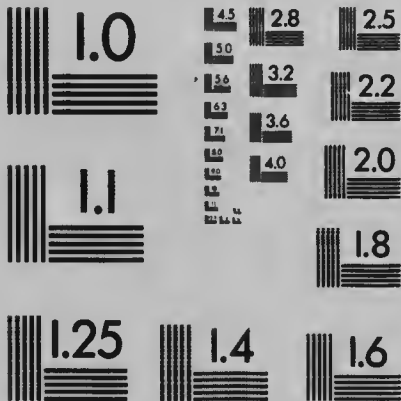
May I suggest, first, to the thoughtful Church layman that he should begin to study the subject if he has not done so already. An educated lay public opinion is greatly needed; for in this, as in all other such movements, it is "the inert mass of uninstructed humanity" that most delays reform. There is a good deal of literature on the subject now that your clergy can indicate to you.

One thing, at any rate, we must be all clear about if we are to do any good in this matter. That is the utter wrong and sin of our unhappy divisions. Perhaps it will be objected that sin is too strong a word to use where good men do



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not see any harm in separation. I shall let the word stand. The sooner good men get their consciences enlightened, the sooner will they see that their divisions are sin. Until that conviction is branded on the hearts of Christian men we shall make no progress in Reunion. Never mind at present who is most in fault. But be clear that there is fault. That is the first step. Where good men are agreed on that they will soon move on at whatever cost to themselves. Therefore, let us reiterate, OUR DIVISIONS ARE SINFUL. The whole Bible, Old and New Testament, is dead against them. Our Lord prayed against them; St. Paul fought against them; they are a great hindrance to the spread of religion. Therefore, they are not merely inexpedient. They are positively and directly, flatly contradictory to the will of God.

II.—SYMPATHY

And when we have studied the subject and grown convinced of the sin of separation, we must next get into the attitude of thoughtful and kindly sympathy, and desire to understand the men who are separated from us. Be serious about this. Be perfectly straight, frank, outspoken. The best compliment to the men who differ from us is to believe that they are sincere and earnest and that they wish us to be earnest

Nothing will be gained by empty effusive compliments to each other or talking of ourselves as all "different regiments in Christ's army." But, on the other hand, nothing will be gained by unsympathetic, churchly arrogance, by telling other religious bodies that we are right and they are wrong, and that the only reunion possible is that they should return straight off into our fold. Try to understand the man who is separated from you—to "put yourself in his place"—to find out that he is just as good and earnest a man as you are and as much devoted to his Lord. Realize that the religious body to which he belongs has been the Church of his honoured father and his loving, godly mother, and that it is associated with very tender memories. Realize, too, that he is probably as convinced of the wrongness of your position as you are of the wrongness of his. Certain doctrines of your Church have been misrepresented to him, and certain doctrines of his misrepresented to you. We must try to understand each other.

I think if we would try to arrange little round-table conferences with earnest men of other religious bodies, where we should talk out straight to each other, not as Anglicans or Presbyterians or Methodists, but as poor servants of Christ sorrowing together over our unhappy divisions and trying to find a way

out; if we would ask that all through the land in the churches of every religious denomination one day each year shall be set apart in which we shall all use the prayers for unity and all preach about the good work done by some of our separated brethren. It would do much to get us in the right attitude. It would help us to think the best and make the best of each other, and that is the first step. Perhaps it is all that this generation can hope to do towards the unity of the Church.

The unity will come some day certainly, since it is the will of Our Lord. But this generation will not see it. For us it will be honour enough if we are allowed to do the humble pioneer work, to prepare the ground and perhaps drive down the piles on which other generations shall build. Even to correct our bigotry, even to learn to put the best construction on the acts of those who differ from us, even to achieve a "truce of God," in which no bitter things shall be said of each other through platform or press—would not even that be a pile-driving work of the doing?

III.—CAUTION

Let us be very eager for reunion with our separated brethren, willing to surrender all that is unimportant. But let us remember that reunion may be bought too dearly if we have t

surrender vital truth for it. There are some truths of the Catholic Faith which are very loosely held by our separated brethren. Take care that they are made secure. Remember, too, that even without surrendering what we call vital truths, union might be achieved in Canada at a cost of separation from the main body of the Christian Church. For example, take the question of the Historic Episcopate. Our Church has laid down as an irreducible minimum the four conditions: the two Creeds; the two Sacraments; the Holy Scriptures; the Historic Episcopate.

With three of these there is no difficulty. But non-Episcopal religious bodies are impatient of the fourth—the Historic Episcopate. In the Old Country there is no danger in this direction, but in Canada, where the Anglican Communion is small, and union with Roman Catholics outside the pale of practical politics, I notice some signs of a public opinion that perhaps Episcopacy need not be insisted on. Indeed, it is no narrowness or churchly arrogance that makes one insist that we must meet any such overture by a determined *non-possumus*. We need not perhaps discuss with our separated brethren the divine right of Episcopacy, or the question whether it is of the *esse* of the Church. We need not perhaps insist that to forsake it would be to separate

ourselves from the whole tradition of Christendom for 1,500 years. Such considerations might perhaps seem to them sentimental and unpractical—not enough to justify us in holding back from union. But surely hard-headed sensible men can understand this simple issue when put before them, that if we were to surrender the Episcopate for the sake of union we should bring loss, not gain, to this united Church of Canada that we hope for. We should not only separate it from the whole Anglican Communion throughout the world (and even that in Canada would be sorely felt) but we should also build an insuperable barrier to union with the bulk of Christendom, especially with the vast Greek and Roman Churches whenever the day for that union shall come. We should not have furthered the unity that the Lord prayed for. We should but have helped in forming a new Canadian sect. We dare not risk that.

Surely it is not too much to ask our brethren to try to understand our position, to believe that it may not be arrogance or self-will, but a deep, strong conviction of what is best for the future that makes it impossible to yield at this point. To us it is hard to see why they should press it, since they see nothing wrong in accepting Episcopacy, and it is the only thing asked of them for the sake of union.

Let us be patient until we understand each other better. But let the position be perfectly clear. Even at the risk of misunderstanding and blame we must forever declare very firmly, though very sorrowfully, that we can have no part in any project of union which rejects the Catholic Episcopate.

IV.—HOP

Be hopeful. All around you will hear the pessimist note: "This talk of union is sentimental folly. No sensible man believes that the separated sects of Christians will ever be united. You are foolish enthusiasts—seers of visions and dreamers of dreams in the midst of a hard-headed practical world."

Be it so. God forbid that the seers of visions and dreamers of dreams should ever be wanting in the Church of God. They are the men that bring about the fulfillments. If we are sure that their visions and dreams are the visions and dreams of their Lord, "that they all may be one"—then we may be equally sure that fulfilment is coming.

It will not come in our day—but come it will. Christ cannot be defeated. In His vision long ago the little mustard seed grew into so great a tree that the fowls of the air lodged in its branches. And, impossible though it seemed,

the fulfilment came. So will this. It is that purpose of Christ that makes us hopeful. Not our own power. *Non nobis, Domine.* Don't lose heart. It looks hopeless now; but it is as when you stand on the seashore and watch the pools of water when the tide is out. All water of the same kind. All belonging to the same sea—but separated by impassable barriers of sand. Utterly impassable they seem—utterly hopeless. But by and by the great tide sweeps steadily in from the ocean, and they all become one—that is it. That is what will come through our prayers and our struggles. God is watching—God is hearing. And in His deep glad sympathy with us, He will answer. The great tide of the Spirit of God will sweep steadily on, and the pools will become one. And that tide shall go no more out. That must happen because Christ has prayed for it.

God give you grace, my brethren, in this diocese to have a large share in bringing in the tide. God give the blessing to this great Canadian land, with all the boundless possibilities before it, that this too may be in its wondrous future a vision and example for the Christian world—a reunited Church. Amen.

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