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STUDIES  
IN THE  
GOSPEL ACCORDING TO  
ST. JOHN.

BY THE  
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AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN ST. MATTHEW," "STUDIES IN THE ACTS,"  
ETC. ETC.

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1885



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The Word.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."—JOHN i. 1.

THE fathers of the Christian Church saw in the vision described in Revelation iv. 7, a faithful representation of the four Evangelists. "In the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle." They differ somewhat in their application of the figures here employed; but the majority, I believe, take the "lion" to represent Matthew, the "calf" or ox to represent Mark, the "man" to represent Luke, and the "eagle" to represent John. But whatever differences prevail in respect of the first three figures, all are agreed that the eagle is a symbol of the fourth Evangelist. "There be a thing too wonderful for me, the way of an eagle in the air."

Whereas the other Evangelists begin their Gospels in time with the human generation of Jesus Christ, St. John begins his in eternity with the Divine generation of the Word. "In the beginning

was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." Observe the calm, serene majesty which characterises these and the succeeding verses. The writer neither reasons nor demonstrates; he simply makes his affirmations, letting them recommend themselves, in virtue, not of any light shed on them, but of the light lodged in them. Such truths as these bear witness to themselves; prove them we cannot, we can only expound them. Other things do not illumine them, rather they illumine all other things. Augustine writes that a friend of his heard a Platonic philosopher say that these verses deserve to be written in letters of gold. Francis Junius attributed his conversion to the accidental perusal of them. The pure sublimity of the style, the simple majesty of the thoughts, overwhelmed him with amazement, and threw his mind into adoring wonder.

Let us now approach them with humble and docile spirits. Dogmatism, whether Unitarian or Trinitarian, is always unbecoming and irreverent. Here, if anywhere, we must "believe that we may understand." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

I. The Eternity of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word."

II. The Personality of the Word. "And the Word was with God."

III. The Divinity of the Word. "And the Word was God."

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I. The ETERNITY of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word."

1. By the phrase "*In the beginning*," the majority of commentators understand eternity. God of necessity took His stand in eternity when He created the worlds at first. Time itself is a creature which has received its existence from God; and to create time, and the universe, of which time is a portion, He must have stood outside time, in His own eternity. Similarly St. John sets forth the Word as existing not only from eternity but in eternity. We can conceive matter without beginning, existing from eternity; but, not being endowed with mind, it cannot exist in eternity. Only mind can exist *in* it as well as *from* it. The Word, however, existed in eternity. Not from the beginning nor before the beginning, but "*in the beginning was the Word*." Maybe after all that the Evangelist has chosen a more appropriate sentence than any substitute proposed by his critics and emendators. Did he say, "Before the beginning was the Word," his meaning would be supposed to be plain, above ambiguity; that really is the way in which the commentaries paraphrase him. But, had he written so, he would have presented eternity under the laws of time, a mistake as grave as to describe the Infinite under the conditions of the finite. But, mounting up higher than time, he contemplates eternity as an idea pure and simple. Not from or before, but "*in the beginning was the Word*," a sentence which leads us at one bound to the serene calm where God dwelleth, above time and above space.



2. Four times he repeats the word "was." "In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word *was* with God, and the Word *was* God. The same *was* in the beginning with God." The verb "was" joined to the beginning makes the idea of eternity dawn upon the mind in all its awful grandeur. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth:" there the verb, being conterminous with the beginning, points to the initial moment of time when the creation, visible and invisible, began to be. "In the beginning *was* the Word:" here the verb underlies the beginning, and stretches back and away into the immeasurable.

St. John evidently intends a contrast between the first verse and the third. "By Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made." The sun, moon, and stars in the beginning "were made;" the Word in the beginning "was;" consequently His existence and theirs differ radically. What "was made" might have been left unmade—the creation was not a Divine necessity any more than redemption. But what in the beginning existed had a necessary existence—the Son is as essential to the Father as the Father to the Son. The world "was made," it originated in the Divine Will; the Word was not made, He simply "was"—His existence has its root in the Divine Nature.

A further contrast is possibly intended, a contrast between the first verse and the fourteenth. "In the beginning *was* the Word;" in the fulness of time "the Word was made flesh." He who existed in

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and from eternity, who with His chisel fashioned the worlds, now turns back the chisel upon Himself, and "makes" Himself into something He was not before. In Genesis He made His mark on the creation, in the Gospels the creation makes its mark on Him. "In the fulness of time God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law." He who lived in eternity, existing in the infinite plenitude of His own Nature, enters the world, becomes subject to the laws of time and of space, binding Himself with them as with cords, who never bound Himself before!

3. Observe further that He always existed as the *Word*. It was not in the course of history that He became the Word—He was God's Word in eternity, before ever the earth was. He is the essential Word of God, the Word in the utterance of which God acquires self-consciousness. It is in words the thinker himself knows his own thoughts; and the more precise and accurate the words, the clearer will be the thoughts, not only to the reader, but to the author himself. All minds are of a kindred nature; the same principle seems to obtain in the Divine Mind—God comes to the knowledge of His own thoughts only in His own Word. And in order to infinite self-knowledge, an infinite Word must ever be sounding in the Divine ear; in His Word God seems to come to self-consciousness. Pantheism teaches that in creation He acquires this self-consciousness, Christianity that in His Word. The Word is the utterance of the Divine Thinker, in which He cognises His own thought, and comes to a

knowledge of His own mind. In His pre-existence Jesus Christ is God speaking to Himself, in his post-existence God speaking to us. The same word He speaks to Himself and to us; therefore it has the same meaning on the Divine as on the human side. The same hieroglyphics are found on both sides of the shield.

But what is gained by defending the eternal pre-existence of Jesus Christ? Much every way. The Revealer of God being eternal, He is competent to give the world an eternal revelation—a revelation of eternal truth, a revelation of the eternal God. Moses and others might serve as organs of the Old Testament revelation, for the religion they established was temporal, designed to last only “till the time of reformation.” In the nature of things a temporal revealer can only found a temporal religion; you must have an Everlasting Revealer to make known the everlasting Gospel. Transcendentalism is a much-abused and much-suspected word in philosophy; one is therefore rather shy of introducing it into theology. But after all what does it mean? The truths which transcend experience, but which at the same time underlie and condition all experience. Take the idea of God: it is an idea we did not derive from experience, an idea transcending experience, an idea nevertheless pervading and colouring all experience. Thus transcendental Christianity moulds, shapes, environs practical Christianity. Jesus Christ, transcending time, descending from eternity into time: this it is which makes the Gospel an everlasting Gospel, the com-

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I. The W  
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plete and final revelation, perfectly safe and reliable throughout all the coming ages. When St. John declares "In the beginning was the Word," he does not indulge in a metaphysical speculation or a poetical flight; he is laying the basis of the Gospel, the foundation of its claim to be the final revelation. If the Word is not eternal, His revelation is only a passing transient phase of the religious life; Rationalistic writers are justified in looking forward for other teachers more advanced and illustrious. The Eternal only can give the Eternal.

## II. The PERSONALITY of the Word. "And the Word was with God."

Here again it behoves us to take off our shoes, for the ground we stand upon is holy. But whilst cultivating reverence on the one hand, let us on the other make "bold," that we also, like Moses, may see the invisible. Cowardice is not reverence—cowards never see God. "There is nothing we are more sure of," says pious Matthew Henry, "than that we think, yet nothing we are more in the dark about than how we think; who can declare the generation of thought in the soul? Surely then the births and generations of the Eternal Mind may well be allowed to be great mysteries of godliness, the bottom of which we cannot fathom, while yet we adore the depth." But, notwithstanding our inability to see through this doctrine, we may with sincere humility see a little way into it.

1. The Word was with God in respect of *personality*. Omnipotence is eternally *in* God; Jesus Christ is

eternally *with* God—a mode of speech signifying distinct personal subsistence, distinct but not separate. God did not spend the everlasting ages in sublime, solitary, masterly inactivity. He had a Word with Him, equal to Himself, the reflex image of His own person. That God from everlasting loved is an idea with which we are all familiar enough; it is the prominent idea in the correlates Father and Son. But in the text Jesus Christ is presented not as the Son but as the Word; accordingly the main idea is not God as Love, but God as Mind. Not only God loved from eternity, but He thought from eternity—He thought as intensely as He loved. Hence the Word infinite as Himself.

God spent eternity in self-communion, holding high and sacred fellowship with His own thoughts; but He so far transcends us in the power of thinking that His ideas lose their thin spectral whiteness and become realities. His one thought becomes a Word consubstantial with Himself. He thinks His ideas into actual being; He thought Himself into His Word. Modern expositors of Plato hardly do him justice in their interpretation of his doctrine of Ideas; to him ideas in the Divine Mind were entities, mental creations as real as material creations. Why not? The more powerful the mind, the greater the potency that lodges in its ideas, the stronger the tendency to personification. Poets, because of their superior energy of thought, personify; who knows but that in the Divine Mind, the poet or maker *par excellence*, to think and to be, idea and entity, are one and the same? At all events, in this passage

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we contemplate God thinking with such infinite energy that He reproduces Himself in His other Self. "The Word was with God"—the concentrated personal embodiment of all the Divine thoughts.

Our treatment, however, would be very inadequate did we not view Him also as a Son, the more popular view in the orthodox Church. The Unitarian conception of the Divine Unity being arithmetical, not dynamical, its advocates deny plurality of persons or hypostases in the Godhead. And yet they loudly proclaim the truth that God is love, a truth which most strongly urges on our acceptance the doctrine of plurality. Love always demands two at least, a subject and an object, one to love and another to be loved. If God is love, as we most emphatically believe, then He must have had some one from eternity to love. Who then is that one? Himself? But self-love is no love, it is the denial of love. Who then? The Church answers—His Son, the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person. Plurality of persons must not, however, be confounded with plurality of Gods. When men are invited to Christ they are not enticed away from God, for Christ is with God; when they are called to worship Christ, they are not bidden to serve an idol, for Christ is God.

2. He was with God in respect of *complacency*. God took unspeakable delight in His Word, for in Him He beheld His own portraiture, without defect, fault, or flaw. We know the pleasure we experience when we perceive ourselves reflected in others—we admire the man who faithfully mirrors our

own ideas. The Greek legend of Narcissus falling in love with his own face in the limpid stream is based on nature—we love ourselves in others. This constitutes the chief pleasure of the highest style of poetry, that in it we see our own hearts graphically portrayed, our own human nature faithfully, ideally mirrored. And God felt infinite delight in beholding His own mind fully reproduced in His Word, His other Self. God experienced in eternity the ecstatic thrill of pleasure which comes from high thinking; He thought every subject through and through, from front to back, from top to bottom. Ever since He only thinks the old thoughts over and over again, but, in a way mysterious to us, He throws such intensity of heat into them that they are ever fresh and new and glowing, ever verdant and blooming, because of the infinite plenitude of Divine sap vitalising their roots.

If again we contemplate God as love, the same idea returns upon us with redoubled force. God as Father infinitely, eternally, loves His Son. "Thou hast loved Me before the foundation of the world." The infinite Love lavished itself upon and twined itself around the infinite Son, for the infinite Subject requires an infinite Object in order to its full complete predication. The finite creation could not be an adequate object to infinite Love: hence the necessity of putting creatures in Christ, the finite in the Infinite, to be worthy objects of the "Everlasting Love." "Glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." "With Thine own Self," "with Thee;" phrases which

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always in St. John's writings signify metaphysical and local, never ethical relations. "Enoch walked *with* God:" there the idea is ethical. But in the verse already cited, in the phrases "with Thee," "with Thine own Self," the idea is metaphysical and local. A little further on in the same prayer Christ speaks of the glory "given" Him, the glory of His mediatorial mission; but this glory was not "given," it was a glory He "had" with God before the world was, in virtue of His eternal generation. "The Word was with God"—in spiritual, metaphysical, necessary relations.

The intense love the Father bears towards the Son, the Son likewise cherishes towards the Father. "The Word was *towards* God"—not simply with, but towards. He had His face, so to speak, turned fully towards God, returning all the wealth of thought and affection poured upon Him by the Father. Among men as a rule the father loves the son more than the son loves the father; so much so that it is considered a law of nature, and necessary to the multiplication of the species. The more, however, a son fulfils the idea of a son, the more ardently will burn the reciprocated love. In the perfect Son, His love to the Father equals the Father's love to Him. Again, in human intercourse the word used does but scant justice to the thought, it seldom contains it in all its fulness and completeness. But with the perfect Thinker the perfect Word reflects back the perfect Thought—the Word ever gazes in rapt amazement at the Mind which uttered it. The Son ever loves the Father,



returns in full His untold wealth of affection. "The Word was towards God."

A further idea still lurks here, which we would do well to elicit. "The Word was *at home* with God:" so some of the best scholars paraphrase it. Jesus Christ in His pre-existent state never felt restrained or ill at ease in the presence of the Almighty as an inferior in the presence of a superior. He felt quite at home with God, as a loving child in the presence of an indulgent father. Does not this rendering tally beautifully with the description Wisdom gives of herself in Prov. viii. 22-31? "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way;" possessed, as the original signifies, by paternity. "When there were no depths I was brought forth," namely, by birth or generation. "Then I was by Him as one brought up with Him," "as one nursed by His side." "I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." The idea of fatherhood and childhood pervades the whole section. Thus Jesus Christ was in all respects at home with God, not as a subject in the presence of his monarch, or a creature in the presence of his Creator, but as an equal in the presence of a friend, or a child in the society of its parent. No restraint, no reserve, no shyness, but open, free, confidential fellowship for ever.

3. He was moreover with God in respect of *counsel* or purpose.

He was with Him in respect of His creative counsel. "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways, before His works of old,"—possessed

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Me as the foundation, centre, and agent of all He purposed accomplishing. All things were gathered together in the pre-existent Christ, nothing was excluded or left out. The election of Christ to this honourable office was the first voluntary act of God in eternity. Hence, in the original, the preposition "in" is omitted. "The Lord possessed Me, the beginning of His ways, before His works of old." Accordingly in Rev. iii. 4, He is called "The Beginning of the creation of God;" not the first part of the creation, but the foundation, sustaining all the vast superstructure; and the foundation of the created must of necessity be in the uncreated. "He is the image of God, the first-born of every creature, for by Him were all things created" (Col. i. 15, 16). The first-born of every creature; not as classed with all things created in antithesis to God, but with God in antithesis to all things created. In His relation to God He is the "only-begotten;" in His relation to the creation He is the "first-begotten"—the beginning of the "way" of God out of Himself into others. "I was set up—*anointed*—from the beginning or ever the earth was;" set apart by God to execute His purposes, appointed solemnly to be His agent in all creative works. "By Him were all things made, and without Him was not anything made that was made."

He was also the centre of God's redemptive purposes, the centre around which all the Divine thoughts revolved. In the centre of the earth all the mountains meet, in the centre all terrestrial objects stand together. Similarly Christ is the centre

of the plan of our salvation. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Two things are here alleged: first, that God has put all spiritual blessings in Christ; second, that He hath put all spiritual persons in Christ; and both before the foundation of the world. Some things come to us *through* Christ, temporal blessings for instance; but however precious the gifts which come *through* Him, still more valuable are the gifts which are lodged *in* Him. All spiritual blessings and all spiritual persons God put in His Son in the "counsel of peace" that was between them both. "The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth;" the word "loveth" here indicating the love which arises from the Divine Nature and not from the Divine Will, the affection which has its origin in personal relation. This pure, warm, personal love prompts the Father to "show" all His thoughts and designs to the Son, and the Son "seeth" them, "seeth" them all, and "seeth" them all perfectly.

Why do we thus dwell on the personal fellowship of the Son with God in eternity, from days of old? That we may be filled with gratitude as we behold Him proceeding from the Father and coming into the world. He that dwells with God in the first verse dwells with man in the fourteenth. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-

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begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth." "The only-begotten of the Father"—"the only-begotten from close beside the Father." Oh, the change in the company! Oh, the matchless love which brought Him so low! From "close beside the Father" to the Cross of ignominy and shame!

III. The proper DIVINITY of the Word. "And the Word was God."

We are here investigating the profoundest mysteries of the Christian religion; but we must beware of the Unitarian conclusion that because they are mysteries they are therefore absurdities. They may be above reason, our reason; but they are not therefore necessarily contrary to reason. Indeed, in an infinite Being there must be mysteries to every finite intelligence; not only things we do not, but things we cannot, understand. This distinguishes Christianity from heathenism, which also has its mysteries; but mysteries which could be explained, and which were explained to candidates for the priesthood. The mysteries of Christianity, however, cannot be made plain; we may apprehend them inasmuch as God has been pleased to reveal them, but we cannot fully comprehend them. Nevertheless it is our stringent duty to labour more and more after their comprehension.

1. This clause then clearly implies the *co-equality* of the Word with God, of the Son with the Father. Two persons may be conceived to be in amicable confidential fellowship with each other, whilst in nature and standing one might be inferior to the



other. But St. John gives us to understand that these two persons in the sacred Godhead are on terms of strict equality. "The Word was God." As Mediator, in His state of humiliation, He was the Father's subordinate, the Father's servant. "Behold My servant, whom I uphold." "He took upon Him the form of a servant." Wherefore He says, "My Father is greater than I." But as He is the second person in the Trinity, St. John teaches His equality with the Father. "The Word was God." "Thou, being man, makest Thyself equal with God," exclaimed the Jews one day in a sudden fit of anger. "Strange," exclaims Augustine, the master mind of Western Christianity, "that the Jews should understand what the Arians cannot." In colloquial language the idea of sonship implies inferiority—the son is subordinate to the father, the function of one being to command, of the other to obey. But the idea of subordination is not necessarily implied in that of sonship; it arises rather from the imperfection of the latter as found among men. A perfect son is in all respects equal to his father, save that the one begets and the other is begotten. "Though a Son, yet learned He obedience." Not *because* a Son, but *though* a Son, showing that the idea of sonship does not necessarily carry with it the idea of obedience. On the contrary, the idea of perfect sonship excludes that of subordination; a perfect Son is equal to the perfect Father. Among men the sonship continues through life, but not necessarily the obedience. The latter is proper and becoming only during the initial im-

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perfect stages of the former; it is done away with in the full mature development. The man of forty is as much a son as the child of four, the fact of sonship remains in undiminished force; but the duty of obedience is past and gone,—proving that subordination arises not from the perfection of sonship, but from its imperfection. But Jesus Christ is from the first a perfect Son, and therefore on a footing of equality with the perfect Father. "He was with God" as His equal and yoke-fellow, for "He was God."

The Son being thus equal with the Father, God will have no occasion to repeat His Word. The one God reveals Himself to Himself and to others in one Word. We use many words to declare our minds, thereby showing the incoherency of our thoughts and the faultiness of the vehicle in which we convey them. The more powerful the mind, the fewer and clearer the words it uses to disclose itself; and the higher and more inspirational the mood, the more condensed and significant the language. Every extraordinary genius reveals itself, not by the multiplicity of its sentences, but by one or two words struck off the anvil at the moment of white heat. Every illustrious man is characterised by one or two sentences. "Know thyself;" therein you see the whole mind and philosophy of Socrates. Any one can multiply examples at leisure. That human analogies are inadequate to set forth the inner operations of the Divine Nature we know; but as we cannot transcend our own minds, we are obliged to resort to them. God revealed Himself

in articulated language; but the perfect revelation is summed up in one word—Jesus Christ. Revealers preceded, but none succeeded Him. Where one suffices there is no need for a second. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by the Son." Here is an organ of revelation as great as the Being to be revealed.

2. St. John further teaches the *consubstantiality* of the Word, with God, their identity in respect of their Divine Substance. "The Word was God." "The Word was with God:" there it is God with the article, denoting the person of the Father. "And the Word was God:" here it is God without the article, indicating the substance, essence, or being of God. Did the Evangelist declare that the Word was God with the article, he would be guilty of self-contradiction—the Son can never be the Father. "I am in the Father," not, I am the Father. What He avers is that He is partaker of the same Divine Essence with the Father. Thus He steers clear of all inconsistency, though not of all mystery. If you ask, How can these things be? we can only answer, "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness."

With Holy Writ in our hands we feel certain that these things are, very uncertain how they are. "The Word was God." The Son is Himself God, but not God Himself; He is so only in vital organic union with the Father and the Spirit. He is not of a like nature with the Father, but of the same nature. Hence the Apostle Paul calls Him the

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"image of God," never His "likeness;" for "image" suggests consubstantiality, "likeness" only resemblance. Just here was waged the fierce controversy between Athanasius and Arius: it is the most celebrated battlefield of Christian theology. Was the Son of a like or of the same nature with the Father? Of a like nature, answered the acute Arius; of the same nature, answered the profound Athanasius. After a prolonged warfare the Church settled down to the Athanasian Creed; to identity of essence, not resemblance; to sameness of being, not likeness; to *homoousia*, not *homoiousia*. Superficial observers sneer at the controversy, declaring it was a quibble of logomachy, a war about words, yea, about one letter of the alphabet. But such critics, in their professed contempt of a letter, judge according to the letter, and not the spirit. On that one letter hinged the welfare of Christianity, and by its adoption into the Creed the Church emphasised its belief in the proper and essential Divinity of the blessed Redeemer. Those who let go the letter seldom ever catch the spirit; hence the Gospel is daily growing thinner, leaner, and more weird-like in the hands of the so-called "Liberals" of theology. Those who let go the letter are quite as reprehensible as those who stop in it; the Sadducees' error was quite as grave as that of the Pharisees. Let us reverence the letter even though it be but a single "iota," for within the letter, not without it, we find the spirit. In this world, the moment spirits are dissevered from bodies, they vanish.

3. Let us therefore hold *fast* the doctrine once



delivered unto the saints, and adore the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich." The quibbles of sophistry and the more serious objections of philosophy notwithstanding, "we believe and know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Beware of running away with the notion that all the intellects of modern civilisation are opposed to orthodoxy—facts are against you. The acute intellects may be, but the profound intellects are not, the intellects which see far and see deep.

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II.

The True Light.

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”—JOHN i. 9.

IN the preceding verses John the Evangelist points out the true character and mission of John the Baptist. “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.” Men believed *through* John, but they believe *in* Jesus. The Church has believed through Moses and the prophets; but it believes in the Saviour, for there is in Him such an infinite volume of being that it can never go through Him. It may go deeper and deeper into Him for ever, but it will never be able to go through Him. Men believe *through* the servants; but they believe *in* the Master. “That all men through Him might believe.”

“He was not that Light”—John was but a mass of darkness, like any other man. No light originated in him; at best he was but receiving light and reflecting it on others. “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that

cometh into the world." Christ it was that was enlightening, John was only enlightened, and in that respect he belongs to the same class as the weakest of the saints. But John was a prophet, you say. Yes, and there are the raw materials of prophets in you also. By being made a prophet, John was not made supra-human but more human; the prophet is not less, but more of a man, than his fellows. Prophecy is only the normal unfolding of human nature, the white flower on the tree of humanity, and if the Divine sap only flow into our roots, we also shall grow into prophets. Prophecy is supernatural, but not supra-human, the one great object of the Gospel being to make prophets of us all. Not only will it make us kings and priests unto God, but prophets likewise. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

This verse, as many of you know, is translated in two ways. The first is that of the Authorised Version—"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The other is that of the Revised Version—"There was the true Light, even the Light which lighteth every man, coming into the world." An alternative reading is offered on the margin—"The true Light, which lighteth every man, was coming into the world." Happily we need not go to the trouble of judging between these on grammatical grounds, for the one rendering is admitted to be as correct as the other; but if there be a preponderance of grammatical reasons, it will, I believe, be conceded that they

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favour the older translation. At all events, I shall take it as the basis of the few remarks which I shall address to you to-day. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

I. Jesus Christ enlightening every man from *within*,—in the intuitive conceptions of the mind.

II. Jesus Christ enlightening every man from *without*,—in the revealed doctrines of Christianity.

I. Jesus Christ enlightening every man from *WITHIN*, that is to say, in the intuitive conceptions of the mind. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

I. This light is *internal*, shining in the mental constitution of every man. "Through Him all things were made, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." What was life in the Word pre-incarnate became light, or reason in men. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The human understanding is only a development of animal life, say many modern scientists. No, says the Bible, it is of a kindred nature with the Divine Life and the outcome thereof. Man has not ascended from the animal, say rather that he has descended from God. The line of his pedigree points, not downward to the dust, but upward to the skies. "The son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." "For we also are His offspring;" not the offspring of the chimpanzee, but the offspring of God. Compare a man's head—any

man's head, the head of the most uncivilised man on the face of the earth to-day, or of the savagest man science has yet discovered in the caves of the pre-historic ages—with the head of the best-trained monkey in the Zoological Gardens, and the difference is immense. What is the capacity of the monkey brain? Thirty-two cubic inches. What is the capacity of the human brain? Ninety cubic inches. You therefore see that the brain of the most undeveloped man, who is not positively an idiot, is nearly three times the capacity of the brain of the most civilised monkey in this or any other country. How to account for the difference? There is a great deal of talking and writing in the present day about the "missing link"—the missing link between the ape and the man. Missing link indeed! It is not a link that is missing, but a whole chain. Human reason is not a development of the monkey brain; rather is it the immediate outcome of the Divine Life.

2. This light is moreover *innate* in every man. "That was the true Light, which lighteth every man as he cometh into the world:" so many scholars choose to translate the words, and it is one of the alternative readings in the revised translation. God takes care to write His name on the soul of every man in his first creation; human nature bears the sign-manual of its Maker in its deepest constitution. We are all familiar enough with the teaching that the idea of God is innate in the soul. That evangelistic philosophers differ considerably in their way of representing this truth is well known; but they all agree that our idea of God is not derived from

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the external world. The external world may awaken it, but it does not produce it; it may show the imprint, but it does not make it. Who then makes it? God Himself according to the Scriptures. "For that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them." "Manifest in them"—in the inborn intuitions of the reason. God prints His own name, He stamps some great universal truths on the mind of every man as he cometh into the world. Men are like so many volumes, continually issuing from the Divine press; and if nothing else be written on them, the name of the Author and Printer is indisputably engraved on the title-page. I do not say that the name is very legible at first especially since the soul has been soiled by sin, but that it is there is to me a demonstrated truth.

Take a sheet of white paper: write on it your own thoughts—your good thoughts or your bad thoughts, just as you please—and underneath your own signature and address. Is that all that is to be read off the paper? Nay; hold it up to the light, and you will behold the name of the manufacturer in watermarks. You may write on it what you like and as you like; but you will never rub off the name of the maker. Your name is *on* it, but his name is *in* it. Thus God has written His name in watermarks on the raw material of the soul. You may write on it, the world may write on it, the devil may write on it; but God has written *in* it—He has deeply stamped His name into the soul in its first make. The idea of God is a lighted lamp hung up in the dome of every man's soul as he cometh

into the world, a lighted lamp flashing forth its penetrating and comforting beams in all directions.

3. Observe further that this light is *Divine*, the same in its nature as that which illuminates God Himself. "This is the true—primary, underived—Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The light proceeding from yonder resplendent sun is the same in its nature as that which resides in the sun. And the light emanating from the Eternal Word is the same in kind as that which is lodged for ever in Him. Here precisely consists the vast, because the radical, difference between man and every other earthly creature. According to Genesis, God created everything "after its kind." "And God made the beast of the earth *after his kind*, and cattle *after their kind*, and everything that creepeth upon the earth *after his kind*." What next? "And God said, Let us make man." How? after his kind? No; "in our image, after our likeness." So the irrational animals were created after their kind—their type was in themselves; but man was created not after his kind, but after another kind—the type of humanity was not in humanity itself but in God. A very noble type surely!

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." No truth is lodged in the mind at its first start, asserts one school of philosophy. No, answers the Bible, except the truth that is lodged in the "likeness" or the plan; and that is a very great truth, the greatest truth conceivable. God created all things, as we have already seen, according to plan; the beasts, the fishes, and

the birds according to the stars according to other things created the world. Moses, He created the world. What then is the likeness; the plan according to the Essence. "I have a plan." Nothing has first been created by thinkers. Not according to its plan, the world was made. The world is an empty building containing nothing in it. The plan is in the empty building completely furnished. The world is empty of its plan; and the truth, the truth of the Divine Order.

Plato some say is essential to the world. Everything is iron and the world for you can have the world not essential. The only thing that is essential is the mathematical plan. The mathematical

the birds according to plan; the sun, the moon, and the stars according to plan. And if He created all other things according to plan, do you think He created the soul without a plan? No, answers Moses, He created the soul also according to plan. What then is the soul's plan? His own image and likeness; the soul is put together on the same plan, according to the same principles, as the Divine Essence. "Let us make man in our image, after our plan." Nothing is to be found in the soul but it has first been in the senses, avers one class of thinkers. No, answers the Bible, save the soul and its plan, the soul and the principles upon which it is made. The house newly built may be said to be an empty building with nothing in it. True; there is nothing in it save itself and the architect's plan; but the plan is in the new house as well as in the old, in the empty house as well as in the house completely furnished. Thus the soul in its first creation is empty of all truths save the truths involved in its plan; and the truths of the plan are the great truths, the truths which constitute its likeness to the Divine Original.

Plato somewhere discusses the question—What is essential to a ship? His answer at last is—Everything save the materials, everything save the iron and the timber. The timber is not essential, for you can have a ship without timber; the iron is not essential, for you can have a ship without iron. The only thing essential to a ship is its shape—the mathematical truths or principles which meet in the plan. The most important thing of the soul likewise



is its plan—the truths or principles which meet in its construction. What are these truths or principles? The very truths or principles which dwell in and pervade the Divine Nature itself. You therefore see that the necessary truths of the Divine Nature underlie the construction of human nature. These necessary truths are burning shining lights, swinging ever in the spiritual firmament of our nature.

These truths, necessary and eternal, have left deep traces of themselves in every language. Take, for instance, the English word "*ought*," the word which sets forth the sense of duty. It differs from all the other words of the language save those of cognate meaning, a word without moods and without tenses, a word without a conjugation, a word above time, space, and circumstance, a word like eternity, perfect and complete in itself. *Ought!* Whence came it? Not from time, for it is not subject to the laws of time as other words; it is a stray word from eternity. In virtue of this word, the central word of conscience, man is in eternity and eternity is in man. This word "*ought*," or, if you like, the truth which this word symbolises, the momentous truth of duty and obligation, is a "great light" hung up in the sky of the soul for ever; and however bright the lustre of the sun in the material firmament of the senses, it pales by the side of the exceeding brightness of the "great light which rules the day" in the inner heavens of the spirit.

4. Remark also that this light is *persistent*—it continues to shine in every man's reason notwithstanding the Fall and its deplorable consequences.

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"That was the true Light which *lighteth*"—present tense—"every man that cometh into the world." The necessary eternal truths, of which we have been speaking, continue to be the birthright of every man, our guilt and turpitude notwithstanding. Without controversy a very precious heritage! "The Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness overcame it not." That, you are aware, is one reading of the words—"the darkness overcame it not." Sin did not succeed in extinguishing the inner Light. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord," writes the Wise Man; a candle lit by God with His own breath. When man fell, did the candle blow out? No; it was sadly bruised, but it did not blow out. "The darkness overcame it not"—the great fundamental truths God planted in man continue to shine despite sin and its grievous consequences. Accordingly the darkness of the Fall was not complete—complete, I mean, in the sense that it could not be blacker—a little light was still continuing to glimmer; candle-light if you like, but light all the same. Much talk is indulged in concerning original sin, though not quite as much as in former years; but we ought also to speak of original light, a light deeper and more primitive even than our sin. Do I not believe in the total depravity of the race? Yes, in the sense that every power is more or less tangled, that every faculty is more or less corrupt. No, in the sense that the derangement could not be greater, that the putridity could not be more advanced. The confusion and depravity here are great, but in hell they are considerably greater. So far a little

light doubtless glimmers in the soul of every man on his coming into this world, the golden beams of the Sun of Righteousness are to be seen playing in the mental faculties of childhood. "The Light shineth in darkness"—the darkness of our fall; "and the darkness overcame it not"—the light still burns.

But if the darkness did not overcome the light, on the other hand the light did not overcome the darkness. In the old world, the world prior to the Incarnation, the light and the darkness confronted each other, without making much impression the one on the other. The darkness did not conquer the light, neither did the light conquer the darkness; and if the light is to win the victory, it must receive an ample increase, and this increase we find in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. Jesus Christ enlightening every man from WITHOUT,—in the revealed doctrines of Christianity. "This is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

1. Let us not forget the *supernatural* character of this light. By supernatural here, however, we are not to understand unnatural or contra-natural, for the most perfect correspondence obtains between the natural and the supernatural. Railway companies, you are aware, often possess running powers on each other's property; and, if I mistake not, the natural and supernatural possess the same powers—they often run their trains on each other's lines. The supernatural is only an extension of the natural. Indeed, it is in the supernatural that the natural

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shows its contents, it is in the Gospel that the creation reveals its meaning. The more studious portion of the congregation have probably read that able and celebrated book, "The Analogy of Religion," by Bishop Butler—one of the few books that is worthy of all the praise it receives. Still it is but a negative work—an analogy between what is *not* revealed in the Scriptures, and what is *not* revealed in Nature, an analogy between what Christianity does *not* say and what the creation does *not* say. I should be much delighted were some other learned prelate to compose a new "Analogy"—not an analogy between what is *not* revealed in the Bible and what is *not* revealed in Nature, but an analogy between what is revealed in the one and what is revealed in the other; not an analogy between the silence of Christianity and the silence of creation, but an analogy between the speech of the one and the speech of the other. It would, I believe, be found out that only in the supernatural the natural shows its contents, that only in the Gospel the world declares its meaning. Take, for instance, the word "God." All the Indo-European equivalents for God, it is well known, are the same in their ultimate root as the word "day," and signify the brightness of the sky. The Latin *Deus*, the Greek *Theos*, the Sanskrit *Dyaus*, the Welsh *Duw*, and even the English *God*—they all come from the same root, signifying the brightness of the sky. This thought has been fixed in the term Jupiter, one of the oldest appellations by which God is known in Europe. Jupiter—what is it? The first syllable *Ju* is the



same as the Welsh *Duw*, and means the bright sky. The remaining two syllables, *piter*, are the same as the better known word *pater*, meaning father. Jupiter, then, is the Latin synonym for the Saxon Sky-Father. As one of our Aryan ancestors stood on the open plain gazing upward, and meditating on the Being behind all phenomena, the Reality at the back of all appearances, he gave expression to the deepest instinct of his nature when he pronounced in articulate language the solemn word "Sky-Father." And when we read in the sixth chapter of Matthew the memorable words of the great Teacher, "And when ye pray, say after this manner, Our Father which art in heaven," what do we find? A new truth? Nay; but a new explanation of an old truth, which in the roll of the ages had grown well-nigh obsolete, the oldest truth of human nature and the deepest truth of the Divine Nature, the central truth in which the two natures meet.

2. It is further a *perfect*, complete light. "This is the *true* light:" this word "true" signifying, in St. John's writings, not the true as opposed to the false, but the perfect as opposed to the imperfect, the full as opposed to the partial. Jesus Christ is the full perfect light, not a single ray wanting. You may see God *through* the creation, but you may see Him *in* Jesus Christ. "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." More literally, "being seen through the things that are made." But in Jesus Christ "dwelleth all the ful

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ness of the Godhead bodily." It is not the same word that is used in these two verses for "Godhead." The word in Romans i. 18 is not Godhead but divinity, "eternal power and divinity:" the stamp of Godhead, the impress of His hand and of His foot, an attribute belonging to God. In Jesus Christ, however, you behold not divinity, but Godhead; not an attribute, but the Being in whom all the attributes inhere. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Divinity in the creation, Godhead in Christ. "For it pleased the Father that in Him should *all fulness* dwell." "In Him are hid *all* the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Some treasures? No, all, without one missing. Treasures many are contained in the Bible, but not all. There are more treasures in Christ than even in the Bible. He could not transfer all the treasures of His person into a book, "for if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." Blessed be God for the treasures contained in this precious volume before me, but the day will arrive when they shall be all exhausted. But after exhausting the treasures of the Book, the treasures of the Person will still remain. Blessed be His name for the treasures which have come *through* Christ, thrice blessed for the treasures that are *in* Christ. Dwelling in Him are treasures enough to make a dozen new Bibles, the Bibles of eternity.

3. It follows as a necessary consequence that this light is *universal*. "This is the true Light, which lighteth *every man* that cometh into the world."

The perfect is always universal ; it is the imperfect that is partial, the incomplete that is national. Given the perfect, and you always have the universal. Jesus Christ as revealed in the Gospel is destined for all men. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." "Salvation is of the Jews ;" but though *of* them, it is *to* all. "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." In my earlier days I often used to hear the old preachers of Wales thank God very fervently for this little word "also,"—the salvation of the inhabitants of Great Britain, they said, was included in it. "And *also* to the Greek." The Sun of Christianity is universal as the sun of nature. "His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it : and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." Already the shining of the Sun has raised the temperature of the world several degrees. "This is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

I will tell you another thing—"this is the true Light, which lighteth every man" that goeth out of the world. Many of you, I know, are glad to hear this. Many long years lie between you and the time you came into the world, but only a handbreadth separates you from the time you must go out of it. And you are glad to hear that "this Light" can penetrate with His beams the blackest recesses of the "dark mountains," along the slopes of which you are rapidly descending, that it can dissipate the mist of the "swelling flood," and illumine your way right into the other world. And I will tell you another

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thing—"this is the true Light, which lighteth" the world into which you are going. "And the Lamb is the light thereof." Have you heard of the poor Chinaman in London the other day? Walking along the streets of the metropolis in the fog and the drizzling rain, he was well-nigh breaking his heart with longing for his native land. One day, however, the sun rose brighter than usual, drove the clouds before him, and lifted the fog. Thereupon the little Chinaman cheered up amazingly. "Why, what is the matter with you to-day? what is the cause of your rejoicing?" asked an acquaintance. "What is the cause indeed," replied the poor foreigner in broken English, pointing with his finger to the sky, "don't you see there? that is China's sun?" and with the word he was dancing on the pavement like a delighted schoolboy. Everything else was strange to him—the streets, the inhabitants, the sceneries, and even the stars. The only thing he beheld in England that he had seen at home was the sun; and he felt comforted under the face of the same sun. Thus when we go to eternity things will appear very strange—the city with its golden streets, the inhabitants with palms in their hands, the sceneries "ever decked in living green." But the same Sun shines there as here, and under its shining we shall feel all fear and tremor depart. The Sun of earth is the Sun of heaven, the Sun of Cardiff is the Sun of the New Jerusalem,



III.

The Incarnation.

“The Word was made flesh.”—JOHN i. 14.

OFTEN the question has been asked, Whence did John derive his doctrine concerning the Word? Some think he derived it from the Alexandrian philosophy. Philo Judæus united, or endeavoured to unite in one system, the theology of the Hebrews and the philosophy of the Greeks, the Wisdom of Solomon and the Logos of Plato. And to the subtle influence exerted by the writings of this able and learned Jew many critics attribute the form, if not the substance, of the Johannine doctrine of the Logos.

Others, again, see in it only the full mature development of a truth already contained in the Old Testament, which continually reminds its readers of some mysterious Word, by which God created the world, and by which the world is still upheld. We further read that the “Word of the Lord” came to Abraham and other patriarchs; but as yet an air of mystery surrounds it. What is it—a part of speech, a thing, or a person? We cannot tell. But as we proceed to the later writings of the Theocracy, the

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suspicion is aroused that the Word or Wisdom is more than a part of speech, that it is a Thing; that it is more than a Thing, that it is a Person. It comes, it speaks, it retires. It is a Person. From this elevated standpoint St. John is supposed to begin his Gospel. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

I see no valid reason to give a flat denial to either of these guesses. Each of them probably contains some truth, and neither of them the whole truth. But it is objected that, if we admit the assertions of Rationalism respecting the Logos of the Greek and Alexandrian philosophies, we detract from the Gospel of St. John. Perhaps we do. But if we detract from the Gospel of St. John, we do not detract from the Christ of St. John, and that is the main point after all. It is a sad mistake, and necessarily disastrous to the philosophy of history, to attempt to isolate the Gospel truths in order to prove their divinity. Rather ought we to rejoice at every discovery which destroys their isolation and traces their organic connection with universal history. That John's idea of the Logos is quite original and unique, with nothing in the wide world to which it might for a moment be compared, would not prove to me its supernatural origin. Rather show me that there were dim prefigurations of it in other ages and other countries, that there were countless lines of thought converging toward one centre, then it will be easier for me to believe in the Divinity of the Centre itself. The philosophical speculations concerning

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the Logos, so far from explaining away or obscuring the brightness of the theological Logos, appear to me to add considerably to His splendour. If the teaching of St. John be true that the Logos in His pre-existent state was the Life and the Light of men, that He was then and is now the "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," then other men must have felt it and obscurely guessed it. The light which was in them, but not of them, must have pointed towards its Divine Source. The fact was already existent in the consciousness of men; is it to be wondered at that they should attempt a philosophy of the fact? The Word was already shining in their consciences; is it surprising that we should discover Him shining in their writings? "The Light shone in darkness," the darkness of their nature and of their literature—we perceive gleams of it; yet in neither case did the darkness comprehend it. John was the first to comprehend it; and in the first fourteen verses of this chapter we have his comprehension of it.

Having premised so much, I now solicit your attention to the *Incarnation of the Word*—the Incarnation, not so much in its inner reality as in the manifold advantages or benefits to be derived from a belief in it. We shall contemplate it in its twofold relation: first, to man; second, to God.

I. The Incarnation in its relation to MAN. This relation is generally described as being a great exaltation to man.

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human *body*. "The Word was made flesh." The material part of our nature has been much maligned in every age. Take the Greek philosophy for example. According to it matter was essentially evil; our spirits became polluted and miserable only in consequence of their habitation in flesh. The fall of man was only the inevitable result of the union of the spirit with body. Matter, not mind, was the indigenous seat of evil, the prolific source of all corruption. The body was the sure badge of the spirit's dishonour. This teaching tainted the speculations of the early Gnostics, and through them the speculations of the entire Church. Against this spurious philosophy St. John vehemently protests—"the Word was made flesh." - He selects the grossest part of our nature, that farthest removed from God, and uses the most forcible, may I say the most vulgar? word at his command, and thereby vindicates the honour of the body. We cannot lay too much stress on the fact that God dwells in a human body, and that by dwelling in it He has redeemed it from all imputation of dishonour. Ever since the Incarnation men respect the body more and more. "Whoso layeth his hand on a human body toucheth heaven," said Novalis first and Carlyle afterwards—a sentiment which has passed into the current newspaper literature of the day. Plato would have said, Whoso layeth his hand on a human body toucheth necessary evil; Carlyle says, Whoso layeth his hand on a human body toucheth heaven. How came the noblest sage of Greece and the greatest sage of England to form such diametrically opposite esti-



mates of the body? How? The Incarnation took place between. The Incarnation gave a new direction to the current of human thought on the subject; the current culminated in the philosopher of Chelsea—"Whoso layeth his hand on a human body toucheth heaven."

Neither did Judaism lay much stress on our material frame. Turn to your Concordance on the word "body," and you will see at a glance how little emphasis was laid upon it in the Old Testament, how seldom it is mentioned in its pages. But the New Testament teems with references to it; one is positively amazed at the great importance it has suddenly acquired. How to account for the change? How? The Incarnation came between. How far the Old Testament Church believed in the resurrection of the body is somewhat problematical; evidently the doctrine was but faintly revealed to it. But in the New Testament it stands out clear and definite, as the necessary and legitimate sequence of the Incarnation. The material part of man is capable of much dignity, it has been consecrated by the personal habitation of the Godhead. What more reasonable, I had almost said what more natural, than that a creature capable of such glory should be delivered from the power of the grave? Let no one say the soul would fare better without the body than with it, either here or yonder. The Infinite Soul has taken to Himself a body, and we have not the slightest hint that it clogs His movements or shackles His powers; and shall the finite soul complain? The immortality of the body is a distinctive

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doctrine of the New Testament. Not the immortality of the soul: that was common between Christianity and Greek philosophy and Jewish theology; but the immortality of the body is a distinctive doctrine, because the Incarnation is its exclusive property. Plotinus, a disciple of Plato, refused to permit his picture to be taken, because it would unduly perpetuate the image of a body he abominated; he avoided all mention of the date or locality of his birth, because it belonged to too dark and miserable an epoch to be remembered. But Paul exclaims, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory." How came two geniuses, almost contemporaries, to make such different estimates of the dignity of the body? One believed in the Incarnation, the other did not. "The Word was made flesh"—then the flesh is something honourable in the universe of God.

2. The Incarnation, moreover, shows the dignity of the human *soul* in the human body; in a word, of human nature in its totality. We must beware of viewing the Incarnation as a mere makeshift on the part of God to keep together the system of nature, or simply to ensure the salvation of mankind. I do not say that it would have taken place apart from our sin and salvation, merely to complete and glorify the old creation; but I do say that it was not a mere scheming on the part of God, a poor endeavour to make the best of the worst. Human nature possessed an intrinsic fitness to become the abode of the mighty God. Man was made in the

image of God and after His likeness, originally and organically constituted an apt medium to reveal Him. God and man are correlative terms. A radical correspondence exists between them. This correspondence the Incarnation brought out into clear light, and the consequent innate fitness of humanity to be the permanent habitation of Deity, and the meet organ of His full revelation. Human nature was competent for the purpose. Nowhere does God complain that it failed to reveal Him, or falsified in the least degree His attributes.

Just think what the Incarnation involves. "The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him bodily." All the infinite plenitude of the Divine Nature dwelling bodily in human nature! Then human nature must be capacious enough to contain it; and what but a nature of infinite capacity can take into itself infinite fulness? The one infinite demands the other. We speak much of the littleness of man, and there is a sense in which he is little enough. But there is another sense in which he is very great, great enough to receive into his own nature the personal fulness of the Godhead. We are limited enough in our ability to give out, but we are unlimited in our capacity to take in. Yes; our nature is a very great nature—it took in a God in Bethlehem. This makes me think more highly of my nature wherever I see it. My nature, your nature, the nature of the pauper in the street, and of the criminal in the gaol, has in it possibilities of inconceivable grandeur. We also are capable of receiving and entertaining God. This it was which

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kindled in the breast of Christ the "enthusiasm of humanity," and impelled Him to die in order to its redemption. It is often thrown in the face of believers in the Incarnation that we paint human nature in colours too black, that we recklessly and unduly disparage this creature of God. But surely they who fling this taunt in our face know not whereof they speak. True, we do cherish very humble views of it; but humble views are not low views. How can we, who believe the Godhead has found room enough in it to dwell in all His inexhaustible fulness, think low of it? The Incarnation shows us its grand potentialities, and throws upon it a thousandfold stronger light than Unitarianism possibly can. Believers in the Incarnation, therefore, burn with a quenchless desire to go and rescue poor, downtrodden, despised human nature in lands afar off. Only faith in the Incarnation can create missionaries. You demand a proof: I appeal to the story of missionary enterprise. Where is the roll of the missionaries of Unitarianism? "By their fruit ye shall know them"—systems as well as men, faiths as well as trees.

3. The Incarnation, linking man to God, removed the antithesis between them. Something more was requisite to remove the antagonism, even the Atone-ment; I speak now only of the antithesis. "The Word was made flesh," literally, He "became" it. Not He assumed it, not He was linked to it, not He occupied it, however convenient such language may be to us, but, He became it. "The Word was," says the first verse; "the Word became," says the four-

teenth. He became something He was not previously. As One who was, He is an hypostasis of the essential nature of God; as He became flesh, He is a part of the creation, its head, crown, and flower. Prior to the Incarnation a wide deep gap divided the Creator from His creation; but the Incarnation filled up the gap and made them of "one piece." It has done away with the antithesis; the Creator has entered the creation and become an integral part of it. "For He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." That is, by the Incarnation the Creator and His creatures, God and men, have become brethren; the relation is one of assimilation and not of differentiation.

The antithesis, however, was not the result of sin, but inevitably arose out of the necessary relation of the Infinite and finite, without any reference to evil. Hence many profound devout thinkers believe that the Incarnation would take place even if sin had never entered the world, in order to remove the antithesis between God and His work, and by its removal to perfect the creation. "The Word was made flesh." There is now no gap between the Infinite and finite; in the language of the Epistle, "they are of one." The finite can look up to the Infinite, and not feel a sense of separation; the Infinite can look down upon the finite, and not feel a sense of distance. "They are of one." There is not a single break in the chain of existence, not a single gap through the entire length and breadth of

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being. From the veriest atom trembling on the verge of nonentity to the awful heights of Absolute Being there is a continuous unbroken ascent—not one crevice to leap over. The Infinite has not only created the finite, but in the Incarnation has united Himself to it, and thus secured the undisturbed continuity of the diameter of being. Before the Incarnation God and the universe were two factors, not only distinct but separate—God there, the universe here, and a wide awful chasm between. But in the Incarnation God slid into the universe, became an integral part of it, and thus united the remotest extremities of existence—the Creator and the creature, the infinitely great and the infinitely little. “The Word was made flesh.”

But the Incarnation is not true, say the Unitarians. Is it not? Then it is a great pity; certainly it deserves to be true. Deny it, and the universe loses its unity and integrity; it is despoiled of much of its grandeur and poetry. According to the orthodox view a continuous path stretches from the smallest particle of matter at the very bottom of creation right up and away to the sublimest heights of the Absolute and Unconditioned; the two remotest boundaries of existence are joined together in irrefragable relationship; the tiniest mote dancing on the brink of nothingness is in indissoluble connection with Eternal Being—all things gathered together in one in Christ. What a grand unity! The two hemispheres of being, the Infinite and finite, wedded in one glorious orb, which is now the “Light of the World!” In this sublime unity effected in



the Incarnation is contained the fundamental truth of pantheism without the grave and multiform errors thereof. Here the advocates of pantheism will find all they want, the two factors, Infinite and finite, reduced into one. Instead of a God evolving the creation out of Himself, here is a God involving Himself in the creation. Instead of the doctrine of evolution, the one developing into the many, here is the doctrine of involution, the many gathered together in the one. "He hath purposed in Himself that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, He would gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."

Compared with this the Rationalistic view of the universe is meagre, prosaic, unscientific. According to it the two hemispheres are for ever separate, the antithesis is always remaining, the centre is ever wanting. Unitarians have no Son of Man who is also Son of God uniting earth and sky, upon whom the angels ascend and descend. Is it not grander, more poetic, and more philosophic, to behold this gulf bridged in Jesus Christ, to see the upward path reaching up to the loftiest altitudes of the Eternal I AM? The sublimity of a doctrine is not a logical demonstration of its truth I admit, but it certainly tells powerfully in its favour. The doctrine of the Incarnation, so far from contradicting reason, complements it, presenting to its adoring meditation the highest unity conceivable of the universe in the sacred person of Jesus Christ. The Unitarian doctrine, on the other hand, because ever confronted

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II. The Incarnation is general

I. It reveals the Divine Essence of the Church reason that the Doubtless, discernible in it under the New, discover whether an angelic glimmerings of to the New, the light upon the "In the beginning with God, and sacred, mysterious consequent, no The Holy Trinity the doctrine of apprehension

with a duality of being, belittles the creation, despoils it of its grandeur and divineness; and its meagreness and poverty are a testimony against its truth. What advantage then hath the orthodox faith? or what profit is there of the Incarnation? Much every way. It dignifies the human body, demonstrates the potentiality of human nature, and reduces the duality of being, finite and infinite, into an adorable unity in the indivisible person of the blessed Saviour.

II. The Incarnation in its relation to GOD. This relation is generally described as a revelation of God.

1. It reveals the *plurality* of persons in the Divine Essence. This truth is the exclusive property of the Church of the New Testament, for the obvious reason that the Incarnation is its exclusive property. Doubtless, dim prefigurations of this doctrine are noticeable in the Old Testament. *We*, examining it under the strong light reflected upon it by the New, discover evidences of it; but it is very doubtful whether an ancient Jew could perceive the faintest glimmerings of it. I think not. But passing over to the New, the doctrine of the Incarnation throws light upon the inner nature of the Divine Being. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That high, sacred, mysterious announcement is logically the consequent, not the antecedent, of the Incarnation. The Holy Trinity, of course, existed previously; but the doctrine concerning it would be incredible, its apprehension by the human mind impossible, but in

the light of the historic reality—"the Word made flesh." First the fact, afterwards the doctrine.

In the Old Testament the Name of God it is that stands out bold and conspicuous. Not the Word but the Name. In the New Testament, however, the Word of God comes to the forefront; and the doctrine of the Word is an advance on the doctrine of the Name. The Name points us to God, the Word leads us into God. In language, in philosophy, in theology, the same rule holds good: first the noun, afterwards the verb; first the subject, afterwards the predicate; first the Name of God, afterwards the Word of God predicating something of the name. The controversy raging in Old Testament times turned around the Divine Name. The momentous question was—Who was God? It was a battle between the true God and false gods, between monotheism and polytheism. Hence the chief function of Judaism was to uphold the Divine Name, to testify that Jehovah alone was God. But the great question of New Testament times is not Who is God? but What is God? Not the *nomen* but the *Verbum*, not the subject but the predicate. The spiritual warfare of modern times is, therefore, different from that of old; it is directed not against false worships but false philosophies, not against false gods but false Christs. Who is God? The Old Testament answers in the doctrine of the Name. What is God? The New Testament answers in the doctrine of the Incarnate Word. The door is ajar, and we see faintly into the Divine Nature and discern there a Word with God, a Word who was God.

2. The incarnation of God. We beheld His begotten of the Fatherhood. the deepest Fatherhood not only unites two Fatherhoods but the intrinsic; the external and His eternal Fatherhood disclose it. It depends not on that of our image and repeated references in Scriptures. Its eminence, for the greater consequence of tutelage. In sacred writings in the literature. As the extrinsic creation of man to be expected analysis of our likeness, and therefore of our indeed one of the offspring." No question it deserved it should. Ne

2. The incarnation further reveals the Fatherhood of God. "The Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." Here we find Sonship and Fatherhood. Deny the Incarnation and you deny the deepest Fatherhood of God, the protests of Unitarianism notwithstanding. Modern theology recognises two Fatherhoods in God—the extrinsic and the intrinsic; the first arising from His relation to the external world, the second from the depths of His eternal nature. Now the first or extrinsic Fatherhood did not require the Incarnation to disclose it. It depended on the doctrine of the creation, not on that of the Incarnation. "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness." Consequently repeated references are made to it in the Jewish Scriptures. It does not indeed receive much prominence, for there were other numerous truths of greater consequence to the nation in its then state of tutelage. And not only do we discover it in the sacred writings of the Jews, but we come across it in the literature and mythology of the Gentiles. As the extrinsic Fatherhood was involved in the creation of man in God's image, it was reasonably to be expected that a close, severe, exhaustive analysis of our nature would ultimately discern the likeness, and that an inference should be made therefrom of our sonship and His Fatherhood. "As indeed one of the Greek poets said, We also are His offspring." Not that this truth received the attention it deserved, nor exerted the ennobling influence it should. Nevertheless the utterance of it by the



poet shows that it is a truth of nature, deeply imbedded in our very make, rather than a doctrine of revelation, demanding the Incarnation to declare it. This is the Fatherhood much paraded in Unitarian theology, held by it in common with the Jewish law and the Greek literature.

Crossing over from the Old Testament to the New, our thoughts are directed to a better and a deeper Fatherhood—the intrinsic and eternal. Not till men saw the Son coming out from the Father did they understand that He was always with the Father. In the “coming out” they perceived what was always in, and a new truth thus dawned upon the world, to eclipse all others with its grandeur and brightness. A Son has come out from the Father! Then it was understood that Sonship and Fatherhood must have existed from eternity within the inner circle of the incomprehensible Godhead. God is Father in the profoundest abysses of His essential nature. There is no room for this intrinsic Fatherhood in Unitarian theology, because there is no place in it for the Incarnation. The God of Unitarianism, therefore, is not a Father in the profoundest sense; He is not a Father in the deepest essence of His being; He is simply a Father in relation to the world. *We* are not begotten by Him, of the same substance with Him; He is therefore a Father to us by creation, not by generation. But a Father by creation is only a figurative Father; the Father by generation only is genuine, real Father. According to Unitarianism, before creation God was not a Father; destroy creation and He will again cease to be a

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Father. His Fatherhood, therefore, is a variable, accidental, extrinsic quality. He can take it up and lay it down when He pleases. With it He is God; without it He is God just the same. But believe in the Incarnation of the Son, and you believe in the truest, deepest Fatherhood of God. Here you have clear, positive, I may say, infinite gain. If the highest, noblest aspect in which we can contemplate God is that of a Father, a real, true Father, then the God of Trinitarianism is immeasurably superior to that of Unitarianism. One is a Father really, truly, intrinsically, for ever and ever; He cannot help being a Father: the other is a Father simply in relation to His creatures; let the universe collapse, and His Fatherhood vanishes the same moment.

The Incarnation reveals to us the intrinsic Fatherhood. It shows us a Son, not by creation in time, but by generation in eternity; and consequently shows us a Father, not in virtue of His creative, but of His generative energies. "The only-begotten of the Father." God is a Father truly, essentially, in the profoundest abysses of His being. He is a Father before creation; perish the worlds, and He will be a Father still. Instead, therefore, of a Fatherhood which may be put on and off according to outward circumstances, here is a Fatherhood intrinsic, independent of all surroundings, rooted in the very centre of the Divine Being, colouring all His thoughts, influencing all His movements, and that from everlasting to everlasting. By the side of this all other fatherhoods are mere types and figures. "The Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;" that

is the New Testament name of God, because it sets forth the only Fatherhood which He lays stress upon, the intrinsic Fatherhood revealed in the Incarnation.

Hitherto I have contrasted the Fatherhoods, whereas, in faithfulness to the Scriptures, I ought to add the one to the other. The Unitarian is compelled by his very position to make a choice, and he chooses the shallower Fatherhood. But the orthodox says, with the Bible in his hand, "I believe in both." We believe in the extrinsic Fatherhood as firmly as do the Unitarians; but, in addition to the extrinsic, we believe in the intrinsic. Thus orthodoxy is more comprehensive than Unitarianism; and the Evangelical Church is the broadest of all the broad churches. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad;" and Thy Gospel too, broader than any theologies or philosophies of man's invention, yea, broader than they all put together. We do not believe less, we believe more, than the self-styled liberals of theology; for their one truth we almost invariably hold two. What advantage is there of the Incarnation? Much every way; but chiefly that it has revealed to us the innermost Fatherhood of God, thereby infinitely enriching the thoughts and feelings of the race. It greatly comforts poor, sinful, distressed humanity to know assuredly that above and before all things God is a Father. We cannot fare badly at the hands of One who in the core of His being is from everlasting to everlasting a Father.

3. The Incarnation further reveals to us the *redeeming* character of God. "In this was the love of God manifested, that He sent His Son into the

world." Deny positive proof you can never find. He gave His Son. He do? The Son at that time; and always been a revelation. time is a revelation of the future, of God's act of his doing. a moment of weakness he was contrary to the changeable being neither shadow His heart in the

If it be true intense in the the only-begotten was the Incarnation confessed that sarily delay, a to send His Son Him might be that. On the "God is not slack count slackness much as God is in Bethlehem bold to affirm to work out the

world." Deny the Incarnation and you have no positive proof of the Divine love; believe it, and you can never desire a higher proof. The Incarnation is a proof because it is a revelation of love. He gave His only-begotten Son; what more could He do? The Incarnation shows what He was at that time; and what He was then, that He had always been and will for ever be. This one act in time is a revelation of the whole eternity, past and future, of God. Man is a creature of impulses; one act of his does not reveal his past and future. In a moment of exceptional enthusiasm or momentary weakness he will make a sacrifice or commit a deed contrary to the uniform tenor of his life. Man is a changeable being; but with God is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; one act of His reveals His heart in the two eternities.

If it be true that this love was in God always, as intense in the days of Abraham as on the morning the only-begotten Son was born into the world, why was the Incarnation delayed so long? It must be confessed that we often speak as if God did unnecessarily delay, as if He were in no manner of haste to send His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved. But the Bible nowhere teaches that. On the other hand, it distinctly states that "God is not slack concerning His promise, as men count slackness." He never procrastinates. Inasmuch as God is unchangeable, and the love exhibited in Bethlehem was in Him from days of old, I make bold to affirm that He embraced the first opportunity to work out the redemption of the race. Yes; He

sent His Son into the world as early as He could, the first opportunity He had. But why not send Him earlier? I answer, What would be the use of sending Him earlier when the world was not prepared to receive Him? Jesus Christ is the joint product of heaven and earth; He is God and Man; hence the necessity for both to be ready. Do not misunderstand me: God was ready, the Son was ready. Why then was He not sent? The earth was not ready. He had to wait till humanity should be ready. The mind of man had to be prepared. Were it a mere question of love or power, He could have been sent earlier; but as it was also a question of wisdom, He must not be sent at a period likely to defeat the end in view. God could not travel faster than the conditions of humanity admitted. He must suit His pace to the tottering steps of man. It took God longer time, perhaps greater pains, to beget Christ in the human mind than to beget Him in the Virgin's womb. Four thousand years were needed to accomplish the former; but the instant it was brought to pass, "God sent forth His Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law."

In Bethlehem and on Calvary God is doing His best to save the world. It follows that if He was doing His best then, He was doing His best always. There is no change in God; what He is at one time He is at all times. The Incarnation reveals Him behind and before. To live and die on this earth were not the capricious result of a momentary impulse; they are manifestations of His eternal nature. God was doing His best in every age to save the

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world and to destroy sin. He was not more earnest in one age and less earnest in another; His appeal to Ephraim is the appeal He makes to all the ages—"What more could I do than I have done?" From Adam to Moses, and from Moses to Christ, God was doing His very best to save. Why do I affirm that? Because He did His very best in Bethlehem and on Calvary. In the birth, life, and death of Jesus Christ we behold the Divine love at white heat. Was it hotter than usual? No! it was equally hot in every age and equally active. Behold here the greatness of salvation and the difficulty of bringing it to pass. It took God, not thirty-three, but thousands of years to accomplish it. Everything He could do He did.

And not only He was doing His utmost in Palestine and under the Old Testament, but He is doing His utmost to-day. He allows not a single opportunity to escape. He is doing His utmost to save the world now. Why then is the world not saved? We stand here on the brink of an awful mystery; but whatever be the solution of it, I make bold to affirm that it is not because of indifference on the part of God. Salvation is a question of wisdom as well as of love; and doubtless the slow unfoldings of Providence, and the consequently slow march of the Gospel, will in the end be amply vindicated. Meanwhile believe that God loves the world now just as much as He did when "He sent His Son into the world, that the world through Him might be saved."



IV.

The Character of Jesus.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth,"—ST. JOHN i. 14.

THE word here rendered "dwelt" means literally "tabernacled." St. John uses it four times in the course of his writings, and in each case it has, contrary to expectation, attached to it the idea of permanence. In this the Incarnation of Christianity differs widely from the incarnations of heathen religions; for it is known to you that these latter abound in startling legends about the gods appearing in material bodies, freely mingling in human society, boldly waging earth's conflicts, and bravely enduring life's hardships. Their union, however, with the body was only transient. Having successfully accomplished their mission, they invariably dropped their material clothing and ascended again into their native element. But the Christian Incarnation is distinguished for its permanence, and must therefore differ in its radical idea from the mythological incarnations of other religions.

The "tabernacle of the Lord" was fixed of old in the centre of the Hebrew camp; around it in all directions, as far as eye could see, were built

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the tabernacles of the encamping hosts. In like manner Jesus Christ pitched His tent in the midst of men, and His tent differed from the myriad tents around it in nothing save in the whiteness of the canvas. His was pure, clean, unsullied as the virgin snow, "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." "He tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth."

Of the Word prior to the Incarnation it is said in the fourth verse, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." He was life and He was light in His pre-existent state; in the Incarnation the life is reproduced in grace and the light in truth. The same qualities which inhered in Him as the Eternal, characterise Him also as the Incarnate, Word. Grace and truth indicate the opposite and balancing poles of character; and every perfect man must touch the two extremes and fill the gap between. Jesus Christ "dwelt among us full of grace" on the one hand, and "full of truth" on the other. In these two words, grace and truth, is presented to us a summary of His life. To define them with precision is difficult; but our purpose will be answered if we take grace as a designation of the gentler virtues, and truth of the manlier qualities of life.

I. No one can thoughtfully read the life of Jesus without being forcibly struck with the INEFFABLE GRACE combined with the RESOLUTE FIRMNESS which never deserts Him.

There are men, "few and far between," who

possess a secret indescribable charm which carries your mind captive. You cannot give a rational, intelligible account of it to yourselves or others; yet their mere presence has a mystic air, a hazy halo, which keeps you delighted and spell-bound. And as we read the Gospels we seem to see playing on their pages a thin film of glory; the letters look illuminated.

“A glory gilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun.”

The Saviour's character is such as to forbid undue familiarity; we feel constrained to shade our eyes as we look. Avowed infidels as well as Christians feel shy, almost reverent, in its hallowed presence. The disciples, no doubt, were keenly sensitive to this bright mystery without a name. Upon one occasion Peter—the rash, impetuous Peter—felt too timid to address to the Saviour a simple question, and was constrained to beckon to John to break the solemn silence. On another occasion the Sanhedrim despatched a file of officers to take Him in custody. There is not much difficulty in conceiving the character of these men. We all know the stuff constables and policemen are made of—recklessness, hardness, daring. But when they confronted the Saviour and heard Him speak, they were utterly paralysed; they retreated crestfallen, saying, “Never man spake like this man.” His words, His looks, His manner quite unnerved the stern officers of the law in the discharge of their duty. Another time, in the synagogue in His

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own home at Nazareth, "He stood up for to read, and the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were *fastened* on Him, and they were astonished at His doctrine." He read not as other men. We read as if the words proceeded from the parchment to us; He read as if the words flashed from Him to the parchment, and thence to the congregation. Out of the deep fountain of His personality there flowed forth an irresistible stream of influence that always carried the heart captive. "Full of grace."

But He was, moreover, as remarkable for His firmness as for His suavity. He possessed an unconquerable strength of will. Firmness or strength is necessary to greatness of every kind; it is the first essential of success. No one has ever achieved distinction without a solid rock at the centre of his personality, a firm basis to sustain the greatness. All the illustrious characters of history were men of undaunted will—a will that could not be swayed by favourable, nor crushed by untoward circumstances. Men of feeble will never leave their mark on their generation. "Reuben, unstable as water, thou shalt not excel." Jesus Christ, however, possessed this tenacity of purpose in an extraordinary degree. "Repentance was hid from His sight;" He never for a moment wavered. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged," said the prophet; which means that His spirit should not faint because of the magnitude of the task He had undertaken, nor be broken because of the dread opposition He should encounter. The stronger the wind the higher soars the eagle, and the greater the danger the more determined was



He to go up to Jerusalem. Not only He successfully stood the test of adversity, but He triumphantly stood the more searching test of prosperity. How few the men who can pursue their purpose without swerving in the genial breeze of popularity! Here Mahomet utterly collapses. When he returns from Medina, sweeping at last all enemies out of his path, as the prophet of a new faith and the leader of an awakened and repentant people, his biographer pauses to notice the lowering of the standard both in his life and teaching. Power, he pleads, brings with it new temptations and new failures. "The more thoroughly a man is carried away by his inspiration and convinced of the truth and goodness of his cause and his message, the more likely is he to forget the means in the end, and to allow the end to justify whatever means seem to lead to its triumph. He must maintain as he can, and by any means, his power over the motley mass of followers that his mission has gathered round him, and will be apt to aim rather at what will hold them than at what will satisfy the highest promptings of his own conscience.

"We may allow the plea in such cases, though with sorrow and humiliation. But the more minutely we examine the life of Christ, the more we shall feel that here again there is no place for it. We shall be impressed with the entire absence of any such bending to expediency, or forgetting the means in the end. He never for one moment accommodates His life or teaching to any standard but the highest; never lowers or relaxes that standard by a shade or

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a hair's-breadth to make the road easy to rich or powerful questioners, or to uphold the spirit of His poorer followers when they are startled and uneasy, as they begin half-blindly to recognise what spirit they are of." "Full of truth."

II. He brings together in sweetest harmony the FEMININE and MASCULINE virtues.

In the expressive language of St. Paul, He was "made of a woman,"—language which carries in it an unsearchable wealth of meaning. He was in an emphatic sense "the seed of the woman." This explains partly the feminine traits everywhere discoverable in His character. Every great man, it has been often remarked, especially every poetic genius, is strongly marked by womanly softness and delicacy, the countenance, the passions, and the life having in them a strong feminine element. This must be so; for every man is great in proportion as he takes up in his own personality and reflects in his own life, not one, but all phases of human nature. By universal consent Jesus Christ reproduces in Himself all the finer qualities of the female sex. It is not without profound significance, therefore, that St. John ascribes to him the "breasts" of a woman, to show the depth, the sensitiveness, and the constancy of His love and devotion. "And in the midst of the candlesticks I saw one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." "Paps"—*μαστοίς*, the very word used to denote the breasts of a woman, as distinguished from

those of a man. Oh, the ineffable tenderness of the Saviour's heart!

It has been often urged, to the disparagement of Christianity, that modern civilisation lacks a certain severity of tone and simplicity of manners very observable in classic antiquity; and the charge is not without a plausible foundation. But to argue that the lack is a loss or a step backward is quite another thing. In ancient times woman occupied a very inferior position; her influence upon society was hardly perceptible; consequently she scarcely entered as a moulding power into education and civilisation. There was a certain severe hardness, or hardness, if you like, characterising men of classical lands. But Jesus Christ came into the world "made of a woman," reproducing in His person and life the finer features of a woman. By His means female influence became a factor in the history of the world, and entered as a softening, transforming element into education and civilisation; and as an inevitable result the severe manly hardness of olden times has been much tempered. The equipoise has not hitherto been definitely fixed, for the world is only in its transition state; but the recognised ideal of Christianity is indisputable—it is the happy union of masculine simplicity and firmness with feminine delicacy and grace.

In classical times the prevailing form of art was sculpture. The hard stone was fetched from the rock, and carefully chiselled and elaborately polished to represent the "human form divine." Their sculpture exhibited a simplicity, a severity, a chaste

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grandeur which far outstrips all efforts of modern ages. Indeed, a vast change has imperceptibly stolen over the minds of men, which is seen in the fact that whereas sculpture was the prevailing form of art among the Greeks, painting is the prevailing form among Christians. We have not been able to cope with the ancients in marble, but it is generally admitted, I believe, that we have greatly surpassed them on canvas. But why has painting superseded sculpture? Because painting is more feminine, and therefore more capable of expressing the softer, gentler virtues. It is the female face of art. One may say with tolerable accuracy that fine art is the creation of Christianity. Art there unmistakably was in the world before—splendid, severe, pure, strong; but we can hardly pronounce it *fine*. Christianity has softened men, it has softened manners, it has softened art.\* The heathen ideal was truth; the Christian ideal is grace and truth.

III. In Jesus Christ we see brought into perfect accord FEELING AND KNOWLEDGE, heart and intellect.

No one can read the Gospels without being deeply impressed by the exquisite sensibility of the Saviour. There is more heart in the Gospels than in all other books put together. Out of the fountain of feeling contained in them has flowed what grace there is in other books and other men. Men and books must join in the apostolic exclamation,—“Out of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace.”

\* See my “Studies in St. Matthew,”

The fact is, the heart was systematically crushed under ancient forms of civilisation. Sensibility was deemed a sign of weakness. Hence men were carefully trained to steel themselves against pain and misfortune, to repress, and, if possible, to eradicate all feeling. Tears for one's self or others were judged symptoms of unmanliness, if not of cowardice. By degrees this prevalent tone of mind framed itself into a philosophy, the noblest outcome of ancient civilisation. Stoicism inculcated hardness. Man should suffice for himself and rise superior both to joy and sorrow. He was to wage fierce war with his emotional nature and smite all feeling with the edge of the sword. Stoicism considered it unmanly to weep, to groan in the spirit, to be touched with feeling for the sins and sufferings of men. Wherefore the ideal Greek face has in it not a vestige of feeling. "The Greeks seek after wisdom." The Greek face is noted for high breed and intelligence, but is never suffused with the glow of feeling; it never, or seldom, blushes; not a muscle moves. If you happen to have in your possession a copy of the Greek Apollo, turn to it on your return home, and you cannot but observe how motionless the face is, how haughty, how utterly devoid of love and sympathy. The Athenian was all intellect, but had no heart.

How different is Jesus Christ! In Him we witness a dignity of bearing, a loftiness of purpose, and a nobleness of life which never show to better advantage than when compared with the highest ideals of Greek culture. But at the same time He evinces a depth of emotion, a delicacy of feeling,

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quite foreign to them. The Greek impresses us with subtlety of intellect, the Christ with subtlety of heart. As we contemplate the Greek, we are constrained to exclaim, How clever! As we contemplate the Christ, we are obliged to cry, How good! There is in Him an unfathomable depth of feeling. Some time ago I went to see "The Shadow of Death," by Holman Hunt. From some depreciatory criticisms I had read, I was prepared to have my attention distracted by multiplicity of details. But no. The moment I entered the apartment the Christ arrested my attention and steadily kept it for about half an hour; and my admiration continued to increase to the end. But that which is deeper than admiration, the sentiment akin to reverence and worship, was but faintly stirred. Why? Because there was not a sufficient depth of feeling in the figure and the face. There was pain, but of too shallow a nature to become the Saviour. It did not melt into sorrow. We demand a richer background of feeling in the Christ of the painter. But why do we demand it? Because we find it in the Christ of the Gospels, and it is this Christ which has created the demand in our hearts. In every representation of Christ we require an infinite ocean of pathos; we want, not a photograph, but a picture. There is in the picture as it is more feeling than the ancients wanted or cared for; less emotion would have abundantly satisfied their highest ideals. Indeed a Stoic, whereas he would give to the execution—the handiwork—his greatest admiration, would contemplate the figure of the

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Christ with derision; to him the expression of pain in the face, with nothing apparently to cause it save a hard day's work, would be deemed unmistakable evidence of weakness and effeminacy.

In this respect, however, the Christ of the Gospels has revolutionised society—He has created a new type of civilisation. "Behold, all things are made new." Greek civilisation started from the mind and aimed at mind-culture; Christian civilisation starts from the heart and aims at heart-culture. The Greek strove after wisdom, believing that the light was the life of men; the Christian seeks after goodness, which is spiritual life, believing that "the life is the light of men." One believed that light is life, the other believes that life is light. Plato wrote over the portico of his academy, "No admittance except for mathematicians"—knowledge was the condition of entrance into his kingdom. Jesus Christ said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Life was the condition of entrance into His kingdom. Heathen civilisation was based upon mental culture. Christian civilisation is founded upon moral culture. Hence feeling, sympathy, tenderness, enter more largely, since the Incarnation, into the annals of mankind. No system of education can be pronounced complete, which aims more at the development of the mind than at that of the heart. Art is Christian in proportion as it makes the heart supreme, and knowledge subservient to feeling.

Poetry too has undergone a corresponding change. Whilst Christian poets can never hope to excel classic bards in finish and polish, yet they have

excelled them in pathos. The devoid of affect one has right were looked was the prop they forced t rent, through the shape of honoured wh mind in all Hence it is th the Greek pr Greek model, response in polished, ver The radical p was a modern S quisite feeling crushed it til Belvedere, and

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excelled them and will excel them in delicacy and pathos. The ancient writers are by no means devoid of affections, for they were men; "but," as one has rightly remarked, "affections with them were looked on with mistrust and misgiving; it was the proper thing to repress, to disown them; they forced their way, like some irresistible current, through a hard stern crust, too often in the shape of passion, and were not welcomed and honoured when they came." The Greek sought mind in all things; the Christian seeks a heart. Hence it is that Goethe, who fashioned his life on the Greek principle and wrote his poetry on the Greek model, is not able to awake any powerful response in the Christian world. He was very polished, very penetrating, but very cold withal. The radical principle of his life was heathen—he was a modern Stoic, a man naturally endowed with exquisite feeling, but who systematically and selfishly crushed it till he became polished as an Apollo Belvedere, and as an Apollo Belvedere without a heart.

"He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear;  
He struck his finger on the place,  
And said, 'Thou ailest here and here.'  
He looked on Europe's dying hour  
Of fitful dreams and feverish power,  
And said, 'The end is everywhere,  
Art still has truth, take refuge there.'  
And he was happy, if to know  
Causes of things, and far below  
His feet, to see the lurid flow  
Of trouble and insane distress  
And headlong fate, be happiness."

Like an ancient philosopher he cared for nothing but mental culture; he had no heart to feel for poor humanity in its deadly struggles; he kept aloof in proud, selfish, unchristian isolation, the greatest of the Stoics and the last of the Greeks.

IV. In Him we see brought together in beautiful proportion the ACTIVE AND THE PASSIVE VIRTUES.

The earth was full of violence, and consequently of suffering, from the beginning of time, but mankind had never learnt to suffer worthily. And of all tasks this, perhaps, is about the hardest,—to suffer in the right spirit. Yet Jesus taught it and practised it. A great principle underlying His life and ministry is non-resistance; not non-resistance to evil, but non-resistance to wrong. No one was ever more active and energetic than He in His stern, unrelenting, uncompromising opposition to wickedness in high and low places alike; but what strikes us more forcibly still is His unprecedented meekness under wrong. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth." Listen to the fundamental principle of His moral philosophy: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.'" That was the taproot of Jewish and heathen civil life—evil was to be requited with evil. "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Again: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and

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hate thine enemy." That was the maxim upon which the worthiest of ancient saints and sages framed their conduct. "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." These are absolutely new principles of life and action, which have called into existence a new class of virtues, virtues which you seek for in vain in ancient history, whether Jewish or heathen.

But did the Saviour do more than teach them? Did He practise them? The Apostle Peter shall answer—"When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." He suffered patiently. Indeed, He never towered so sublimely as in His sufferings. He was heroic in the exercise of strength, more heroic in the exercise of patience. He was great—doing; He was greater—suffering. He was Divine—living; He was more Divine—dying. The greatness of Jesus culminates in His passion and death. Here, without a doubt, He leaves all the heroes and sages and saints of antiquity immeasurably behind. Some bring forward Socrates as a worthy rival for the honours which come from the majesty of suffering. But what says Rousseau, a writer by no means friendly to the Christian religion? "I will confess to you, that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how



mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and so sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred Personage whose history it contains should be Himself a mere man? Do we find that He assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in His manner! What an affecting gracefulness in His instructions! What sublimity in His maxims! What profound wisdom in His discourses! What presence of mind, what subtlety, what fitness in His replies! How great the command over His passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man, loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ: the resemblance is so striking that all the Church Fathers perceived it. What prepossession, what blindness must it be to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion there is between them! Socrates, dying without pain or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; and if this easy death had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was anything more than a mere sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of ethics. Others, however, had before put them into practice: he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precepts. Aristides had

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been just before Socrates defined justice. Leonidas had given up his life for his country before Socrates declared patriotism to be a duty. The Spartans were a sober people before Socrates recommended sobriety. Before he had even defined virtue, Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where could Jesus learn, among His contemporaries, that pure and sublime morality of which He only has given us both precept and example? The greatest wisdom was made known among the most bigoted fanaticism; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtues did honour to the vilest people on earth. The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophising among friends, appears the most agreeable that one could wish: that of Jesus, expiring in agonies, abused, insulted, and accursed by a whole nation, is the most horrible that one could fear. Socrates, indeed, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, amidst excruciating tortures, prayed for His merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." Verily His death, contrary to all expectation, forces upon us the idea of a God in a manner more remarkable than His life. There is in it something so supremely grand, so utterly foreign to our nature and experience, so decisively superhuman, that we are obliged to exclaim with the centurion, "Truly this was the Son of God." A bleeding, dying God was totally alien to the ideas of this Roman official and contrary to his prevailing habits of thought; yet he found it easier to believe it was a God that

was nailed to the shameful tree than that mere man should suffer so gloriously and superbly.

As already intimated, by His incomparable teaching and noble example, He has originated in the human race a new type of goodness, that based on non-resistance of wrong. "For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps." Thus the blessed Saviour has consecrated suffering. He has shown that there is a higher heroism than that which is manifested in the exercise of power, even that which is manifested in the exercise of patience. He has taught the world that to endure with meekness entitles us to the rank of greatness as well as to act with vigour.

The angels, announcing to the shepherds of Bethlehem the birth of Christ the Lord, said—"This shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Poverty is made a sign of divinity, an idea novel and startling. The Palestinian public gave utterance to the world's idea of divinity, when they desired Him that He would show them a sign from heaven. They wanted Him to do something, they craved for a glaring display of miracles. "But Jesus answered and said unto

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them, A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas ; for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This reference to Jonah's adventure in the fish's belly, and our Lord's three days' burial in the earth, is looked upon by a few able critics as an unwarrantable interpolation, giving a false turn to the conversation. But they seem to me to miss the main point of the argument. The Jews said, "What sign showest thou unto us? What *doest* thou?" In accordance with the broad current of the world's thought at the time they wanted him to *do* something. "You shall have a sign," answered Christ ; "it will not, however, consist in doing but in suffering. You require me to work like a God : I mean to give you something better,—I mean to suffer like a God. Others have performed miracles before me, and others will perform them after me ; but I shall give you a sign which none other gave, a sign peculiar to myself, a sign prefigured in the history of the prophet Jonah—*I shall die*. My death shall prove My Divinity. It is on My sufferings that I shall base My claims to Divine honours." And, singular to say, the great indubitable proof of the Saviour's Divinity is not His miracles, for others have performed miracles, but the sign of the prophet Jonah—His death, burial, and resurrection. The memorable words of the French freethinker come back upon us with ten-

fold power,—“If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God.” To die as Christ died is more divine than to open the eyes of the blind. Self-sacrifice, such as Christ made on Calvary, is more godlike than the creation of the worlds.

Do you want to grow like God? Then grow like Jesus Christ. Cultivate the passive virtues; practise self-denial. Did godlikeness consist in superior power or knowledge, then verily the outlook of many of us were dreary enough. But it consists in nothing of the kind, it consist emphatically in self-sacrifice. And we can all grow godlike in that, we can all develop into the dimensions of heroism in the passive virtues. Our advantages in that respect are all on a par. We must beware of supposing that, when Jesus Christ lived in poverty, and died on a cross, He was belying the character of God. He was not belying it but revealing it. Poverty is divine, not wealth. Self-sacrifice is the eternal law of the Divine nature, not self-aggrandisement. The Lord Jesus revealed the passive virtues of the Supreme Being, and thereby constituted them the deepest and most essential properties of Christian civilisation. “He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps.” “Full of grace and truth.”

V. In Jesus Christ we behold the REAL kissing the IDEAL.

He realised in daily life the highest ideal humanity has ever been able to conceive. The most

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ethereal aspirations find in Him ample fulfilment. Man's ideas were always far in advance of his noblest achievements. Therefore the Muse was believed to have wings, for she flew high over the tops of the tallest realities. All efforts to raise the actual into the ideal, to elevate everyday life into chaste and holy poetry, had been signal failures. But in the Gospels we have depicted to us a life full at the same time of the divinest poetry and the sheerest reality. It is one consistent, magnificent poem, out of which have been evolved the fairest, noblest conceptions of modern art; but it is also truest prose, for all the ideas are rooted and grounded in corresponding facts. It is the most remarkable, one might almost say, the most sensational novel ever penned, and yet the truest, soberest history ever recorded. Its perfection as poetry is our surest guarantee of its veracity as history. For, to quote Rousseau once more, "shall we suppose the evangelical history a mere fiction? Indeed, it bears no marks of fiction. On the contrary, the history of Socrates, which no one presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty without obviating it: it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality contained in the Gospel. The marks of its truth are so striking and inimitable, that the *inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.*"



In other quarters we discover a little grace and a little truth; in Jesus Christ alone we find them in immeasurable, inexhaustible plenitude. As we examine the Old Testament Scriptures, we come across streams of grace and truth; but they are streams in the desert, which soon dry up, and we are left longing for the sea. Imagination always exceeds the fact, the poetry is grander than the reality. But when we come to the New Testament and contemplate the life of Jesus, history outstrips imagination, truth appears more wonderful than fiction. We can imagine a larger fulness of grace than anything we perceive in the Old Testament; but we can imagine no richer grace than is exhibited in the life and death of the Saviour; indeed, we could imagine nothing so divinely grand and impressive. Reality transcends imagination, facts for once fly higher than fancy. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." A greater love than this—love dying for friends—imagination had not, could not picture, without suspecting that it was belying itself. Read classic poetry which recounts the deeds of valour and love and patriotism, and in no instance does the genius of the poet dare go beyond the sacrifice of life for country and friends. "For scarcely for a righteous man would one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." The imagination would not adventure beyond the limits laid down here—death for goodness—without the painful misgiving that it was indulging in wild, unlawful fancies; fancies not only

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above nature, but against nature. But the Gospel fearlessly exceeds these limits—it posits as its central fact, not death on behalf of the good, but death on behalf of the bad. “God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

“Imagination’s utmost stretch  
In wonder dies away.”

VI. In Him we see the HUMAN gently melting into the DIVINE. “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” The word here rendered “beheld” means literally to “look at *intently*, to contemplate.” Accordingly, in order to see the Divine glory of Christ, it is necessary to gaze lovingly and steadily at Him. He moves before our vision in the form of a man; we must continue to look inquiringly and affectionately before we can penetrate through the outward guise and perceive the inner splendour.

The noblest objects never disclose their best meaning at first sight. Sir Joshua Reynolds says that, when he first visited Italy to make the acquaintance of the celebrated masterpieces of art, he was much cast down. The renowned masters maintained towards him a quiet and dignified silence, they refused to confide to him their thoughts. He gazed steadfastly at the wondrous pictures whose fame had filled the world, and could not behold their glory. Persevering, however, in his studies, the pictures gradually began, one after another, to raise their veils, and permit him to have an occa-

sional peep at their rare beauty; they softly whispered to him a few of their secrets; and as he continued unwavering in his devotion, they at last flung away their reserve, showed themselves with an open face, and revealed to him the wealth of beautiful ideas that was lodged in them.

As with pictures, so with characters. The diviner the life, the closer the inspection requisite to understand it. If we begin in the remote past, with Samson and Hercules, we shall not experience any very formidable difficulties in grasping the principle which fashioned their characters. The story of their lives is comparatively simple, having strength for a foundation. But as we wend our way down to later times, we come across more complex characters; new factors come into operation; and the process of analysis is harder of a successful accomplishment. But of all characters, ancient or modern, none demand so much intent gazing as that of Jesus Christ. Potences perfectly novel in the history of the world exert their subtle influence; the Human and the Divine, the Grace and the Truth, are so closely associated, that not at once do we grasp the radical idea, and perceive its subdued, tempered beauty. The depth and manifoldness of Christ's character form the reason for the well-nigh two hundred Lives and Harmonies which have been launched upon the world. A difficult character to understand fully, for its beauty only grows upon us by degrees. Every age discovers a new trait; every fresh generation perceives a fresh excellence; and thus from age to age He increases in loveliness in

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the estimation of men. He continues to reveal to the loving earnest gaze His glory, "the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father."

Doubtless the words contain a reference to the glory or Shekinah of the old dispensation, which dwelt in the tabernacle in the wilderness, and afterwards in the temple at Jerusalem. The superior tabernacle of the new economy, the tabernacle of His flesh, can boast of a Shekinah too, not a physical effulgence striking the eye of sense, but a holy brightness showing itself to the reverent and affectionate look of the soul. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." "As of"—befitting, becoming, beseeming. There are various kinds of glory, such as that of the philosopher, of the statesman, and of the warrior. But the glory of the Saviour's character was of that specific kind and degree, which the instincts of humanity have always pronounced to be "befitting" a Divine Person.

This singular "fitness" is one of the most cogent proofs we have in support of the proper Divinity of the Person of Christ. His affirmations concerning Himself would not alone suffice to engender belief in His personal Godhead: the miracles He performed, in their bare capacity of mighty wonders, would not of themselves suffice. What then produced the belief? The marked fitness which His character always and everywhere bore to God. His life was such as befitted God. What is becoming and unbecoming in the Supreme we cannot definitely declare beforehand; yet in the light of the moral



principles He has implanted in our nature, we can judge of what is not becoming. That the character of our best earthly friend would not be becoming in God we know assuredly; there is a manifest unfitness in it to the Divine Being. But the most exacting and sensitive of critics must confess that the character of Jesus is quite becoming in the Highest. The saintliest men and women in the world picture God of just such a character as the Saviour's without doing any outrage to their best trained and most enlightened moral feelings. Jesus Christ presents us not only with our most exquisite ideal of human character, but with our loftiest and most perfect ideal of the Divine character. No incident in His variegated history, no feature in His trying life, can be pointed out, which would in the slightest degree tarnish the brightness of the Eternal Essence. The fact that His character is always and everywhere worthy of a God is to me an invincible proof that He is Himself Divine.

He greatly altered the world's views of God, but in no case did He lower them. He altered them, but the alteration was always from a lower plane to a higher. We instinctively feel that where His views came into collision with those already in vogue, His were the more worthy. Prior to His time, men's conception of God was being continually refined, enlarged, improved; but after His time the greatest geniuses of the world have never been able to improve on the Gospel conception that is embodied in His life and teaching.

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only a man, a great man, if you like, but nothing more." We answer, He was a man, no doubt; but did you ever see a man more like a God? Can you conceive of the character of God as differing in any material point from the character of Jesus? I confess I cannot. I look over the register of the noble men of the past, and I see no one whose character can be transferred in its entirety to God without violently shocking my sense of propriety. But I feel I can transfer the character of Christ in its integrity to the Lord of Hosts, without degrading in the least degree my loftiest idea of Him. How to account for it? He was a perfect man, you say. True; but how is it that He, of all the millions of earth, should be perfect? How is it that His character alone becomes the Almighty? The Evangelist solves the problem by concluding that He was God, and I confess that that is the only adequate solution that offers itself to my reason and heart. He is so like God that I am constrained to believe that He is God.

More: I am obliged to believe that He is the God of the Unitarians—the noblest of them, I mean. He embodies their highest conception, not only of human, but also of the Divine perfection. They conceive of God and Jesus as distinct personalities, and rightly so; but when they come to think of the character of God, they at once pass over to that of Jesus. The metaphysical God they conceive as different from Jesus, the ethical God as one and the same. With their intellects they deny Him, with their hearts many of them worship Him. And

after all, it is the heart-worship that is of supreme importance. Some of their representative writers help me to worship the Lord Jesus,—they seem to me to worship Him devoutly themselves, not with all the mind perhaps, but with all the heart. From this standpoint it is that I would address the honest Unitarian and endeavour to win him over to the faith of the Church. According to his belief and ours, Jesus Christ is the highest revelation of God; and the question is—Could any one be so like God without being God? The perfection of His humanity is to me a proof of His Divinity. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.”

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## V.

**The Rebealer of God.**

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."—  
JOHN i. 18.

IN verse 14th the Evangelist says that he and his fellow-disciples had "beheld the glory of Christ, glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." But was that all? No; not only they had beheld His glory, but had received of His fulness, and grace for grace. It was a great privilege to behold His glory, a greater privilege to receive of His fulness. "For the law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law was not identical with Moses; it existed apart from him and was quite independent of him. "The law was given through Moses" as a matter of fact; but it might have been given through another organ, through Joshua or David or Isaiah. There was no intrinsic necessity that it should be given through Moses any more than through some other servant of God. Grace and truth, however, cannot be thus separated from Jesus Christ; they are indissolubly and essentially connected with His person. Grace and truth could not come by any other being; Jesus Christ was the only one who could effect their



realisation. "Grace and truth came—*became*—by Jesus Christ." The law came by Moses to the world, but not to being; but grace and truth not only came to the world by Jesus Christ, but they came to being by Him. They "*became*" by Jesus Christ, the very same word that is used for making the worlds in the opening verses. No other person, how exalted soever, could make this revelation, for the simple reason that no other had seen God at any time; "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." The subject is—*Jesus Christ, the Revealer of God.*

- I. He declared the Unity of God.
- II. He declared the Spirituality of God.
- III. He declared the Goodness of God.

I. Jesus Christ declared the UNITY of God. By this we do not understand that this truth was absolutely unknown before His advent, but that it received new importance and fresh vitality in the religion He established.

1. There is but one God—a very vital truth. Whence came it? From Nature? Let us ask the pupils of Nature, the numerous nations of antiquity. How many Gods are there? What has Nature taught them? We inquire not what Nature has taught us, who have sat at the Master's feet, but what she taught men of olden times. Or, perhaps, it were more accurate to ask, not what Nature taught, but what men learnt? We shall ask one of the first and most elementary questions of our

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religion—How many Gods are there? They answer loudly and unanimously, "There are gods many and lords many." All men, left to the unaided guidance of Nature, would vote for plurality of gods. I affirm not that Nature teaches polytheism, but I do affirm that the nations, without exception, learnt polytheism in her school. In the light of modern science we can trace a principle of unity extending through all the dominions of God and welding them together into a universe; the same laws govern the dewdrops that govern the planets; we distinctly perceive the unity of plan. But the ancient populations of the earth possessed not our means of judging of the unity of creation; to their minds everything was discord and confusion. From the advantageousness of our position we are able to attempt a philosophy of history; we do not see very far nor very clearly as yet, but we see quite enough to convince us that in history as in Nature the law of progress prevails. But the men of olden times could not, in the nature of things, have discovered this principle of unity in Providence; they had not advanced far enough in the path of life to be able to examine and form a judgment of the way along which they had travelled. To their minds history was made up of conflicts and antagonisms.

The mildest departure from the monotheistic faith was that of Persia and the adjoining countries. Their populations looked around, and beheld, as we behold, the presence of light and darkness, of good and evil. These two powers were in perpetual antagonism, dinning the ears of men with their

discord. How to account for them? You, perhaps, have ingenious theories founded on the concise but startling statements of Moses in the opening chapters of Genesis. But they had no Moses, no Book of Genesis. They had to stare the bare facts in the face, solve them as they might. Good and evil are in the world; their enmity is implacable; their warfare incessant. Whence came they? From the same fountain? Nay; for a "fountain doth not send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter." Do good and evil, light and darkness, emanate from the same Being? Impossible, they answered; impossible, we answer. So far, so good. How then to account for the difficulty? They accounted for it by creating a greater; they adopted a creed in which there were two gods, Ormuzd and Ahriman, a god of good and a god of evil. Two gods—what a contradiction in terms!

It is evident there cannot be two infinite gods; two infinities is a matter of impossibility. Two Beings alike absolute and unconditioned, are unthinkable. Their gods were, therefore, necessarily finite; and once you divest God of His infinitude, you can go on multiplying gods as often as you please. If you deny infinite *Being*, your nature demands infinite *number*. The human spirit demands infinitude; and if it be denied it in greatness, it will have it in numbers. Men forsook the infinite God; hence they invented an infinite number of small gods. The world, left to itself, would go on multiplying gods for ever. "It was easier to find a god in Athens than a man;" and it is con-

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fidently averred that there are more gods to-day than there are men on the face of the entire globe, that the objects of worship far outnumber the offerers of worship. The human soul cannot rest but in the infinite; it must have it, if not in fulness of existence, then in fulness of figures. The earth was literally full of gods. Nature never led her zealous devotees to a faith in one God.

2. Turn from Nature to philosophy. Philosophy and idolatry, it is known, were attached twins. The city of Athens was the privileged centre of learning, "for all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Knowledge was a mania in the city. Did that complete their history? No; "for while Paul waited at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." The capital of philosophy is also the centre of idolatry. But there were a few who were conscious of the gross, immoral idolatry prevalent in the city; they dared ridicule the graven images; they ventured to throw out suspicious insinuations. But what had they to offer instead? Nothing at all. They seemed to seriously doubt the truth of polytheism; some, perhaps, might have thought in the inner recesses of their hearts that it was altogether a colossal system of falsehood on the part of the priests, and of delusion on the part of the people. But what truth had they to offer as a substitute? Nothing. The alternative lay between polytheism and atheism. None of them mounted up to the calm serene





In the Old Testament the unity of God is the prominent idea; it is impressively and repeatedly inculcated in its pages. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." "Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any." "I am God, and there is none else." That was the language of the Jew's creed, but not of the Jew's heart. The creed was not of his own composition; the creed was Divine, not human. Were the Jew allowed to compose a creed, he would go in for gods many and lords many. This monotheistic creed was forced, so to speak, upon the Jewish nation. There is not a single human creed extant that teaches the unity of God. The Jewish creed teaches it, but its author is God. The Christian creed teaches it, but its author is the only-begotten Son. The Mahometan creed teaches it, but Mahomet incontestably borrowed it from the two former. These religions alone amid all the religions of the world teach it in our time, and the Jewish nation alone among all the nations of antiquity; or rather not the Jewish nation, but the Jewish creed, for oftentimes the nation came into fearful collision with the creed. Every man on the face of the world, left to the workings of his own heart, is a polytheist.

4. The idea of one God, which Jesus Christ found inculcated so vehemently, but with such scant success, on the pages of the Old Testament, He appropriated and made the cardinal truth of the new religion. He amplified it, and imparted to it a vitality which it never possessed before. "There is none good but one, that is, God." "That they

might know Thee, the only true God." "There is one God, and none other but He." "The King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God."

But are there no minor deities, no inferior gods, watching over the affairs of this life? No; the great God performs all, does everything Himself. He makes the grass grow, clothes the lily, feeds the birds, mingles with men in their holy assemblies, watches over them in the forum and the market. The wind shall not blow away a hair of your head "without your Father's" knowledge. The novelty of the doctrine of the Divine unity on the lips of Christ consists in this—He brings God very near man, representing Him as actively interesting Himself in all our concerns. He is not a God dwelling in state and pomp far above the stars, and looking down from His exalted pedestal unfeelingly and unsympathetically on the joys and agonies of earth; He is a living Reality, an ever-near Presence, interesting Himself intensely in our welfare. That is the God which Christ revealed, the God of earth as well as of heaven, the God of the market as well as of the temple, the God of week-days as well as of Sundays. He brought God very near us. Judaism showed men a great God, but He was distant. Paganism showed them a near God, but He was small. The great God of the Jew was very far, the near God of the Greek was very small. In Christianity, however, we see the great God of the Jew without being far, and the near God of the Greek without being small. Here we behold the great God of Judaism united to the

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near God of Paganism, thus satisfying the reasonable requirements of both religions. The Israelite finds here the central truth of his religion—the great God ever distinct from the world. Here also the Greek finds the fundamental truth of his religion—the near God interesting Himself in terrestrial affairs and ever exerting Himself on behalf of goodness. The great God is near; the near God is great. No wonder, therefore, that the doctrine of the Divine unity as thus presented goes out conquering and to conquer. Before the Incarnation this truth could hardly hold its own in the world, as is evidenced by the fact that only one small people believed it. But since the Incarnation it has gone out propagating itself on the right and on the left. Prior to the coming of Christ, gods were continually multiplying on the earth. But since His coming, their number has rapidly diminished. Europe at one time abounded with idols, but it has long been completely cleared of them; and it is not a small thing to rid one continent throughout all its length and breadth of their baneful presence, and win it over to an unfaltering faith in the unity of God. The other continents are fast following.

II. Jesus Christ declared the SPIRITUALITY of God. By this, again, we do not understand that the great truth that God is a Spirit was totally unknown to the ancient leaders of thought, but that it received from Christ a new impulse, a new power, and a new application.

1. That God is a Spirit is a thought than which



there is none more familiar to the modern mind. Whence came it? From Nature? Decidedly not. Every effect, it is true, necessarily demands a cause; but a material effect can never hint, much less prove, a spiritual cause. Matter does not give the idea of spirit; it cannot give an idea which is not in it. We may bring the idea of spirit to material Nature, indeed, we do bring it daily; but we do not derive it from Nature. Matter cannot give out that which is not in.

2. Whence then came it? We are conscious of something within us called mind. We are told it is a substance essentially different from matter; but this is the language of modern philosophy, which has borrowed more than it is willing to acknowledge from Christianity. And it is not the unanimous language of modern philosophy even. The most influential school at the present day emphatically denies that mind is in essence different from matter, what we call mind being only the natural result of the happy organisation of matter. What is this thinking, meditating element within me? Ancient philosophy is lost in a hopeless labyrinth. A philosopher here and there seemed to cherish high, noble views of the soul, its nature and destiny; but they did not represent the masses. Neither did they reflect the prevalent tone of mind among the educated classes.

Take by far the best of the ancient schools of philosophy—the Stoics. These men had culled all the choicest truths from all preceding systems and religions, and incorporated them into a new system.

Their teaching and fair and their idea of No; they could to anything the univers could not a to space. The infinite Being recognised them, What which spread heavens." C stance. He Person.

3. Let us the Hebrew Old Testament higher than as the heaven earth. But is in a book in the Book the ideas in carnal. In continual progress which is in Babylonish an effectual images. This since.

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Their teaching was a summary of all that was good and fair and true in the heathen world. What was their idea of the Supreme Being? Was He infinite? No; they could not attach the idea of the infinite to anything save to the vacuum which encompasses the universe. Was He incorporeal? No; they could not attribute incorporeity to anything save to space. They conceived infinite Nothing, but not infinite Being. Between God and matter they recognised no radical, essential distinction. Ask them, What is God? and they answer, "The ether which spreads itself over the exterior surface of the heavens." God was an ethereal, not a spiritual, substance. He was refined matter, not a Spirit, not a Person.

3. Let us now turn from heathen philosophy to the Hebrew Scriptures. Doubtless we find in the Old Testament very spiritual views of God, as much higher than the vague conjectures of heathenism as the heavens are above the tallest mountains of earth. But there is a vast difference between what is in a book and what is in the mind. The ideas in the Book of the Jew were pure and spiritual; the ideas in the mind of the Jew were low and carnal. In proof of this I need only adduce the continual proneness of the Jewish nation to idolatry, which is materialism of the grossest kind. The Babylonish captivity, however, appears to have been an effectual antidote against the worship of graven images. The hand of a Jew never hewed an image since.

Well then, did they rise to nobler, worthier views

of God? Let us see. In the former part of their history, they continually ignored the law; in the latter, they worshipped it. They worshipped the *law*, not God. In the first period, from their deliverance out of Egypt down to the Babylonish captivity, they made gods of wood and stone; in the second, from the Babylonish captivity down to the advent of Christ, they made gods of letters. Instead of bowing to idols, they bowed to the alphabet, thus exchanging the worship of idols for the worship of words. The name Jehovah superseded the Being Jehovah,—they bowed at the name, they sneered at the Being. The letters which spelt the name were more sacred in their eyes and received from them devouter homage than the Being whom the name denoted. And the worship of letters is always material; and this is the worship of England and the countries of modern civilisation generally threaten to fall into. There is no imminent danger that Englishmen will carve idols and bow the knee in adoration before blocks of wood and stone. But there is a strong probability that they will fall down and worship "letters;" and it should never be forgotten that letter-worship is as idolatrous in its nature and as pernicious to true religion as image-worship. Practically it signifies but little which a nation worships, Milcom, the god of the children of Ammon, or the letter Aleph. Religiously it makes but little odds which a community adores, Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Sidonians, or the letter Beth. The Jews at the commencement of their career worshipped wood and stone; at the close they

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worshipped the alphabet. In either case they fell infinitely short of spiritual worship.

Low, gross, degrading, carnal views of God were everywhere prevalent. Every spirit had vanished beyond the ken of mortal men. In heathendom, as we have seen, the grossest idolatry was rampant. In Judæa, among the Pharisees, formalism was dominant; among the Sadducees, the aristocratic classes of society, the rankest infidelity was rife. Everywhere the spirituality of God was forgotten or denied.

4. At this crisis Jesus Christ makes His appearance on the arena of history, and proclaims, with an emphasis and a fulness of meaning before unknown, the sublime truth—"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." This declaration overwhelms us with its simplicity, purity, and grandeur. "Where," says Dr. Adam Clarke, and surely he knew something about this subject, "except here, is this saying, or one substantially the same, God is a Spirit? It is not in the law, it is not in the prophets, it is not in the Jewish commentators, and it has no parallel among the wise men of Greece and Rome. It is a declaration of God that was never made before, and contains an application or practical use of that declaration which till now was not fully understood, either by Jew or Gentile." "Not fully understood," said the learned doctor, the extent of whose erudition astonishes all his readers, and that is what I have been trying to inculcate in this discourse. Doubtless others groped after this truth,



dimly expressed it, for how could they be men with immortal spirits in their breasts, and not do so? But they never grasped it, never gave it full and adequate utterance. They had occasional glimpses of it, but they never caught it; never mastered it, and consequently never harnessed it to any system of worship. Jesus Christ was the first to focus the ancient thinkings—for thoughts there were none—of men on the subject. "God is a Spirit"—the greatest spirit, the most spiritual spirit. As there are degrees in the density of matter, so probably there are degrees in the rarity of spirits. "No man hath seen God at any time;" literally, "no one," nor man nor angel. Angels doubtless see each other, else fellowship between them were impossible; but they cannot see God, His essence being too delicate. "The King eternal, immortal, invisible," where the Apostle makes invisibility as much an incommunicable attribute of God as His eternity and immortality. "God is a Spirit:" on our peril therefore we teach that He is confined to any material temple. "God is a Spirit:" on our peril therefore we say that He is represented to either the eye of the body or the eye of the mind in a baked wafer. More: as the Israelites were prohibited to make a graven image of Him, so are we forbidden to form even a mental image of Him. God is not to be worshipped through any images, whether material or mental, but in the unpictured spirituality of His uncreated essence.

### III. Jesus

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## III. Jesus Christ declared the GOODNESS of God.

I. The prominent feature in the God of Nature is power, not goodness, not love. The creation discourses to me in language eloquent and grand of the power of the Highest; but the idea of bare power, without some further knowledge of its character, would create dismay rather than trust. Suppose a man-of-war were to visit a barbarous isle; the inhabitants see the stately ship moving onwards in superb majesty, and sending forth dense columns of smoke and steam. They are at once vividly impressed with its enormous power; but the idea of its power, without some further knowledge of the character and intentions of the hands on board, strikes wild terror into their hearts. What if the strangers come to kidnap our children, to plunder our homes, to burn our villages! The idea of power, without some further knowledge of its character, is very discomfoting. In like manner the power of God is seen in the moaning surge of the ocean, in the sturdy pride of the oak, in the enduring firmness of the mountain. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His *eternal power* and Godhead." In Nature His power is more readily seen than anything else. But the conception of an Eternal Power, without some further knowledge of His character, produces alarming apprehensions rather than delightful anticipations. True, God is mighty; but I have insulted His might, offered indignity to His name, and "defied the Omnipotent to arms." What

if this irresistible Power be wielded to crush me, sinful, rebellious creature! Who will tell me how this Power feels towards me? Does His heart throb with anger or with pity? Who can tell me? Nature? No; Nature cannot. Every chapter and verse in the volume of Nature were written before I sinned. The beauty of landscapes, the perfume of flowers, the breath of winds, the melodies of birds may convey to me a message of "sweetness and light" from the great God; but I cannot be sure, for the order of Nature had been established before I sinned. Has not sin converted His goodness to wrath, His smiles to vengeance? Nature is mute.

2. The main excellence of the God of Nature, as we have seen, is power; but the main excellence of the God of philosophy is wisdom. Philosophy is a loving search after wisdom. "The Jew requires a sign; the Greek seeks after wisdom." The manifest tendency of philosophy is to exalt mind, and to make all the Divine attributes subservient to mind. If it contemplate man, it at once takes the measure of his mind, and estimates him accordingly; or with Paley it seeks in his frame for evidences of design, and thence arrives at an all-wise Designer. If it turn its eye upon the material creation, it diligently and patiently looks for indications of wisdom in the skilful adaptation of means to ends, and thence arrives at "God, the only wise." No doubt, philosophy does good service, and cannot be ignored without injury to all; but it is universally felt that the argument from design is very inadequate, it is

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so cold, minute, and ingenious. It makes no appeal to the great heart of humanity, tells nothing of God's relation to me as a transgressor of His law. Nature preaches a God of infinite power; philosophy teaches a God of infinite wisdom; neither of them can declare to the world His character. Is there no one who can enlighten us respecting His heart? The text answers, "The only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

3. What then has He declared? "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is presented to our view a new aspect to the Being of God. Man never fabricated a God of love. The gods of man's devising were vengeful, cruel, capricious. But the God declared by Jesus Christ is a God of love. In the light of this revelation the Apostle John ventures the assertion that God and Love are identical. "God is love." Not only He loves, but He is love. By saying that He loves, we only say what may be also affirmed of the creature—man loves, the angel loves. But when we say, "He is love," we ascribe to Him a perfection to which no creature can lay claim. Satan once loved with all the ardour of a seraph; but he ceased to love; yet in ceasing to love, he did not cease to be. But it were as easy for God to cease to be as to cease to love. "He is love." The archangel before the throne loves; but the archangel of to-day might be the archdevil of to-morrow; yet in ceasing to love, he would not cease



to be. In God, however, His love and His essence are so interwoven that the cessation of the one were the destruction of the other. Take love out of man, and a sinner remains; extract love out of an angel, and a devil is left; cancel love out of God and—nothing remains. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." Being always in His bosom, the Lord Jesus knows perfectly the contents of God's Heart; and in His life, death, and ministry that Heart is unfolded to the world. O sacred Heart! O loving Heart! We fall down and worship thee!

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VI.

The Lamb of God.

"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."—ST. JOHN I. 29.

THE Jewish Sanhedrim sent a special deputation to John the Baptist to ask him, "Who art thou?" "And he confessed and denied not, but confessed, I am not the Christ." The peculiar form of the words denotes eagerness on his part to undeceive them, if they thought for a moment that he was the Messiah. Many probably would secretly rejoice to be mistaken for the Christ, for someone greater than themselves, and return evasive answers, letting the deputation draw what conclusion they might. John, however, nervously shrank from the possibility of a mistake. He was categorically questioned, and he categorically answered; he was neither the Christ nor Elias nor "the Prophet," whoever this last might signify. Thereupon the deputation returned to Jerusalem, duly reported their mission, and then the subject was quietly dropped.

The "next day"—the next day after the interview between him and the Jewish embassy—"John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

world." This word "seeth" is a strong word, meaning to look intently, to gaze earnestly, to pierce. Seeing Jesus approaching him, John fixed a long penetrating gaze upon Him—sought, as it were, to read His inner life and soul; and as the result of this prolonged, thoughtful, meditative look, he said with decision and emphasis, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The speech is the combined result of inspiration and of deep, searching thought.

In this pregnant saying of the Baptist we find the sum and substance of the Old Testament. Prophecy—what was it? The eye of sanctified humanity all aflame, looking into the future and seeing the Lamb coming. The complicated system of sacrifice—what was it? The outstretched finger of holy humanity pointing to the future and indicating the Lamb which was coming. In a word, the ministry of the Old Testament was but the means God ordained to fix the gaze of the world on the Lamb which was coming to take away the sin of the world. And the ministry of the New Testament is only the same means, appointed by the same God, to turn back the eyes of the world and fix them on the same Lamb. Our duty, as ministers of the New Testament, is to say with John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God." Some, it is to be feared, say—"Behold us, observe our learning and eloquence;" but our duty is to say, not "Behold us," but "Behold the Lamb." "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." As an old Welsh preacher used to say—"Hebrew, Greek, and

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Latin are all very useful in their place; but their place is not where Pilate put them—over the Saviour's head, but rather at His feet."

Having premised so much, allow me now to direct your attention, if you please, to the main theme of the present discourse, namely, *The excellency of the Christian atonement*. Not its nature or necessity, but its super-excellency. The text shows that it excels in three things. It excels in many other things according to other texts, but it excels in three things according to this text:—

I. It excels in the NATURE of the victim. Whereas the sacrifices of Judaism were irrational lambs, the sacrifice of Christianity is the Lamb of God.

II. It excels in the EFFICACY of the work. Whereas the sacrifices of Judaism only brought sin to remembrance every year, the sacrifice of Christianity took sin away. "He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

III. It excels in the SCOPE of its operation. Whereas the Jewish sacrifices were intended for the benefit of one nation only, the sacrifice of Christianity is intended for all nations; "it takes away the sin of the world."

I. It excels in the NATURE of the victim. Whereas the sacrifices of Judaism were irrational lambs, the sacrifice of Christianity is the Lamb of God. "Behold the Lamb of God."

i. The words indicate the *faultlessness* or *sinlessness* of the Saviour. "Who made no sin, neither



was guile found in His mouth." According to Judaism the lamb of sacrifice must be a year old and without blemish, every joint in its place and every limb perfect. A lamb might be without blemish the first month after its birth, but its health might be impaired or its leg broken before the end of the twelve months. According to Judaism the lamb must go without injury through the four seasons, spring and summer, autumn and winter, and thus prove to all that it was healthy and sound. A year old and without blemish: that was the law. Thus Jesus Christ offered Himself not in infancy or boyhood, but in the prime of His strength and the flower of His days. He went through the four seasons—the spring and summer, the autumn and winter, of existence, without receiving and without inflicting injury. He died at the age of thirty-three, the average age of a generation; a very significant fact in His history. He offered Himself as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." Without blemish in the inward life, without spot in the outward character; perfect within and without. "Without blemish," *αμομος*, from Momus, the god of criticism. Criticise the Saviour, scrutinise His every thought, word, and deed, test Him in every imaginable way, subject Him to the severest examination and the most rigorous cross-examination—what then? "Without spot or wrinkle or any such thing." "He offered Himself without spot unto God." Many are without spot unto men, in the estimation of their fellows; but they are profoundly conscious that they are full of spots unto

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God, in the sight of omniscience. Jesus Christ, however, offered himself without spot unto God. He ran through the thirty-three years' course allotted Him in the world, and presented Himself before God at its close without a speck on His robes. In His intercessory prayer, as recorded in John xvii., just when and where the holiest saints most loudly bewail their sins, He stands in His stainless integrity, has not a single imperfection to confess and lament. "The prince of this world cometh, but he hath nothing in me." The devil has something in the best of us; he has all in some of us; but he had nothing in Christ. No wonder, therefore, that "the heavens were opened unto Him, and a voice from heaven came, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The heavens opened before and after, but each time they opened for the inhabitants of earth to look up. "The heavens were opened," says Ezekiel, "and I saw visions of God." "Behold, I see the heavens opened," cried Stephen under the shower of stones, "and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." But on the banks of the Jordan we see an exception—the heavens opened there, not from the earth upward, but from the sky downward; not for the inhabitants of the earth to look up, but for the inhabitants of heaven to look down and see a wonder—a perfect man for the first time in the history of the race. "The heavens were opened unto Him," that is to say, towards Him, in His direction, "and a voice said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

2. The words further denote His Divine *appointment*. "The Lamb of God," the Lamb appointed, set apart by God for sacrificial purposes. According to Judaism, the lamb of sacrifice was separated from the flock days before it was slain. And Jesus Christ was set apart by God, marked out for sacred services, centuries before He was crucified. "The Lamb slain *from the foundation of the world*"—a very wonderful verse, teaching us that a Lamb slain is the central idea of the creation, that in the light of this idea the universe was planned at the beginning. According to it, the principle of sacrifice underlies and upholds the whole system of things, the Cross is the key to the enigma of the worlds. A deistical writer of the eighteenth century published a book under the title of "Christianity as old as Creation." Quite true, but in a sense he never imagined. The Gospel is at bottom in strictest unison with Nature; nay, it alone furnishes the deepest and truest interpretation of Nature. A Lamb slain lies at the heart of the universe, the Cross forms the axle of the planets. The idea of sacrifice, as revealed in the Scriptures, is the "scarlet thread" that stretches from eternity to eternity; the cable which lies at the bottom of the sea of being, along which the Divine thoughts run and flash; the principle which connects all the ages of the world, and binds them together in one. God sprinkled the door-posts of the creation and the lintels thereof with blood when He framed them at the beginning. "In Him all things consist," stand together; not in Him simply

as a Divine Saviour.

Not only created by the Divine nature, but in the deepest part of our being, without blemish or stain, ordained from the foundation of the world, among the things to which the apostle refers, the Son, and I with the Father, a priest and the central fact of the fundamental principle of mankind before the Godhead, the Godhead was, for the first time, before in this principle of God, which is the same relation of Essence.



as a Divine Person, but as an incarnate dying Saviour.

Not only the "Lamb slain" is the centre of created nature, but He is also the centre of the Divine nature. Sacrifice seems to be the first, deepest principle of God Himself. "A Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was fore-ordained *before the foundation of the world*"—a more wonderful verse still. The other was *from* the foundation, this is *before* the foundation. What ordination is among men you know, what it is among the particular section of the Christian Church to which we belong, you know. Well, intimates the apostle, God held an ordination service in eternity when only Three were present—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the Father anointed the Son with the consecrating oil of the Holy Ghost to be a priest and a sacrifice. The Lamb slain is the central fact, the principle of sacrifice is the fundamental principle, of the Divine nature. When mankind beheld the Lamb of Sacrifice coming *out* of the Godhead in the fulness of time, then mankind understood that the Lamb of Sacrifice was *in* the Godhead from everlasting, before ever the earth was, for nothing could come out which was not before in. The Gospel, therefore, does not create this principle, it only reveals it. "The church of God, which He (God) purchased with His own blood." Not His blood, but His own blood—the same phraseology precisely that describes the relation of the Son to the Father in the Eternal Essence. "His own Son"—the necessary Son of



His nature, the Son, not by sovereign will, but by necessary generation. So here: "His own blood," the blood that was necessary to, part and parcel of, the Divine nature. Not, of course, the material fluid, but the all-important truth which the blood sets forth,—that sacrifice is an eternal, inseparable principle of the Godhead. "His own blood," or, according to the Welsh, which better reproduces the force of the original, "His proper blood." Proper, property, signifying that blood is as much a property or attribute of God as His eternal power or wisdom. The principle of sacrifice is thus the central fact, and blood the first deepest attribute of the Godhead.

3. The words also imply that Jesus Christ was possessor of the *Divine nature*. "The Lamb of God," the Lamb which is a partaker of the nature of God,—God being in the centre of His heart a lamb. According to Judaism, the Lamb of sacrifice was to be brought up on the farm of the man who sacrificed. The exceptions of necessity were numerous, and the corruptions more numerous still; nevertheless that was the guiding principle of the law. The reason is evident—the Lamb of sacrifice must cost some thought and pains to the sacrificer, and consequently be a lamb between which and himself existed a tie of affection—you always love the lamb you have nourished. And Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God, a Lamb which God reared upon His own farm. "Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him." According to the Chaldaic paraphrase, "I was nursed at His side." The

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words in the original, it is said, contain an indisputable reference to a caded lamb, a lamb brought up and nourished by hand, and fondled by its owner. Jesus Christ was His Father's pet lamb from eternity.

But the context teaches not only that He was of God, but that He Himself was God. This it was which imparted expiatory value to His sufferings. "The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin." But here is a Lamb, and there is virtue enough in His blood to take away sin. Thousands of the lambs of Judaism could not expiate the sins of one man; but here is one Lamb, which has virtue enough in His blood to expiate the sins of thousands of men. But how can one atone for thousands? asked the North American Indians of the missionary Brainerd. The missionary solved their difficulty by showing that one sovereign is worth two hundred and forty pence—one gold coin being equal in value to many copper ones, the difference in the metal making a difference in the value. Similarly the sufferings of one God-man are a sufficient propitiation for the sins of millions of mere men, the difference in the rank constituting a difference in the worth. Jesus Christ was a partaker of the Divine nature, and this it was which contributed expiatory efficacy to His passion and death.

II. It excels in the EFFICACY of the work. The sacrifices of Judaism only brought sin to remembrance every year, but the sacrifice of Christianity took sin away. "Behold the Lamb of God which

taketh away the sin of the world." On the margin the verb "taketh away" is rendered "beareth." The original, no doubt, includes the two renderings, but "bearing" first, "taking away" next.

1. Look then at Jesus Christ *bearing* the sin of the world. But to bear it He must uplift it, to carry it He must go under it. So also we read, "Jesus was made a surety of a better covenant." The word "surety" here means literally a "striker of hands." You know that when a bargain is concluded between a seller and a buyer, the latter strikes his hand in the hand of the former. Hence the phrase, "the bargain is struck." A very old custom this. If you lived in Jerusalem on a fair day in the reign of Solomon, you would have witnessed the same custom. "Be not thou one of them that strike hands, of them that are sureties for debts," Prov. xxii. 26. That was the old way of contracting a debt—striking hands; and forms the basis of the comparison made use of by the apostle to set forth the mysterious transaction between Father and Son in the "counsel of peace" that was between them both. They came to a full mutual understanding in respect of the inhabitants of the earth—the Son struck His hand in the hand of the Father, He became the hand-striker or surety of the New Testament. He became responsible for the debt before humanity sank into debt.

Hence in the Old Testament to forgive means literally to bear or carry. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for

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thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin,"—literally "bearing iniquity, transgression, and sin." "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?"—literally, "that beareth iniquity." Other gods were sometimes pardoning iniquity, the God of the Bible alone was bearing it, carrying it on His own shoulders. Under the Old Testament He was carrying it in respect of covenant; under the New through incarnation and imputation. Behold Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, treading the earth, and bending and staggering under the load of your sins. "He upholds the worlds by the word of His power." The other day on one of the London streets I saw a contrivance to judge a man's strength by the power of his breath—you breathe into the machine, and by the weight you lift will be accurately estimated the power of your lungs. And Jesus Christ keeps the stars floating by the power of His breath just as children keep bubbles on a summer eve; He breathes and the planets swim as feathers in a breeze; but He who upholds the stars with His word, who bears with ease the burden of ten thousand worlds, bends and staggers under the weight of your sins. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all;" on the margin, "The Lord hath made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him." Sin came from all directions; a multitude of sins from our own neighbourhood went that day on a pilgrimage to Mount Calvary; iniquity poured in from all quarters, and fell in terrible cataracts on the devoted head of the patient victim. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for



our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

2. Observe also that He bore sin *away*. "Behold the Lamb of God which beareth away the sin of the world." The high priest laid his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, to which, the commentators say, reference is made in the text, "and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and sent him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness," whatever such words mean. But they signify thus much at all events, that Jesus Christ, the great antitype, would carry away sin wholly and entirely. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." I prefer the Welsh translation here, it better expresses the precise shade of meaning in the original; "Christ hath *wholly* purchased us from the curse of the law." Not half purchased, but wholly purchased. The comparison is this: a man goes to the market to buy, he has not sufficient money to pay down, but he gives ten pounds deposit, promising to pay the balance at a future date. Is that the way Christ did, pay part and promise the remainder? No; answers the apostle, He wholly purchased us, He paid all down in one infinite payment. "In the fulness of time God sent His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that He might *redeem* them that were under the law," the same word still, which the apostle uses only twice in connection with Christ, and that only in the

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Epistle to the Galatians. The Galatians imagined that Christ only half purchased them, and that they had to purchase the rest by their submission to circumcision and other Jewish rites and ceremonies; hence their readiness to be led away by false teachers, and to mix up Christianity and Judaism. No, foolish Galatians, answers the apostle, not so; Jesus Christ finished the work, purchased you out and out; you have nothing to do but to go free. "He wholly purchased you from the curse of the law."

But how to wholly purchase? Only by fully paying. "He was made a curse for us." "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "He spared not," the same phraseology that is used to set forth the punishment inflicted on the angels that kept not their first estate. "He spared not the angels which sinned." Oh mystery of godliness! The same language describes the sufferings of the Son that is used to set forth the damnation of devils! "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." "The cup, which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" A wonderful Cup this! We meet with it again and again on the pages of Holy Writ. "The cup of His fury." "There is a cup in the hand of the Lord, and the wine in it is red, well mixed." Come over to the pages of the New Testament, and you will again meet with this cup. "Can ye drink of the cup that I am to drink of?" "The cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" He takes the cup from the hand of His

Father, raises it to His lips, and, because of the exceeding bitterness, He sweats drops of blood, and cries in agony of soul, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But it is not possible; He again raises it to His lips, drains it to its very dregs, and hurls it an empty cup on the rocks of Golgotha. But that event changed the history of the cup ever since. The next time we meet with it on the pages of the New Testament, it has received a new name. "The Cup of Blessing, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" The cup of the Old Testament was the cup of cursing, the cup of the New Testament is the cup of blessing. The Lord Jesus drank the cup of cursing to the very bottom; and having emptied it of all the curses, He filled it to the brim with the choicest blessings of His right hand, and now He extends it to us, saying, "Drink ye all of it."

3. Jesus Christ bore away the sin of the world *once* for ever. As already intimated, the sacrifices of Judaism required to be constantly repeated; but in Christianity the one priest through the one sacrifice cancelled sin for ever. "But now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." In the Epistle to the Hebrews the author continually reverts to the *one* offering *once* offered. The saints of the Old Testament obtained forgiveness of sins, not, however, in virtue of the sacrifices of Judaism, but in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to

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declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." "For the law was given by Moses," the means to discover sin; "but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," the means to put away sin. There was grace under the Old Testament, but no grace in the Old Testament—grace *under* it, none *in* it; all the grace that has ever been in the world was in Jesus Christ.

And not only the Christian atonement throws its virtue back to the beginning of time, but continues in its efficacy, without abating one jot, to the end of time. Many of you, I know, are glad to hear this. "This man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." "By His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." In the highly imaginative language of Christmas Evans, whom English people are in the habit of naming the Wild preacher of Wild Wales, "He lifted the ten turnpike gates of Sinai off their hinges, and suspended them by the nails of His own cross, saying, 'I have no further need of the nails, I will hang you here in my stead.'" Eternal redemption. Under the Old Testament no free trade was carried on between heaven and earth, no unrestricted commerce, for the duty was so high—a lamb being taken from one farm, a bullock from another, a heifer from the third, a goat from the fourth, and fowls from the poor, to pay the imposed duty; but the sacrifice once offered on Calvary for the sin of the world has, I am glad to tell you, established Free Trade for ever.



" Nothing in my hand I bring,  
Simply to Thy cross I cling."

III. The Christian atonement excels in the AREA of its influence. Whilst the Jewish sacrifices were intended for the benefit of one nation only, the sacrifice of Christianity is intended for the benefit of all nations. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."

I. *Sin*, observe, not sins. Sin is greater than sins, sin contains sins in itself. As human nature is greater than human persons, the nature containing the persons in itself, so sin is greater than sins, the former containing the latter in itself. Sin is evil in its unity and totality, sins are evil as it breaks out in individual offences. Sin is the root, sins are the branches, and in taking away the root He was also destroying the branches. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world"—sin in its root, sin in its deepest, bitterest nature. A momentous question in the history of philosophy and theology is this—How came sin to being? What is the origin of evil? I have a book on the subject at home, and a very able book it is, entitled "The Philosophy of the Fall." The title, however, is somewhat misleading—there is no philosophy to a fall. The "philosophy of sin" is a manifest contradiction. For what is sin? "The transgression of law," of every law, of the law of God and of the law of mind; and philosophy can explain only that which is according to law, not that which is against law. Sin is essentially disorder, confusion ever worse confounded; and a philosophy of disorder

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is impracticable, because impossible. Sin is a violation of every law, of moral laws and of mental laws; it can never be harmonised with any law; hence, every attempt to account for sin on philosophical grounds has been a signal failure. The origin of evil is as much of a mystery to-day as ever it was, notwithstanding the long years of close thinking the ablest minds in Christendom have given it. But if we cannot construct a philosophy of the way of sin, inasmuch as it has no way, we may have a "philosophy of the way of salvation," for there is a way here to begin with. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." In the beginning of time we see man bringing sin into the world; in the fulness of time we behold the God-Man taking sin out of the world. Oh miracle of miracles! The Lamb of God suffering, bleeding, dying, to take away sin! *We* can commit sin, only God can abolish it. We can bring it into existence, only God can remove it from existence. We can bring it into the world in a moment of rashness, only God in our nature can take it out of the world, and He only by sweat and blood. Think not, oh men, that sin is a trifle; remember that once it exists, it requires the blood of the God-Man to wipe it out.

2. Notice, also, that it is the sin of the *world*. As already stated, the Jewish sacrifices were intended only for one nation, but the sacrifice of Christianity expiates the sin of the entire race in all ages and in all countries. When the Great Western Railway was first made in South Wales, it was constructed

on the broad-gauge principle; but the directors years afterwards judged it expedient to convert it from the broad gauge into the narrow gauge. In the history of the way of salvation, however, the contrary process was observed,—the narrow gauge under the Old Testament, and the broad gauge under the New. “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.” The doctrine of the atonement is not a table of weights and measures—so much blood for so much sin; but all the blood is for every sin.

3. In conclusion, allow me to say that the sacrifice of Christ is a full atonement for *all* the sin of all the world. According to Judaism, a sacrifice was not left for all sins, such as adultery, murder, Sabbath desecration—in a word, all sins committed with a high hand. Whoever was found guilty of these was to be “cut off from among his people.” But the sacrifice of Christ covers all, not a single sin excepted. Let the great sinners, therefore, take heart—there is here warm welcome for all. “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Duncan, the king of Scotland, goes to spend a night with Lord and Lady Macbeth in their manorial castle. The king retires to bed, and falls into the arms of sleep. But Lord and Lady Macbeth do not sleep, they are full of damnable hellish thoughts. Lord Macbeth, instigated by his lady, walks softly into the king’s bedchamber, plunges the dagger into his heart’s best blood. Lady Macbeth follows, dips her hands in the red-mouthed

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gash, and besmears with it the hands and swords of the sleeping drunken guardsmen. Observe her ladyship weeks after; see her suddenly starting and rubbing her hands as if she were washing them. Listen to her soliloquising—"Yet here's the spot. Out, damned spot! out, I say! . . . Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." Listen again to her lord:

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green—one red."

And, as one has pithily said, the great problem of the ages is—How to wash white the red right hand of Lady Macbeth? How to wipe out the damned spot? Neither the perfumes of Arabia will sweeten it, nor the waters of the Atlantic will wash it. The only remedy for a guilty conscience is to be found in the sacrifice once offered on Calvary for the sins of the world. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His son, will cleanse us from all sin."



## VII

## Christian Service.

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona : thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone."—ST. JOHN i. 40-42.

FROM the twenty-ninth verse on to the end of the chapter, an account is given us of certain incidents which occurred on three days in succession. On the first of the three Jesus cometh to the Baptist, the first time probably after the baptism and the temptation. Seeing Him approach with the traces of the forty days' fasting and conflict probably visible on His countenance, the Baptist, moved by a prophetic impulse, cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" This sudden exclamation is followed by the Baptist's explanation of how he came to know Him to be the Messiah, the fore-ordained sacrifice.

"Again, the next day after, John was standing, and two of his disciples ; and looking at Jesus walking, he says, Behold the Lamb of God." The two disciples, who heard him speak, at once divined

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his meaning, and therefore left him and followed Jesus. "They followed Him," for Jesus, it appears, was walking away. Knowing however by a subtle delicate instinct or sympathy that they were following, He turned round and beheld them, fixed a long intent gaze upon them, and asked, "What seek ye?" "And they said, Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" "He said, Come and see. They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day; and it was about the tenth hour." Many other hours had doubtless been forgotten by the Evangelist, for he appears to be one of the two who obeyed the Baptist's intimation, but the hour when he first found Christ he could never forget. That hour was indelibly burnt into his memory; in his old age at Ephesus, as he sat to write the memoirs of the Saviour, he loved to recall the incident and note the exact time—"it was about the tenth hour."

"One of the two which heard John speak, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother," the other being evidently the narrator himself. Let us now contemplate Andrew as a worker in the service of Christ and deduce a few lessons therefrom. Three or four words in the text point out the progressive stages or steps in his work—"findeth"—"saith"—"brought." These, together with the welcome the Saviour gave to Andrew's first convert, will serve us as the landmarks of our discourse.

I. ANDREW FINDING PETER. "He first findeth his own brother Simon."

1. This implies that Andrew sought his brother *at once*, without delay or procrastination. "He first findeth his own brother Simon." This is capable of two interpretations. First, that John and Andrew, the moment they left the Saviour's society in His private lodgings, resolved to bring each his brother to Him, that they might taste of the joy which filled them with calm ineffable content. John started in one direction to seek James, and Andrew in another to seek Peter; but Andrew was the first to meet with the desired success; "Andrew first findeth his own brother Simon." The words may mean secondly that Andrew findeth his own brother first. He found others subsequently and brought them to Christ; but his first convert, so to speak, was his own brother Simon. Having found Christ himself, he lost no time in making Him known to others. Christian life always means Christian work. Earthly treasures decrease, but spiritual possessions increase, by being shared together.

2. We have no reason to believe that Andrew was specially *gifted*—he never gave evidence of great mental power; nevertheless the ability he possessed he used diligently for the Master's advantage. And, believe me, it is the duty of every Christian, whatever his talents, to do what in him lies to save the world. You perhaps expect God to save the world through the ministers of the Gospel; but that honour He will not give to ministers as an order or class—only through the Church will He save the world. "As soon as Zion travailed," then and not before, "she brought forth

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her children." Not till the Church collectively rouse herself shall we see men flocking to her as doves to their windows. As in the realm of Nature so in the kingdom of His grace, God accumulates not His gifts in one spot, but wisely distributes them over a vast surface. It is the bubbling, babbling streams, the tiny sparkling rivulets, flowing on day and night by hamlet and farmhouse, that are useful, not the swollen floods or roaring cataracts. The Niagara excites our wonder, fills us with amazement, perhaps with awe; but one Niagara is enough for a continent. That continent, however, requires tens of thousands of silver fountains and lucid brooks; and let me tell you—those clear springs and busy streams, whose names have never been registered in any geography, prove an inestimably greater blessing to America than the mighty Falls, whose fame fills the world. And God, now and again, once or twice in a century, raises a man great and gifted, a Niagara of a man, in whose presence the world trembles and admires. Yet the Church depends more for its prosperity upon the ten thousand happy souls who quietly and unobtrusively scatter blessings broadcast in every neighbourhood and throughout the length and breadth of our beloved country. Though you be but slender rills, yet let not the slender rills think they may as well cease flowing. God fructifies the world by small rivers; He saves the world by private Christians.

3. Neither was Andrew specially *commissioned* to go and convert others. Later on he received, we know, the Master's formal authorisation; but



just yet he had neither received authority from Christ nor license from men—he had nothing to prompt him but the joy and enthusiasm of his own heart. The Egyptian Memnon is represented as keeping silence all the dark hours of the night, but bursting forth into mystic strains of weirdlike music every morning just as the first rays of the sun kiss his lips. Like that idol, John and Andrew and Philip lived mute and inactive; but when the first beams of the Sun of Righteousness began to play around their hearts, they immediately began to speak, saying, "We have found the Messias." Men and women, who have experienced the Divine love sked abroad in their hearts, do not want to be formally enjoined to tell others of it; but rather, like those of whom we read in the Gospels, they must blaze it abroad, the command of Christ to tell no man notwithstanding. Bird-like thoughts stir within them and they must sing. The flowers require not to be sternly told to grow and blossom, and make themselves beautiful; let the sun but shine, and they will do it without being told out of the gladness of their own hearts. Birds need not an almanack to apprise them that the month of May, the season for open-air concerts, has arrived; they know it all without consulting the calendar. And once men have been in the presence of Christ, once they have basked in the vivifying beams of His love, they require no elaborate certificate to empower them to go and tell others of His beauties—the fire burns, and speak they must. Commission or no commission, be not ashamed to tell others

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that you have found the Saviour; license or no license, never blush to confess Christ before brother or acquaintance. Napoleon the Great's maxim commends itself to my judgment, "The tools to him that can use them;" and he only can use them who has his heart in his work. We shall be judged not by the regularity or irregularity of our orders, but by the quantity and quality of work done. If you have a desire to do good, you have a perfect right to attempt it, the desire creates the title; and the efficiency of a workman will be judged, not by his ancestry, physical or spiritual, but by the success he commands, or rather deserves. The value of a machine is not determined by the name of its inventor or patentee, but by the thoroughness with which it does its work. Had the spinning-jenny been invented by St. Peter instead of by Arkwright, it would signify nothing; the merit of the invention is tested by the cloth it turns out. Similarly with teachers: whether you are in the apostolic succession or out of it, whether you are regularly ordained or not, it matters nothing, all depends upon the spirit which inspires you. If you have the desire to lead a brother to Christ, you require no other passport; the very desire confers the right.

II. Andrew SPEAKING to Simon. "Andrew findeth his own brother Simon, and saith to him, We have found the Messiah."

I. Andrew does not preach to his brother, does not enter into an elaborate argument, he simply *talks* to him. We do not do our work, all of us

precisely in the same way. Variety is pleasing. The line of beauty is not the straight, but always the circular, line. Pictures are not produced by a multitude of stiff unbending strokes, but by the happy arrangement of a multitude of curves. Why, God has created His universe in a curve. And not only the curve is the line of beauty, it is also the line of usefulness. In order to serviceableness in the world, we must curve a great deal. But as already stated, variety prevails in the apostolic methods. In the context, Andrew tells his story in one way, Philip in another. We are not bound down to any stereotyped method, but we are all bound to do what in us lies to win men to Christ.

2. He talked *earnestly*. He goes to Simon and tells him in bated breath and with a glistening eye,—"We have found the Messiah." Andrew's excitement, no doubt, conveyed the assurance to Simon's mind that something extraordinary had happened. "We have found the Messiah"—the news is told in plain, unadorned, short sentences. You have here no fine language, no polished phrases, no balanced periods, but a few brief words coming red-hot from the heart. Intense earnestness has no leisure to indulge in the luxury of elocutionary flourishes. I am not sure but all teachers of Christianity, both private and public, air their erudition and rhetoric too much. God will not bless mere learning; what attractions can our limited acquirements have for Him who made the mind and endowed it with what faculties it possesses? God will not bless mere elocution; what

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fascination can our sonorous sentences have for Him who garnished the heavens, and the brush of whose garment leaves behind it traces of ineffable beauty? But even God is attracted and pleased by moral earnestness. Let us be sincere, ardent, in our work, and Heaven will smile on us. Richard Sheridan said he often went to hear Rowland Hill preach, because his words flowed hissing hot from his heart. Chalmers's main forte as a preacher and college professor, it is said, was his "blood-earnestness." "What we want," remarked a Chinese convert once, "is men with hot hearts to tell us of the love of Christ." Be earnest, be enthusiastic, and the fire of your own soul will kindle a flame in the souls of others.

3. His conversation was further inspired by brotherly *love*. "He found his own brother Simon"—not only his brother, but his own brother. Whatever be the exact shade of meaning, the words unquestionably indicate close warm friendship. This principle always holds good—in order to succeed in our religious work, we must impress men that we are animated by warm, unselfish, disinterested love. Human nature, like inanimate nature, only opens to the comforting rays of love, the sun of the spiritual creation. The human heart is a very delicate instrument, and requires to be handled with consummate tact and tenderness. You probably remember the scene in *Hamlet*, where in a courtier comes to the young prince with sweet honied words, with a view to worm out the secret mystery preying upon his heart. The prince takes



up a flute, and hands it to the wily courtier, saying:—

“Will you play upon this flute?”

*Courtier.* “My lord, I cannot.”

*Hamlet.* “I pray you.”

*Courtier.* “Believe me I cannot, I do beseech you. I know no touch of it, my lord.”

*Hamlet.* “’Tis very easy; . . . govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb; give it breath with your mouth; and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.”

*Courtier.* “But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.”

*Hamlet (with ire flashing in his eye and scorn quivering in his voice).* “Why, look you, now, how unworthy a thing you make of *me!* You would play upon *me!*; you would seem to know *my* stops; you would pluck out the heart of *my* mystery; you would sound *me* from my lowest note to the top of my compass. Do you think *I* am easier to be played on than a *flute?*”

The human soul requires to be played upon with rare skill and ungrudging sympathy in order to elicit the sweet strains of harmony sleeping in its delicate strings.

4. Nevertheless it is not difficult to perceive that Andrew’s announcement is marked by considerable *incompleteness*, if not imperfection. “We have found the Messiah,” said Andrew; but were he asked to explain himself, in all probability he would have been considerably embarrassed. Philip too, in the following verses, says,—“We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, *the son of*

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*Joseph.*" Philip does not seem to be well posted in his theology; his mistake would be considered exceedingly grave in a clerical examination. But, thank God, imperfect teaching is often blessed. The very fragments of divine truth quiver with the power of endless life. Speak the whole truth, if you can; if you cannot, speak the half. The planters of potatoes are never afraid of splitting them, if they can only secure an eye in each half. And in teaching or preaching, we need not fear to plant fragments of truth in the mind, provided each fragment has an eye in it, a Saviour to vitalise it. Single verses, single sentences, have carried conviction to many a heart. Speak what you know, and God will bless your imperfect efforts. The drawing-room mirror, if you stand before it, will correctly reflect your whole body; shiver it into ten thousand pieces, and each piece will give you back your face. And the Gospel is often compared to a mirror; if you cannot carry it in its completeness as set forth in our theological systems, if you cannot present it to your Sabbath-school class in its entirety, hold up the fragments to them. Wait not till you acquire proficiency in Biblical criticism, till you have purchased and perused learned commentaries. No; but begin at once, and your knowledge will surely expand. If you cannot carry in your mind the whole granary of divine truth, carry a few grains—sow them in the virgin soil of the youthful heart. Say with gladness of soul—"We have found the Messiah."

5. You will also observe that his talk is charac-

terised by much *assurance*. "We have found the Messiah;" not, I think or hope we have. He felt quite convinced — doubts cast not their baneful shadows across the joyous serenity of his mind. Religious dogmatism is much deprecated in the present day in certain quarters. You may dogmatise as much as you like against theology, but you are warned under heavy penalties not to dogmatise in its favour. The most inveterate dogmatists of this last quarter of the nineteenth century are not the theologians, but the scientists—

"Dull bigots, narrowed to a *hopeless* creed,  
And priests in all but name."

So sings one of the best poets of the age. But notwithstanding the supercilious sneers of science and of the self-styled "liberals of theology," let us have the moral courage to hold fast to the "faith once delivered to the saints." Who are the most successful preachers and evangelists just now in England and America? Why, the men who refuse to give up evangelical dogmatism, the men who of all their contemporaries accentuate most strongly the characteristic doctrines of Puritan divinity. Whereas other preachers of great genius and learning amuse or amaze, edify or entertain, their congregations, the great dogmatists save their hearers—the men who speak because they believe, and not because they doubt; the men who are fully assured that the Gospel is God's unadulterated truth. "We have found the Messiah."

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III. Andrew BRINGING Simon to Christ. "And he brought him to Jesus."

I. This suggests to us that our chief aim ought to be to lead men to Christ, not to any particular sect or denomination. Proselytisation is not conversion. The Pharisees "compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and made him twofold more the child of hell than themselves," for proselytes are always more demonstrative in the vindication of their adopted views than those brought up in them from their infancy. It is the fashion in the present day in the annual meetings of the great conferences, unions, and assemblies of the various sects, to laud and justify sectarian zeal; but I see nothing therein to boast. The divisions, suspicions, and sectarian jealousies have always distressed me. No; I perceive nothing in sectarianism as such to be proud of, but a great deal to deplore and regret. True, God overrules sectarianism to men's good and His own glory, just as out of sin He evokes good; but as the latter is no justification of evil, so the former is no vindication of denominationalism. Let Christ's name be magnified, whatever befalls our names. The views to which that good and holy man, that able and earnest preacher, however mistaken he may be in his monastic views, Father Ignatius, gave vehement utterance in the last Church Congress at Sheffield, commend themselves heartily to my judgment and conscience—"Let that Church go up which holds Christ aloft before the eyes of the people. If the Church of Rome lifts up Christ, then up with the Church of Rome. If the Salvation Army holds up

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Christ, then up with the Salvation Army." My friends, let the blood-stained banner of the Cross wave high above the little flag of the denomination. May it be our chief aim to lead people, not to the sect, but to the Saviour.

2. As churches and sects should be subordinated to Christ, so should *creeds* and theologies. We ought to labour to bring men to believe in our Saviour rather than in our system of divinity. Be it far from me to unnecessarily disparage systems and creeds; over and over again I have deemed it my duty to defend them against the superficial attacks of platform orators and newspaper writers; they embody and convey to us in the best language the best thoughts of the best thinkers of the bygone generations. But once we deem them infallible, once we look upon them as marking the finality of Christian thought, we convert them to ignoble, pernicious purposes. Creeds should be helps, not hindrances, to anxious inquirers after salvation. If creeds go between sinners and Christ, then away with the creeds. How stands it in many churches? In one church, if a man adopt not the Arminian interpretation of the Gospel, he is rejected, however serious his demeanour and pure his life. In another, if he repudiate the Calvinistic interpretation of the Gospel, he is cast away, however bright his character and indefatigable his efforts to elevate his fellow-men. Special interpretations of the Gospel, instead of the Gospel itself, are made a test of a man's faith. What is all that but putting human opinion between man and God's truth? What but placing creeds

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between the sinner and his Saviour? Andrew brought his brother to Jesus: let us imitate him—let us bring men to Christ, let them contemplate Him in the vast universality of His love, and not as that love is broken and refracted in man-constructed systems. A man may be a Christian, though an Arminian; he may be a Christian, though a Calvinist. Therefore let our churches widen their theologies that poor sinners may have free course to the presence of their Saviour. Creeds are for the benefit of sinners after, not before, finding the Saviour; for edification, not conversion; for the use of believers, not unbelievers.

3. It is just possible that it may be expedient to add that Christ should be placed even above the *Bible* itself. I put the Bible above all creeds and systems, but I put Christ above the Bible. To be saved, we must penetrate through the Scriptures to the living Christ behind and above. It is possible for men to read the Bible diligently, to ponder deeply over its truths, and yet stop with it, instead of making their way to the interior court to contemplate the Inner Radiance. This was the fatal mistake of the Scribes and Pharisees; not reluctance to go to the Bible, but unwillingness to go through it to the living God behind. They read and studied the Bible assiduously; they observed every word and reckoned every letter; they could quote it promptly and accurately. *But they stopped in the letter*—they did not go far enough. "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of Me." The Scriptures are not intended to detain us with

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themselves, but to introduce us to Jesus. As you read them, therefore, constantly seek communion with the wonderful Personage behind them, endeavour hard to catch a glimpse of His glory, and prostrate yourself humbly before His adorable majesty. Sunday-school teachers, you read the Bible weekly with your classes; but do you show them Jesus behind the verses? Do you lead the children through the Bible to the Saviour?

Men and women, speak to your neighbours about Christ. Sunday-school teachers, speak to the classes about Christ. And to myself I would say, Speak to the people about Christ. There is not a town or hamlet or house in all Great Britain, but there is a way from it to London; not a village in any county but a road leads from it to the metropolis. Similarly not a village is mentioned in the Old Testament but there is a way from it to Bethlehem and Calvary, not a subject named but it is directly or indirectly connected with Jesus. "Of Me Moses wrote." "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did speak." And if Moses and the prophets made Christ the theme of their meditations and writings, how much more ought we who enjoy all the privileges of the New Dispensation? Christ should be first and last in all our private devotions and public utterances. Down with everything which hides Him or draws the attention from Him. You have probably heard the oft-repeated story, but deserving of one more repetition—the story of the Spanish artist, who threw all the enthusiasm and inspiration of which he was capable into a picture

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of the Last Supper. He drew the face of the Christ with as much dignity and purity as his art could command; and on a table in the foreground he put the sacramental cups, the tracings upon which were exceedingly beautiful. His friends, coming one day to view the picture, instinctively exclaimed, "What beautiful cups!" "Ah," sighed he sadly, "I see I have made a grievous mistake,—the cups divert attention from my Lord;" and thereupon he took up his brush and swept them all off the canvas. Well done, holy, pure-minded painter! "Thou shalt not lose thy reward." What a much-needed lesson it conveys to all professional teachers of Christianity. Down with ideas if they becloud the Saviour. Down with rhetorical embellishments if they draw attention from Him. Down with all flowers of speech if they hide Him.

IV. Our treatment of this text, however, would be manifestly incomplete did we not dwell in conclusion on the RECEPTION the Saviour accorded Simon on his first introduction to Him. "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas."

1. Jesus *beheld* him, looked intently at him, took stock of his endowments mental and spiritual, formed a correct estimate of his character and disposition. This word is the one generally joined to the Saviour, a word signifying to look with the eyes of the mind quite as much as with the eyes of the body. Jesus looked at the new convert, saw into him and through him, read his inner character with the same un-



failing accuracy that Adam read the inner nature of the animals brought to him to name. Perfect human nature, exempt from the obliquity of mental and moral vision produced by sin, possesses a marvellous insight into character; hence the pre-eminence of woman as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. In the following paragraph Jesus makes known the guilelessness of Nathanael, and couples with it a very significant promise,—“Thou shalt see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man.” This promise is not an arbitrary one—heaven is always open to guileless natures. Heaven and earth always open their portals to clear white hearts—angels are always visible to children. No passage is truer to nature in that deservedly popular little book, “Helen’s Babies,” than that in which one of the children is made to declare that he saw angels in the clouds, a declaration immediately confirmed by the Irish coachman.

2. He immediately perceived what *possibilities* of good lay in him. He doubtless saw the possibilities of evil that lay in him likewise, the dark abysses of potential sin; but the Saviour estimates character, not by the actual evil, but by the possible good. Man’s real worth must not be judged by the amount of dross in him, but by the amount of gold; not by the quantity of chaff, but by the quantity of grain. God sees and singles out every grain of virtue that may lie hid in your deepest nature. He saw that there was “little good in Abijah towards the Lord God of Israel.” Amid all the vile corruption of the

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home, the court, and the nation, the Omniscient Eye at once fixed on the little good in the little heart of the little child. "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona, thou shalt be called Cephas, which is, by interpretation, a stone." Simon, son of Jona, Simon, son of a dove: does this hint that in his natural state he was timid, fickle, inconstant, a man of great capacities but of no perseverance? At all events, the words teach that under the renovating, invigorating influence of the Saviour, Simon would develop into a pillar of strength in the infant church. "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be Cephas—a stone." Not at once did he develop from his inconstant, incoherent, fluid state into the firmness, constancy, and consistency of the rock; it was a process requiring time. The petrification of the earth was gradual, and the confirmation of character cannot be effected in a day. "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be a Rock." Companing from day to day with Christ, he grew firm in his convictions, steadfast in his behaviour. Friends unconsciously influence each other. If two men associate daily with each other for a space of years, the stronger character moulds and fashions the weaker into its own type. Thus Simon, living under the daily influence of Jesus, was recast, or in the expressive language of St. Paul, "created anew"—he was transformed into a new man,—Simon unfolded into Peter.

The influence a strong character exerts over a weak one is, however, not invariably salutary. Some men's presence represses energy, originality; they cast a shadow upon you, not sunshine. Con-

sequently your own mind remains weak and sickly, like flowers under the overshadowing presence of a spreading oak. Some schoolmasters paralyse effort in the children under their care, their presence depresses the vital energies. Not so Christ: His smile brought light and warmth; the moment His eye settled on a poor man, the dark roots of faith and hope at once stirred within him; His benign presence brought spring and summer to humanity. Marvellous the progress the disciples made, marvellous the improvement which took place in them during the three brief years they followed the "Teacher come from God." A new inspiration flowed from Him to them, an impulse, originating in His heart, throbbed and thrilled in theirs,—they felt in His presence they could remove mountains and cast them into the depths of the sea. The timid Simons grew into the intrepid Peters, and the Sons of Thunder into the Apostles of Love.

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## VIII

*The First Miracle.*

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory unto them."—ST. JOHN ii. 11.

MANY words are used in the New Testament to denote miracles. Sometimes they are called "wonders," because of the effect they produce on the minds of the spectators. Sometimes they are called powers, because of the evidence they bear to the presence of a supernatural agency. But St. John, who had had time calmly to contemplate them, and who had been blessed with a deeper insight than the other Evangelists into the theology underlying the transient acts, calls them here by a very different term, a term, to my mind, fraught with the deepest significance, namely, "signs." "This beginning of signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory unto them." That the translators thought fit to substitute other words for it, is much to be regretted. A miracle, in St. John's opinion, was not a mere prodigy of power, it was a sign; and we should never leave off seeking till we get at the thing signified. In his view a miracle was not a mere caprice of power, it was a sign; and we



should never feel satisfied till we get at the principle with which it is connected. A very superficial view is that which represents miracles as so many defiant violations of nature; rather should they be viewed as so many signs or illustrations, indicating to us the true course of natural phenomena.

Looking, therefore, upon this miracle as a sign, we shall proceed to consider it, first, as a sign in relation to Nature; second, as a sign in relation to Society; third, as a sign in relation to Christ.

#### I. This miracle is a sign in respect of NATURE.

1. Please to observe that it is a miracle *in itself*, independently of all surrounding circumstances. One can easily conceive that what is an everyday occurrence in one climate may be a rare wonder in another. An inhabitant of the Torrid Zone has never seen ice; to him therefore the freezing of water would be tantamount to a miracle. Or suppose a modern chemist were to live in the first century of the Christian era; by his superior knowledge he would bring about results that would fairly astonish the age. But in all such cases the miracle would depend for its miraculous character on adventitious circumstances. The freezing of water would be a miracle in the Torrid Zone, but an everyday occurrence in the Frigid. The feats of the chemist would pass for supernatural in the first century, but would be put down as strictly natural in the nineteenth. But Christ's miracles are miracles all the world over, and all the ages through. To turn water into wine, to open the eyes of the

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blind, to unstop the ears of the deaf, to raise the dead are miracles everywhere; they are miracles in Lapland and miracles in Italy, miracles in Siberia and miracles in India. They are miracles in every age; they are miracles in the first century and miracles in the tenth, miracles in the fifteenth and miracles in the nineteenth, and I will venture to add that they will be considered miracles to the end of the world. Increase of knowledge will not divest them of their supernatural character; they are miracles, not to ignorance, but to omniscience itself. It is a noteworthy fact that the miracles attributed to magicians were miracles only to ignorance—modern science can explain, or, if need be, repeat them. But the miracles of the Bible lie outside the province of science; it can neither explain nor repeat them; nothing, therefore, remains for it to do but either to deny them or confess them. The miracle in Cana was a miracle *per se*.

2. You will further notice that the miracle was not performed till *nature was quite exhausted*. "Mine hour is not yet come," said He to Mary, for the wine, was only gradually failing. When did His hour come graciously to interfere? Not till the wine had actually failed. This always characterises His interpositions. When did He come to the assistance of His tempest-tossed disciples? Not before the fourth watch, when a further delay would have engulfed them all. As long as nature or art could render any assistance, He did not interfere with their free action. He healed many sick, but none whom doctors could in any way assist. All



He cured were incurable—incurable to nature and incurable to art. The blind, the deaf, and the dumb—what could medical men do to them? Lepers and those stricken with palsy—what could physicians do to them? The possessed of devils, the dying, and the dead—what could even modern science do to them? They were all extreme cases, beyond the power of Nature to heal, beyond the skill of Art to bless. This, says St. John, is a sign: a sign of what? That you also may calculate upon His presence in extremity. He may conceal Himself as long as your earthly wine lasts, but let the moment arrive when Nature can do no more, and He is sure to arrive with it. He does not arrive before His time, for such a premature interference would be an encumbrance rather than a blessing. But He is never a moment behind time, for at the critical tick of the clock, when a further delay would ensure confusion, the reserves come up "in time of need." "Mine hour is not yet come." The two disciples on their way to Emmaus talked sorrowfully and looked sad; they detailed to the supposed stranger the grievous events of the Crucifixion, "and besides all this, this is the third day since these things were done." The third day was a great day in His ministry; He promised to rise the third day; but the third day is come and He is not come, the third day has arrived and the promise remains unfulfilled. See their unbelief: the third day was come, but it was not gone; they ought to have hoped till it was gone at any rate; and even whilst they were rehearsing dolefully the sad events, the promise had already been gloriously fulfilled. Thus

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it is with many of us. "The third day is come, but He is not come; the day of trial has arrived, but He has not arrived; we will worry and vex." No, the day is come, but it is not gone; rest assured that in the fourth watch He will appear for your rescue; when your earthly wine is all gone, He will come to your relief. Continue to trust in His succour.

3. It is a miracle which in its *results is repeated every year*. As already hinted, miracles are not violations of Nature; they are rather a kind of explanatory notes revealing to us the secret processes of material phenomena. They are signs, says St. John, showing us *the Power* that is everywhere and always at work. He calmed the storm once, He calms the storm still. He healed the sick once, He heals the sick still. He turned water into wine once, He turns water into wine still. The water comes down from the clouds, is imbibed by the roots of the vine, is sent up into the branches in sap, and in the clusters is converted into wine. To do it in an instant of time, as was the case in Cana, may appear more wonderful to us, but it adds nothing to the real wonder. The wonder is, not that water should turn into wine in a twelvemonth, but that it should turn into wine at all. The technical miracle consisted in the manner of doing, and not in the thing done. But any manner that can bring about such a marvellous change, must be wonderful indeed—Nature itself is a standing miracle.

Many cry out in every age, "What signs showest thou unto us that we may believe in thee?" Their whole nature runs out after miracles. For my part, I want no miracles—I see miracles enough every



day. I read in the Bible that Aaron's rod "was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms," and I am astonished. But last spring I saw a cause of greater astonishment; I saw thousands of bare rods budding buds and blooming blossoms in the hedges in my neighbourhood; I saw no one do it, and the police saw no one do it, and yet the trees were being daily clothed with thicker foliage. Was not that wonderful? I read in the Bible that the manna, the bread of the children of Israel, was coming down daily from heaven to the wilderness, and I am amazed. But I see a cause of greater amazement every year: I see your bread coming, not down from heaven, but up from the earth, a much more unlikely place, every day in the spring. Is not that wonderful? I read in the Scriptures that Elijah, hiding by the brook Cherith, was daily fed with abundance of bread and meat by two carnivorous ravens, and I am filled with wonder. But there is a cause of much greater wonderment in the fact that the millions of London, and the millions of Britain, and the millions of the earth, are daily fed with abundance of bread and meat, without a single raven under God's sun to cater for them. I read in the New Testament that Jesus Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes, and fed the great multitude, and that the fragments that remained filled twelve baskets full—there was more at the end of the meal than at the beginning. But this year I witnessed a greater miracle: I saw the barley and the wheat increasing, "some on its thirty, and some on its sixty, and some on its hundred fold;"

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and the loaves and the fishes, notwithstanding the enormous consumption, are more numerous to-day than they have ever been before: is not that wonderful? Nature is a standing miracle. You have heard of Luther's two miracles. "I have recently witnessed two miracles," wrote he to Chancellor Bench, at a critical moment in the history of the Reformation. "This is the first: as I was standing at my window I saw the stars and the sky, and that vast and glorious firmament in which the Lord has placed them. I could nowhere discover the columns on which the Master has supported His immense vault, and yet the heavens did not fall. And here is the second: I beheld thick clouds hanging above us like a vast sea. I could neither perceive the ground on which they reposed, nor the cords by which they were suspended; and yet they did not fall upon us, but saluted us rapidly and fled away." The Lord Jesus turned water into wine in Cana, to teach us that processes equally marvellous go on around us every year, that Nature itself is a standing miracle.

## II. This miracle is a sign in respect of SOCIETY.

I. It was performed in a *marriage*. The question, no doubt, presented itself to the disciples, What attitude will our new Master assume towards society? John the Baptist was an ascetic; will Christ be one? Another supposition was very reasonable. The Messiah had been portrayed by the prophets as a king and a conqueror; the Jewish nation associated thoughts of royalty with His coming; will He,



then, claim the throne, wear the crown, sway the sceptre, and restore again the kingdom to Israel? This latter supposition was the dominant one in the minds of His followers. On the third day came a sign which showed how far either of these expectations corresponded to the truth. He was not an ascetic, for He went into a wedding. He was not a dignitary, for it was the wedding of ordinary people in very straitened circumstances. Instead of asserting the dignity of His descent and keeping aloof from the people, He claimed to belong to them, and entered sympathetically into their fellowship. About eight weeks ago the heavens opened over Him, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him like a dove, and a mysterious voice from the deep of the blue declared Him to be the well-beloved Son of God. For the six weeks following He was in the wilderness doing battle with devils and wrestling with God in prayer; the very week after he attends a rustic wedding near His home, where there is feasting and merriment, but no pomp. Is there any incongruity in the story? Nay; but the greatest unity. The resplendent sun shining in the sky and the grain of sand dancing in its beam are rounded by the same law and polished by the same Hand. And the Divine Spirit that threw a halo on the baptism, that led Christ to the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, did not disdain to accompany Him to the marriage of His friends. Life has immense powers of adaptation; it is death that is formal, frigid, unbending. Artificial flowers are always the same,

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the same summer and winter, day and night; but living flowers vary in size and hue; they expand and contract, they open and shut, they adapt themselves to the climate and soil in which they are placed. So does every life; so did the Eternal Life incarnate. On the banks of the Jordan He is the Son of God; in the wilderness the conqueror of devils; in Cana of Galilee a genial guest in a homely wedding. But you nowhere read of His being at a funeral. Why? Because marriage belongs to the primeval order of creation, but funerals do not. Marriage is a part of the original programme of the universe, but death is an intrusion. He, therefore, went to a marriage to vindicate the Divine order; He did not attend funerals because they are incursions upon that order. He was the Everlasting Life, and consequently could not join in the procession of death. Indeed, each time He met death in His sojourn through the world, He could not but grapple with him and compel him to give up his prey.

2. The miracle proper, moreover, was performed in the *feast* which followed. It was not during the religious or civil ceremony, but, as the Prayer-book has it, in the marriage feast. Strange that the Saviour's first miracle should be performed in a company which had met for the special purpose of rejoicing! And yet, it was not strange. It was consonant with His deepest character. He is always and everywhere the antagonist of suffering. One aim of the Gospel is to dispel grief and encourage joy. The Saviour is the source of joy; the Bible



is the book of joy; heaven is the home of joy. "Rejoice evermore." But men continually run to extremes; they swing to asceticism on the one hand or indulgence on the other; Christ walked between. The Puritans were strong, valiant, robust Christians, but very joyless withal; they had taken heartily to the holiness of the Bible, but had left the beauty of holiness behind. We run to the other extreme; we are a gay, profligate, piping generation, taking cordially enough to the beauty of religion, but leaving its holiness behind. Let us look at this miracle as a sign, and learn the thing signified. There are seasons when it bessems us to weep, and there are times when it becomes us to rejoice. Jesus wept with the bereaved sisters in Bethany, but He also honoured a marriage feast with his presence and ministered materially to its joy. His approving smile sends a thrill of happiness through the universe.

3. It was furthermore performed in a marriage feast for the purpose of *beneficence*. I say "of beneficence," to point out a difference between the miracles of the Old Testament and those of the New. Moses' first miracle was to turn water into blood; there was a severe, destructive element in it. But Christ's first miracle was to turn water into wine; there was a soothing, solacing element in it. There is more or less severity in the Old Testament, nothing but compassion in the New. What about cursing the fig-tree? you ask. I see quite as much compassion in that as in any other of His merciful acts. You remember the circumstances. "He went out of the

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city," says Matthew, "into Bethany, and lodged there. Now in the morning as He returned into the city He hungered." The word rendered "lodged" signifies to pass the night in an open, unroofed court. He had spent the day in Jerusalem, diligently prosecuting the work which His Father gave Him to do. He retired for the night to Bethany, but too late, it appears, to be accommodated in the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, supposing they still lived there; He had, therefore, to spend the night in an open, unroofed court. "The foxes have holes, the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Early in the morning, before the inhabitants were astir, as He was returning to the city He hungered on the way. He was going to resume His work without breaking His fast. So keen was His hunger that He walked up gladly to a fig-tree on the roadside, hoping to find on it unripe figs wherewith to allay the pangs of His physical nature, and, finding none, He cursed it. But mark: it was on the roadway, and therefore no private man's property; it had moreover run wild and yielded no fruit, and therefore the public wayfarers suffered no loss. And, above all, when He wanted to teach the world the curse which will wither the men who do not improve their opportunities, instead of selecting one of the hundreds around Him, He chose a tree and cursed it. But no cruelty there, else every man who fells a tree would be guilty of the same cruelty. And that fig-tree in its barrenness has done the world more good than all the fig-trees of Palestine



with the luscious fruit hanging gracefully from their boughs. Every morning since have disciples passed that way and wondered at the blighting effect of their Master's word, saying, "How soon the fig-tree is withered away!" and have laid the lesson to heart, and have endeavoured to bring forth more fruit in consequence.

4. But the miracle, besides being one of beneficence, appears to be likewise one of *luxury*. Wine was not needful to maintain life; it was not needful at all in the material sense of the word. To multiply the loaves and fishes was to meet a necessity; to turn water into wine was simply to gratify the love of luxury. And in this it was a sign.

For one thing, it was a sign that man does not live upon bread alone, but that he is permitted, nay, enjoined to go out after the beautiful in every form and manifestation. Our age increases in wealth; men command more money than is absolutely required to obtain the bare necessities of life. What then? Is it sinful to provide for ourselves and families a few luxuries? By no means—witness this miracle. But men will make bad use of the license you give them, you say. And I answer, Many make bad use of sunlight, and yet God does not strike them with blindness. Misers make bad use of the multiplication table, and yet you do not propose to strike it out of the curriculum of the schools. Is it sinful to have pictures on the wall whilst the heathen lie unreclaimed? For my part, I see no reason why Englishmen and Welshmen should be only half civilised because the Caffrarians

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are altogether barbarous. But what good does that painting on the wall do? Not the same kind of good as the table in the kitchen, but you must not therefore infer that it answers no good purpose at all. The potato in cross-examination would make out a better case than the rose; it has more solid claims to cultivation; yet I prefer seeing the rose-bush growing before my window. Engineering, navigation, agriculture, trade, can make a long catalogue of the purposes they subserve; but there is a region above them, more enduring by far,—the poetic, the artistic, the refined. The mechanics of the Greeks have been obsolete for twenty centuries; but the poetry of Homer has still the dew of its youth upon it. The chemistry of the Elizabethan age is of no account and no value in our day; but the dramas of Shakespeare, the visions of Milton, and the dreams of Bunyan promise to instruct, interest, and astonish the world as long as a human heart beats in a human breast. The wine of genius will keep long, and the longer it is kept the better it is; whilst the coarser productions of man decay and pass away to everlasting oblivion. And as the feast of genius goes on, better wine will be served from age to age. Good wine has been already quaffed, and we hear from different quarters that it is failing fast. We hear in some religious circles that the wine administered to the congregations by modern preachers is not so good, so exhilarating, as it was wont to be. Many writers praise the good wines of the past and lament the sourness and unpalatableness of the wines of the present, and the

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shameful adulteration that is going on on every hand. They cry out, "They have no wine, and yet they insist upon colouring the water; the vines refuse to give their fruit, but men insist upon manufacturing wines in their strong-smelling breweries, and then delude themselves and others into the belief that it has grown upon God's vine-trees." They are better judges of wine than I am, and therefore I shall not dispute their verdict. But this I say—if all hope in the vines die out, yet I will venture to hope in the Vine-dresser; if the trees in God's vineyard are not so fruitful as they used to be, yet I will venture to hope in the Husbandman. He can do wonders; He can fill even *water-pots* with the choicest wine, and He will fill them, and the world shall yet have to confess, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now."

But this miracle is a sign in another sense: it points out the Gospel method of destroying sin. By a marvellous display of His miraculous power He here produces 120 gallons of wine. It is idle to say it was not intoxicating—we have no means of settling the question. The supposition may be right and it may be wrong, and one supposition always suffices to confute another. Anyhow this miracle serves to show that temperance has its seat in the man himself; that moderation consists, not in the scarcity of the gifts or parsimony in the Giver, but in the self-control of the recipient; and that the Gospel method of destroying sin is not so much by denying us the opportunity as by killing within us the inclination to indulge in it. The

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Gospel aims at destroying sin in the heart rather than in the life. How can the field be cleared of the weeds and thistles which overrun it? By one of two ways; by reaping or else by uprooting them. But the first process, that of reaping, requires to be repeated every year. The only effectual way is to wither their roots. These are the only possible ways in which sin may be destroyed. Law, whether enacted by the throne or particular societies, cuts the branches, withers the leaves; but the Gospel pulls sins up by the roots. Is the Gospel, then, opposed to total abstinence? By no means; not more opposed to it than pruning is to manuring. The Gospel proposes to heal the roots, and teetotalism to lop off the branches till the roots be healed; and whilst preferring the first, I wish God-speed to the second. The Gospel is opposed to slavery, it looks upon it as a disease; but its way of destroying it is to heal the constitution, to infuse new life into the body politic; and the disease will be effectually, though slowly, removed. But is it on that account hostile to philanthropic societies which have for their special object the liberty of the slave? Certainly not; apply specific remedies to specific diseases till the Gospel has time to heal the constitution. And so in respect of all evils; Christianity seeks to destroy their roots. It does not lay down specific rules. It does not say, You must not habitually visit public-houses. What then? It withers the desire to visit them. It does not say, You must not visit playhouses and singing saloons. What then? It slays the liking for such

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things. It eradicates sin, and sin will never grow when its roots are destroyed.

The Gospel consequently does not inculcate hard and fast lines. Its nature is freedom. Wherefore the New Testament word for liberty means that one may go whithersoever he likes. The Christian is free indeed—he may go whithersoever he likes. May he go to obscene places? Let me ask, Does he like to go there? May he visit places of recreation on the Sabbath day? Let me ask, Does he like to visit them? He may go whithersoever he likes; but the Gospel, in giving him that license, takes care to slay within him the inclination to go to forbidden places or to do impure deeds. Akin with this is the Old Testament word for liberty. It is the same that is elsewhere translated a swallow. A swallow in the Hebrew is called *liberty*. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim *liberty* to the captives." Liberty—that is the word. The captives of sin shall be as free as swallows on the wing. Look at them: they are the embodiment of the idea of liberty; see how they dart hither and thither; mark how they shoot to the right and to the left with such elegance and fleetness. What graceful curves they cut in the air! Well, the Gospel will make sinners as free as swallows on the wing; they shall soar freely in the heaven of holiness for ever; they shall make dignified swoops round the Throne of the Eternal. You are not full-fledged yet; your

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pinions are now feeble; your flights hitherto have been short and tremulous, from bough to bough, from duty to duty, from service to service. But ere long you shall renew your strength, you shall mount up with wings as eagles, and, with your eyes fixed on the Central Sun of all existence, you shall fly swiftly through the blue of heaven, commanding all the ease and freedom of winged seraphs. The Gospel takes away the roots of sin from the believer's heart, and then it can well afford to give him the freedom of the universe.

III. It is a sign in respect of Jesus Christ's own PERSON. "He manifested forth His glory unto them."

1. He had not like others to acquire glory, to win it; He had only to *manifest* it. The glory was already resident in Him; He had only to withdraw the veil and let it shine forth. He manifested it on the present occasion by His supremacy over Nature. The realm of matter acknowledges His sovereignty; its laws bow to His will. "Who is this that the sea and the wind obey Him?" Who is this that can subjugate Nature and put her under the yoke, not of law, but of grace? Ulysses, on his return from the Trojan war, was not recognised by his friends, relatives, and acquaintances. A long exposure to the hardships of a protracted war had so altered his appearance that his own family refused to acknowledge him. What did he do in this unpleasant predicament to prove his identity? He called for a bow, which he had left at home when

he bade adieu to the vine-clad hills of Ithaca and embarked for the seat of battle, a bow which no other arm in the country save his own was strong enough to wield. He seized the bow, pulled the string, and it gracefully yielded to the grasp of that stout and brawny arm. His friends required no other sign, his family demanded no other evidence, for he who bent the bow could be none other than the hero of Troy. And when Jesus Christ came to the world, His countrymen denied His claim to the Messiahship. "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." He came not as they had pictured Him. He had no royal pomp or court splendour to show. "He has no beauty or comeliness that we should desire Him; His countenance is marred above the children of men." What did He do to prove the dignity of His descent? He laid hold upon the bow of Nature, the bow that refused to yield to the stoutest arm or bow to the mightiest intelligence; and He could bend it at His will, He could twist its laws around His fingers. At His approach death fled, at His coming devils trembled, and under His gaze the water blushed into wine. "He manifested forth His glory."

2. As a consequence "His disciples *believed* in Him." They had believed in Him before; but witnessing this unexpected miracle their faith was confirmed, it grew in intensity. Miracles cannot convince unbelievers, but they can confirm those who already believe. His disciples, not the guests, believed in Him. To believe is the work of a lifetime; faith needs to be repeated every day. We

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have believed in Him a hundred times before, but we must believe in Him to-day again, and continue to believe to the very last. "The just shall live by faith."

The Saviour began to manifest His glory, as we have seen, in a marriage feast; He will consummate it in a marriage feast too. Yes; there will be another marriage feast by-and-by; and the mother of Jesus and His brethren and His disciples will be there, when He will be the Bridegroom and the Church the Bride. The marriage is being celebrated now, but the feast has not yet commenced. But the feast will come; we shall sit down round the table, we shall drink of the wine that has been standing on its lees from eternity, from days of old; the best wine will be given last; and the anxious Mary will have no cause to say, "They have no wine." "We shall drink of the fruit of this vine with Him in the kingdom of His Father," the blood of the grapes which hang in beautiful clusters on the Tree of Life; and then will be fulfilled that which is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory," and the victory will be none other than marriage joys for ever and ever.

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IX.

Christ Purifying the Temple.

“And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not My Father’s House an house of merchandise. And His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.”—St. JOHN ii. 13-17.

THIS is the Saviour’s second visit to the Temple. His first was when He was twelve years of age. On that occasion He assumed no authority, for His age and instinctive sense of propriety forbad it. He sat at the doctors’ feet, “both hearing them and asking them questions;” by which we are not to understand that He gave Himself superior airs, and lectured the aged men occupying the seats of learning, but that He availed Himself of the advantage, possessed by every Hebrew child, of attending the public classes in connection with the Temple, to be instructed in the Scriptures by the appointed professors, called in the Gospels doctors or rabbis. Jesus attended these classes on His

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first visit to Jerusalem, and was so filled with enthusiasm as to forget all about the caravan and its speedy return to Galilee. He attended as an eager modest learner, not as a haughty fault-finding inspector.

But on this, His second visit, having been duly inaugurated to His official work, He at once begins to discharge the duties of His office. "The Lord whom ye seek shall come to His temple. He shall purify the sons of Levi." In the verses following the text, the Jews demanded of Him a miracle of power. "What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?" But Jesus Christ declines to appeal to power in support of morality—morality must stand on its own basis. His greatest miracle is His character, His sinless life, His unimpeachable holiness.

Whether the Saviour resorted to physical force or not, is to my present purpose of no consequence; the greatest significance of the incident lies in the moral impression it produced. "Then the disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." The subject is—*Christian zeal*.

- I. Zeal for the structure of the House.
- II. Zeal for the ordinances of the House.
- III. Zeal for the discipline of the House.
- IV. Zeal for the doctrines of the House.

I. Zeal for the BUILDING. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

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1. It is the confessed duty of the Church to provide convenient *places* for the public worship of God. Private worship and family worship are inculcated in Holy Writ, but special importance is attached to public worship. Man is essentially a social being; this feature the Gospel seizes upon, and turns into account. Over-building is, no doubt, a lamentable waste of strength; but under-building is a sin. Christ commissions us to go to the highways and hedges and compel erring wandering sinners to come in; but this presupposes that we have decent edifices for them to come into. The Church that neglects to provide proper accommodation for the fast-growing population of the country is guilty of a serious breach of Christian trust.

2. And here you will allow me to impress upon you the importance of the house of God being in consonance with the most chastened *taste*. "Beauty becometh thy courts, O Lord." Beauty, says Ruskin, is as cheap as ugliness; why then exclude it from the sanctuary of the Highest? Christianity has, in the past ages of the world, displayed a wonderful genius for architecture. It has revolutionised the conceptions of men, thereby stamping its own image on public buildings. The flat roof, I am told, was very prevalent in antiquity, for the mind of man always moved horizontally, on a low level; but Christianity has elevated the human mind, has given it a wider scope heavenward, and consequently has changed the very roofs of places of public worship—instead of the flat roof, we have now the dome and the spire, mirroring the heavenward

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longings of human nature. I do not like to see God's house the most impoverished in the neighbourhood,—men living in costly, convenient, well-kept houses, and their God dwelling in a paltry shed, neglected and forsaken. David's conscience smote him because he dwelt in a better house than his God. "Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains." And he resolved to build God a better house than his own; wherefore God secured him on his throne. You can always tell the state of spiritual religion in a neighbourhood by the condition of the church or chapel. Let no one think this unworthy of notice—God always expects His house to partake of the temporal prosperity of His Church. When His people were few and their circumstances straitened, an altar of earth hastily thrown up with a spade was acceptable in His sight. After they multiplied in number and increased in wealth, the altar of earth was obliged to give way to an altar of stones—a little art was required in the divine service. But when the Church developed into a nation and could boast of much riches, God demanded another step forward—the altar of stones must be superseded by an altar of gold. "Thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold. Thou shalt make two cherubim of gold. Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood, and thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold roundabout. Of pure gold shalt thou make them." Barns were pleasing to God in the days of our per-

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secuted forefathers, but they will not be acceptable in the days of their luxurious and well-to-do children.

3. But after the zeal to build, we ought to have zeal enough to *pay*. Our own denomination at the present time is like Issachar—"a strong ass couching down between two burdens"—the heavy burden of debt and interest on the one hand, and the heavy burden of current expenses on the other. Observe, however, that I laid the emphasis, not on the word "ass," but on the word "strong"—that much in parenthesis, because of some men's tendency to misconstrue. Like Issachar, "we bow the shoulder to bear, and become servants unto tribute;" but if we only believed in our strength, we could easily rise and shake off the burden which apparently crushes our efforts in other directions. And believe me, no one has ever suffered in his temporal affairs because of too freehanded liberality towards God's Temple. Many, I know, have been obliged to go through the bankruptcy and other courts, because of too much liberality in the service of the devil, none ever because of too much liberality in the service of God. What church has suffered in its worldly circumstances because the Sabbath collections were too high? I am tempted to say with the American coloured preacher—"Show me such a church, a church that has died because of its too great charity in the cause of God and man, and I shall proclaim in its funeral, 'Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord.'"

II. Zeal for the ORDINANCES. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up."

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I. By the ordinances of the house we are here to understand the *means of grace*—the ordinary services of the Church on Sundays, week days, and holydays. Rightly are they called *means of grace*, for they are the means God has appointed by which He will communicate grace to the soul; and if we neglect the means, rest assured we shall not obtain the grace. To neglect the means of grace is an old habit; an old habit, however, which has received apostolic censure. "Not neglecting the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." God has promised, it is true, to be a "small sanctuary" to his people; but where and when? When His people dwelt in Babylon, when they could not frequent the public sanctuary in Jerusalem. And if you chance to know any of the saints who are to-day obliged to dwell in Babylon, who are in sore captivity through bodily illness or distressing circumstances beyond their control, the promise remains in force—God will be to them a "small sanctuary." But if you are in the enjoyment of health and strength, and in the possession of the requisite leisure, God expects you to come to the public assembly with thanksgiving, and to His presence with praise. As already hinted, man is a social being, and Christianity is a social religion. Jesus Christ went about "preaching the Gospel." Is that all? No; He went about "preaching the Gospel of the kingdom." We have been saved into a kingdom—a social organisation, and the duties of a kingdom rest upon us. I do not believe in personal apart from social godliness. A man whose attendance on the public

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services of the sanctuary is broken, is a man whose private religion is broken, bruised to the very core. The zeal of the house is well-nigh extinct in his breast.

2. However, two institutions in particular go under the name of ordinances—*Baptism and the Lord's Supper*. These two ordinances were established in the Church by the Lord Jesus Himself; and about these a bitterer and more prolonged controversy has been waged by His followers than about all the doctrines of Christianity put together. Had He appointed three ordinances, the disputation would have inevitably reached such a pitch that it is doubtful whether the saints would have had time for anything else. But be that as it may, there are two extremes which should, in my opinion, be carefully guarded against. The first is the sacerdotal extreme, the extreme to which the Episcopal Church manifests a decided bias. According to this extreme, baptism is regeneration, and the bread and wine are the very body and the very blood of the Lord Jesus. The sacraments are *miracles*—a very perilous extreme and fraught with the direst consequences. The other extreme tends directly to make everything “common”—an extreme towards which English Nonconformity shows a decided leaning. Many representative writers of Nonconformity in England apparently view the sacraments as idle empty ceremonies—a view very pernicious to a vigorous spiritual life. The Saviour would have never sanctioned, much less founded, empty unmeaning forms in His Church. Baptism is not an idle rite which the Church would be quite as well without

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as with. No; it is a rite full of significance and full of grace, when the Church administers it in faith, hope, and charity. Ministers and deacons, give baptism its due place in the services of the Church. Neither is the Lord's Supper a supererogatory ceremony, a ceremony which the Church could do as well without as with. Oh no; the Lord's Supper is a holy ordinance, wherein all the vital doctrines of the Gospel meet. Whatever importance belongs to the great doctrines of our religion, singly and separately, *all* the importance of *all* the doctrines is lodged here—the love of the Father, the atonement of the Son, and the presence of the Spirit. The Lord's Supper is a means of grace in a very special sense; I, for one, believe firmly in the *real* presence, not the real presence materially, but the real presence spiritually. Have we not often seen Him in the breaking of the bread? May our Churches be saved the humiliation of looking upon the divine Sacraments as worthless, unmeaning rites!

3. But zeal for the ordinances does not suffice, we must also have zeal *in* the ordinances. Warmth is always attractive, enthusiasm always contagious. The Nonconformist denominations have always been remarkable for their fervour. Whereas the Established Church has been boasting of its "sweetness and light"—a boast which I for one care not to dispute—the Nonconformist churches owe their success to their manly vigour and warmth. This is the secret of their life—their warmth. One of the chronic ailments of the soul, it has been said, is cold; when it sinned, it turned its back upon the



sun, and took its journey into a far frigid country; and one of the objects of the Gospel is to cure it of its cold, to thaw its ice, to pervade it once more with the genial glow of the sun. Our success continues to depend upon our warmth—only the force that gave us being can sustain us in being. We hold our usual prayer-meetings; but where is the old fervour? We hold our usual preaching services; but where is the old *hwyl*? You say that the ministers of the last generation were warmer-hearted than their successors. Granted; but remember also that the hearers of the last generation were warmer-hearted than those of our day. Give us as much fire in the pews, and I will guarantee you as much fire in the pulpit. God forbid the Israelites to offer asses in sacrifice—dull, heavy, torpid creatures. But alas! alas! we in Wales have been offering asses in sacrifice for many a long year—worship insipid, flat, dead. “But a lively demonstration of feeling is not permissible in our day, it is not respectable.” Is it not? Well, then, God preserve us from respectability. As I look around me, I see enthusiasm enough in Parliament, in political and social gatherings, — enthusiasm amounting to positive boisterousness; and is it only in connection with the eternal interests of humanity that it is to be pronounced vulgar and reprehensible? Look at the Salvation Army. Does not their success depend upon their zeal, their heat, their energy? They are deficient in light, it is true; but let them alone—one of the most recent discoveries of science is that heat turns into light.

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That is true in the natural world; it is equally true in the spiritual world. Oh for more zeal in the divine service! oh for more joy, greater gladness of heart! "That your joy might be full." Who have a right to rejoice, if we have not? There was not much joy in the old world, the world before the Incarnation. There was much counterfeit, but very little of the genuine article. Consequently the old world never invented *rhyme*. It created rhythm, but no rhyme; blank verse, but no tuneful correspondence of sounds. Rhyme is the creation of Christianity. Read the classic poetry of Greece and Rome, and it is all blank verse—rhythm but no rhyme. Read the sublime poetry of the Hebrew prophets, and it is all blank verse—rhythm but no rhyme. The human heart did not experience joy sufficiently intense and exhilarating to make language jingle like bells upon the horses' bridles; only the religion of Jesus possessed inspiration enough to enable it to do this. Why then should we bow our heads like rushes?

III. Zeal for the DISCIPLINE of the house. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." In the preceding verses we see Jesus Christ driving out the sellers and buyers and exchangers of money—an act symbolical of Church discipline.

I. *Wickedness* should be rebuked. Whatever will come of us as a religious body, let us see that we uncompromisingly maintain its purity. Even if we lose in the number of our adherents, let us beware that we suffer not in the dignity of our

character. We had better lose everything, even our very existence, than our character. Wise discipline, judicious pruning, is essential to solid prosperity. The apostle Paul threatened to visit the Corinthian Church, the morals of which were of those free and easy kind so much vaunted in our day as signs of culture and breadth, with a "rod." Yes; there is place, as there is need, for rods in Christian Churches as in Christian families. Men cannot, remarks Renan, be properly governed till science has discovered the secret to immediately burst the planet, to shiver it in a moment into ten million atoms. Nought save fear of the explosion will keep the nations in their proper places, and make them observe their respective obligations. The promoters of the French Revolution were animated by a sentiment not very dissimilar, when they invented for their motto—"*Terror and all the virtues.*" Fear they believed to be the chief source whence goodness flowed. A very pernicious error decidedly, but an error containing in it the usual modicum of truth: in the present state of society fear, if it do not prompt to goodness, deters from evil. The moment discipline disappears from a Church, its moral calibre begins a process of deterioration—a principle amply illustrated in the history of primitive Christianity. When Raphael painted the figures of St. Peter and St. Paul on the dome of St. Peter's at Rome, some of the papal officials objected that the colour in their countenances was too high and florid. "Oh," replied the artist, "I did not paint them as they were here upon earth, but as they are now

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in heaven,—looking down upon the Church they established, and blushing crimson because of its corruptions.” Do not the founders of our Connexion feel a glow of holy shame mantling their cheeks as they look down from heaven upon the present history of many of our churches? Where is St. Paul’s “rod?” A fragment of his cloak is reported to be still found at Rome, but where is his “rod?” Do not the churches, yea, the pulpits of our land, require to undergo a process of purification? Do we not now stand in need of a “scourge of small cords” to drive out of the temple the wicked men who, by their negligence and sometimes open immorality, disgrace the altars of our God? The Connexion to which we belong has in years past been an alabaster box of precious ointment, the perfume of which has spread over every hill and filled every dale in this highly favoured principality, sweetening the very atmosphere we breathe. But in some neighbourhoods dead flies have entered, causing the ointment of the Divine Apothecary to stink. Professors of religion are not afraid of frequenting public houses; do not the churches wink at the evil? Preachers of the Gospel are not afraid to get drunk; will there not be over-zealous friends in the Presbytery to take their part? Be it far from me to hint that these evils are frequent; thank God, they are not; but they ought not to be at all. Let the churches insist that the connexional pulpits shall be kept pure and unspotted.

2. Another object wise discipline has in view is the *fortification of virtue*—instruction in righteous-



ness. In the family and the Church disciplinary regimen should aim at the development of goodness, even more than at the repression of vice. Our great aim as Christian communities should be to instigate one another to reach higher altitudes in holiness and usefulness. True, we cannot achieve here a state of perfect sinlessness, for "if we say we sin not, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." But if we cannot be sinless, we can be, and ought to be, blameless. "Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." "Harmless" here means literally "hornless"—"hornless as doves." Some creatures have horns, with which they accomplish much mischief. But as for doves, they have no horns; much injury they cannot inflict, for they are deficient in the instruments wherewith to inflict it. Similarly some men habitually wear horns, bringing vividly to our minds him who was pictured in our early school-books with horns and cloven feet, as though they and he belonged to the same dark family; in presbytery and synod they rush like wild buffaloes upon their brethren who dwell in innocency, they are never happy except when they make others unhappy, never satisfied save when they are vigorously using their horns against people unable or unwilling to defend themselves. Be not you like unto them, says the Saviour, not only refrain from doing mischief, but throw aside the instruments of mischief—be wise as serpents

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and hornless as doves. Shall we as ministers and deacons agree to fling away our horns and live together in sweet amity? "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded His blessing, even life for evermore."

So living, we shall "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Adorn the doctrine—a very beautiful expression. That, I apprehend, is the special work of the Christian Church in this nineteenth century—adorning the doctrine. The special work of the Church in the first century was to reveal the doctrine; the special work of the Church in the fifteenth and subsequent centuries was to expound the doctrine; the special work of the latter half of the last, and the beginning of this century was to apply the doctrine. But the special work of the Church in this age of artistic revival is to adorn the doctrine. Paul and John—they were remarkable for their power to reveal truth; Luther and Calvin—they were remarkable for their power to expound truth; Whitfield and Wesley in England, Rowlands and Harris in Wales—they were remarkable for their power to apply truth. What is our special vocation? It is to adorn the truth. Our age is pre-eminently an age of beauty, every department of life, private and public, secular and holy, is being taken possession of in the name of Art. Let us not



be behindhand in discerning the signs of the times, let the principles of the everlasting beauty find exquisite illustrations of themselves in our life and conversation in the world.

3. Our interest in the holiness of the Church should not be half-hearted and languid, but earnest, ardent, all aflame with divine *zeal*. In proportion as we are zealous for God and loyal to Him will He bless our efforts at evangelisation. Some of the older States in the great Republic across the Atlantic complain sadly of excessive drought. In bygone years the rain was wont to descend in copious fertilising showers; but now the clouds hover high in the air and float away to other regions. And why? Because the old-established States have been completely shorn of their ancient forests, and as a penalty they now fail to attract the clouds; or, if they attract them, they fail to draw from them the "water of life." What then do the inhabitants do under these blighting circumstances? They plant cannons in the high places of the land, and when they see a cloud sailing high in mid-air they fire their artillery; the air shakes, and in the shock the cloud rends and pours its precious contents on the thirsty soil—rain often descends the day after battle. That is the modern way of obtaining rain; but the grey-haired settlers declare the old way was better, and they are now busily planting trees in the denuded regions—trees will draw water from the clouds easier than artillery. In like manner the Israel of God is lamenting the excessive drought in the present day—some of you are longing for a

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"season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," you are fervently praying for the "day of visitation." We see the clouds of the divine promises heavy-laden with water; but they sail high in the empyrean—no showers descend. What do the Churches do? They fetch the American revivalists, they send here and there for the big guns of the Christian ministry. The guns shoot, the air trembles, the clouds burst, the torrent falls. But it is a torrent, and like all torrents it drenches the surface and soon passes, and the earth is as parched as ever. I say nothing against your resorting to extraordinary means to force on a revival—forcing is now a complicated art, not only in horticulture, but in all departments of activity, temporal and spiritual. But I show you a more excellent way—cultivate more assiduously the "trees of righteousness," grow more vigorously in grace and knowledge, fulfil more faithfully your duties to men, and discharge more promptly your obligations to God and your Redeemer, and the clouds of the Divine promises, big with mercy, shall break in showers on your heads. Get you up, gird your loins, live lives of holiness and consecration, and soon you will hear the "sound of abundance of rain."

IV. Zeal for the DOCTRINES of the House. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." It is the Church's vocation, not that of the ministry as an official order, to defend the faith. "The Church of the living God—the pillar and ground of the truth." It is the duty of the churches, as churches, to look

after the soundness and the unity of the faith. And perhaps it is not quite unworthy of notice that all the notorious heretics, with one or two exceptions, were professional preachers. It rejoices my heart to believe that England's churches are sounder in the faith than England's ministers. Reading the religious press of the metropolis, one is tempted to think that one respectable denomination is fast drifting from sound doctrine. But I will venture to say—No; the denomination is not. Many of its preachers seem to have entered into competition with one another which will err fastest and farthest; but the churches as a whole "hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints."

1. Zeal for the doctrine implies mental hostility to *error*. Jesus Christ expresses His approval of some of the churches of Asia, because they set their faces against false doctrines. The manifest tendency of the present day is to extend toleration not only to heretics, which is right, but also to heresies, which is wrong. What a vast difference is observable in the indulgent tone of a section of the English religious press and the strong condemnatory language of the New Testament Epistles in writing of doctrinal errors. I have great respect for the modern newspaper writers, and they will doubtless extend to me also the indulgence they are always so ready to extend to heretics, if I say I have greater respect for the New Testament writers. But I forget—orthodoxy and believers in orthodoxy are proscribed from the list of things to be tolerated; they have right neither to life nor true

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representation. But all the same I believe and tell you that it is your duty not to let go hastily, not to let go at all, the vital doctrines of Christianity, which have been transmitted to us by the great thinkers of the Christian Church for nineteen centuries, men as illustrious for their unfeigned piety as for their profound scholarship. I do not judge it expedient to give prominence to, and enter into controversy with, "every imp that speaks the language of hell with a new accent;" but whenever a momentous error appears, it is our duty to say with unmistakable decision, "Get thee behind me, Satan." One important error, leavening the theology of this last decade, is the dogmatic denial of everlasting punishment. If God will be pleased to throw open the gates of the eternal prison, and let the devils and the damned go free, there is no one here who will raise an objection; on the other hand, we would rejoice with trembling, knowing that all His ways are in righteousness and truth. But what amazes me is that men from premisses so narrow and precarious should draw a conclusion so broad and sweeping, and, I will add, so fraught with everlasting injury, should it chance to turn out a mistake. At all events, caution here is safe. Without a clearer revelation on the subject than we now possess, or without a much more convincing exegesis of the passages under discussion than we have yet been favoured with, I, for one, dare not proclaim in the hearing of obstinate rebels a general amnesty in the divine Empire at a period not so very remote, for if the date of the amnesty be thrown very far



forward, the difficulty, which seems to scandalize the advocates of this new view, is not removed—it is only infinitesimally palliated. With the revelation and exigesis we have, I can easily understand men thinking and speculating about it; but to preach it as a Gospel fact, to proclaim it from house-tops as demonstrated truth, to publish it in popular papers and magazines as veritable history, to make of it the corner-stone of the new theology and the Gospel of the future—all this is to me past comprehension. Another error to which I deem it expedient to call your attention as representatives of the churches is the bold denial of the sacredness of the Sabbath-day. Public men, eminent preachers, well-known writers, do their best to break down the hedge round about this day; they endeavour to persuade the legislature to throw open the doors of places of public amusement and secular instruction. As a rule they belong to the class known as advanced liberals, and make their boast of liberty. But it is a fact which they apparently overlook—that the history of the Sabbath and that of liberty run on parallel lines. Show me a country that observes the Sabbath, and I will show you a country that enjoys liberty, religious and civil. On the other hand, show me a nation that desecrates the Sabbath, converting it into a day of pleasure or of business, and I will show you a country where despotism in one form or another always flourishes. The Sabbatarian nations are the free nations of the earth. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”

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2. Whilst opposing heresy, our chief concern should be the vindication and exposition of *truth*; zeal, not for sect or party, but for truth. "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." Zeal for the great doctrines that make for the salvation of the world. Every Biblical truth is inspired; but every inspired truth is not of equal importance. Let us be zealous for the great truths. Our theology, in common with that of the Presbyterian bodies of the world, is Calvinistic; it is therefore natural, nay, reasonable, that we should not entirely overlook the "five points." Yet we must remember that it is not the "five points" that save, but the great eternal truths which underlie and support these and all other "points." The salvation of the world is of too great importance to rest upon "points," it rests on facts as on immovable rocks. Let our churches see that the Cross occupies the central place in the preaching of the day, that the doctrine of the Atonement continues the centre of our theology. The longer I preach, the more emphasis I lay on the Atonement, the nearer I press to the Cross. The Roman Catholics wear it *on* their hearts, but I wear it *in* mine. No sermon is worth delivering if it be not sprinkled with blood, all the better if it be immersed in it. We believe in baptism by sprinkling in respect of water, but in baptism by immersion in respect of blood. Here lies the secret of our strength. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me." Nothing else "draws" for any length of time. Take Unitarianism, for instance, Christianity with the Cross

left out, the Gospel with the Atonement struck off. What is the result? It does not "draw." One of the leaders of English Unitarianism declared publicly in Birmingham the other day that Unitarianism failed to "draw." The English public will not attend their chapels. That is just what Christ foresaw. He knew that nought save His Cross would serve to draw men. "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw." It is not His character, though spotlessly white, not His teaching, though sublimely pure, not His person, though mysteriously Divine, but His Cross that is the centre of the world's attraction. The popularity as well as the efficacy of Christianity is mainly dependent on the Cross. As a Christian communion professing allegiance to the Gospel in all its entirety, let us insist with no faltering accent upon the Cross being held aloft in our theology, private and public; for when our pulpits will lose the Cross, the chapels will lose their congregations.

3. But whilst urging the churches as represented by you to be valiant in their defence of the central, fundamental truths, I must also claim on my own behalf and that of my brethren, the younger ones more especially, a kind of unorganised *liberty* on the confines of the faith. "Unorganised liberty," I say, in contradistinction to the organised freedom, the landmarks of which are indicated in the standards and the creeds in respect of the fundamental doctrines. As officers in the Church of Christ, as recognised ministers and deacons, we cannot allow ourselves to be always laying the

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foundations—that should be done once for all. We cannot permit ourselves in our collective capacity to be always calling in question the vital truths of the Gospel,—the Incarnation, the Atonement, justification by faith. If we doubt these, the Christian pulpit is not our place, but the pew. We are supposed to be settled in our convictions upon subjects such as these before aspiring to the Christian ministry. If we are not, then we should wait till we shall have arrived at a state of comparative certainty or else seek some other outlet for our energy. The pulpit is not the place to preach the Gospel of Doubt, but the Gospel of Faith. By this I do not for a moment mean that we are precluded from examination and re-examination of the vital articles; we often profoundly and prayerfully examine them, not however because we doubt them, but because we believe them. Faith, not doubt, will be found the true principle of investigation, whether in philosophy or theology.

Organised liberty, in the view of many, is bondage. But in civil life it is not so; liberty brought under law is the highest kind of liberty, secured against the caprice of despotism on the one hand, and against the freaks of individualism on the other. Why should it be supposed to be otherwise in intellectual life? But whilst insisting on firmness in respect of the central doctrines, we should permit a great deal of latitude in respect of the minor questions which constitute the fringe of the Christian faith. See that our young men, and especially our young ministers, have their anchor sure and steadfast

in the Rock of Ages, then you can afford to give plenty of length to the chain. See that they hold fast to the great truths, then if you see them occasionally moving a little unsteadily on the boundaries of the faith like a ship dancing on the ridge of the wave, raise no alarm—the young man is safe, once he is anchored to Christ. Firmness in the centre, elasticity in the circumference: that has been the guiding principle of Welsh Presbyterianism in the past; let it be our motto in the future

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X

The New Birth.

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."—ST. JOHN iii. 6, 7.

NICODEMUS came to Jesus Christ, sincerely desiring, no doubt, to be enlightened concerning the new teaching. "The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." "From God" is emphatic. Other teachers received their commission from men, but here at last is a teacher who has received his commission from God. Nicodemus beheld in Him a prophet—a teacher from heaven in contradistinction to a preacher from the schools.

"Jesus answered and said unto him ;" but no question has yet been asked. We must, however, remember that the coming of Nicodemus was in itself an anxious inquiry, the attitude of his mind was that of a note of interrogation. Jesus did not answer his question, for he asked none ; but what was better—He answered *him*. "Jesus answered and said unto him, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The phrase "to be born again" was not new to Nicodemus, he was



perfectly acquainted with it. What was new was its application to Jews, to men, not in their national capacity, but in their bare character of human beings. If Jesus had said, "Except the Gentiles be born again," Nicodemus would have understood Him, or at least have supposed he understood Him. By baptism the Gentile proselytes were believed to be dis severed from their original stock, and grafted into the holy stock of Abraham. They were re-born, began a new life within the Jewish theocracy. So complete was the transference, or rather transformation, that the proselytes were allowed to intermarry with the daughters of Israel. Jesus Christ in this chapter borrows the current phraseology, and as usual with Him infuses into it an analogous but deeper signification. "Except a *man* be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This unqualified statement, applied to Jews as well as Gentiles, staggers Nicodemus, who confusedly asks—"How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Ironical men see irony in the interrogation; but I perceive in it only perplexity arising from profound earnestness. Nicodemus understood in a general way how a Gentile could be born again,—by the proselyte's baptism; but he could not divine how one who was born a Jew could be born again. The subject had never been debated in the colleges, it had never been decided by the rabbis; and the only way that now suggests itself to his mind is a repetition of the first birth. Whereupon the Saviour proceeds

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to explain—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." A repetition of the natural birth would avail nothing; a dozen natural births would effect no improvement on the first: in each case the result would be precisely the same. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." The *ye* is emphatic. *Ye*, Jews as well as Gentiles, "*Ye* must be born again."

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh:" that describes man in a state of nature, man before regeneration. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit:" that describes man in a state of grace, man after regeneration. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again:" that describes the way whereby a man is removed from a state of nature into a state of grace—man in the process of regeneration. Those shall be my divisions, simply making the second and third change places.

I. Man in a STATE OF NATURE, or man before regeneration. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." It is rather singular that Jesus Christ, the second Adam, nowhere makes mention of the first Adam, nor makes any direct reference to him. It is equally singular that He nowhere inculcates a doctrine of vast importance in Christian theology—the doctrine of the Fall. Nevertheless He everywhere assumes the doctrine; at all events He always takes for granted the depravity of our nature, whichever way the depravity came about.

The doctrine of regeneration presupposes the doctrine of the Fall, and the consequent turpitude of our nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."

1. This depravity is therefore *innate*. "That which is *born* of the flesh is flesh." Pelagius, better known among us by his Welsh name Morgan, imagined that every child is born into the world white and unsullied as a sheet of paper, without trace or mark upon the soul, and that what defilement subsequently attaches to it, is contracted from its environments. But Christian theology as well as all profound philosophy repudiates the hypothesis. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." The Psalmist does not in these words reflect upon the character of his mother, as some sinister writers slyly insinuate—his mother was a woman of well-known piety. He never mentions the piety of his father, but he makes frequent references to the piety of his mother. "I am thy servant, the son of thine handmaid." No; he does not, in the words already cited, reflect upon the character of his mother, but rather upon his own. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." The defilement was not on the surface only, superinduced from without, like the outward defilement of the colliers in the hill districts, but was mixed with his very make, pervading flesh, bone, and marrow, arising from within, like the coloured complexion of the negro.

No wonder therefore that he should pray in the same Psalm, "Wash me throughly from mine

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iniquity, and cleanse me from <sup>my</sup> sin." Two words are used in the original for "to wash." The first signifies the washing of the surface or outside, just as a man washes his hands or his face—only on the skin the uncleanness lies, and to wash the skin suffices to remove it. The other signifies that kind of washing that penetrates below the surface, that wholly pervades the material, that cleanses not the outside only but the inside likewise, and all the substance between the two sides, just as a woman washes clothes. It is not the outside only that she cleanses but the inside likewise, and all the fabric between the outside and the inside. This is precisely the word used by the Psalmist: "Wash me *thoroughly* from mine iniquity;" not the surface only, but my whole nature—wash me through and through; let the washing go wherever the corruption is gone; not my feet only, but also my hands and my head; not the outer man only, but the inner man of the heart. The identical words of the Psalmist are still stronger: "Multiply to wash me *thoroughly* from mine iniquity." That is to say, "Wash me *thoroughly*, not once or twice, but as many times as Thou seest I need it; repeat the process again and again, so that by any means I may be made clean." As a woman washes clothes deeply stained over and over again till the slightest vestige of the uncleanness is wiped off, so he asks God not to spare him, but to wash him repeatedly through and through, and to continue the process of purification till the last relic of the birth-stain be completely and for ever removed.

2. The text implies also that the turpitude is *hereditary*. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." This is a verity of science as well as of theology. Once degeneration enters a species, the process goes on inevitably from bad to worse unless a remedial check be applied. This, we know, is the case in the vegetable and animal worlds; upon what grounds do we exempt human nature from the dominion of the same law? "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him." What besides? "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." Like begets like. The verses just cited in juxtaposition teach us that man under sin is a degenerate being: the divine image continues, but broken; the divine likeness remains, but sadly blurred. The divine aspirations are not entirely stifled, but corrupt imaginations flourish wondrously and choke the good seed. A singular paradox occurs in the history of the Deluge. Why did God destroy the old world with the waters of the flood? Because "He saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart, and the Lord said, I will destroy man." And destroy him He did, except eight souls (Gen. v.) Listen to Him again after the Deluge had subsided. God said, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, *for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*" (Gen. viii. 21). The

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words unmistakably teach that man always inclines to evil, because of the hereditary bias of his nature. My personal sin grows out of an undercurrent of evil in the race; far beneath my individual consciousness flows the dark turbid river of the sin of the race, floating me down its swollen torrents towards the Dead Sea. Not only is the stream turbid, but the very spring emits foulness. But what is remarkable is that God in Genesis viii. brings forward the very same reason for sparing man that in Genesis v. he adduces for drowning him, namely, that the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth. As though God said,—“ True, I have drowned man once, but I will not drown him again; he is evil from his youth, wicked from his birth; and though I destroy him a hundred times, the old sin will again grow and break out the first favourable moment—sin is ingrained in his nature, water cannot wash it, fire cannot burn it; therefore, after showing my abhorrence of sin in one deluge, I will not send another, for it will do no good—sin is ingrained in the nature.” Marvellous that God should plead original sin as an extenuation of our doom, and urge our hereditary corruption as a reason why we should not be summarily damned. Only grace could perceive in our inborn turpitude an argument for our salvation.

3. This depravity is furthermore *universal*. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and there is no exception. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” “The Lord



looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." More literally—"they are all gone sour, they are all together become stinking,"—so the word filthy is rendered on the margin. You have seen milk or some other fluid gone sour, it is good for nothing but to be cast out into the cesspool. Thus God at first created man fresh and sweet, but men became sour, and consequently emitted a loathsome smell in the nostrils of the Almighty. No wonder, therefore, that we read in connection with one of the first sacrifices ever offered that "God smelled a sweet savour." The world had become rancid, it poisoned the very air, but in sacrifice God found a way to sweeten the world again. "He smelled a sweet savour."

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men,"—"death passed *through* all men." It passed upon them, passed through them; and the reason is obvious—sin had passed through them first. The cholera enters a community, strikes down one-half of the inhabitants, but leaves the other half untouched. Is that the way sin behaved, poisoning one half of the race, but letting the rest escape scot-free? No, it poisoned all, smote all, went through all—through every member of the race, and through every faculty and power in every member.

4. This depravity is *total*. "Whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh," and nothing but flesh. Here

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we have stumbled upon the total depravity of man—a doctrine much spoken against by certain diletanti writers in the present day, who, however, have not had the patience to understand it, nor the candour to properly represent it. By this doctrine it is not meant that every man is as bad as he can be, as polluted on the day of his birth as he can possibly be on the day of his death. What then? That man is born aside from the perpendicular, that he is born with the inclination of his nature towards evil. The inclination may be greater at the end of life than at the beginning; indeed, it is sure to be so unless he is seized upon and straightened by divine grace; but there can be no question, in my opinion, that every faculty is more or less tainted with evil, that the bias of the soul, the whole trend of our being, is in the direction of evil. Walking along the high road one day, I observed a winding track as of a reptile, clearly traceable in the dust. For a moment or two I could not conjecture its cause. But suddenly the truth flashed across my mind—it was the winding track of a snake, dragging its slimy length along. And as I investigate the human mind, turning my gaze inward into my own constitution, I clearly perceive, methinks, the slimy traces of the snake—"the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan"—gliding across all my faculties. She has left her mark upon the understanding, the affections, and even the conscience itself. Every man, and every power in every man, is depraved. "God is not in all his thoughts." Analyse the sinner's thoughts: you will find therein a little

truth, a little beauty, a great deal of the world, and a still greater deal of the devil; but of God not a particle, not the smallest atom. The seeds of all evil are sown in the soil of our heart; they have not all grown as yet, probably they never will all grow; but they are there all the same, for one of the characteristics of seeds is that a great many will go into a very small place. The seeds of all sin are in thy heart, my brother, the roots of all wickedness. Wherefore the apostle exhorts the Hebrews "to look diligently lest any root of bitterness spring up, causing trouble, and thereby many be defiled." The old roots are there, in thy heart; see that they grow not; better still is it to pull them up and put them to dry in the sun. Of Haman we learn that "he was full of indignation against Mordecai. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself" (Est. v. 9, 10). Deadly malice burned in his heart. Well, did he purge himself of his malice? No, he only curbed it. Did he eradicate his passion? No, he only checked its sudden manifestation. And that is about all education, civilisation, culture, can accomplish—they teach men to bridle themselves. Lactantius remarks, with his usual insight, of the wisdom of the Gentiles, that it consisted in hiding vice, not in uprooting it; in checking lust, not in slaying it. But what says the Bible? "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." It is not enough to teach Babylon's brats, the sinful propensities and lusts, how to behave; they must be dashed against the rocks, they must be slain, annihilated, every one.

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Let no one imagine that I am haranguing against external morality. Certainly not; I am only speaking a little in favour of internal morality. "What is holiness?" a gentleman once asked a class of Sunday School children. "To be clean outside," answered a little child. I know only of one better answer—to be clean inside as well as outside. Education can only clean the outside. You may send the flesh to costly schools, to Oxford or Cambridge, to learn the manners of good society; but it continues flesh notwithstanding—learned flesh, if you like, polished flesh, civilized flesh, but flesh all the same. The Gospel of Culture can only garnish the outside, whitewash the graves, "which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." But the Gospel of Christ can clean the inside, adorn the hidden man of the heart, quicken those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Whereas Culture only whitewashes the sepulchres, Jesus Christ opens them, and bids the dead live.

II. Man changed from a state of NATURE into a state of GRACE, or man being regenerated. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

1. Here we are taught that godliness begins in *life*—God re-planting a principle of life deep down at the very springs of our personality. "Ye must be *born* again." Godliness is not a thing of profession or acquisition, but of birth. True religion is not a trade, it is nature. In regeneration God inserts a new germ of life in the very centre, the

innermost core, of our being. As already shown, all human methods to improve humanity proceed from without to within, whereas the divine plan proceeds from within to without. God and Man, Nature and Art, do not work in the same way even when they work towards the same end. Take, for example, an apple. Man's way of making an apple is to hew it inward, God's way is to grow it outwards. So in all instances. Man proposes schemes of education, of social and political reform, proceeding from without to within; God introduces a power of inward renovation, inserts the seed of new life in the centre, thus moving from within to without. True religion is not an art which you may acquire, but life born into your soul, forming the basis of your own nature. Have you heard the story of the idiot boy? Seeing a corpse for the first time in his life, he endeavoured hard to make it stand on its feet; but was at last compelled to give up the attempt in utter despair, saying to himself, "Something is wanting within." Similarly philosophers of various schools have struggled valiantly to make poor human nature stand erect, they have surrounded it with strong educational supports. But no use—it always disappointed their hopes, it always fell; something was wanting within. But what philosophy could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God in the Gospel of His Son performs; He supplies the internal defect, imparts new life and new strength to our inner man.

2. Observe also that this life is *new*—absolutely new. "Ye must be born anew," so the majority of

commentators choose to read. The regenerate life is not the continuation or development or refinement of the old natural life, but absolutely a new creation. Some of the Broad Church divines view the regenerate life as only a refined unfolding of a life already hid deep down in the soul, which only requires a fresh stimulus, through the application of sound mental manure and the continuous shining of the divine love as set forth in the Gospel, to burst through the hard increment of sin and evil habits, and to bring forth all the beautiful blossoms of holiness. Philosophy, pure and simple, maintains that human nature, like the damsel of old, "is not dead, but sleepeth," and that all that is requisite to her salvation is to excite her faculties, to strengthen her powers, to awake her out of her long sleep. No, answers the Bible, the soul is dead, without a spark of life; it is not sufficient to rouse men out of their sleep, they must be waked out of their graves. "And you hath He quickened when ye were *dead* in trespasses and sins." No, no; the regenerate life is not the continuation of the old life, refined and developed, but the new beginning of a new life, which ushers us into a new creation. "Except a man be *born anew*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Human nature is too bad to be improved, too dilapidated to be repaired. Yonder is a cracked bell. How again to restore it? By one of two methods. The first is to repair the bell, to encompass it with hoops, to surround it with bands. Nevertheless you can easily discern the crack of



the bell in the crack of the sound. The only effectual way is to remelt the bell, recast it, and make it all new; then it will ring clear, round, sonorous as ever. And human nature is a bell suspended high up in the steeple of the creation to ring forth the praises of the Almighty Creator. But in the Fall in Eden the bell cracked. How again to restore it? By one of two ways. One is to surround it with outward laws and regulations as with steel hoops. This is the method adopted by philosophy as embodied in practical statesmanship; and without doubt there is a marked improvement in the sound. Nevertheless the crack in the metal shows itself in the crack in the tone. The best way is to remelt it, recast it, remould it; and this is God's method in the Gospel. He remelts our being, refashions us, creates us afresh from root to branch, makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus, zealous unto good works; and by and by we will sound forth His praises in a nobler, sweeter strain than ever we did before. Heaven's high arches will be made to echo our anthems of praise.

3. Observe further that this life is not only new, but *heavenly*—heavenly in its origin and nature. "Ye must be born from above"—so runs the marginal rendering. It might be a new life on the same level as the old, but the text shows that it is a new life on a higher platform. The believer's life is a heavenly life—life from above.

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carnal man, a truth too obvious to require elaboration at my hands.

But more especially is this life heavenly in contradistinction from that which God bestowed upon man in his first creation. Man was created a holy, but at the same time, an earthly creature. "So also is it written, The first man was of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." Adam at his best was but an earthly man; the earth was the sphere of his thoughts, the object of his affections. The Lord had to descend to the earth to hold converse with him. Adam would have been content to live on the earth for ever—a holy, but, at the same time, an earthly man. But the life God implants in the hearts of believers is heavenly both in its origin and nature. Of the patriarchs we read that they "desired a better country, that is, an heavenly." Paul and his fellow-saints had a "desire to depart and be with Christ." What may be the matter with them? Are they the brain-sick victims of dreams and delusions? Oh no; they are characterised by wonderful calmness and self-possession. How then to account for their strange longings and desires? Only on this wise—they are the recipients of celestial life, which in its turn engenders within them celestial, heavenward longings. The heavenly life yearns to return home to its native soil. Do you see the migratory birds leaving the countries of Southern Europe in the spring and winging their flight back to England? Why do they leave the warm, sunny climate of the South for our murky atmosphere and changeable

weather? Is it because their means of subsistence are exhausted? Decidedly not, for fruits and berries are never so abundant in the South as in the months of May, June, and July. Why then do they migrate? The why is in their own nature; a migratory instinct is born with them and in them; and the instinct must have its way. Similarly with the saints—they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; they have a recurrent desire to depart, which nothing can totally quench; they now and again cast longing, wistful glances to the sky—they have an urgent wish to migrate. Why? Is it because their food here is exhausted? Certainly not, for the richer the fare here, the greater their desire to go; the greater the *hwyl* in the Sabbath services the more rapidly they flutter their wings, as if on the point of soaring above the stars. What then is the explanation? They have a heavenly instinct within them, which instinct points clearly to its native climate, and impels them thitherward. The saints belong by birth to another world, and the life of that world is the ruling dominant force in their emotions, imaginations, and actions.

4. The enumeration of the prominent characteristics of the regenerate life is not yet complete—we must ascend another step and affirm that the regenerate life of the Christian is specifically a *divine* life. "Except a man be born of the *Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." It might be a heavenly, without being a divine, life. The life with which the angels are endowed is heavenly, but it is not divine. Thus you perceive that the life of

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the regenerate man is not only superior to that of Adam in his pristine innocence, but superior to that of angels and archangels before the Throne; for theirs is a created and finite life, and the created and finite is always undivine. But the regenerate life is the uncreated, infinite life of God Himself, which in Holy Writ goes by the appellation "everlasting life." The believer is "born of the Spirit," "born of God;" and what can such language mean but that the very identical life of God passes into the soul of man? Here we find, not likeness, but sameness; not similarity, but identity. The life of God becomes the life of man, the supernatural penetrates and transforms the natural. When man was first created, "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," but it were too much to say that he was "born of God." In the first creation we have likeness, not sameness; similarity, not identity. But when man is created anew in Christ Jesus, the creation is so intimate that it is a birth out of God—the divine life flows into the human, and thereby glorifies it.

You therefore see that regeneration is a supernatural process. It were not correct to declare it miraculous, for the miraculous involves interposition with the fixed and permanent laws of Nature; but it is supernatural all the same. Christianity ceased to be miraculous in the first century, but it continues to be supernatural. The miraculous is only accidental to it, but the supernatural belongs to its essence—it is as supernatural to-day as ever it was. To regenerate a man is supernatural work—it is to

introduce and lodge the supernatural life in the human soul, to make man a partaker of the divine nature, that is to say, the divine life.

"Ye are born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." "Incorruptible seed"—seed that will not corrupt itself, nor be corrupted by others. The seed deposited in the angel in his creation was corruptible, and the proof is that it corrupted itself. The seed lodged in man in his first make was corruptible, and the proof is that it was corrupted by others. But the seed planted in the believer in his regeneration is incorruptible as the seed of God—it neither corrupts itself nor suffers itself to be corrupted by others, it neither breeds evil nor catches evil. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." God's seed is in man, the same seed in both, and therefore incorruptible in man as in God. "He cannot sin, for he is born of God." What is of the flesh in him sins; but what is of God in him is above sin. The divine is always, everywhere, and under all circumstances, above sin—it can neither corrupt nor be corrupted. "Incorruptible seed." The new man is born of God—the life of God flows into him, the divine sap circulates in his veins. Some of you probably already know that the word, translated in the Old Testament sometimes a "fool" and sometimes a "sinner," the celebrated word "*nabal*," means literally drought, saplessness, as when we speak of a withered tree, or a dry, crumpled,

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shrivelled leaf. That is one of the Bible names on a sinner—a man that is withered, dried up to the very roots. He will burn fiercely and frightfully once he gets within reach of the fire, for he has not a drop of sap in his nature. He is a dry tree, withered through and through from branch to root. But the believer is compared in the same Bible to a tree planted by the rivers of water, whose leaf shall not wither; the Christian is planted beside the wells of the Divine Nature, drawing his sap from the Eternal Essence itself. A grand ennobling thought this—the Divine Sap circulating in my constitution, making me too verdant ever to catch fire. Oh no; the saints will never burn—there is too much juice in them for the flames ever to make an impression even upon their bark.

III. Man in a state of GRACE, or man after Regeneration. “That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Of this man Jesus Christ in the context affirms several things.

1. Once a man is born again he is capable of *understanding* the Gospel in its spiritual significance and relations. “Except a man be born again, he cannot *see*—understand—the kingdom of God;” but being born again, he possesses a new insight into the true nature of things. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Not only the carnal man, the man who lives in his flesh, but the natural man, the man who lives in his



intellect, cannot understand them. The natural man may receive the thoughts of the Spirit of God, but not the things under the thoughts, the realities represented by the ideas. The ideas are beautiful as the prismatic bubbles which children blow on a summer eve, but, like the bubbles in another quality, they are empty within. The idea of God—there for you a beautiful bubble; but there is no God within. The idea of atonement—there for you another beautiful bubble; but there is no blood within. The natural, psychical man, the man who lives in his intellect, receives the ideas, but not the things represented by the ideas; but the regenerate man receives into his heart with cordial welcome the very things themselves, the spiritual living realities which move behind the curtain of thought. Not only the idea of God, but God Himself. Not only the idea of atonement, but the Atonement itself. "By whom we have now received the Atonement." The natural man receives the ideas, but the spiritual man the things represented by the ideas. Hence the New Testament word for "truth" signifies not truth as a thought, but truth as a thing; not truth as an idea, but truth as a reality. Permit me, my friends, to ask you,—Do you receive the *things* of the Gospel? You receive the ideas, I know,—the glistening of your eyes, the ripples of light on your countenances, testify to that; but remember—it is not the ideas that save but the things. Many have received the ideas and perished notwithstanding—salvation is not in thoughts but in things.

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2. The words further teach that the regenerate man *enters* the kingdom, becomes a denizen of it—a decided advance upon seeing or apprehending it. “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” But being so born, he becomes a naturalised subject of the kingdom, enjoying all its privileges and sharing all its responsibilities. “Our citizenship is in heaven.” Our names are inscribed in the roll of the book. “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man were born in her. The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there.” Yes, our names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. There is another book up there, a book of works, a chronicle of the deeds of the children of men; in the face of that no man shall live. But the Book of Life is not a book of works, but of names; not a catalogue of performances, good or bad, but of addresses. “The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there”—He Himself registers the birth of all His people, enters their names in His Book of Life. “Our citizenship is in heaven.”

Or take the older reading—“our conversation is in heaven.” If we are citizens of the heavenly kingdom, then our life must be worthy of our high calling. “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” We are nonconformists; but nonconformists from what? From the Established Church, you answer. True, but that is not much honour or dishonour to

anyone; to be nonconformists from the world is the only consideration of supreme importance to you and me. To take the lead in the organisation of worldly pleasures does not, any more than to take the lead in the perpetration of worldly sins, reflect much credit upon professors of Christianity. One day a man was bathing in the Thames when another was walking leisurely along its banks. "Ah," cried out the man on dry ground, "behold a Quaker in the river!" "How do you know I am a Quaker, when I am without my distinctive dress?" asked the bather in return. "Easy enough," was the prompt reply, "you swim against the stream—that is how Quakers always do." And I sincerely hope that it may be said of us—Yonder are men born of God. Why? Because they swim against the current—the swift deep current of worldly habits and frivolities. "He cannot sin, because he is born of God." "We are His workmanship, created unto good works;" or, as the words might be translated—"We are His poetry, created, tuned, to good works"—the English word "poem" being a direct derivative from the original for "workmanship." "We are His poetry." In the first creation God works prose; in the second poetry. "We are His poetry." Degrees of excellence, it is true, obtain in poetry: the metre is often lame, the quantity often faulty, the rhyme often harsh; but never mind—let God give us the finishing-touch, and we shall be all perfect, polished after the similitude of a palace; some on the short, some on the long, and some on the common, metre, but every

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3. Having once effected our entrance into the kingdom, its duties and privileges afford keen *enjoyment* to the new man. That is the signification many commentators attribute to the word "see" in the context. Once a man is born again he "sees," keenly relishes, the kingdom of God. It is marvellous the sweetness believers extract from Gospel truths. They "taste the heavenly gifts." "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Tasting God and finding Him sweet to the palate! "What is sweeter than honey?" The Psalmist finds no difficulty in answering—"Thy judgments are sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" "Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed *in* his deed." Not only after it and for it, but also *in* it. Many a day our duty lies on our path like the carcass of a lion—we fear to approach it. But let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid—march up valiantly, for "behold, there is a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion," honey sucked from the sweet flowers of Paradise, of which you may "take in your hands and go on your journey eating"—you will gather strength on the way. It is within the hardest duties—the carcasses of the shaggiest lions—that the celestial bees always put their honey to keep. The active diligent Christian invariably

finds blessedness *in* his deeds. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased."

And that is one of the main objects of the Gospel, to make religion a source of exalted and refined pleasure to man. The great object of Judaism was to teach mankind that religion is a duty, to bring men to do good because to do it is a duty, to induce men to worship because to worship is a duty. That is the first grade in true religion—to lead a godly life because it is our duty. But the great object of Christianity is to lift religion from the platform of duty to that of enjoyment, enlisting not only the conscience but the affections in the divine service, teaching us to live "soberly, righteously, and godly in the world that now is," because of the exquisite pleasure we therein experience. To the consciousness of duty it adds the sensation of pleasure. Have you heard of that pious monk in the middle ages? He intensely desired to have one look at the Saviour's bodily form, one gaze on His blessed and holy countenance. And one day as he was praying and meditating in his cell, "suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven," and raising his eyes he beheld in the cloud of light one like unto the Son of God. But just as he was going to fix his eyes on the celestial vision, the monastery bell rang calling him to his duty. What did he do under the circumstance? Did he postpone his duties and stop to feast his soul on the sacred sight? No; the little monk immediately started to his feet, went out of his cell, took his turn at the outer gate,

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distributed charity to the necessitous that flocked to the monastery for much-needed help. Having completed his task, he returned to his apartment, sorry to think he had missed the vision for which he had been praying all his monastic life through. But to his astonishment, there shone the Shekinah brighter than ever, and in the glowing radiance he beheld One, no longer like unto the Son of God, but "like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle," and out of the ineffable Brightness came a voice, saying, "Hadst thou remained here to the neglect of duty I should have departed; but seeing thou preferrest duty to ease, come and see;" and thereupon He showed to the poor monk His hands and His feet. The conscientious Christian was filled with unspeakable delight, not unmixed with holy awe. You see the lesson: to taste the joy of religion you must perform its duties; to enter the inner court of sweet communion with God, you must penetrate through the outer court of outward service. Through Judaism the world attained Christianity; and through duty shall we arrive at solid pleasure.



XI.

The Brazen Serpent.

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”—ST. JOHN iii. 14, 15.

THE question has often been asked, “What is the difference between the Gospels and the Epistles, between the truth as taught by Jesus Christ and the same truth as taught by the Apostles?” The only difference, it appears to me, is that which obtains between the seed and the flower. Here is a seed in one hand, and a rose in the other—what is the difference between them? Simply a difference of growth or development. The seed is the rose enveloped, the rose is the seed developed—it is the same flower in different stages of its history. You can with perfect propriety put the algebraic sign of equation between the bare tiny seed that you must adjust your glasses properly to see, and the full-blown rose, rich alike in colour and aroma. God gives His gifts to man in seed or germ, in the smallest compass possible; then leaves it to man to cultivate and unfold the same. He gives men seeds of roses, then leaves it to men to grow the roses. He gives men acorns, the seeds of oaks,

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then leaves it to men to develop the oaks. And when God incarnate trod the earth in the person of Jesus Christ, He gave men in the Gospel the seeds of truth; then left men under divine guidance and inspiration to develop the seeds into doctrines in the Epistles. Doctrines in the seeds in the Gospels, doctrines in fruit and flower in the Epistles. Take, for instance, the doctrine of the Atonement. Some lay to the charge of the Apostle Paul the invention of this doctrine—a great honour, by the way, to the Apostle Paul. They confess that they see it in the Epistles, but deny that they see it in the Gospels. Alas! our modern Homers often nod. True, it is not to be found in the Gospels in its developed, but it does not require much ingenuity to see it in its enveloped form; and a letter is the same whether folded in an envelope or unfolded in the hand. This doctrine in its first initial germ is clearly discernible in the text, and it will be my endeavour this morning to open its meaning and present it to your earnest and devout meditation.

The usual way to treat the text is to dwell on the points of likeness or difference, varying from three to thirteen, between the serpent lifted up in the wilderness and the Son of Man lifted up on the cross. I shall, however, confine myself to three analogies, which will enable me, I hope, to lay before you with as much clearness and succinctness as practicable the way of salvation in its completeness. We are so much in the habit of cutting up the way, and examining it in sections, that we are in danger of forgetting its unity, integrity, and correspondences.

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I. The analogy in the DISEASE: the poison of the fiery serpents fermenting in the Israelites, the poison of sin fermenting in us.

II. The analogy in the REMEDY: the brazen serpent lifted up on a pole a remedy for the Israelites, the Son of Man lifted up on the cross a remedy for us.

III. The analogy in the APPLICATION of the remedy to the disease. Looking at the uplifted serpent brought health to the Israelites, believing in the crucified Saviour brings salvation to us.

I. The analogy in the DISEASE. The poison of the fiery serpents was fermenting in the Israelites, the poison of sin is fermenting in us.

1. I begin then by observing that men are *sinner*s. However trite this truth appears to us, St. Paul thought it incumbent upon him to devote the first three chapters in the Epistle to the Romans to prove it. "We have proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin"—the very religious and the very profane, the very good and the very bad. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;" not only our unrighteousnesses, but our very righteousnesses; not only our worst works, but our very best works—they are all as filthy rags. You may endeavour by repeated efforts at moral improvements to wash your rags, but they are rags still, and you can no more wash them clean than an Ethiop can make his left hand white by rubbing it with his right.

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for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." "There is no difference." These words are joined in our Bible to the verse which goes before; but in the majority of Bibles to the verse which follows. "There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Better still "fallen short." The irrational animals *come* short of the glory of God, but no blame attaches to them for it; only men *fall* short of it; the idea of a fall or descent underlies all human history. Men *fall* short, consequently their shortcomings are culpable. Some have fallen more deeply than others; but there is no difference in the fact that all have fallen, and the least fall is death, as well as the greatest.

3. You therefore see that we all are under *sentence of death*. "Every mouth is stopped, and all the world is become guilty before God." On the margin, "all the world is brought under the judgment of God." Being guilty, we are all subject to the divine displeasure, liable at any and every moment to pay penalty unto God. The words do not mean that God actually demands the penalty, but they do mean that He has the full right to demand it whenever He thinks fit. What then is the penalty? Death. "The wages of sin is death," the wages never fall below that. The smallest sin deserves death as well as the greatest. You may think that it ought not: but it signifies nothing what you think, all depends upon what God thinks. And what does God think? What He says. And what does He say? "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Not the soul that sinneth

much, but the soul that sinneth, be it much or little, it shall die. Death is the penalty for one sin as well as for ten, for a small sin as well as for a heinous one. We are all under the condemnation of death, the religious Pharisee as well as the out-cast publican, the respectable tradesman as well as the convicted swindler. "There is no difference." You say there is a difference; the Bible says there is no difference. Which will you accept, your own estimate of your sin and its deserts, or God's estimate of the same? For my part, I shall accept God's estimate, even against my own reason. There is a difference of course in the degree of guilt, but the smallest degree will damn. It is the fact of guilt that will send us to hell-fire, the degree of guilt that will fix our place in the fire. "He that knew the will of his Lord, and did it not, will be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew it not with a few stripes;" but the first stripe will kill. God cannot fix on a smaller punishment, for in the deepest nature of things sin is death.

4. But not only are we guilty, and therefore justly liable to the punishment of death, but we are *polluted, morally sick*. The same sin that brought death upon us, wrought death in us. The venom of the fiery serpents curdled the blood and inflamed the flesh of the bitten Israelites, and would inevitably terminate in death, for aught they could do for themselves or their comrades for them. And the "poison of asps is under our lips"—it has vitiated our blood; sin has depraved our nature and for ever ruined our health. Many competent critics

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suppose that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil contained natural poison, and that that was one reason why God sternly prohibited Adam to partake of it, "for in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." Eat, however, he did; and as a consequence the body became mortal and the soul depraved. The divines teach that we all sinned in Adam. Likely enough: but one thing is incontrovertible—Adam continues to sin in us. The corruption of humanity runs in the blood. Sickness is contagious, health never—you catch fever, you never catch strength. The Jew transmitted his depravity to his children, but not his circumcision—each had to be circumcised afresh; and you impart your sin to your posterity, but not your holiness—each has to be regenerated anew. Thus we have inherited the disease of sin from our ancestors. We are both guilty and diseased. As guilty, death lies on us; as diseased, death works in us.

II. The analogy in the REMEDY. The brazen serpent lifted up on a pole was a remedy for the Israelites, the Son of Man lifted up on the cross is a remedy for us. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up."

1. This teaches us that our salvation comes through *man*. "So must the Son of Man be lifted up." By serpents were the lives of the Israelites endangered, and by a serpent God appointed that their lives should be preserved. And by man came sin into the world; by man also God has ordained



that salvation should come. "As by man came sin, so by man came the resurrection of the dead." Sovereignty has a large place, arbitrariness no place, in the way of our salvation—subtle analogies and deep correspondences pervade the whole scheme. Sin came into the world by man, fairly and fully by man. "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 14). Some of our theological standards declare that Adam was deceived; but "Adam was not deceived," says the Apostle. He sinned freely, coolly, deliberately, with the full concurrence of his entire nature. Sin came into the world through the will, the intelligence, and the affections—it came fairly and fully by man in the plenary and leisurely exercise of all his faculties. And as by man came sin, so also by man came salvation. It is not of man, but all the same it is by man.

2. Observe further that our salvation came, not by any man, but by the *Son of Man*—one who in the core of His being is closely united to every other man. The Son of Man, and therefore a brother to every other man, a brother that is more nearly related to us than any other human being,—nearer than father and mother, nearer than brother and sister. According to the ancient law of Israel and, I believe, of other ancient nations, the Goel, or nearest relative, alone had the right to redeem a man. This is what Job meant when he said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," my Goel or nearest relative, the one who has the right to purchase me. Thus Jesus Christ is the nearest relative any man has or can have, for

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He alone is the Son of Man. Abraham was a man, but not a brother of yours. Paul was a man, but not a brother of yours. The Emperor of China is a man, but no relation of yours. But Jesus Christ was man in a sense deeper and truer than any of them—He became man in such a way as to be a true brother to every other man. "He is the root of David," the root of the new humanity; and a fibre of the root is in every branch and twig, constituting the vitality and forming the unity of the tree. And Jesus Christ plunged deep down into the central essence of humanity, became incorporated with the core of our nature, and thus throws off His fibres to every member of the human race. All mankind have profited by the Incarnation. In the angels we see individuals but no species; in the animals we see species but no individuals; in mankind, however, we see both species and individuals, and this it is which made the Incarnation practicable and our salvation possible.

3. Our salvation, however, came not by the Son of Man as such, but by the Son of Man as *lifted up*, crucified on Calvary. The tendency of modern theology is to linger fondly around the Cradle of the Saviour, to make the Incarnation the central doctrine of Christianity. I need not tell you who listen to me every Sunday that in loving admiration for the Redeemer's Cradle I knowingly come behind no man, in devout reverence for the Incarnation I willingly fall behind no preacher. I may not be able to peer so deeply into the mysteries of this grand and wondrous doctrine as some of my brethren;

but I think I bow the knee as readily and supply as any of them at the mention of it. Blessed be God that His Son was cradled on our planet, that He was united with our essential humanity. But I must not stop there, for the Bible does not stop there—the central object of the Bible is not the Cradle but the Cross, not the Incarnation but the Atonement. For every reference to His birth, there are twenty to His death. “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ.” “I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” “So must the Son of Man be lifted up.” A glorious display of the condescending grace of God was doubtless made in Bethlehem; but we must not forget that on Calvary God and man were reconciled. “The chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him”—which, construed into the language of modern theologians, means that the punishment of our sin was inflicted upon Him. Do not let this startle you—it is consonant with the deepest philosophy as well as with the deepest and oldest theology. All that the advocates of the “moral theory” of the Atonement affirm, we also affirm; we differ from them not because we affirm less, but because we affirm more; not because we are narrower, but because we are broader. Christ suffered with humanity and for humanity, say Maurice, Bushnell, Young, and the school which they have popularised in the country. “Yes,” we answer; “blessed be His name, He suffered *with* humanity and *for* humanity; but He did more—He suffered *instead* of humanity.” *With, for, instead*: those are the three

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stages of love, and perfect infinite love will run through the whole scale. The advocates of the "moral theory" aver that He suffered with man, and there they stop. As a representative of orthodox theology, I say, "You do not go too far; the only fault we find with you is that you do not go far enough. The Divine Love Incarnate suffered *with* man and *for* man; but the philosophy of love as well as its theology demands that you should go a step farther—it suffered *instead* of man. If it did not do that it stopped short of the goal, the Divine Love Incarnate did not go as far as it might." Thus you see that God's love is more strikingly exhibited in orthodoxy than in the so-called broad theology—we wish it were a little broader. Christ suffered *with* man, and *for* man, and *instead* of man: *with* man in virtue of His keen sympathies; *for* man in that He confronted the malice and dire hatred of His persecutors, and thus suffered martyrdom rather than forsake the path of duty; *instead* of man in that He underwent the infliction of what the Bible calls "the wrath of God." The martyrs only suffered from sin; but Christ suffered from sin, and for sin—He died in the stead of sinners. "Christ once suffered, the just for the unjust."

4. You will further remark the *necessity* that existed for an Atonement. "So *must* the Son of Man be lifted up." Not shall, but must. In this chapter we read of two "musts." The first is in verse tenth. "Marvel not that I say unto you, Ye *must* be born again." That indicates the absolute necessity for a radical change in human nature in order to be saved; without it our salvation is im-

possible. The other "must" is in the text, "So must the Son of Man be lifted up." This indicates an imperative necessity for an atonement on the part of God. This "must" strikes its roots down deeper than into either type or prophecy, into the nature of God Himself. If sinners were to be saved, there existed a divine necessity that sin should be expiated. Sinners and suffering may be separated, sin and suffering never. Sin *must* be punished; the Son of Man *must* be lifted up. This necessity is not merely governmental, it arises out of the divine nature. Justice is the same in God as in man; but it bears a different relation to Him from what it does to us. Justice in man is only an element of character—I do not cease to be when I cease to be just. But justice in God is an essential attribute of nature—it would be as easy for God to cease to be as to cease to be just, His existence and His justice being for ever and ever inextricably intertwined. On the one hand, God is infinitely just; He is infinitely merciful on the other. And in any complete system of theology these two statements must be co-ordinated. The justice must not trench on the love, the love must not absorb the justice. God has both the one and the other. This is beautifully set forth in allegory: "Melchisedeck, king of Salem, first being by interpretation king of Righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is, king of Peace." And God is first king of Righteousness—rock must form the deepest foundation of all existence, finite and infinite: after that also king of Peace—love is beauty and softness rounding off

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the ruggedness of the rock. God's righteousness must be upheld, all its demands fully met; then He will be at liberty to reign in love over a reconciled world. "Grace must reign through righteousness"—not behind it or despite it, but through it. "Whom God hath set forth a propitiation, to show forth His righteousness." This word "propitiation" is first used in Genesis vi. 14, and is there translated "pitch." "And Noah pitched the ark within and without with pitch." The carpentry of the antediluvians was not extra perfect; holes, crevices, chinks, unevennesses disfigured the sides of the ark, and endangered the safety of the ship. Modern shipwrights caulk the ship, Noah and his carpenters pitched it within and without with pitch, filled the holes and crevices and smoothed down all unevennesses, thereby fitting the ark effectually to shut out the water of the Deluge. And when God turned the world out of His hand at first, to swim through the immensities, he pronounced it "very good," the workmanship was without a flaw. But sin dented it, riddled it, cut it up in manifold ways—"the earth was full of violence." But Jesus Christ through His Atonement "pitched it within and without with pitch," speaking metaphorically of course; He filled up the cavities and the crevices—His Atonement keeps out the flood—the flood of the divine wrath. He rehabilitated the globe in the sight of its Maker.

5. The text further implies that Jesus Christ, having been uplifted on the cross, is now both *physician and remedy* to His people. The uplifted



brazen serpent could only heal one disease, the violent inflammation consequent on the serpent's bite, to that it was an infallible antidote; but the uplifted Saviour heals all manner of sicknesses and diseases among the people, moral and physical, but especially moral. "I will forgive thine iniquities, and heal all thy diseases." "He saves to the uttermost all those who come to God through Him." This word "uttermost" has two meanings. It first means the "uttermost" degree of perfection. He saves His people to the uttermost, raises their spiritual health to the highest pitch of possibility, without ache or pain, flaw or drawback, health in boundless abundance. You shall be perfectly well by-and-by, believers, free alike from sin and sorrow, from moral suffering and physical pain. But it also means the "uttermost" degree of continuation. We have known men in excellent health one day, but ere many weeks passed their health gradually and imperceptibly impaired, and to-day they are sleeping their long sleep under the weeping yew. But believers in Jesus are saved to the uttermost, their health is carried up to the highest point of possibility, and its continuation for ever is absolutely guaranteed. The cross of Christ is now the tree of life for the nations. As the tree of knowledge is supposed to have grown poison, so the tree of life is believed by many to have grown the antidote thereto. Hence the words, "lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever; therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden." If he ate of

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the tree of life, he would have secured a physical immortality in sin; the most awful destiny imaginable. Therefore God in mercy drove him from the tree, and put cherubim with flaming swords turning every way as sentinels to guard the approach thereto. Physical immortality in sin would be terrible for man and the universe at large. But Jesus Christ crucified is the substance of the tree of life: He does not give us immortality in sin; He does better, He gives us immortality free alike from its guilt and depravity. "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

III. As God ordained that the Israelites should receive life by looking at the brazen serpent, so He has ordained that sinners should obtain salvation by believing in the crucified Saviour. "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The revised version reads a little differently, "That whosoever believeth should have in Him everlasting life." The difference is merely verbal, the meaning remains practically the same; whosoever looked at the brazen serpent lived. Refusing to look, they died; consenting to look, they lived. So if you only believe in Jesus Christ, you shall live. "There is life in a look at the Crucified One." The Israelites were not bidden to mend themselves, to apply poultices and unguents to their putrefying sores. No; they had only to look; and new life immediately throbbed in their swollen veins. Neither are you enjoined to improve your life, to wipe away your old sins. No; look

as you are, look: believing that God would not hang up His Son on the cross to befool you, look and your soul shall live.

1. It means that through faith in Christ the sinner receives *permission* to live. This is what is meant by remission of sins, that God will not enforce the penalty against us. Two words are used in the English language in this connection—forgive and remit; forgive—give for; remit—set free, discharge. And two corresponding words are used in the original of the New Testament. The first is *χαρίζομαι*, to show grace, virtually of the same meaning as forgive—give for. The other word is *ἀφίημι*, to set free, virtually of the same meaning as remit—discharge, set loose. From confounding these two words, writers of much power, mental and spiritual, have fallen into an error of considerable gravity. Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, and after him the saintly Maurice, taught that God has actually forgiven all men in and since the death of Christ, that all now live under non-imputation of sin, and that individual salvation depends upon the cordial acceptance of this fact, and individual damnation upon its rejection. This argument, like most others, contains an element of truth. Everybody has been forgiven in the sense of *charizomai*; God has shown His pardoning grace to all men in the death of Christ; everybody has been forgiven in the literal sense of the word, namely, that God has *given for* them all that Almighty Love could offer. But all have not been forgiven in the sense of *aphiemi*; their sins have not been remitted; this is done only on their

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acceptance of God's pardoning grace. Their persons have not been removed from under the condemnation; this is done only on their faith in Christ, their personal concurrence in the divine plan of salvation. God has shown His pardoning grace in the sacrifice of His Son; He performs the pardoning act only when you believe in that sacrifice, thereby entering cordially and joyfully into the divine purposes. The cross is an ever-present and all-powerful testimony that God delights in mercy. But that mercy is not yours till you receive it, the pardon is not bestowed till you show your willingness to accept it. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

2. The words further imply that by faith in Christ crucified we acquire a *right* to live. This is what is meant by justification. In forgiveness we receive permission to live; in justification we receive the right to live. Thus you see that forgiveness and justification may be distinguished, though in the Gospel they are never separated. Amongst men, however, they are often separated as well as distinguished. Suppose that a criminal has been justly sentenced to seven years' penal servitude for burglary; but the royal prerogative to exercise clemency is extended to him, and in a month after his committal he is released. The man returns to his old haunts a pardoned, but not a justified, man. He goes back to society with an indelible stigma on his character, he is instinctively shunned by all honest and respectable people. Pardoned but not justified, either before God or society or his own

conscience. But the believer in Christ is not only pardoned but justified, he acquires a right to live. The old verdict of death is cancelled; and more—he is reckoned righteous in the righteousness of his Redeemer. He is justified before God, the holy angels, and his own conscience. Believe and you will be at once arrayed in this divine righteousness. “The righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” It is unto all here to-day, *unto* all without distinction, but *upon* all them that believe. Will you accept it? Will you believe in Jesus Christ? In whom will you believe, if not in Him? This righteousness is offered unto you now; accept it; let God array you in it. “He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” God’s righteousness on the sinner’s back! O wondrous grace! I know not how white Gabriel’s robes are to-night; but I know this—the robes of Gabriel’s Master are whiter. I know not how bright are the raiments of archangels; but I know this—the raiments of the archangels’ Lord are brighter. But when the guilty sinner believes, the sinner who has deserved to die a thousand times, he is arrayed, not in the same robes as the archangels, but in the same robes as the Lord of all the archangels of heaven.

3. But the text further teaches that by faith you will acquire the *power* to live; this is what is meant by regeneration. You get permission to live in forgiveness, you get the right to live in justification, you get the power to live in regenera-

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tion. Believe in Jesus Christ, and a new, divine, infinite life will gradually ooze into the dry cistern of your being, and fill you up to overflowing. Whether the cure of the Israelites who looked at the brazen serpent was instantaneous or gradual I cannot positively tell; perhaps they felt a little sore and stiff for a week or a fortnight; but their ultimate cure was a divine certainty. Our cure, however, is gradual; but it is divinely, gloriously certain. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." "He that believeth hath eternal life." Eternal life, like everything eternal, is always in the present tense. The eternal life enters the soul in regeneration, in crystal, perhaps in small, drops at first; but it continues to percolate and make more room for itself till at last it gloriously floods the soul. "Whosoever believeth hath eternal life." This appears to me to be the strongest proof of our immortality.

In the days of Christ faith in the everlasting life was practically extinct. Come with me to Palestine. Notice in the Sanhedrim in Jerusalem the representatives of the Jewish nation. Their Sanhedrim, like our Parliament, is divided into well-defined factions. Who is the President? Caiaphas, a Sadducee. Who are the party in power? The obsequious followers of the President, Sadducees to a man. And what do the Sadducees teach? Nobody can tell, but we know that they had expunged from their creed the doctrine of eternal life or the immortality of the soul. The Old Testament Scriptures contain most explicit



revelations of the doctrine; but notwithstanding their explicitness, the faith in them of the most learned and influential party in the land had died out into utter darkness.

Come with me again to Rome; we will enter the Roman Senate; there we see the representatives of the intelligence and virtue of the country; there we behold men of worldwide renown and of unsurpassed ability. There in the front sits Julius Cæsar, and there Cato, and there Cicero—men accounted authorities in literary taste to this day. The English Parliament of the present year, however rich in talent, cannot rival the Roman Senate fifty years before the birth of Christ. An important debate is going on—What punishment to dole out to the fellow-conspirators of Catiline against the State? Julius Cæsar stands up, as the High Priest of the national religion, and opens the debate in a speech which has been reported and transmitted to us. What does he say? He protests against putting the conspirators to death, as that was not to punish them but to let them escape punishment, for death, said he, was annihilation; beyond death—nothing. And that in the face of the highest intelligence and noblest virtue in Rome! Cato stands up and answers him—does he refute his arguments as to the immortality of the soul? Nay; he has much to say upon all other arguments, only a sentence or two upon this. Cicero follows and sweeps on with irresistible eloquence; does he answer Julius Cæsar on the supreme topic, the immortality of the soul? Nay, he makes just a reference, and then passes on. Faith had practically

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died out of the world. No new reasons have been added in natural theology since Socrates spoke and Plato wrote; Christ added the authority of His teaching; the apostles appealed to the fact of their Master's resurrection. But no amount of mere external testimony could again quicken the faith. What then did it? That the external teaching was corroborated in the consciousness of eternal life in them that believed. The old world had lost faith in "natural theology" reasons and Old Testament revelations, because their consciousness did not respond; they felt their fund of life exhausting within them; and when they felt mortality within, how could they believe in immortality without? But Christianity, besides giving a clear testimony concerning our immortality, has added the consciousness of immortality. "Whosoever believeth *hath* everlasting life;" and having the consciousness of the everlasting life within, it is easy to believe in the doctrine concerning an everlasting life without.

XII.

The Divine Love.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”—ST. JOHN iii. 16.

IN this chapter a detailed account is given us of the conversion of Nicodemus, “one of the rulers of the Jews.” “The same came to Jesus by night”—natural night and spiritual night. None ever come to Jesus but by night, when it has grown dark upon them in every other quarter. When you first came to Christ, you came by night—your soul was sunk in deep gloom.

Nicodemus, however, was not long in the society of Jesus before it began to dawn upon him. The Lord Jesus delivered in his hearing the fullest and most elaborate explanation of the Way of Salvation anywhere to be found in the Gospels. This exposition divides itself into two parts: the first treating of earthly, the second of heavenly, truths. “If I have spoken unto you earthly things, and ye have not believed; how shall ye believe if I speak unto you heavenly things?”

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truths and heavenly truths: these find their synonyms in the terminology of the present day in the words *subjective* and *objective*. Earthly or subjective truths: repentance—that is one; regeneration, the subject of the present conversation up to verse 12th—that is another; sanctification—that is a third. These are truths which we may experience in our own hearts, and therefore verify for ourselves.

Then from verse 12th on, the Saviour dwells on the heavenly or objective truths. The first He mentions is the Incarnation. "No man hath ascended to heaven but He that descended from heaven, even the Son of Man, who is in heaven." The Saviour does not say the word Incarnation—He never did say it; but though He articulates not the word, He clearly attests the fact. Now, the Incarnation is a heavenly or objective truth, that is, a truth which you cannot experience in your own soul, but must accept on bare, naked testimony. It belongs not to the domain of experience, but to the region of pure faith.

The second heavenly or objective truth He names is the Atonement. "For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." He does not say the word Atonement—He never did say it; but though He did not pronounce the word, He incontestably taught the fact. Now the Atonement is a heavenly truth, that is, a truth which you cannot verify in your own inward experience, but must accept on bare naked testimony. Do not misunderstand me: the effects

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of the Atonement you may experience, but the Atonement itself is an objective fact, accomplished once on Calvary, and never again to be repeated. It belongs not to the domain of experience, but to the region of pure faith.

The next heavenly or objective truth He specifies is the Divine Love. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." How the divine Heart felt towards the world, only the divine Being could know; it was an inaccessible secret of the divine Nature, and must be accepted on the bare, naked testimony of the only-begotten Son, who from everlasting was in the bosom of the Father. It is a heavenly objective truth, an experience of the Divine Nature, and not that of human nature. This then is the subject to which I now wish to solicit your attention—*The Divine Love*.

Luther rightly alleged of the text that it is the Bible in miniature. No wonder, therefore, that John Williams, the martyr of Erromanga, always selected it as the text of the first sermon he preached in every barbarous island of the South Sea which he happened to touch in his little missionary ship. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A very appropriate text for the savage inhabitants of the South Sea Islands, equally appropriate for the more civilised populations of our own country.

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I. The Divine Love in its SOURCE. "For God so loved the world."

II. The Divine Love in its MANIFESTATION. "That He gave His only-begotten Son."

III. The Divine Love in its DESIGN. "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

I. The Divine Love in its SOURCE. "For God so loved the world."

1. God so loved the world—the world in its *guilt*; therefore His love was a love of *benevolence*. He could not take delight in it, but He could and did wish it well. Two words are used in the New Testament to designate love. One is *agapao*, a word signifying love of intense good-will; the other is *phileo*, a word signifying love of positive delight. The first is that used in the text. "God so loved the world." He bore towards it infinite good-will. He could have no complacency in it, for it was steeped in guilt; but He could and did wish it well, He cherished towards it unbounded benevolence. The same word is used in the verse, "Love your enemies." The Lord Jesus does not enjoin us to delight in our enemies, and have pleasure in their society. He understood human nature too well to enjoin anything of the kind: but He does command us to deliberately wish them prosperity, to embrace every opportunity to promote their well-being. We ought to love men we do not like. The Almighty could not love the world in its sinful guilty estate with a love of complacency without



doing outrage to the deepest instincts of His nature; He could only love it with a love of sincere, infinite benevolence. But once the world believes in Christ, and is thereby reconciled, God loves it with a love of positive delight. "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I have come out from God." It is not the same word that is used here for love as in the text; the word here is that which signifies love of delight. He loves the ungodly world with a love of infinite benevolence; He loves the believing Church with a love of infinite complacency. He shakes hands with the world; He embraces, kisses the Church: that is the idea.

2. "God so loved the world"—the world in its *depravity*; therefore His love is *self-moved*. By the world here we are not to understand the world as made by God, but the world as ruined by the devil; not the world under the dominion of good, but the world under the tyranny of evil. Consequently there was nothing in it to attract the Divine Love; nothing to attract it, but an infinite deal to repel it. If God loved the world, obviously He must have moved Himself to do so. The ocean is always moving, but it is not self-moving. The cause of its movements is outside itself, in the moon, and in the wind. Did the wind and the moon let it alone, the Atlantic would for ever be a pacific ocean, quiet, restful, pellucid as an inland lake; it has no power to heave itself. But as for the shoreless sea of the Divine Love, it has the power to move itself; and it did move itself. It

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rolled in a grand irresistible current towards the shores of our world. Like the Divine Essence, the Divine Love possesses the power of self-determination.

Turn to your bodies of divinity—the bodies of divinity, I mean, when you and I were children, for recent books on divinity are singularly devoid of body, being rather the volatile spirits of divinity,—and you will, perchance, find enumerated among God's attributes both love and anger. But it is hardly justifiable, I think, to assign anger a place among the divine attributes. At any rate it is not an essential attribute, for we know of a time when there was no anger in the Supreme Being. Something in us called this property into existence in Him. As a rule, what is in the Creator gives existence to what is in the creature. But here is an exception—what is in the creature calls into existence what is in the Creator. Sin in us awakened wrath in Him. But for the sharp and sudden collision between God and man in Paradise, a spark of fire would have never been struck out of the Divine Nature. But let us not forget that since sin has entered, there is wrath in Him; but the cause of the wrath is outside Himself, in the creation. There is love in Him also, but the cause of the love is not in the creation, but deep down in the Creator. His love, like His being, is cause and effect in one; in other words, it is self-caused.

3. "God so loved the world"—the world, and not hell; fallen men, and not fallen angels; consequently His love is *sovereign*. By sovereign I do

not mean arbitrary—God has reasons for all He does; but free as opposed to necessary. Recent theological thought is somewhat confused on this subject; it first disturbs the water, and then mistakes foul water for deep water—a not uncommon mistake in these days. It reasons thus:—Inasmuch as God is essential love, He was under the highest necessity, the necessity of His own nature, first to create the world, and afterwards to redeem it, for the fundamental law of love is self-communication—love must manifest itself. Whereas the Rationalists bind God to the laws of created nature, the Transcendentalists bind Him to the laws of His own uncreated nature; both classes, however, agreeing in depriving Him of freedom of will. No, answers the Bible, God was under no necessity to create or redeem; He was at liberty to do as He liked. Men mistake certainty for necessity. This same distinction should be observed in the discussion of other doctrines, such, for instance, as the doctrine of election—the distinction, I mean, between certainty and necessity, between *will* and *shall*. Election does not destroy freedom of will; it makes faith on the part of man not a matter of necessity, but a matter of certainty. Iron fate has no room in the realm of free grace. Similarly in respect of the subject under consideration. Seeing that God is essential love, there was eternal certainty that He would both create and save, but no necessity. He was under no manner of obligation to Himself or others to love sinners—it is the spontaneous result of sovereign grace. He loved us

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according to the pleasure, not the necessity, of His will.

Not only He could refrain from loving us, if He thought fit; but He could have loved fallen angels instead, if such were His pleasure. But "He took, not hold of angels, but in the seed of Abraham took He hold." Why in us and not in them? "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." The angels fell, and are falling to this day; the world fell likewise; but though it fell outside the sphere of God's holiness, it did not fall outside the circle of His love. The angels fell, and no hand was extended to rescue them; men fell also, but were seized upon by the Hand of Mercy, thereby breaking the force of our descent. Oh, wondrous love! Did God leave us to our wicked doom, there were nothing to excite our astonishment; did He damn us, every soul, there were nothing to wonder at. The marvel is, not His wrath because of sin, but His love despite of it. A young man once came to the late venerable minister, Mr. Lewis Powell, of Cardiff, to tell him that his faith had recently been much shaken in the grace of the Gospel. "What shook it?" inquired the good man. "That verse in the ninth of the Romans," answered the young tyro in theology; "'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' I cannot understand why He should hate Esau." "Oh, indeed," answered the silver-haired saint in his quaint way, "it is a difficult verse, I confess, difficult to me as well as to you. But your difficulty is at the end, and mine is at the beginning. I can well understand why

He hated Esau, desperate character that He was; but I cannot for the life of me understand why He loved Jacob. I can well understand why He should hate the whole human race, but it beats me quite to understand why He should love you and me." Many cannot understand the mystery of the Divine Wrath, and accordingly deny everlasting punishment; but I understand, I think, the mystery of the Wrath tolerably well, but I cannot for the life of me understand the mystery of the Love. "For God so loved the world."

II. The Divine Love in its MANIFESTATION. "That He gave His only-begotten Son." He sent Moses, but gave His Son; He sent John the Baptist, but gave Jesus Christ. He sent scores since the beginning of time, but He never gave one save the Only-begotten.

1. The Divine Love was manifested in the birth or *incarnation* of Jesus Christ. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John iv. 9). This did not engender or excite the love, it only manifested it. The law of gravitation existed from the foundation of the world, it daily exerted its influence, keeping the stars in their orbits and swinging them around their respective centres. The mysterious force, however, was unknown until discovered by Sir Isaac Newton, and published in his writings. It existed from the first; only a century or two ago was it made manifest. In like manner the love of

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God existed from eternity, from days of old. It burnt as hot in the days of Noah and of Abraham, as on the Incarnation morn or the Atonement eve. All through the ages it governed the world with a view to its final redemption. But in the Incarnation and Propitiation was it revealed, only then did it force itself upon the obtuse vision of the world. "Ye have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from—out of—the Father, and am come into the world." Not only He came *from* God, but He came *out of* God. John the Baptist came *from* God. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." But Jesus Christ came, not from God, but out of God—He emerged from His central essence. "And He came into the world,"—not to it, but into it. Out of God into the world, out of the loftiest heart of divinity into the deepest heart of humanity. "He descended into the lowest parts of the earth." And when the doors of the Eternal Bosom were opened for the Eternal Son to come forth, the waves of the Divine Love flowed forth a mighty flood upon the earth.

2. The Divine Love further manifested itself in the death or *Atonement* of the blessed Saviour. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John iv. 10). The Incarnation in the ninth verse, the Atonement in the tenth. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" to be a "propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." You therefore perceive that the Divine

Love is not the effect of the Atonement, but the cause. The death of Christ, the doctrine of the Atonement, has often been preached in a manner to bedim the Divine Love, instead of to manifest it. Therefore I will venture to repeat in order to imprint it indelibly on your memory—love is not the effect of the Atonement, but the cause. “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” “And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together,”—language full of significance, and replete with the tenderest pathos. “God will provide Himself a lamb,”—His love will furnish the sacrifice His justice demands. What God like unto our God, Himself providing at His own expense the offering He requires? “He gave His only-begotten Son.” The gods of heathenism received sacrifices, but they never gave them. The God of the Gospel, however, gives the sacrifice He demands. Transport yourselves in imagination to Athens or Rome; observe closely the images of the gods, in motley crowds on either hand of you; see the rivers of red blood flowing *towards* them. No marvel that “Paul’s spirit was stirred within him as he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.” Come with me again to Jerusalem. Behold the image of the invisible God lifted up on Calvary. Does blood flow *towards* it? No; blood flows *from* it. Here then we have hit upon the radical difference between paganism and Christianity. Blood *to* the image: that is the essence of paganism. Blood *from* the image: that is the essence of

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Christianity. The heathen gods demand a sacrifice, but never provide it; the Gospel God both demands it and provides it. "He gave His only-begotten Son."

"God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Here I rather like the Welsh version—"God will look into Himself for the lamb of the burnt-offering." Looking outside Himself He saw nowhere a lamb fit to bear the burden of the world. But turning His eyes back upon Himself, He saw in His own bosom the needed ransom. "He looked into Himself," and in Himself found the lamb "for a burnt-offering," "and so they went both of them together"—God and the Lamb, the Father and the Son. "They rose up early in the morning" of time, started on their sacrificial errand, travelled together the paths of the centuries, and at last reached the top of the Hill. And once there, God said, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow." "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Oh, wondrous grace! Sparing His enemies, but not sparing His Son!

3. It will further heighten our conception of the Divine Love if we allow our minds to dwell a little longer upon the *Person* whom God thus gave—"His only-begotten Son," "His own Son," the Son of His love. Unitarians believe ardently in the Divine Love; indeed, that is the sum and substance, the centre and circumference, of their theology. But they are unable, they say, on philosophical and other grounds, to believe in the Divine Son. But to me the Divine Love is the most cogent reason for

believing in the Divine Son. Love must have an object as well as a subject; one to be loved as well as one to love. Love is always a predicate; there must be one at each end. Accordingly Jesus Christ is uniformly regarded in the New Testament as the Son of God, the infinite object of the infinite love.

In the text He is denominated the "only-begotten Son"—the only Son God has. The love to the world which prompted the Father to immolate His only Son, must be great beyond finite comprehension. The Gospel has introduced a new rule into arithmetic, to estimate love, not by what it gives, but by what it has left after giving. The widow in the story cast into the treasury two mites, only two; yet the Master affirmed that she gave more than all the rich men of Palestine. How did He arrive at that conclusion? By calculating what she gave? No; but by calculating what she had left after giving; she had nothing. Judge of God's love by the same standard; by what He gave? Yes, if you like, and by what He had left after giving. "He gave His only-begotten Son"—after giving Him He had no Son left. When Abraham gave Isaac, to which reference is probably made in the text, he had Ishmael still with him. But when God gave His Son, He had no Son left in the family. Love could not make a greater gift; it virtually exhausted itself. He could give countless worlds as a ransom for our souls, and be none the poorer, for He would be giving only of His abundance. With a word of His mouth, or a wave of His hand, He could create others larger and

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No wonder, therefore, that "God commendeth His love towards us, because that, whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He commendeth His love, thrusts it on our attention, holds it up to our adoring gaze. Much power is displayed in the creation, but God does not think it worth His while to draw special attention to it. To Him to create was a very small matter. He taketh up the isles as the small dust of the balance. Much wisdom is exhibited in the complex laws and melodious harmonies of the spheres; but God nowhere commends it. He once said, "Very good," and never repeated the verdict. But "He commendeth His love," directs our thoughts in a special manner to it. "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." But God hath greater love even than that; He sent His Son to lay down His life for His enemies. No wonder that He commends it, and nothing pleases Him more than to hear us commend it as best we can. "Do your gods love?" asked the missionary of his pagan hearers. "The gods never think of loving," was the prompt but cheerless reply. But blessed be His name, our God thought of loving. "For God so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son." "Is that true?" asked the heathen inhabitants of the Tahiti Islands of Nott, the missionary, as they listened with glistening eyes to him reading the text. "Quite true," replied

the missionary. "Then how can you say it without weeping?" remarked they in utter astonishment, as the big tears flowed copiously, sparkling like crystals on their dusky cheeks.

III. The Divine Love in its DESIGN. "That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

1. It has in view the salvation of every *individual*. "Whosoever," "every one," that believeth shall be saved. "For God so loved the world"—there you have love of the universal, mankind as a whole. "That whosoever believeth shall not perish"—there you have love of the individual, mankind as units. And the pre-eminence of the Gospel in this respect is that it unites love of the universal with love of the individual. Positivism talks a great deal of the love of the race, and so far it deserves commendation; its teaching chimes in beautifully with that of the Gospel. But here, as in almost every other instance, its truth is only half truth, and taken for the whole is dangerous error. It inculcates love of the race, but is comparatively careless of the individuals composing the race. It sacrifices the individual to the species. Annihilation of the individual, immortality only of the species: that, I believe, is its creed—a cheerless creed enough to me and to you. It encourages the immolation of the one to the many, of the individual man to the race of which he is the unit: a half truth, which, by denying personal immortality and consequently excluding the great law of compensa-

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tion, is tantamount to downright error. The central doctrine of Positivism is that of evolution; the central principle of evolution is—the survival of the fittest by the destruction of the weakest. It slays the weak for the welfare of the strong. But Christianity, so far from sacrificing the weak for the benefit of the strong, directly takes their part and champions their cause, saying, “Ye that are strong ought to bear the burdens of the weak.” The Gospel brings salvation to the race, because it offers salvation to every individual man. The welfare of the all by the destruction of the one: that is Positive Philosophy. The welfare of the all by the salvation of the one: that is Christianity. Which, young men, think you, is the better, and worthier of your adherence? The Gospel seizes the lost units of the race; seeks for the one sheep that is lost; sweeps the house, lights the candle, and takes an immensity of trouble to recover the one piece of silver that dropped into the mire. “That whosoever—every one—that believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “I thank God for this word ‘whosoever,’” remarked Richard Baxter; “did it read, there is mercy for Richard Baxter, I am so vile, so sinful, that I would have thought it must have meant some other Richard Baxter; but this word ‘whosoever’ includes the worst of all the Baxters that ever lived.”

2. The Gospel offers to every individual the *supremest, most precious blessing* God Himself can bestow—“everlasting life.” “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Why—my text is brimful of the "everlasting:" the Everlasting Love in the beginning, the Everlasting Son in the middle, and the Everlasting Life at the end. "And the end everlasting life." What then does this mean? First, it means endless life. That is the popular idea generally attached to it, and is by no means an undeserving one. But more especially in the Scriptures it means supernatural or divine life. The popular idea is based upon that of arithmetical progression, an unlimited series of years. But that does not exhaust the Scriptural idea. What then is the Scriptural idea? The divine or supernatural life bursting in upon the human and filling it to overflowing, the life of God pervading, ennobling, inspiring, absorbing the life of the soul, a total submersion of the human by the divine. Everlasting Life is none other, can be none other, than the life of the Everlasting Being. "How many gods are there?" was a question once addressed to a number of children. "One" was the unanimous answer. "How do you know?" further inquired the gentleman. "Because the Bible tells us," again answered the little ones. "How do you know the Bible speaks the truth?" again pressed their interrogator. After a moment's pause, one little man ventured the answer—"If one God fills everywhere, there is no room for another." Well done and well said, little philosopher! His philosophy was as sound as his theology. Two Infinite Beings cannot co-exist, neither can there be two Everlasting

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Lives: the conception is impossible. The Everlasting Life—what is it? None other than the life of the Everlasting Being. The eternal life man acquires by faith is none other than the life of the eternal God; they are not similar but identical, numerically one and the same. Believers are “partakers of the divine Nature,” sharers of the divine Life.

3. Let me remark, in conclusion, that the Gospel offers to every man the supremest blessing on the easiest, *cheapest* terms—faith. “That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” “Only believe, and thou shalt be saved.” You have nothing to do but to believe. God the Father had a great deal to do, and God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost: but man has nothing to do but to believe. Life, heaven, God—all are yours on the simple condition that you receive them. The terms could not be easier and more advantageous. Be united to Jesus Christ by faith, and you at once become an inheritor of eternal life. Do you believe? This is the question which must settle your eternity. Not, do you sin, but do you believe? Are you united to Jesus Christ? Of the precise origin of the late civil war in America I am not quite sure; but I am told it was a perverse misunderstanding on the subject of slavery. The North was against the slave-trade, the South for it; and so both parties appealed to weapons of war. But be that as it may, one thing is clear; not many months passed before the question of slavery was swallowed up in the more important question of the Union—the Union of the States. Who is for or

against the slave? There the conflict began. Who is for or against the Union? There it finished. Neither am I quite certain of the first cause of the prolonged controversy between earth and heaven, man and God. A rumour was afloat in my native neighbourhood that it all began in a slight misunderstanding touching a certain apple-tree in the garden of Eden. But be that as it may, the question of the apple-tree has been long ago swallowed up in the more important question of the union—the union with the Son. Salvation hinges not on such questions as what was the first sin, or who is the greatest sinner? but upon the simple straightforward question—Who is for or against the union with Jesus Christ? Do you believe in the only-begotten Son? If you do, you have passed from death unto life. If not, “there remaineth for you no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

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## XIII

**The Woman of Samaria.**

"And He must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh He to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well : and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water : Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink."—ST. JOHN iv. 4-7.

1. You will please observe that the person to whom we are here introduced was a *Samaritan*, a member of a race specially hateful to the Jews. "The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans," being of different national stocks. When Sanballat, king of Assyria, carried away into captivity the Israelitish inhabitants of Samaria, "he sent men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel, and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof."

These foreigners were the ancestors of the Samaritans of whom we read in this chapter. They carried with them to Samaria their Assyrian idols, each tribe or clan its own idol. Circum-

stances, however, compelled them to abandon their heathen cultus and to adopt the worship of Jehovah, "the god of the land."

The pure-blooded Jews accordingly looked upon these Samaritans as Gentile intruders, all the more odious because occupying a portion of the land given to the seed of Abraham for an inheritance, and flagrantly polluting the worship of Jehovah. They hated them with a hatred doubly dyed in the gall of bitterness. They went the length of denying them a part in the resurrection. Once a year they publicly and formally anathematised them in all their synagogues. Whereas they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte from among other nations, a convert from among the Samaritans would have been contemptuously rejected. A rabbinical maxim further taught, "Whosoever eateth a Samaritan's bread is as one that eateth swine's flesh." To avoid, therefore, all defiling contact with a people so accursed, the severely orthodox Jews made a circuitous route through Perea to reach their fellow-countrymen in Galilee. What will unenlightened zeal for orthodoxy not do! The Saviour, however, whilst not abating one jot of the rightful claims of the Jews,—*"Salvation is of the Jews,"*—viewed this excessive scrupulousness as transgressing the bounds of neighbourly decorum. He sent His disciples to their city to buy bread, despite the rabbinical teaching, and here He enters into a free and earnest conversation with a Samaritan concerning the nature of God and true worship.

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2. This Samaritan is further shown to be a *woman*. In olden time woman's position was specially humiliating. "Never speak to a woman in the street, even if she be thy wife." "Burn the words of the law rather than teach them to a woman." Those were maxims just then current in Jewish society. If proof were needed of a strange abnormal disturbance in the history of the human race, it would be found in the unworthy treatment woman has received at the hands of society. Throughout the animal creation, the female sex, it has been pointed out, is treated with respect, tenderness, and consideration. Among birds and brutes the female is never systematically maltreated. This occurs only among men—a proof scientific of some terrible wrenching in the past history of the race. The Saviour, however, in the unsullied purity of His manhood, brushed aside as cobwebs all social regulations which tended to perpetuate this state of feminine servitude. But He could not do it without exciting the mute wonderment even of those who knew Him best. "They marvelled that He talked with the woman."

3. It is further intimated that this woman was a "*sinner*"—a sinner in the Jewish sense of the term. Not only was she poor and belonging to a heathen nation, but she lived in habitual sin. "Go, call thy husband." And she said, "I have no husband." Jesus said unto her, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast, is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly." It appears that she had

been divorced five times; "and he whom thou now hast is not *thy* husband." This little word *thy* seems to be emphatic. "He is not *thy* husband," but the husband of another. Thus she was living in habitual adultery.

But notwithstanding her life of illicit indulgence, the Saviour enters into earnest holy conversation with her. We have an account also of Socrates once holding a parley with the "strange woman." What is the purpose of his conversation? Does he endeavour to reclaim her? Nay; he only teaches her how to ply her infamous trade with greater success, furnishing her, out of his deep knowledge of human nature, with new foibles wherewith to entrap the unwary. In extenuation of his offence it has been alleged that he was only making an experiment with his much-vaunted "method." Maybe; but it conclusively proves that he had no adequate conception of the gross turpitude of moral evil, and that he was animated by no strong desire to win back to virtue those who had fallen from feminine integrity. What infinite distance separates the conversation of Socrates with the courtesan from the conversation of Christ with the Samaritan woman!

The Saviour conversed with her, not only despite her exceeding sinfulness, but because of it. "He came to seek and to save the lost." And He could not let this opportunity pass of endeavouring to effect the salvation of this unhappy woman. When the salvation of souls was in the question, His great heart burst through all rabbinical re-

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strictions. "What do you consider the most important thing?" Dr. Lyman Beecher was asked on his death-bed. "It is not controversy; it is not theology; it is saving souls," replied the dying saint. And Jesus never let opportunities of doing good escape Him. "The wise man makes opportunities," remarks Bacon. But so far from making them, we let them slip. Let us imitate the Master; let us break through conventionalities and social etiquette, if thereby we can pluck a brand from the burning.

I. Jesus Christ ENLIGHTENING the woman.

II. Jesus Christ RECLAIMING the woman.

III. Jesus Christ INSPIRING the woman, or imparting to her His own enthusiasm.

I. Jesus Christ ENLIGHTENING the woman. He leads her from natural to spiritual subjects.

i. Observe the sweet *courtesy* which characterises His interview with her. He opens the conversation, not with a contemptuous sneer or opprobrious epithet, according to the manner of the Jews, but with a modest, simple request, "Give me to drink." And notwithstanding her ungracious rebuff, a mixture of banter and vulgarity, not one word of petulance, or even of rebuke, escapes His lips. A most gentlemanly stranger! The fact is, true religion teaches us to be courteous and respectful towards men, as well as reverent and worshipful towards God. A man is a gentleman in the same proportion that he is a Christian. The Saviour's unexampled

urbanity doubtless greatly impressed the woman of Samaria. Such a perfect gentleman she had never met before. At the commencement of the conversation she calls Him a Jew. A little further on she styles Him Sir or Rabbi. A little further on yet, she styles Him both Sir and Prophet. "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a Prophet." A few verses further on still she timidly pronounces Him to be "the Christ," the Messiah that was to come. He, whom she considered at the beginning of the intercourse to be a vagabond Jew, has advanced wonderfully in her estimation; His head towers high above the stars. Undeniably His personal demeanour was a powerful factor in the genesis of this conviction.

To speak the truth is not enough—it must be spoken in love; and the love will impress quite as much as the truth. A hawthorn, near Glastonbury Church, one of the oldest churches within these realms, was reported to bud and blossom in mid-winter; whereas the bushes and trees round about looked bare and naked, this particular one appeared clad in beauty. What was the cause of its flowering in mid-winter? Tradition answered that Joseph of Arimathæa, the supposed first missionary of Christianity to Britain, and the accredited founder of the Glastonbury Church, touched it one day in passing with the fringe of his garment, whereupon extraordinary virtue flowed into the bush, and it forthwith blossomed. What is not true naturally may be true spiritually. Let men of prickly characters, the cantankerous thorns of humanity, be gently brushed by the hand of love, and forthwith they will flower in

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all the beauty of holiness. Jew, Sir, Prophet, Christ; such is the respect engendered by courtesy.

2. Notice also that the woman's lack of culture did not hinder the Saviour making to her some of the *grandest disclosures* anywhere to be found in Holy Writ. Pythagoras taught the maxim to his disciples and scrupulously observed it himself, "Never wear the types of the gods upon your rings." That is to say, do not publish your highest and most sacred truths to the ignorant and uninitiated. Jesus Christ acts here, however, on a totally different principle; in the fulness of His heart He makes to this poor sinful woman some of His sublimest revelations. A radical mistake preachers, missionaries, and tract-distributors often make, is to attempt to simplify the Gospel, as if we could render it more intelligible than Christ made it. Away with our Gospels made easy! It cannot be made easier for comprehension or practice than Christ and His Apostles left it. In communion with unlearned but unsophisticated people, Christ made all His grandest disclosures of divine truth.

The sublime will always awake the corresponding consciousness. Personally I love occasionally to contemplate truth in its infinite dimensions. I delight to view it rising mountain above mountain, like the Alps or Himalayas, and stretching up and away into the infinitude of God. This is one reason why the words of Christ have more power and permanence in them than the systems of men. A Greek temple was symmetrical, beautiful, always embodying the Greek idea of the finite; consequently, however

pleasing, it never subdued the spirit into a posture of worship. But a Gothic temple, lacking perhaps in precision and proportion, bears on it the impress of the infinite, and floats the mind away from itself towards the eternal, the spire leading the imagination upward to the sky, suggesting incomparably more than it expresses. And systems of divinity—what are they? Only Greek structures, measurable in every part, and however edifying to the intellect, they do not overwhelm the spirit into an adoring mood. But turn to the conversations and discourses of Christ, and you are moving in Gothic temples, every nave bearing on it the impress of infinitude, every transept in its mingled light and shade flinging across the mind the shadows of eternity. Let us studiously avoid puerilities, crudities, and silly anecdotes in dealing with the uneducated, and declare to them the whole truth in its bare simplicity and quiet grandeur, and, with the blessing of God, they will fall down and worship.

3. It is further worthy of observation that the Lord Jesus made a discovery to this woman which He never made to the Pharisees, nor directly to His own disciples—the discovery of His *Messiahship*. "I am He." Why to her, and not to them? Because, answer the commentators, it would not be safe to make the confession openly and publicly in Judæa or Galilee. That may be true; but the main reason, doubtless, lay in the different dispositions of those whom He addressed. The eagle has to strive hard and swoop round a great deal before he soars above the clouds, the weight of his body

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being a disadvantage to him to ascend. The lark, however, though smaller of stature and feebler of wing, soars up with rapidity and ease, the slightness of her body greatly facilitating her ascent. Thus minds of powerful calibre, heavily equipped with native and educational endowments, find it difficult to make their way up to the calm presence of God, their very ability being an impediment to them. Seeing every difficulty and feeling the force of every objection, they have to turn round and round and ascend laboriously in spiral columns. But many souls, small as larks, shoot up easily and gracefully, almost in a straight line, carolling all the way as they go, to the pure serene blue of the divine Presence. To the Samaritan woman, and not to the learned Pharisees, did Christ openly avow his Messiahship, and present Himself in the majestic nakedness of His divine mission.

II. Jesus Christ RECLAIMING the woman. The object of His enlightening her was to effect her salvation.

I. Jesus Christ always aimed at *doing good*. "He went about doing good." "He must therefore needs go through Samaria." You will find in ancient history examples of men doing good spasmodically—doing good from sudden impulses, doing good when the suffering presented itself to the eye, and the opportunity offered itself to the hand. In ancient history, however, the relief was the result of natural impulse; but in Christianity the impulse has been dignified into a principle, nature has been elevated into religion. Under the Christian Dispensation

we are to do good, not from impulse, but from principle. "Love your enemies," the word for love here signifying not so much love as a feeling as love as a principle; for love as a feeling has its seat in the heart, but love as a principle has its seat in the will. Christ enjoins love of the moral will. Love as a feeling ebbs and flows according to our surroundings, and therefore works fitfully—active in the presence of misery, dormant in its absence. But love as principle of the will cannot rest; principle is ever the same, consequently uniform in its action—it goes about doing good, seeking out hidden suffering. Thus the love exhibited by Christ is widely different from that inculcated by heathen philosophers. Plato and Aristotle teach you to love mankind, but always *for your own sakes*. They teach you to assuage suffering, not as a matter of duty but of expediency; not for the sake of the men who suffer, but for your own sakes—that the natural sensitiveness of your heart be not often and unnecessarily pained. Selfishness is the taproot of heathen virtue, the reason even for the cultivation of love, benevolence, and philanthropy. Jesus Christ also teaches you to love mankind, not however for your own sakes, but for their sakes, or rather for His sake. He urges you to alleviate the distress of your neighbours, not that you may be free from deleterious influences and exempt from the necessity of beholding disagreeable sights, but that they may be made healthier, holier, and happier. The love of the Gospel has not self-interest, but self-sacrifice, as its essence. "He must needs go through Samaria;"

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He felt a divine imperative, a supreme obligation, to embrace every opportunity of benefiting others. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." He came to do, not His own will, but that of Another. Herein He differed widely, fundamentally, from all ancient heroes and sages. Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, evinced great courage. But theirs was the courage of self-assertion, whilst His was the courage of self-abnegation; theirs the heroism which affirmed their own will, His the heroism which gave up His own will; theirs the unbending determination which led to the sacrifice of others to aggrandise themselves, His the unbending determination which prompted the sacrifice of Himself to benefit others. The courage of self-assertion is the courage of the devil; that of self-sacrifice is the courage of God.

2. He sought to do the *highest* good by labouring for the reclamation of the worst characters. He keenly and tenderly sympathised with the erring. He looked with an eye of infinite pity on the notorious sinners of the age, the men and women who unhappily laboured under the excommunicating ban of respectable society. In Him mercy to sinners, as well as tenderness to sufferers, first came to bloom.

The history of the world relative to this subject is divisible into three stages. The first is a state of well-nigh complete insensibility. Sin was not known to be sin; it was passed by unheeded; right and wrong escaped unnoticed. This stage in the development of society is graphically described in

the Iliad, in which are powerfully set forth heroes and cowards, strong men and weak men, but not good men and bad men. The distinction between virtue and villany does not seem to have presented itself to the poet; in his age the moral sense, though existent, was practically torpid.

The second stage is marked by the awakening of the conscience, the idea of right and wrong rising grandly and awfully upon the nations. The difference is recognised between virtue and vice; virtue is applauded, vice censured. Woe to the evil-doer in this stage of civilisation, especially among the Hebrew people. Death is the penalty not only for murder, but for adultery, for blasphemy, and even for the desecration of the Sabbath-day. The idea of justice taught men to sympathise with the man sinned against, but not with the man sinning; it offered protection to the man receiving injury, but it had only severity to show to the man inflicting it.

The third stage is characterised by the exhibition of mercy, complete, full-orbed mercy, in the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus. Moses taught society to sympathise with one party to a crime—the party receiving injury. But Jesus Christ teaches us to view compassionately the two parties—the party receiving the injury and the party inflicting it. Ancient legislators teach us to put ourselves in the place of the man sinned against; Jesus teaches us to put ourselves in the place of the man sinning as well. Whereas men before the Incarnation had only pity enough to succour scantily one of the parties, Christ had pity enough to succour both.

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Accordingly He changed the attitude of the world in respect to its notorious sinners. A man of delicate health avoids the haunts of disease—therein lies his safety; a man of robust health visits them, for he carries his armour within him in the vigorous vitality of his constitution. In like manner the Pharisees avoided the slightest contact with publicans and sinners, for they wisely feared the contagion; their spiritual life was not strong enough to resist the insidiousness of the disease. But Jesus Christ associated daily with them, eating and drinking in their company,—perfect health fears not the infection. *Finite* goodness repelled publicans and sinners, *infinite* goodness attracted them: herein you will find the grand secret of the Gospel. “The publicans and sinners drew”—were drawing—“nigh unto Him.” It was not an exceptional incident; but a quiet pervasive influence was emanating unceasingly from His person, irresistibly attracting to Him all those who had gone out of the way. His attraction was such as not only to keep the good in their place, but also to draw the bad to their place.

In this He is an example to modern churches; we are still to succour the suffering, to relieve the destitute, to reclaim the wicked. And it must be confessed that the spirit of Christ leavens to a large extent modern society. Suffering is being largely diminished, destitution largely relieved, and we hail with unfeigned delight the strenuous efforts, crude and rude maybe, but honest and enthusiastic nevertheless, made in various quarters and in

divers ways at the present day, to recover the lapsed masses.

3. To successfully accomplish these ends, He threw into His philanthropic movements unprecedented *zeal* and energy. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." He had infinite faith in human nature. He saw its hidden potentialities in a clearer light than they had ever been discerned before. A lady, examining one of Turner's pictures, remarked to him, "But, Mr. Turner, I do not see these things in Nature." "Madam," replied the artist with pardonable *naïveté*, "don't you wish you did?" Neither did the Saviour's contemporaries behold in human nature the same vast possibilities of good as He saw; but it is devoutly to be wished that they did. In that age He was about the only one that was really sanguine relative to the future of mankind. A lowering gloomy despair had settled like a heavy, ponderous, deadly incubus upon the heart of the world. The great majority of men were judged incorrigible, irremediable, unimprovable, and accordingly handed over to blank despair. The philosophers cherished but a faint flickering hope that a few choice souls might be made meet to hold fellowship with the gods. Talk of the doctrine of Election as taught by Calvin! Why, in the worst caricatures of it ever made by men who designedly misrepresent it, it is an immeasurable advance upon the doctrine of Election, as taught by Plato and the other Greek philosophers—in the number, I mean, of the redeemed. Jesus Christ entertained large,

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tolerant, glowing, far-reaching views of the capabilities of human nature; not of a few richly-endowed and finely-organised souls, but of all men. He was emphatically an optimist, the only optimist of His century. It demands no great sagacity to perceive that the philosophy of His age was that known as pessimism, the very philosophy which has of late years distressed the heart of Germany and flung its baneful shadow on the more sober thought of this country. In happy contrast to all philosophies having despair as their upshot, the Gospel teaches us to look to the future undismayed, for the Saviour has an unwavering faith in the possible reclamation of the worst characters—the thief, the robber, the adulterer, the murderer. You have not; but here precisely the Saviour shows Himself wiser and more charitable than you—He had infinite hope of human nature.

According to the strength of His hope, was the fervour of His zeal in the work of reclamation. "He came to seek and to save the lost." He laboured in season and out of season to win back the outcasts of society. According to a long adopted interpretation, St. Mark describes the Saviour as the Servant of the Lord, treading the path of obedience. Accordingly He introduces almost every event in His career with the word "straightway" or "immediately." He uses it not less than twelve times in the first chapter alone. The Saviour never procrastinated, never delayed, never wasted a moment. Having accomplished one purpose, He "straightway" set forth to accomplish

another. This continued for three years without break or pause. Ministers' vacations had not then been invented. He was consumed by His fiery zeal to save the lost. In fact, He had more hope of the abandoned profligate classes than of the sanctimonious professors of religion. The worst sinners generally make the best saints. A certain painter was once employed to adorn a window in one of our national cathedrals, a work which he did with credit and skill. The artist, however, had an ingenious inventive apprentice, who picked up and preserved all the bits of glass that were nipped off and thrown away as useless. But out of these rejected pieces—so runs the story—he constructed a window of such exquisite beauty as to command greater attention and win heartier applause than that designed by the master artist. Thus the Scribes and Pharisees of Judaism, the poets and philosophers of Gentilism, the renowned builders of the social fabric, had been constructing their imposing temples out of the best men and chastest women of their respective ages and countries; the slaves, the harlots, the publicans, had been contemptuously rejected, and trampled upon as worthless refuse. At last Jesus Christ appeared; He fixed His kind, compassionate eye on the huge heap of human rubbish; He associated with the off-scouring of society; and lo! He built a grander temple and made more beautiful windows than the world had ever beheld before, out of the soiled characters rejected by the architects and builders of states and churches as vile, noxious offal. The

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woman of Samaria, the "woman who was a sinner," Mary Magdalene,—how attractively the light of Divine Grace streams down upon our world through their variegated histories!

III. He INSPIRED the woman, imparted to her His own enthusiasm. "The woman left her water-pot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"

I. She at once set about converting her *neighbours*. "Is not this the Christ?" Her evident excitement and eagerness produced a profound sensation in the town. "And many Samaritans of that city believed on Him for the saying of the woman." She did not lecture them, she only related her experience; and many believed for her "saying." We can also say; we cannot all preach and deliver elaborate discourses; but we can all speak a word for Christ to the listless and the forlorn.

"Despise not the day of small things." Her "saying" led to the evangelisation of a whole city. How often will a small cause set in motion a train of events that will issue in universal good. May I be allowed to recapitulate what, I have no doubt, some of you have either heard or read before? About two hundred years ago a travelling pedlar with his bundle on his back entered a Shropshire village. He called at a farm-house and offered for sale a copy of the "Bruised Reed" by Richard Sibbes. The farmer bought the book, and the farmer's son read it, and through it found salvation

in Christ. That farmer's son was none other than Richard Baxter. Baxter wrote a book called the "Everlasting Rest of the Saints," which was read by a young man, who was led by it to consecrate himself to the service of God. That young man was Dr. Doddridge. Doddridge in his turn wrote a book called "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul." That book was diligently perused by another young man, who was led by it to a life of holiness and widespread influence. That young man was William Wilberforce, the liberator of the slave. In his turn he wrote a book entitled "A Practical View of Christianity," the study of which was blessed to the conversion of Legh Richmond. Again, Legh Richmond wrote a book called "The Dairyman's Daughter," a book blessed to the salvation of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Englishmen all over the world. Let us therefore take encouragement, and labour in season and out of season, for we know not which will prosper, this or that.

2. The success attending the woman's simple, plain, unvarnished efforts filled the Saviour with a holy joy. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." "He that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." "The will of Him that sent me" is a constantly recurring phrase on the lips of Jesus Christ. Sin consists in the usurpation by the creaturely will of the place belonging legitimately to the Will of the Creator. Adam followed his own will, and not that of God, which doubtless constituted his fall. "Can it be," scoffingly ask infidels and a large number of so-called

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“liberal” theologians, “that God condemned to death Adam and his posterity for stealing an apple?” They evidently judge the enormity of the offence by the market price of the apple. No; we answer, He condemned him not for eating the apple, but for erecting his own will into antagonism to his Maker’s in eating it. If Adam insisted upon following his own will in the matter of an apple, do you think he would sacrifice that will in the matter of a world? If he refused obedience in an easy thing, do you suppose he would yield it in a matter more difficult? Sin is the refusal to recognise the Divine Will, to which our own owes constant, humble, loyal allegiance. That being the race’s apostasy, what will constitute its restoration? The constant recognition of the Divine Will, and prompt cheerful obedience to it.

XIV.

The Living Water.

“The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”—ST. JOHN IV. 14.

It is difficult for us, even on the hottest day in summer, to understand the sweet refreshing thoughts which, in the minds of the Oriental inhabitants of the world, cluster around a spring of water. Our climate is so humid compared with theirs, and our springs so abundant, that we cannot fully sympathise with their keen appreciation of wells of living water. Where a country is well irrigated, they behold fertility, verdure, abundance. Where there is no water, they see barrenness, famine, death. To them, therefore, life appears more closely associated with water than with any other element. Life—water: they always go together. Life seems to be dependent on water; hence they came to speak of the Water of Life.

Gradually these words came to have a mystical meaning. In the tongues of almost all peoples you meet with the Well of Life, the Cup of Immortality, the Fount of Youth. If you look over the dreamy aspirations of the Ancient and Middle Ages, you will

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find that they resolve themselves into two—a thirst for the elixir of immortality, and a longing for the philosopher's stone. The elixir was believed to possess the power to impart immortality to man, and the stone to possess the power to convert all baser metals into pure gold. The elixir was to set *me* right, the stone to set my *circumstances* right. But I need not remind you that the alchemists could neither concoct the one nor discover the other. Notwithstanding all their efforts, man remained both mortal and indigent. But these, like all other deep longings of our nature, are met and satisfied in Christianity. Christ gives to man "the white stone with the new name,"—this is the real Philosopher's Stone, and it will set our circumstances right by-and-by. He also gives us the Water of Life, which is the genuine Elixir of Immortality, and will render our persons really and truly immortal. "The water that I give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life." The subject I propose for our consideration is—*Vital religion*, or Christianity in the heart.

I. Religion in its SOURCE.

II. Religion in its NATURE.

III. Religion in its OPERATION.

IV. Religion in its DESTINATION.

I. Religion in its SOURCE. "The water that I shall give him."

i. Here true religion or saving grace is described as a *gift*. Not the water that I shall extract from

the heart or draw out of human nature, but "the water that I shall give." If you dig an artesian well in the parched desert of Sahara, it will gradually fill with water, the moisture in the deep soil slowly percolating into it. In like manner, say the Broad Church theologians, if you dig deep into the human heart, if you make an artesian well in human nature, you will find a little moisture, a little water, a little goodness; dig deep and you will find the concealed principle of life, a latent love of God, only they are covered over with ignorance and stifled with evil. Now I cannot discover that teaching in the Bible. Be it far from me unnecessarily to calumniate my nature and my kin. But still I prefer following the Bible on this as on every other subject: man is dead to God, utterly dead; not only dead on the surface, but dead at the core; not only dead in the branches, but dead at the roots. "Ye were dead in trespasses and sins,"—dead without a spark of life. "The carnal mind is enmity against God,"—enmity without a particle of love. "Ye were darkness,"—darkness without a ray of light. Human nature is an arid desert, on the surface and in the depths—you can never draw a single drop of living water out of it. True religion is not a development of anything in human nature; it is not the result of culture, however skilful and assiduous; it is the gift of Christ.

2. It is a *free* gift. "The water that I shall give." Not the water that I shall sell, nor the water that I shall partly sell and partly give. No; it is free grace given without money and without

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price. Water is one of the freest gifts of nature. Whereas you charge for milk, you readily give water. Well, Christ gives grace like water. He gives liberally and abundantly, and upbraideth not. God is too rich to sell; we are too poor to buy. But still, singular to say, this complete graciousness of the Gospel is the great stumbling-block in the way of its acceptance by man. The pride of the heart is so inveterate that we want to merit life, we want to purchase the water by our good works. We want to sell our "rags of righteousness" to God. But be convinced of this, however eager you may be to barter, God will never consent to sell. "The water that I shall give." He punishes according to desert; He saves according to grace. "The wages of sin is death"—it is something man has earned and deserved; "but the gift of God is everlasting life." It is pure sovereign grace, from beginning to end, without merit of any kind. In another place we read of the "gift of righteousness"—righteousness given to man on the simple condition that he will accept it. Luther tells us that so long as he looked upon the righteousness of God as a principle which demanded something from man, he feared it; but when He saw it was not a principle asking of man, but a principle giving to man, his soul was filled with peace; it was the germ of the Protestant Reformation. "The gift of righteousness." "The water that I shall give." This is my great complaint against the Roman Catholic Church, that it impinges on the grace of the Gospel, that it charges for the

Water of Life. But let us remember that it is all of grace; you must receive it gratuitously, or you shall not have it at all. "But you Protestant ministers," you say, "make the people pay; you seldom ever hold a service but there is a collection at the close." Just so; but I hope we make it sufficiently clear that we do not sell the water. Dr. Adam Clarke once preached on the words, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." At the conclusion of the discourse he announced a collection. "How can you, Doctor," asked a lady afterwards, "reconcile the freeness of the Water of Life with the collection at the close?" "Oh, madam," answered the learned and venerable divine, "God gives the water without money and without price; but you must pay for the water-works, for the pipes, and the pitchers which convey the water to your neighbourhood." Remember, you pay nothing to God; you are charged nothing for the water; but you cannot have convenient chapels to sit in without paying for them, nor a regular ministry to urge the water on your acceptance, without making a suitable provision for its support. The water is offered you without money and without price.

3. It is a free gift which only *Himself* can bestow. Not the water that my apostles or their successors shall give, but "the water that *I* shall give." Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel, but He has reserved to Himself the prerogative of dispensing grace. All we can do is to tell you about Divine Grace; Christ alone can

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give it. "The water that I shall give." You have heard of the grace of Baptism. Now I believe that grace may be had through baptism; not that grace and baptism are indissolubly connected by an inviolable law; but grace ought to be received in the ordinance of baptism as in every other ordinance of the Saviour's appointment. But it is of some importance that we should remember that it is neither the priest nor the church that communicates it, but Christ Himself. "The water that I shall give." Vital Christianity is a direct communication from Christ to the Christian, an immediate impartation of life. "God is rich in mercy." He only is rich who has something to spare, who has over and above what he wants for his own private purposes. "God is rich in mercy." He has more life than He wants for His own uses, He has sufficient life to spare to satisfy the deepest cravings of His rational universe world without end. "I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." All questions of life and death He reserves in His own hands. Subordinate questions may be deputed to ministers and ambassadors, but questions involving life and death are always bound round about the Throne: He kills, and He makes alive.

4. It is a gift freely given to *whosoever desires it*. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall never thirst." "If thou hadst asked Him, He would have given thee living water." "On that day, the great day of the feast, Jesus cried out, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." He had enough water to quench the thirst of all mankind—

“Enough for each, enough for all,  
Enough for evermore.”

John “saw a *river* of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;” and you never need fear to drink when you have a river to drink from. It is moreover “clear as crystal.” Purity is a quality we should endeavour to preserve in our discourses. Drinks may be highly coloured, water may be made fiery. And there is danger lest we colour the Gospel with philosophy, a greater danger just now lest we flavour it with spiritual alcoholic excitement. Let us keep the water pure. Come, therefore, and drink. But where shall we get the water? Here—in the Bible. It is a book of living springs—I never strike a verse but water flows out. Many books, popular in their day, are now antiquated—the cisterns are run dry. Take, for instance, Blair’s sermons—sermons so highly valued last century that the author received £600 a volume for them. Read them—how flat, how insipid, how tedious! The Bible, however, is ever fresh, and as living now as in any century in its history. Come to this well and draw for yourselves. We convey you a little water—fresh from the spring, I hope, though I am not quite sure about some of my brethren. Nevertheless you taste the pipes; come to the spring, and you shall have the water pure.

II. Religion in its NATURE. “The water that I shall give him shall be in him.”

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1. Religion is personal. "The water that I shall give *him* shall be in *him*."

We sometimes speak of Christian nations, and there is a sense in which the language is tolerable enough. But to belong to a Christian nation does not suffice to ensure our salvation—we must have Christ in the heart. Christian nations do not make Christian individuals, but Christian individuals constitute Christian nations. I rejoice in the recognition of God in the British Constitution, I like to see the name of God on the current coin of the realm—"Victoria, by the grace of God, Queen." It would be all the better if it were in plain English instead of learned Latin. I am glad to think that the name of God is inwoven into the fabric of American civilisation. "In the name of God, Amen." Those, I am told, are the first words in the Constitution of the United States. All Christian nations are and ought to be Theocracies. I have no manner of sympathy with those who would eliminate the name of God from the British Constitution, nor much with those who would eliminate the name of Christ. God is the ultimate foundation of all human society; without Him you can neither cement nor govern mankind. The mad attempt, if you remember, was made in France. The governing council decreed that there was no God. What was the result? Anarchy, confusion, license, bloodshed, terror. Robespierre, one of the leading spirits of the Revolution, had to declare to his comrades in conclave assembled, "If there be no God, we must make one—we cannot govern

France without Him." It is a privilege we cannot too highly esteem that we are members of a Christian nation. Nevertheless that does not suffice—Christ must enter us, pervade us, saturate us. The Water of Life must flow through the heart and irrigate the withered shrivelled roots of our being.

2. It is *inward*. "The water that I shall give him, shall be *in* him." Not upon him, around him, without him, but in him. You have heard, ere now, that with some professors even, their profession is like their cloaks—something to wear one day in the seven to appear genteel, but which they carefully fold and put by the remaining six. Christianity, it is true, is something to put *on* one; still more emphatically it is something to put *in* one. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him." Godliness is a vital principle planted in the deepest depths of our being, penetrating deeper than the intellect, deeper than the emotions, imbedding itself in the inner pith of the central tap-root of our existence. On the one hand, we are taught that our "life is hid with Christ in God." That is our objective or justification life. "The coney is a little folk, yet they make their houses in the rock." Feeble in themselves, they take care to make themselves strong habitations. Not having strong bodies, they are careful to have strong houses. And we are a very feeble folk; but if we are believers in the Gospel, we have strong houses, our life is hid with Christ in God. On the other hand, His life is hid with Christ in us. This is our

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subjective or regenerate life; it is hid in the innermost recesses of our being. Not in the intellect or affections, but in our heart of hearts. The intellect is liable to damage and decay; ere now we have seen the reason reeling from its throne. The Divine Life, however, is not hid in the intellect, but in the secret spring of personality, where neither sickness can reach it nor old age wither it. The fiery tooth of fever may gnaw the brain: we have seen men delirious under the fierce assault of dire disease or the sudden stroke of dread misfortune; yet they were God's children all the while. Born of God, and yet lunatics! Children of the Highest, and yet downright madmen! The Divine Life is too inward for lunacy to touch or fever to kill. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him."

3. It is *Divine*. "The water that I shall give him." Not the water that I shall create. The water which He creates is not divine—the created is of necessity undivine. The Divine on the other hand is of necessity uncreated. But if God cannot create the Divine, He can communicate it. "The water that I shall give." We cannot lay too much stress on the truth that the Divine Life in the Christian is the same in-kind as the Divine Life in God Himself—the water that He gives has its fountain-head in His own essential nature. "I am God Almighty," said God to Abraham. Literally, "I am God full of breasts." Abraham had no need to fear—God is Mother as well as Father, He is a God full of breasts. If all his earthly supplies failed him, he could turn to God and derive sustenance like a child from the

breast of its mother. "With Thee," says the Psalmist, "is the Fountain of Life." We rejoice to read of the River of Life; but if the river dry up, we shall still be able to draw upon the Fountain. Here we drink of the River of Life—God flowing forth in redemption. But it is a question long mooted in theology whether we shall not in heaven drink of the water in the Fountain, as it gushes up fresh and pure from the deep abysses of the Eternal Nature. "All my springs are in Thee," says the Psalmist again. The streams come to us from different quarters in different ways—they flow through the creation; but there is no *spring* in the creation, all the springs are in God. "I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh," says God another time. "Pour out"—words descriptive of water. "I will cause my Spirit to gush out of Me like water upon every flesh." "Let some droppings fall on me." Put yourselves under the shower, my friends; let it drench you, saturate you, soak you. Sinners are described in Holy Writ as parched land, dry stubble, ready to blaze up at the first approach of fire. But if God rain His Spirit like water upon you, you will be impervious to the flames. For this reason Britain may be likened to a "tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth her fruit in her season, her leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever she doeth shall prosper." Other nations seem like dry brushwood—a spark is enough to set them ablaze. "War! War!" is their cry on the least provocation. But Britain is a green willow, and like the willow she will weep before she will burn;

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she will shed tears before she will take fire. The water of Christianity quenches her inflammability.

III. Religion in its OPERATION. "A well of water springing up."

1. It is active. "A well of water springing up," always bubbling to the surface. Pools sometimes overflow and sometimes dry up; but a living well gushes up always the same. Vital Christianity in the heart, it is true, varies considerably in feeling; it consists, however, not in feeling, but in principles. We are too apt to gauge religion by feeling; but let us not forget that it is, first, principle—a well of water springing up, in the winter of adversity and the summer of prosperity, to everlasting life. Not necessarily a well of hot water. You may adopt means to boil the water, to make it hot; but hot or cold, it is water all the same. Religion consists primarily of principles. If the principles be boiled, all the better; but let us be sure that we have the principles to begin with.

2. It is *cleansing*. Hercules, according to classic story, directed the course of a river through the Augean stables, thereby ridding them of the accumulated filth of thirty years. And Jesus Christ turns the river of Divine Grace into the sinner's heart, and thereby washes it of its impurity. You have seen springs in soft soils carrying up with them particles of sand, which however they carry up in order to carry away. So also Divine Grace, as it bubbles up in the heart, disturbs the sands of defilement. The believer is oftentimes alarmed, he

mistakes the activity of the spring for the activity of corruption—he thinks sin is becoming more operative. However, it is only disturbed in order to be removed. Grace will continue to trickle through the foul heart till it be made white and clean, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

It furthermore cleanses society. "How shall a young man cleanse his way? By walking according to thy word." God's Word is a holy Word. It is well known that Rowland Hill had taken a strong liking to the Welsh name for the Holy Ghost—the Clean Ghost. Did he know it he would have been equally enamoured with the Welsh term for the Bible—the Clean Bible. "Seeing that thou from a child hast known the Clean Scriptures." The Bible is a remarkably clean book. No book like it. One remarked to Johnson, that Shakespeare never blotted a line. "Would he had blotted a thousand!" was the blunt reply. A London firm is about issuing an expurgated edition of the great poet of Stratford-upon-Avon, in which all the dirty lines are left out. Some critics severely censure the publishers; I commend them—I shall then be able to read Shakespeare with my children as I now read the Bible. Compared with contemporary dramatists, Shakespeare deserves much credit for the absence of obscenity from his pages; but there is too much left for parents to read it with their children. Even Shakespeare will be all the better for a little cleansing. The New Testament, however, is perfectly clean—it contains not a line requiring expurgation. It is a clean book—angels might read it without once

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blushing. And it cleanses society; it has washed away unnamable sins; and it will go on with the work of refinement till the face of the earth will be made like unto the face of heaven.

3. It is *satisfying*. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." This world cannot satisfy us. At first we believe it can, but experience soon undeceives us. The experience of Eve is repeated in each of her children. "She bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord." In the ecstasy of the moment she called her first-born Cain; that is, possession—he was to retrieve the fortunes of the family and restore the bliss of Paradise. "And she again bare his brother;" but inasmuch as her former sanguine hopes had been all dashed to pieces, she swung to the opposite extreme, and called his name Abel; that is, vanity. Her first-born she called Possession, because she anticipated boundless joy; her second she called Vanity, because instead of contentment she found grief. Thus, young people just starting in the race of life, imagine that, could they acquire wealth, they would attain happiness—they think their burning thirst would be slaked. But, alas! "Man never is, but always to be blessed"—earthly happiness always hovers in the far distance.

The Gospel, however, quenches our thirst. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." Springing up, *leaping up*.

As water forced through artificial wells springs, leaps, curves in the air, so the joy consequent on believing leaps up to everlasting life. "Wherein we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Literally, exult, leap, dance. The Christian sometimes can hardly restrain himself—he exults, leaps, dances with joy unspeakable and saturated with glory. "They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasure!" (Ps. xxxvi. 8). The words here rendered "abundantly satisfied" mean literally to inebriate or intoxicate. "They shall be drunk with the fulness of thy house." Oh, I have seen people delirious with Christian joy, fairly intoxicated with God. "Be ye not drunk with wine, but be ye filled with the Holy Ghost." Oh glorious sight—a man drunk with the Infinite!

IV. Religion in its DESTINATION. "Springing up to everlasting life."

1. It is aspiring. "Springing up—up—up—to everlasting life." I have already observed that Christianity is satisfying; but it is not satiating. The satisfaction it yields is not inconsistent with aspiration and effort. The believing soul wants nothing but God, but it wants more of God. All pain and discomfort are removed; but the longing for God continues to grow in intensity and fervour. Woe to us when we have reached the goal of our desires in respect of holiness! Have you heard of that painter who broke his palette, destroyed his colours, and threw away his brush, because he had

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reached the top of his ambition? The last picture he painted seems to have realised his ideal, and perfectly contented him; and he was too good a philosopher not to know that, once he reached his ideal, there was no future and no progress in store for him. I recently met with some advocates of the "Higher Life," who claimed for themselves sinless perfection in this life, and I have trembled for their future. Mark—there is such a thing as evangelical perfection; but evangelical perfection is not sinless perfection. No; it is keenly sensitive of its actual shortcomings, and is evermore striving after diviner altitudes in holiness—"springing up," up, and ever up towards the Everlasting Perfection. "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thine image." "I press towards the mark—the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

2. It will at last reach *everlasting life*. "Springing up to everlasting life." This teaches that the life implanted in the Christian in regeneration will continue for ever. It will stretch on beyond the grave. The Saviour never wavers in His teaching concerning the endless future of man; His religion alone yields certitude on the subject. Other teachers threw fitful glances across the grave; Christianity stood on the brink thereof and shed a constant flood of white light upon it. Christianity is the only religion which clears up the past and the future of our race. What is the origin of man? What is the secret clue to his present confused history? In vain you seek for a satisfactory answer in the fantastic cosmogonies of the world—

the Bible alone answers them. "God created man upright, but he sought out many inventions," and the worst of all his inventions was sin. Let us look to the future—what is the destiny of man? is death the be-all and end-all of existence?

"To be or not to be? that is the question."

Philosophy, poetry, heathenism cannot answer. But where they grow dumb, or, if not dumb, hesitant and indistinct, Christianity speaks out full, clear, and firm. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life." It deserves our homage and adherence, were it only for this. Edwin, the Prince of Northumbria, gathered together his barons into a banqueting-hall, to deliberate together as to the desirability of relinquishing the old idolatry and accepting the new religion urged on their acceptance by the missionaries of the Cross. One and another spoke; presently a hoary-headed warrior stood up and said, "Perhaps you recollect, O king, a thing which sometimes happens in winter days, when you are seated at table with your captains and your men-at-arms, while a good fire is burning, and your hall is comfortably warm, but it rains, snows, and blows outside. A little bird comes in and crosses the hall with a dash, entering by one door and going out by the other. The instant of this crossing is for it full of delight. It feels neither the rain nor the storm. But that instant is brief. The bird flies out in the twinkling of an eye, and from winter it passes into winter. Such

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man appears to me the life of man upon the earth, and its duration for a moment, compared with the length of the time which precedes and that which follows it. This time is dark and uncomfortable for us. It tortures us by the impossibility of our knowing it. If, then, the new doctrine can teach us anything in any degree certain, it deserves that we should follow it." Well said, hoary-headed warrior! And the old chronicles add that the new religion was voted amid the acclamation of the assembly. "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life."

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XV.

The Good Shepherd.

"I am the Good Shepherd."—ST. JOHN x. 11.

IN the preceding chapter we have a detailed account of the miracle Jesus Christ performed upon the man born blind. For some reason or other this miracle created intense excitement in Jerusalem. Many of the officers of the synagogue tried to persuade the man to deny the miracle; and when they failed in their sinister design, they "cast him out" of the synagogue. Before, he was a blind man; now, he is an excommunicated man.

This dismal incident suggested to the Saviour the parable, or rather the allegory, of the Good Shepherd. The Pharisees were the shepherds of Israel, appointed of God to look after the flock. But instead of feeding the sheep, they fed themselves; instead of sympathising with the poor man and rejoicing in the recovery of his sight, they persecuted him, harassed him, vexed him. They were offended not only with Jesus Christ, for giving eyes, but with the poor man also, for receiving eyes. They did not love the sheep, they only loved the wool; they did not love the flock, they only loved

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the fleece. But the Saviour affirms of Himself, in contrast to them, "I am the Good Shepherd. They are shepherds, shepherds in name and profession, but you have seen how heartlessly they behave to the sheep of their care. I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." My endeavour this morning will be to enumerate the subsidiary reasons the Saviour here adduces in support of His claim to the title of a Good Shepherd, reserving the chief reason, that of His death, for a separate treatment.

I. He is a good shepherd because He owns the sheep, He is the proprietor of the flock.

It is a great thing to own sheep. You know right well that a man is always more careful of his own sheep than he is of those of other people. You may have a servant to look after your sheep for hire, and he may turn out a tolerably good servant; nevertheless you find it necessary oftentimes, not only to look after the sheep, but after the servant as well. The Pharisees were only servants looking after the sheep for hire. "And he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth. The hireling fleeth because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." But Jesus Christ was the owner of the sheep, the proprietor of the flock. It follows naturally that He would exercise greater vigilance and risk greater danger on their behalf.

I. They are His by the *gift* of the Father. Over

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and over again in the course of the Gospels He gives utterance to this truth. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." Earthly parents make presents to their children on their birthdays; and sometimes in the country a father makes a present of a sheep to his son; and a very valuable present it is, for in a few years the one shall have multiplied into a hundred. Similarly the Almighty Father made a birthday present to His Son. "The Lord said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day I have begotten Thee." What next? "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." He made a gift of mankind to His Son on the anniversary of His birth.

2. They are His by *creative ties*. This probably is the deep meaning of the phrase, "*His own sheep*," sheep which are His even before they are called. In the first chapter of this Gospel we have described to us the intimate original relations which Jesus Christ in His capacity as the Word bears to the race. "This is the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" therefore when He appeared in the world He only came to "*His own*." He had planted an echo of Himself in humanity, established natural affinity between Himself and the human heart. Consequently when He called the sheep, His voice awoke a response in the Divine-Human in every bosom, that is, in every bosom which had not sinfully stifled the heavenward aspirations of the soul to gratify the animal passions of the body. The anthem of redemption

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excites reminiscences in the soul of the melody of creation—the Shepherd's voice is not strange, for we have heard it before. The sheep know His voice.

3. They are His also by *purchase*. Some perceive this idea in the language of the text—"The Good Shepherd giveth" as a deposit, layeth down as a pledge, "His life for the sheep." "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The blood, however, He shed not in His own defence, but for the sake of those whom He came to rescue.

II. Jesus Christ is a good shepherd, because He KNOWS His sheep. "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

1. He knows the sheep by their *faces*. Not only He has heard some rumour about you, but He knows you by your countenances. Not as you know a hive of bees in the garden does He know you. You know the hive collectively, but you know not the bees singly and individually; did you meet one of your own bees in the meadow, having gone thither to gather honey, you would not know her as your bee. But Jesus Christ knows you not only collectively as a church, but singly and individually as separate members of the community. He knows you by your very faces. When a sinner is converted, he is brought face to face with the Saviour; he looks the Saviour in the face, and the

Saviour looks him in the face ; and He never forgets any face, once He has a full fair view of it.

An ancient and convenient custom among shepherds is to put a mark upon their sheep, an ear-mark as they call it ; and by the mark they know them in years to come. Jesus Christ too puts a mark on His sheep, not on the ear, but on the forehead. "And the angel cried, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." "And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads." In your conversion the Good Shepherd puts His private mark upon you. We read also of the "mark of the beast," and this likewise is on the forehead. "And he causeth all, both great and small, rich and poor, free and bound, to receive a mark in their foreheads, that no man might buy or sell, save he had that mark." This congregation is all marked. Ye ungodly men and women, a certain mark is impressed upon your foreheads ; I cannot see it, but every devil that chances to pass you in the street sees it in a moment, and knows whose sheep you are just as the shepherds of Plinlimmon know their sheep. But when a man is converted, the Saviour rubs off the mark of the beast, and stamps His own mark instead. I cannot behold it ; but every angel that happens to meet you in the highway notices it in the twinkling of an eye. Like the apostle Paul, "you bear in your bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus." No doubt exists in the minds of

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spirits to whom you belong—they recognise you by the marks.

2. He further knows your *names*. "He calleth His own sheep by name." Not only He knows your faces, but He further remembers your names. To me it is a very difficult thing to remember names. I remember faces moderately well, but I cannot possibly remember names. But Jesus Christ remembers your very names. He knows His followers, not as men and women, but as Peter and Andrew, John and James, Mary and Martha. Queer names are applied to the saints in the last chapters in the epistles. Turn, for instance, to the last chapter in the Romans; you there read of Urbane and Stachys, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater—odd names all; I cannot possibly remember them, but Jesus Christ remembers them every one. "He calleth His own sheep by name." He calleth the stars by name too, and leads them through the ancestral spaces of the sky every evening; but then the stars are very big things; I also remember the names of the stars tolerably well since I was a lad. The wonder is that He calleth the tiny sheep by name, scattered as they are on the hills and the dales of the universe. "What is in a name?" asks the great English poet. Well, there is a great deal in a name too, especially in a Christian name. There is not much perhaps in a surname, and still less in a bardic name, especially since bardic names have become so common in Wales; but still there is a great deal in a Christian name. And the Good Shepherd always calls you

by your Christian names; not by some fanciful names, but by the very names given you at the baptismal font. When men are comparative strangers, they surname and master one another; but the Saviour surnames and masters no one. Like the mother, the sister, or the wife, full of tenderness and affection, He calls you by your Christian names. "John, John?" "Philip, Philip." "He calleth His own sheep by name."

3. He furthermore is perfectly acquainted with your *circumstances*. He sends a letter from heaven to the angel of the church at Pergamos. What does He say? "I know thy works and where thou dwellest." Were the question asked of many of our town pastors where the sheep of their care live, they would frequently be much embarrassed to return an answer. But the Good Shepherd knows where you live—the town, the street, the house. On one occasion, you remember, He appeared in a dream to Cornelius and bade him send for one of the apostles to enlighten him in the principles of the new religion. But where does the apostle live? Oh, He takes care to give the name and address in full. "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside." There is the name and address in full—Simon Peter, at the house of Simon the tanner, the Seaside, Joppa. On another occasion He appears in a vision to Ananias, and commands him to go and seek out one Saul. But where does Saul live? Oh, He takes care to give the name and address in full. "Arise, go into

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the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth." Were Saul living in Joppa now, and were I to write him a letter to-day, it would safely reach his hands in about a fortnight—Saul of Tarsus, the house of Judas, Straight Street, Damascus. The names of the members are carefully enrolled in our church books; mistakes, however, often creep in, notwithstanding the most careful oversight. They keep a church-book up yonder also; they call it the Lamb's book of life; your names are all correctly entered and your chronicles accurately kept.

4. This word "know" means something deeper yet; it means thorough, complete apprehension of your deepest *character*. The word "know" in the fourth and fifth verses signifies outside acquaintance, that man and Christ have come within the same circle. But the word "know" in the fourteenth verse means a clear discerning insight into the springs of life and the motives of action. "I know my sheep;" He discerns the hidden texture of the inner life. When Andrew introduced his brother Simon to the Saviour, He "beheld" him, a word signifying that He fixed on him a searching steadfast gaze, that He recognised the underlying strata of his inner soul. Accordingly He predicted a change in his name. "Thou art Simon; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." "He knew all men." This knowledge was not the result of omniscience, but of an innate human gift of penetrating into men, of penetrating through men, and

thereby of discerning their spirits. He fixes the holy gaze of His liquid eye upon you; He knows you better than you know yourselves, yet loves you notwithstanding all.

III. He is a good shepherd, because He FEEDS His sheep. "They shall go in and out and find pasture."

I. "They go *in*" first to the fold. This supposes that they shall rest awhile after their weary wanderings in the desert. The Psalmist gives utterance to the same truth—"He leadeth me beside the still waters." Not beside stagnant waters, for they cause sickness and disease; nor beside rough waters, for they affright the timid sheep; but beside still waters, where the flock may rest in perfect safety. Very soothing to my disturbed feelings it is to turn in to the House of God on a Sabbath morning and have a quiet service. I like to read quietly, to pray quietly, to preach quietly; it creates stillness within my tempestuous breast, and I return home serener, calmer, and more placid. You have doubtless observed the sweet quieting influence the perusal of the Bible exerts over your exhausted nature; a chapter of the Bible is always a surer remedy for nervous excitement than a bottle of physic. People often go to their doctors when they ought to go to their ministers. The Bible is a very "still" book. Read other authors, and you discover in them all more or less tumult. Read Byron, for instance, and the wild hurricane blows on every page, you almost expect to see the leaves rustle. Read Scott, and he

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is full of movement and dash ; there is some strange "go" in all his poetry. His works have scarcely any rest or pause, they hardly allow of punctuation. Turn from them to the philosophers : in their pages likewise you witness strenuous endeavour, unflagging energy, incessant striving. Compared with them Holy Writ is exceedingly composed and subdued ; it runs deep but it runs still ; it acts like magic upon the turbulence of the heart. "And there was a great calm."

2. The words speak not only of "going in" to rest, but of "going out" to *graze*. Here is safety and satisfaction. "He shall go in and out and find pasture." Whether he will graze or not is another question ; but one thing is certain—he will find grass. What is the Bible ? The pasture-land of the Good Shepherd's sheep. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures," on the margin, "in pastures of tender grass." Sheep are very fond of young tender grass ; they frequently risk their lives to get at the sweet green blade. Turn an ass into the most fertile field, and you will see him forsaking the grass to leisurely nibble the thistles. But turn in a sheep, and you will see her leaving the high dry grass to seek the young tender blade. Well, the Bible pasture is green pasture. Everything is as new, every truth as fresh, as if it were spoken only yesterday. Other books contain but little green pasture. Some one has compared them to mown hay ; the food they supply is very dry. But as for the truths of the Bible, they are not hay cut and dried, but green growing grass—they contain

as much sap as if they were revealed from heaven only this week. The preachers of the Word go to the field and cut a little, and bring you occasional armfuls; but better for the sheep did they go to the field themselves and crop the grass as it grows.

Not only the grass is green, and therefore to be coveted; but there is plenty of it. "He shall go in and out and find pasture"—green pasture and plenty of it. "The thief cometh not but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." The flock of Jesus Christ live not sparingly, but luxuriously, abundantly. To be allowed to live in a humble cottage on the mountain-side upon dry bread would be an inestimable favour to men who have a thousand times deserved to be damned; but in the Gospel we are heavily loaded with Divine mercies, we live like princes of the blood. Superabundance of life! We have not only the necessities but the luxuries of eternal life. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil;" on the margin, "thou makest me fat with oil." The Psalmist had grown stout upon the truths of Revelation.

We all live amid grander truths than were known to the Psalmist, we enjoy richer food. But many of us, I fear, still belong to Pharaoh's "lean and ill-favoured kine." I know many a sheep in Wales living in the midst of plenty, and yet meagre and thin in appearance. Why? Lies the fault with the pasture? No; the pasture is rich and succulent;

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but the sheep are sick and lack appetite. The Shepherd's duty is to provide pasture, but it is the sheep's duty to eat it. But alas! many sheep are sick, and, having lost their appetite, they complain of the quality of their food. But the truth is—no food can please the sick. A young person, subject to the slow but sure ravages of consumption, sails to the Madeiras to escape the severity of the English winter. He is delighted with his new surroundings. He writes home to say that the climate is delicious, the scenery beautiful, the food choice and abundant. All he complains of is lack of appetite; and he dies there—all for lack of appetite. This is too true a picture of hundreds in our congregations—they pine away, not for lack of food, but for lack of appetite. But I am glad to say that the Good Shepherd looks after the appetite—He re-establishes the health of the poor sheep. "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out." The word "search" signifies to go after the sheep which have strayed and to restore them to the fold—the shepherd seeking the lost sheep. The words "seek out" mean to examine, to institute inquiries into the state of the health, and to adopt means to strengthen it. If a sheep strays, he fetches her back; if another is sick, he heals her. "He will restore my soul." To restore here carries in it a double meaning. The first is to return to the fold, to recover the soul that has erred. The other is to re-establish the health, to restore the soul that is sick. The Good Shepherd performs the double duty—He goes after the sheep

that are lost; He re-establishes the health of the sheep that are sick.

IV. He is a good shepherd, because He LEADS the sheep. "He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out. And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him." "He putteth forth His own sheep;" literally, He thrusts them out, He uses holy violence. To separate the saints from the unbelievers, to call them to the church from the world, requires the gentle pressure of His hand; conversion is something more than moral suasion. But once men are converted, He then constitutes Himself their leader.

1. He *leads* the sheep. It is well known that sheep require to be continually led. In this they differ much from other creatures. The migrating birds never wander from their path; the swallow never misses her point. In the autumn she starts for warmer climes without map or compass to show her the way; but she flies straight to her destination as an arrow to the target. She has within her an infallible instinct which always guides her in the right track. Behold again the lion in the forest: in the evening he creeps out of his lair, travels far and near to discover his prey; and at the earliest streaks of dawn he retraces his steps through the dense jungle without ever missing his track. He has within him a cunning instinct which always leads him in the way he should go. The sheep, however, is constituted vastly different. If she strays only a mile from home, she loses every con-

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ception of north, south, east, and west: she has no more idea of the four cardinal points of geography than she has of the five cardinal points of Calvinism. Exceedingly simple and helpless is a sheep gone astray. And when the Bible speaks of sinners, to what does it compare us? To swallows upon the wing? Certainly not. To lions in the forest? Certainly not. To what then? To erring sheep. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." We have lost well nigh every conception of the cardinal points of virtue; or if we remember the names, we have lost the qualities. If we are to regain our knowledge of God and of goodness, we must put ourselves implicitly under the guidance of Jesus Christ.

2. He leads them *gently*. "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him." He is not behind them, scaring them with the lashes of the law, but in front of them, drawing them with the cords of His love. He walks not according to His own but their skill and strength. He sweetly adapts His steps to theirs. A very beautiful word is spoken on this subject in the Apocalypse: "And a lamb leadeth them." Not a dog or a wolf, nor a ram hardened by the inclemency of the weather, but a lamb. He will not march you too fast, for He is only a lamb Himself. "And a lamb leadeth them." He can sympathise sweetly with the weaklings of the flock. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." In another passage we read of Him going after the sheep which was

lost; "and when He found it, He laid it on His shoulders rejoicing." You have seen a shepherd carrying a sheep; he slings her across his shoulders, whilst her head dangles carelessly in the air. A safe place enough, but very uncomfortable nevertheless, for the adult sheep must be made to feel the folly of wandering. A faithful portraiture of the Good Shepherd of the text. He carries the sheep on His shoulders; but He carries the lambs in His bosom, He presses them to His heart and warms them with His best love.

3. He also leads them *safely* "along the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." There are other paths in the world, the paths of sin, the paths of iniquity. But the Good Shepherd leads only along the paths of temperance and virtue. Some of you, perhaps, doubt the existence of the paths. You vainly imagine that none were ever called to travel the rugged roads you are obliged to travel, that none were summoned to lead such exposed lives as you are compelled to lead. Look narrowly, my friends, and sooner or later you will be sure to discover the footprints of the flock. The path has long been made by the continuous tramp of a thousand wayfarers; and more—the Shepherd himself is in front of you. "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him." He does not summon you to climb rocks which He has not climbed Himself, nor to cross mountains which He has not crossed Himself. He knows the force of every wind, the edge of every temptation, the weight of every sorrow.

Travelling in high mountains such as the Alps,

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the guide is oftentimes obliged to go in front, and with his knife cut a foothold in the rock ; in which the tourist, to pass over in safety, must carefully put down his foot. Similarly many dangerous passes are to be encountered in the mountains of life. How to cross without the foot slipping? The Shepherd has travelled in front, has made His footmarks on the rocks ; and by walking carefully in His steps, we shall never fall. Suffering : that is a dangerous pass in the mountains ; I travelled it for years. Many a day I feared my brain would reel, my heart faint, my foot slip. But by steadfast looking I saw the footprints of the Shepherd, and by treading in His steps I have hitherto crossed in safety. "For hereunto are ye also called ; for Christ also suffered, giving us an example, that we might follow in His steps." I rejoice to think that the blessed Jesus has left distinct traces of His holy feet upon the mountains of our earthly existence, and that they are still visible after the lapse of eighteen centuries. This is to me one of the most cogent reasons for believing in the Divinity of His person, that He was able to stamp His foot so deeply on the rock of history, that their prints have not yet been erased. I have walked the earth as heavily as I could ; but were I to die to-day, my footmarks would all be blotted out in a year or two. But here is One who never enjoyed educational advantages, who was never to school or college, and who moreover died at an age when other thinkers only plan the work of their life ; and yet He trod so heavily that the marks of His feet are

still visible, more visible than those of any other genius, whether literary, political, or military, of ancient or modern times. How to account for it? There is only one explanation—the weight of Godhead was in His steps, the emphasis of the Infinite in His tread. May we have grace to walk in His steps; so doing, we shall never fall.

4. Not only He leads us through life, but He goes before us through *death*. “He goeth before them.” “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.” Death in the Psalmist’s days was surrounded with greater terror than in ours. Notice the name whereby the ancient saints designated it—the Valley of the Shadow; and in the bottom of the valley was a deep dark river rolling wildly down to the Dead Sea. Very cold was the water of the River of Death; the rays of the sun had never kissed its angry waves, for the sun lay so low down the horizon, and the sides of the valley were so deep and precipitous that the light was warded off. And in the dark the sheep had to cross it; nevertheless they cheered a little when they felt the crook and heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. I have, however, a new story to tell you—the Valley of the Shadow no longer exists. The Sun of Righteousness has climbed up the slopes of the sky and is now shining full upon the valley. “The people who sat in darkness saw great light; and to them who sat in the valley of the shadow of death light is sprung up.” The sun lights the glen, and its

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rays warm the waters. David was obliged to cross in the dark; but we shall cross under the shining of the Sun; and more, the Sun has taken off the chill. And if you still fear and tremble, I should not be surprised if the Shepherd caused the flood to subside that the timid sheep might cross in safety. When Mr. Fearing lay a-dying, Bunyan says that "the water was lower than it was ever seen before"—the Shepherd caused the water to subside that the fearful saint might not be terrified overmuch. And remember, when the unbeliever dies he dies along the river—his soul is swept for ever downward by the violence of the current. But when the believer dies, he dies across the river; he just plunges into the flood to wash the wool, and then emerges the other side perfectly white and clean.

Not a single sheep will be wanting, they shall all be safely folded by Divine Love. "I will make them to pass the second time under the rod." This refers to the Oriental manner of counting the sheep—they had to pass out of the fold under the rod. And God made the sheep pass under the rod in His covenant in the past eternity with His Son—they were all carefully numbered; He will make them pass under the rod again in the eternity to come, and not one shall be missing—the two numbers will perfectly correspond. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

XVI.

**The Spirit of Truth.**

“And when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.”—ST. JOHN xvi. 13.

THE question confronts us at the outset, What is here meant by “all truth?” The commentators manifest a strong tendency to reduce “all truth” into some truth, every truth to a few truths. But it is better, in my opinion, to take for granted that the Bible always means what it says. “He will guide you into all truth”—all the truth of Nature as well as all the truth of the Gospel, all the truth of Science as well as all the truth of Religion. As examples of the operation of the Spirit on the natural powers of man, it is customary to revert to the history of Aholiab and Bezaleel. Aholiab was, doubtless, a skilled mechanic before the effusion of the Spirit on him; but after His effusion the fertility of his mind and the dexterity of his hand were vastly increased—he became the best carpenter in the whole land. Bezaleel was, no doubt, an ingenious artisan before the descent of the Spirit on him; but after His descent the inventiveness of his

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mind and the delicacy of his touch were greatly improved—he developed into the chief artificer on the whole earth.

I am glad to acknowledge, and to acknowledge thankfully, that the great thinkers of the world, whether philosophy, science, art, or religion be the subject of their investigation, have not been wholly uninfluenced or unguided by the Holy Ghost. "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him," and with them alone, whether they be His secrets in the Creation or in Redemption. It is a fact worthy of our notice that the great discoverers of the world are almost invariably men of profound natural devoutness: Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato—Kepler, Newton, and Faraday. Even Nature confides her secrets to none except to men of deep piety. Several names of much cleverness and undisputed ability may be mentioned in the ranks of scepticism and agnosticism, but not a single discoverer of any great and permanent eminence. Tyndall and Huxley in our own day—very brilliant and very able without a doubt; but they have not yet established their right to be classed with the *great* discoverers and inventors. Even Nature refuses her confidence to men who are not in the confidence of her Lord. "The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him," and with them alone. "He will guide you into all truth."

But though the text is thus applicable to science and art, yet it must be confessed that the truth which makes for our salvation is here mainly intended. "He will guide you into all truth,"

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literally, "into the whole truth"—the whole truth of the Christian religion, the whole truth which revolves around the person and work of the Redeemer. The subject, therefore, which invites our attention is—*The relation which the Holy Spirit sustains to Gospel truth.*

I. The Spirit guiding into all truth in respect of REVELATION.

II. The Spirit guiding into all truth in respect of EXPOSITION.

III. The Spirit guiding into all truth in respect of APPLICATION.

I. The Spirit guiding into all truth in respect of REVELATION. In other words, the Spirit guiding the apostles to reveal the truth. "He will guide you into all truth."

1. This means that the Spirit will *speak* the truth, and nothing but the truth, "for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." This is the Saviour's infallible proof of the trustworthiness of His own teaching, that He did not speak of Himself; and the same principle He urges in support of the infallibility of the Spirit's illumination. "He shall not speak of"—*from*—"Himself." If you hear any one speaking from himself, boasting much in his originality, claiming that he has woven his discovery out of himself, as the spider weaves his web, you may rest assured that his discovery will turn out to be exceedingly shallow and worthless.

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For truth is not a thing that comes *from* man, but a thing that comes *to* man. He never strikes it—it always strikes him. Consequently no profound thinker ever “speaks from himself; but whatsoever he heareth, that speaketh he.” Not whatsoever he heareth from other men, but whatsoever he heareth by listening attentively at the door of irrational nature around him, or of human nature within him, or of the Divine Nature above him. Accordingly, the great discoverers of the world never claim much credit to themselves, for they are vividly conscious that they do not speak from themselves, but are rather spoken to by a Power or a Mind external to themselves. “I am but a child,” remarked Sir Isaac Newton, “gathering pebbles on the shore of the great sea of truth”—words full of humility, for he distinctly felt that all the credit due to him was the credit of *seeing* the pebbles,—the credit of *making* them belonged to another; and the credit of seeing pebbles is not much of a credit after all, it is the credit of making them that is credit indeed. Thus truth comes not *from* man, say rather that it comes *to* man. You cannot originate it—only discover it; you cannot make it—only see it. If you make it, it is no longer truth, but a lie. Wherefore it is averred of the Evil Spirit that he “speaketh of his own,” speaketh from himself, originates what he says, and therefore of necessity “speaketh a lie.” But of the Holy Spirit the Saviour says that “He speaketh not from Himself, but whatsoever He heareth” in the exalted fellowship of the Trinity in Unity, “that speaketh He.” It is impossible to be

original in speaking the truth—originality is the exclusive property of falsehood.

But this appellation, "the Spirit of Truth," doubtless implies more: it teaches that He is the soul of truth, the life inside the truth, the sap within the Gospel doctrines, keeping them fresh and green. But for the Spirit as a circulating, vitalising sap within them, they would all shrivel up, the Tree of Life would wither and die, and its leaves would all drop to the ground. Examine the truths contained in other religions—how withered and dry they look. Examine the same truths in the religion of Christ—they throb with life and are clothed with verdure. Why? What is the cause of this difference? The Spirit as a never-dying soul within the Gospel truths, a circulating sap vitalising them both root and branch.

2. But the words further teach that the Holy Spirit will *inspire* the truth, the truth already extant in the world, and only waiting the breath of inspiration to quicken it. "The holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Is that all? No; "every Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" literally, "is God-inspired, God-breathed." Not only the writers, but their writings, are all alive with the breath of God. Reading the Bible, we feel the winds of Divinity blowing upon us and through us, the Breath of God warm on our face. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the Bible became a living book." Inspiration is not a fact past and gone in the history of the world—it is ever present and ever powerful.

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The inspired men are dead, a matter of little moment; but the inspired truths are still living. The Bible has perpetuated inspiration, and has made it a fact ever present in every century, forming a strictly supernatural element in the history of the world to-day, as supernatural quite as in the first century of our era.

No; the inspiration has not run out of the truths of Holy Writ; they are inspired now, they are warm now with the breath of the Eternal. One of the rare excellences of the Bible is its warmth: it is confessedly a very hot book. Its temperature is many degrees higher than that of any other book I know of. Whereas the same truths in other religions and philosophies sink down to freezing point, in Christianity they invariably rise to blood-heat, sometimes to boiling point. This is an essential element in inspiration—heat, but an element too often forgotten in formal treatises on the subject, and totally overlooked by the rationalising authors of the age. By inspiration they generally understand a power to reveal new truths. No doubt it implies that; but it further implies power to impart new warmth to old truths, fresh vitality to truths already familiar to the human mind; and the power to warm old truths, to quicken familiar but barren principles, is rarer, because higher, than the power to effect new discoveries. Many of the truths of the Bible, besides the commandment of which St. John speaks, are both old and new—old as to form, new as to power; old as to utterance, new as to temperature. There is a vast difference between

truth inspired and the same truth uninspired. Take an illustration. Here are two bars of steel. They are precisely of the same make, the same shape, the same weight, the same length, the same breadth. The most practised eye cannot detect the slightest difference between them. Nevertheless there is a difference, none the less for being subtle. Put the two bars on the ground near a heap of rubbish, and the difference will immediately be made manifest. Whilst one lies inert on the floor, the other exerts a potent influence on the whole mass, disturbing the needles and nails and iron filings, which start, like the animals that entered Noah's ark, on a journey the reason and destination of which nobody knows. What is the matter? are not the two bars alike? Yes, alike and yet different, for one has been magnetised; it is surcharged with an occult power of drawing to itself whatever has in it the nature of iron. And here are two truths, one in heathen philosophy, the other in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Examine them narrowly—they are as similar as two truths can be; of the same length, the same breadth, the same depth; expressed almost in identical terms. Well, is there any difference between them? No, answer the critics: Yes, answer the divines. The truth as contained in Greek or Chinese philosophy lies barren and inoperative, it exerts no perceptible influence on the huge mass of corrupt society around it. But the same truth as uttered by Jesus Christ enters as a living quickening force into human life, re-creating society from top to bottom, furnishing men with a new ideal in life, inflaming them with

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a holy ardour to realise it in everyday conduct. It revolutionises thought, casts the spell of its influence upon the centuries. Why? What is the matter? Is it not the same truth that we formerly met with in the pages of Plato and of Confucius? Yes, the same, and not the same. In Christianity it has been magnetised, inspired; and, as already stated, there is a vast difference between truth inspired and the same truth unquickened by the breath of God. The truths of the Gospel are, many of them, the truths of heathen philosophies and religions *plus* the Divine magnetism; and this *plus* constitutes a difference "wide as the poles asunder."

3. But not only the Holy Spirit spoke the truth, and inspired truths already known, but He further *revealed* new truths, truths otherwise inaccessible to created intelligences. "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." The primary reference of these words is, as is generally observed, not to the things of heaven, but the things of the Gospel. Neither the senses of the body nor the faculties of the mind could discover them. Well, that being the case, nobody knows them, you say. Oh yes; for "God has revealed them to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The truths of Nature are only His surface thoughts, and therefore within the range of created intellects. But the truths of the Gospel are His "deep things," too deep for human

reason ever to fathom, but which nevertheless "God has shown to us by His Spirit."

In the context the "things of God" are called the things of Jesus Christ. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." As Columbus took possession of the continent of America in the name of Christ, so Christ took possession of the continent of Truth in His own name—He has stamped on every truth His own private mark. "He shall glorify Me, for He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you." This is the final test whether any doctrine be of the inspiration of the Spirit. Does it glorify Christ? Many spirits went out in the apostolic age, many teachers claiming to be divinely commissioned; but this was the test whereby the spirits were tried—did they glorify Christ? Many strange and novel doctrines are promulgated in the present day, labelled with the names of able and scholarly men,—are they true? Let me ask, "Do they glorify Christ?" If not, beware of them; and again I say unto you, Beware. "What do you think of 'Ecce Homo?'" asked a lady once of Professor Duncan, the Professor of Hebrew in one of the Scotch Colleges, soon after the appearance of that popular and charmingly written book. "What does 'Ecce Homo' think of Christ?" asked the old Rabbi back. "I cannot tell; that it is which puzzles me," answered the lady. "Well," deliberately answered the sick professor, "if any book, after a

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careful perusal of it, leaves you in doubt what it thinks and what you ought to think about Christ, there is something radically wrong in it." Wise and seasonable words. A book may be very ingenious, very learned, very able, and all that; but if it knows not what to think or say of Christ, if it fails to glorify Christ, it is not a good book. Every sound book—it glorifies Christ; every sound doctrine—it glorifies Christ; every sound sermon—it glorifies Christ. "He shall glorify Me."

II. The Spirit guiding into all truth in respect of EXPOSITION. In other words, the Spirit guiding the readers of the Bible to understand it. "He will guide you into all truth."

I. This sets forth the *nature* of the Spirit's influence. "He will *guide* you into all truth," this word "guide" meaning to show the road, and not only to show it, but to travel along it. To direct strangers in a strange country in words is much; to direct them by accompanying them till they reach their destination is more. Thus the Holy Spirit not only shows the way to the City of Truth, but leads the mind along it; He takes it by the hand, as it were, and leads it to a reasonable apprehension of the great doctrines of salvation. This partly indicates the difference between the influence of the Spirit under the Old Testament, and His influence under the New. The word "*moved*" is that used to describe His operation under the Old. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This word "moved" is a very

strong word, signifying that the prophets were carried away and borne along before the breath of the Spirit, like ships before the breath of the wind, a force outside them and behind them driving them irresistibly along. That was the character of the Spirit's work under the Old Testament, exceedingly stormy, full of sudden violent impulses. The Spirit sometimes fell suddenly upon the prophets, and sometimes left them quite as suddenly; but in either case the prophets were thrown half dead on the ground. But "*guide*" is the word used to describe His corresponding operations under the New Testament, a word denoting steady, constant, uniform influence. "He will guide you into all truth." Not He will move you, stir you, carry you away like ships in a gale; but He will guide you, lead you sweetly by the hand, He will be a power within you and before you, gently but effectually helping you in all your researches. Under the Old Testament His operations were like winter storms, under the New they are like summer breezes.

"He will guide you into all truth"—not *to* it, but *into* it. And you know right well that truth viewed from within is very different from truth viewed only from without. Indeed, you cannot properly judge truth except from within. Go and examine a coloured window in one of the venerable churches of our land. From without it looks a mixed, unmeaning, vulgar blotch of paint, possessing neither beauty nor comeliness that we should desire it. But enter the cathedral, examine the window from within, look upon it between you and

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the light, and it is gloriously transfigured, it is gorgeously adorned with angels, and archangels, and saints already made perfect, and in the midst is "Jesus Christ, and He crucified." From without the window looks unattractive enough; but from within it looks clad in chaste beauty. Similarly with the great fundamental truths of the Gospel, such as the doctrine of the Atonement, and that of justification by faith. From without they present neither beauty nor comeliness, marked as they are all over with spots of blood—"unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." But go inside the doctrines, study them from within, look at them between you and the light of God and the Eternal Judgment, and they are instantly transfigured, they become "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

2. Observe also the *subjects* of His guidance. "He will guide *you*,"—not the Apostles only, but you also. The Spirit influences the mental movements of the weakest saint. "The Spirit of the Lord will rest upon him and make his understanding quick in the fear of the Lord." On the margin, "understanding" is rendered "scent." "He will make him quick of scent in the fear of the Lord." According to this translation, which is quite as legitimate as the authorised one, the Holy Spirit plants in the believer's soul a kind of spiritual instinct which enables him to discern between the true and the false. He can tell by the organ of spiritual scent whether a doctrine be wholesome or tending to corruption. It is never expedient to go

out hunting heresy as a hound hunts a fox; nevertheless, if the fox be in the covert, it is well to scent him. "Catch us the little foxes," which in the clothing of sheep do such havoc among the tender grapes, the youthful minds of our churches. A gentleman ascends the pulpit, delivers an eloquent, erudite discourse: the young people are all thrown into delightful raptures of admiration. In the congregation, however, sits an old lady, very illiterate in the estimation of the world; she knows nothing of systematic or any other theology; the only books she has read are the Bible and her Hymn-book. What does she think of the showy, learned discourse? Not much. Why not? Did she understand it? No; but she scented it. She can tell by the smell of her nostrils whether a doctrine be healthy and sweet or sickly and unsavoury. "The Spirit of the Lord rests upon her, and makes her scent quick in the fear of the Lord."

Or take the authorised rendering—"He will make his understanding quick in the fear of the Lord." The Spirit mysteriously invigorates the mind. You have heard it stated that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost makes no material difference in the natural powers of the mind—a statement, however, to be taken with the usual grain of salt. I believe it does make often a great deal of difference—the Holy Spirit irrigates the mind, vivifies the faculties, and makes the whole mental machinery move with greater ease and rapidity. The "unction from the Holy One" oils the wheels marvellously. Look at Saul, the son of Kish. In the morning he

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is full of anxiety and questionings about his father's asses; but, ere the day is out, the Spirit falls upon him, and in the evening he is among the trained prophets, prophesying as eloquently as the best. A great and unexpected change from the company of asses to the society of prophets! Think again of Peter. A couple of days before the Pentecost he delivers an address to the assembled disciples on the subject of election—of election to office, a very dismal subject in the history of the Church from that day to this. What was the result? Casting lots. They might as well have cast planets, in so far that not much good came from the casting. Note him after the Pentecost—how then? Had he to resort to lot-casting? Oh no; but he intuitively read the deepest thoughts of men, and clearly and firmly apprehended the vital truths of Christianity. "The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and made his understanding quick in the fear of the Lord."

This, however, does not mean the total extinction of all differences between believers in their scholastic attainments and critical accomplishments; but it does mean the abolition of all difference in their spiritual apprehension of the saving truths of the Gospel. It is a fact, known probably to you all, that long sight has no advantage over short sight in examining the heavens. Here is a long-sighted, and here is a short-sighted, man. Ask them, Do you see the spreading oak in yonder park? Yes, answers one: No, answers the other. Ask them, Do you see the whitewashed farmstead on the brow of

yonder hill? Yes, answers one: No, answers the other. Well, you say, one sees much farther than the other. Wait a while; tell them to lift up their eyes to heaven. Ask them, Do you see the sun? Yes, answers one: Yes, answers the other. Ask them, Do you see behind and beyond? From both comes the unanimous answer, No. Unequal in their vision of bodies terrestrial, they are strictly equal in their vision of bodies celestial. Both can see the sun, neither can see behind and beyond. Thus Christians may much excel one another in knowledge of philology, of grammatical construction, and of the critical apparatus generally. But let them turn their vision Godward, let them fix their eyes on the spiritual truths and not on the syntax, and it is marvellous how all the differences seem at once to vanish. The dullest, obtusest believer sees as far as the Sun of Righteousness, and your most learned occupants of professorial chairs cannot see an inch behind and beyond. "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest."

3. The words, however, further indicate the *scope* of the Spirit's influence. "He will guide you into *all* truth"—not into some, but into all. Not at once, it is true, for guidance is a gradual process; to understand the doctrines of the Gospel, even under the tuition of the Spirit, demands the labour of years. The text does not say the Spirit will guide us in a month or in a year; but given the time demanded by the intrinsic conditions of the

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human mind, and the "Spirit will guide us into *all* truth." The history of doctrine is none other than the history of the Divine guidance of the Church into the truths of Revelation. He guided the Church fathers into the truth concerning the Person of Jesus Christ. He guided the Protestant Reformers into the truth of Justification by faith without the works of the law. He guided the Puritans and the Methodist Revivalists in England and Wales into the important doctrine of Regeneration. Well, has the Bible been exhausted? Oh no; other truths remain to be discovered, other doctrines lie concealed as yet, doctrines to reward the patient and prayerful study of generations to come. The Spirit guides as fast as the body of the Church can follow, and will not desist till every chapter of the Bible has been thoroughly explored, and emptied of all its contents. "God has much light to break out of the Bible yet," exclaimed Pastor Robinson; He has new doctrines yet to be evolved. Take, for instance, the doctrine of Sanctification. I doubt much if the Church has yet discovered the true secret of this doctrine; how else to account for the worldliness and carnality of the average believers of the day? It understands the doctrine of Justification—justification is by faith without the works of the law; but in practice, possibly in theory, Sanctification is the combined result of a confused medley of faith and works. I should not be at all surprised to find that Sanctification is also by faith without the works of the law—not, indeed, without good works as a

consequence, but without them as helps. But be that as it may, you will pardon me for saying that I believe that treasures many lie hid in the direction of the "Higher Life." There are more acorns in Bashan than oaks, and there are more seeds of truth in the words of Christ than have yet developed into doctrines. Our bodies of divinity shall have to be enlarged by-and-by, room shall have to be made for doctrines which hitherto have had no name in the theology of the Church. If that be the case, you ask, What shall we do with the Creeds, the Confessions, and Standards of Faith? We shall continue to respect the old, and, if the need arise, we shall endeavour to make new ones. Creeds are not intended to shut out new truths, but to shut in old truths. Creeds set limits to faith, said the chairman of a respected Union in the metropolis the other day. No, we reply; they do not set limits to faith, they only set limits to unbelief. You shall believe as much more as you like; but we are not very willing you should believe much less. Creeds are hindrances to progress, affirmed the same reverend divine. No, we answer; they are only hindrances to retrogression. They are not intended to prevent the Church moving on, they are only intended to prevent it moving back, and so lose the ground it has gained through much agony of thought and prayer. They tie down the mind, he further avers, and impede its flight upwards. Nothing of the kind, we answer; rather they tie up the mind, and stop its flight downward. What minds have soared higher than those who

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think it no degradation and no bondage to subscribe to the hoary creeds of Christendom? Creeds are constructed and cherished, not with the view of excluding new truths, but with the express purpose of preserving old truths, lest they be lost in the shaking and upturning of the centuries. Creeds are the garnerers where the Church lays by its ripe truths for the support and comfort of its children in years to come. But because we store the ripe fruit, does that make us negligent of the orchard? Let the history of the Church answer.

You are a hundred times welcome to go out on voyages of discovery, to find out new islands or new continents of truth. Only remember the condition,—under the guidance of the Holy Ghost “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation;” and a good reason why,—“Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.” The Spirit, who inspired the Bible, He only can adequately interpret it. But what about the right of private judgment, one of the cardinal articles in the programme of the Reformation? This article, like others, is liable to abuse as well as to use, and no article has been more grossly perverted than this to unworthy ignoble purposes. I have profound respect for private judgment when it is a holy judgment at the same time, judgment under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. But I have not an atom of confidence in private judgment when it is a depraved judgment, judgment under the dominion of the Evil Spirit. The Spirit, who gave the Bible, He

only can adequately interpret it. The other evening I visited the Houses of Parliament, and observed that a soft pure light was shed down on the floor from above the ceiling. I could see the light, but not the flame. Methought the Scriptures were illuminated in the same manner, from above the ceiling; the source of the light is in God, not in man. And, indeed, now and again, in moments of rapture, we seem to behold a pure halo as of the Divine Shekinah playing upon the page, the very letters become livingly transfused with a rich radiance as of yester-eve's golden sunset—

“A glory gilds the sacred page,  
Majestic like the sun;  
It gives a light to every age,  
It gives, but borrows none.”

Let us then seek the illumination of the Spirit. We study human commentaries, and we do well; let us not forget the commentary of the Holy Ghost. No “pocket commentary” this, such as you saw advertised the other day in the newspapers, but heart commentary. “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” When the Council of Trent sat, if an embarrassing question would arise, the ecclesiastics present would despatch a statement to Rome, submitting the points in dispute to the final arbitrament of the Pope and the College of Cardinals. In due time the answer would be returned, prefaced with the usual formula, “It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to us,” and then would follow the deliverance of the Sovereign Pontiff and his advisers,

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an end of all controversy. This continued so long and happened so frequently, says Dr. Owen in his commentary on the Hebrews, that it passed into a proverb among the nations of the Continent that the Holy Ghost was being sent periodically from Rome to Trent in the Pope's portmanteau. But we need not send to Rome to learn the mind of the Spirit, "for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

This is the Protestant counterpart to the Romish doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope—the doctrine of the infallibility of the Spirit. "He will guide you into all truth"—He will guide you infallibly; but it is another question, and more problematical, if you will follow infallibly. But wait awhile, believers, and you will all attain a state of infallibility—the other side of the river we shall be all advanced above the possibility of a mistake. The Gospel opens up for us in the future a vista of indescribable grandeur and divineness; the way of salvation is perfect and complete from beginning to end. The Bible is an infallible book; the Spirit is an infallible interpreter; and between them both men will grow infallible by-and-by. The Bible is a supernatural book; the Spirit is a supernatural expositor; and ere long we shall become supernatural under the combined influence of the two!

III. The Spirit guiding into all truth in respect of APPLICATION. In other words, the Spirit guiding the ministers of the Gospel to apply and enforce the truth. "He will guide you into all truth."

I. This suggests that the Spirit *whets* the truth, that He puts edge on the ministry of the Word. "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power." According to the Welsh version—"in the exposition of the Spirit and with power,"—the Spirit illuminating the light, accompanying the exposition of the preacher with a *secret* exposition of His own. Sometimes He flashes wondrously in the service; after half an hour of heavy speaking, there suddenly comes a lightning-flash, and another, and another. We feel thankful for the lightnings of the Spirit; but we prefer His constant shining as that of the sun in his meridian splendour. The original, however, comprises both the Welsh and English renderings—the Spirit expounds with such power that the exposition becomes demonstration; the truths of the Gospel are driven home to the mind with the same conclusive force as the truths of geometry—no possibility remains of resisting or invalidating them. "And when He is come, He will reprove—convince, convict—the world of sin." Or, as the words might be paraphrased—"He will plead the world out." We plead much with the world, endeavouring to persuade it to forsake its evil ways; but the world pleads back; we can never get the last word with it, we cannot convince it. But when the Spirit is come, "He will plead the world out," He will convince it, He will conquer it, the world will not open its mouth for very shame. He will plead it out—out of its arguments, out of its sophistries, out of its subterfuges,

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out of its sins. Oh that He would come oftener to our assemblies in His convincing power! "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were tickled? No. Amused? No. Entertained? No; "they were pricked," pricked to the quick, pierced through, as the word signifies. I know the sermons you like; sermons smooth, refined, polished; sermons besprinkled with daisies, primroses, violets; sermons full of flowers. But read Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost; what sort of a sermon was it? A sermon heavily perfumed with flowers? By no means; it contains not one daisy, not one primrose, not one violet; but it bristles from beginning to end with sharp pricks like a hawthorn bush. "They were pricked in their hearts, and said, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Modern ministers have taken to flower-gardening; and when we cannot grow our own flowers, we go gathering them through the vast fields of Nature; but men rush to perdition all the same, many with the perfume of our flowers of rhetoric upon their robes. The great need of the modern pulpit is sermons with fewer flowers and sharper pricks.

2. In conclusion, the Spirit imparts *warmth* to the ministry. "He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." I have already stated that warmth is an essential element in the inspiration of the Scriptures; I now wish to add that warmth is an essential element in the inspiration of the ministry. The chief difference between genius and

talent seems to me to consist, not in the amount of light, but in the amount of heat; not in the knowledge, but in the fire. The erudition of Ben Jonson was profounder than that of Shakespeare; the knowledge of Whewell was more extensive than that of Carlyle; the information of many a Scot was more capacious than that of Robert Burns. Where then was the genius? Not in the knowledge, but in the fire; not in the light, but in the heat. This also seems to be the main characteristic of the Christian Dispensation—its heat. "He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." "Did not our hearts burn within us as He opened to us the Scriptures?" Not, He opened to them the Scriptures and enlightened them, though that was true; but, He opened to them the Scriptures and burned them. He struck fire from the verses of Isaiah and the other prophets, and with the sparks He set the spirits of his disciples ablaze. The function of the ministry still continues the same—we should extract heat as well as light out of texts of Scripture. As in the promise, so in history, fire is indissolubly connected with the Spirit, and invariably follows in His wake.

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