E. F. Herrman

Mar. 1895

SERMONS
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FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY,
NEW YORK. - - - - CHICAGO.
GRACE AND GLORY

SERMONS

FOR THE LIFE THAT NOW IS AND THAT WHICH IS TO COME

BY

A. J. GORDON

Pastor of the Clarendon Street Church, Boston

CHICAGO:

FLEMING H. REVELL, 148 & 150 Madison St.,

Publisher of Evangelical Literature.
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I.

GRACE AND GLORY.

"For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." — Ps. lxxxiv: 11.

It is not for the sake of rounding out the sentence, and rendering it sonorous, that the Psalmist uses these words, sun and shield. The two sides of Jehovah's character are thus strikingly exhibited, — his majesty, which is as the sun shining in his glory; and his mercy, which is as that sun, tempered and assuaged by the intervening shield of clouds. To the Israelites, journeying through the wilderness, we are told that God manifested himself as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. That is, in the darkness, when they needed light, he appeared to them as a clear and bright shining sun; but in the day, when they needed protection, he became as a cloud to shelter them from the terrible heat and brightness. And perhaps it was in reference to this historical fact
that the Psalmist sung: "The Lord God is a sun and shield."

And then is added, "The Lord will give grace and glory," which is simply a continuation of the same thought. Glory is the manifestation of God when he shines as the sun; grace is the manifestation of God when he veils his brightness in the person of Jesus Christ. "The Lord our God is a sun," and as such he gives glory; the Lord our God is a shield, and as such he gives grace; and neither in grace nor in glory will he withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly.

The words lead us naturally to speak of God's twofold manifestation to us, and of God's twofold gift to us.

I. In the first place let us consider God's twofold manifestation to us: "For the Lord God is a sun and shield."

God alone is called the sun in the Scriptures; but it is most significant that the incarnate Son of God is spoken of as the "brightness," or "the raying forth" of the Father's glory. We can see the sun only through the medium of the light which it sheds upon us, and we can see God only in that revelation of himself which he has made in Jesus Christ, who is the "Light of the world." And the incarnate Lord is just as truly God in substance, in nature, and in glory, as the sunlight is
the sun. How profound is this saying, as well as how apt in its imagery, "The Lord is a sun"! The sun is the source of all life as well as of all light. The food which sustains the body, the colors which delight the eye, the flavors which regale the senses, are all woven with the same shuttles,—the sunbeams. The pattern is different, the warp is various, but the filling is the same; the sunlight woven and wrought together into all the countless fabrics which the body needs for food and clothing and pleasure. The thousand trades by which man gains a livelihood, the sun is carrying on all the time. He is the great farmer, who grows and ripens the grain for the millions of the earth; he is the great mechanic, who, by means of steam and vapor, lifts the water-floods to the sky, and so feeds the rivers, and showers the plains, and turns the wheels; he is the great architect, who builds the trees which the carpenter only hews and polishes; and he is the great artist, who tints the flower and colors the landscape, and paints the sunset with a beauty which the highest human skill can only imperfectly copy. It is the most potent and everywhere present object in nature which the Spirit has here selected as the image of the invisible God. And I have thus sketched his offices in order to remind you that the sun is the fountain of life as well as the fountain of light.
Turn now to consider Him who is "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." His is exactly this twofold office of life-giving through light-giving. The two functions are simply interchangeable. We are told that Christ was "the light of life," and again, that "the life was the light of men."

Is it not one of the most fatal errors of unbelief that it has separated what God has joined together, and presumed to feed man's moral and spiritual nature without the light of God's word or the light of his Son? Hear what many are saying to-day,—that the knowledge of a personal God is not necessary in order that one should be virtuous; that the light of conscience is not dependent on the light of Christ to keep it burning; that goodness is entirely possible without God; that, in a word, the inward moral life is independent of any outward divine illumination. Now, it is possible, no doubt, for righteousness to exist in the heart of an atheist. There are dead virtues just as there are dead works; there are consciences whose action is simply the unexpended momentum of divine influences long since rejected; there are virtuous instincts which are simply the reminiscences of a lost and forgotten state of innocence; there are exhibitions of truth, and justice and honor, which are simply the old coins of righteousness still
passing current after God’s image and superscription have been worn off from them, so that they who trade in them know not whence they are. And as there are dead virtues, so there is a dead light which they send forth. If you have ever witnessed at night that strange glow which is emitted from decayed wood in the forest, you have the best illustration of it. There is light, indeed, but it is utterly cold. Not a spark could be gotten from it to kindle a fire or illumine the way for a bewildered traveller. It is the light of death. And, alas! this is all that many have who, while denying God, still boast they are walking in the light.

When we appeal to the word of God how striking is the relation which we find everywhere indicated there between light and life, between the knowledge of God and the life of God! “This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” as though spiritual life were simply “the light of God” transmuted and wrought into holiness of heart and righteousness of conduct. It seems a very fine material from which to weave such a solid fabric. Men cannot credit it, that by simply studying the Bible, and absorbing the rays of divine revelation which fall there, all the sturdy virtues, purity and truthfulness and temperance and justice, can be developed and brought into exercise in hu-
man characters. But such is, beyond all question, the fact. And next to the curious skill of nature, which transmutes sunbeams into beams of wood, nothing is more wonderful than that transformation of the Spirit which builds character out of faith, human conduct out of divine truth, strong virtues out of spiritual knowledge. This is the divine order.

"God is light," and he leads men in the paths of righteousness, not simply by lighting up the way for them, but most of all by strengthening them to walk in that way, through building them up in inward holiness. He gives food to the soul before he gives guidance. "Light is sown for the righteous," and not till we have reaped it and gathered it into our bosom, and eaten it, have we strength to walk in the way of the Lord. Indeed, mere external light would be only a mockery without the internal life enabling us to follow its teachings.

"I am the way," says Christ; but how little of hope there would be in that revelation had he not also added, "and the truth and the life"! It is life that the lame and bruised and far-off wanderers from God need in order that they may get home. And blessed be God, who "hath shined into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus
Christ," it is not merely the illumination which shows us the path of duty which he gives us, but life with which to walk that path; Christ, the life, to lead us unto Christ, the way.

But it is said that the Lord is a shield as well as a sun. Christ incarnate hides God from us as well as reveals him to us.

When Moses asked Jehovah to show him his glory he answered, "No man can see my face and live." And so we find him constantly speaking to his servant out of the cloud, as though such a covering were necessary to mitigate and temper the brightness of his glory.

And, so far as we can know, it would be no more possible now than it was then, for men in the flesh to look into the face of God without being consumed. It is certainly impossible as yet for men to know God as a Spirit and to understand all his ways. Hence the incarnation is a veiling as well as an unveiling of God, a mystery as well as a manifestation. The time had come for revealing the Father's love and grace, but not for laying bare all the secrets of his wisdom or the deep purposes of his will. And hence there is just as great occasion for admiration in beholding the self-contained reserve of Christ in dealing with things which for the present must be hidden from men, as in contemplating his unaffected frankness.
in opening even to his humblest hearers the great things which he came to reveal. It is the weakness of man to tell all he knows; it is the glory of Christ that he was a master of silence as well as a master of speech; that he knew how to say to his disciples at one time, "To you it is given to know," and, at another, "It is not for you to know." How obvious it must be that while Christ came into the world to reveal the Father, he did not come to answer for us all curious questions, and to gratify all idle speculations which men may choose to raise! Hence I believe that it is just as true that he shields God from the gaze of irreverent speculation as that he uncovers him to the eye of humble faith. It may be a hard saying, but it is probably true, that Christ's person and revelation blind the proud and unbelieving, just as much as they enlighten the submissive and believing. Take, for example, his incarnation. What a thick veil of mystery it is to some! Instead of revealing God, as it was meant to do, from how many does it seem only the more utterly to hide him. Take the resurrection of the body. How it coarsens and complicates the doctrine of the future life to many who had no trouble with the philosophic doctrine of the immortality of the soul! Or, take the doctrine of vicarious atonement, which the Son of God reveals as God's method of forgiv-
ing sin,—what a scandal it is in the eyes of many who had settled the whole question of pardon on the ground of the infinite fatherhood of God! These are illustrations of revelations that blind by their excess of light, and in them we seem to catch a glimpse of the meaning of those most solemn words, “that seeing they might not see.”

But there is another and most blessed sense in which the Lord is a shield to us. He interposes between us and God’s violated law. He takes all the penalties and pains of that law into his own bosom. He throws himself athwart the track of justice, and bares his own breast to its punishments, that we may be spared from them, through his endurance of them. And this he takes upon himself because he only is great enough for such an interposition. God alone can shield us from God. The eternal Son is the only being that can intercept eternal punishment and ward it off from us. The shield of faith may enable us “to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one,” but only the shield of the Infinite Conqueror can avert from us all the fiery penalties of that law that is exceeding broad.

Let not this imagery, however, betray us into any thought of a divine vindictive anger which is so furious to come at us that it can only be stayed by the interposition of the Son of God. But God is
perfectly holy; and it is as impossible that holiness should not contain the double quality of hatred of sin and complacency towards obedience, as that the fire should not contain both light and heat. Yet Christ—oh wondrous achievement!—was able to separate these two elements. He took the penalty into himself, detained, endured, and exhausted it in his own person; and the love which fell upon his own faultless obedience he let pass on to us. He received the one undiminished, and transmitted to us the other unstinted. Ay, more. As the cloud withholds from us the heat of the sun that would smite us by day, and yet transmits to us the light of that sun softened and transfigured and glorified into a beauty that it could never have had before, so the love of God is nowhere so beautiful as when seen in the face of Jesus Christ on the cross, or shining through the rifts of his wounded and broken body.

And so, my hearers, how many seeming paradoxes in our Saviour's teaching may be explained by the imagery of the text, "a sun and shield," and by the double idea of revealing and concealing which it contains! It is plain now how Christ could say, at one time, "No man hath seen God at any time," and yet add, at another, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." It is not difficult now to reconcile two such contradictory sayings
as "Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape," and "From henceforth ye have both seen him and known him." And as the lurid words of Scripture fall upon our ear, "Our God is a consuming fire," we have only to utter the Psalmist's prayer, "Behold, O God, our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed," and we may read them translated into the dialect of grace, "God is love."

II. Consider now, in the second place, God's twofold gift to us: "The Lord will give grace and glory."

There is a striking correspondence between the first and the second parts of the text. As a sun God gives glory; as a shield he gives grace. For grace is simply what we receive and what we escape by the interposition of Jesus Christ between us and a holy law. It is not the result of God's condoning or overlooking our sins, but rather of his expiating them in the person of our Substitute, that so he may perfectly justify us from them. Grace, instead of being merely a concession from God's love, is the holy approval of God's law falling upon the believer after all its claims and conditions have been satisfied. "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Righteousness and justice have part in the transaction, as well as mercy and compassion. And this gives
a certain strength and vigor to the doctrine of justification by the blood of Christ which is far different from what appears in the notion that pardon is simply an easy tolerance of wrong-doing. What is the difference between the ministry of Moses and that of Christ? Is it that the one brought in the law, and the other brought in grace? No! "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." All that the commandment enjoined, Christ perfectly kept. All the punishment which it threatened, he fully endured. All the honor which it claimed, he completely rendered. The truth in the inward parts, which it demanded, he presented who was without spot and blemish. He did not dull the edge of justice by any weak concessions to sin; he did not weaken the claims of law by any attempted abolition of its penalties. He told the truth about sin, and about the ill-desert of sin, and about the righteous punishment of the sinner. He told the truth about the law of God, and the justice of God, and the coming judgment of God. "Truth came by Jesus Christ." He came "to bear witness to the truth." He was "the Truth." So far his mission and that of Moses were the same. But, blessed be God, "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." What the great law-giver never could do he did,—taught the decalogue to justify by
having satisfied it with his own spotless obedience; made the commandment pronounce a benediction on the penitent sinner by having endured in his own person the utmost chastisement of his sins, and so reconciled the claims of justice and of mercy that God “might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” Who, then, is Christ crucified but the Lord our shield? “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed.” Strange paradox this,—healing by Christ’s stripes! It is because those stripes were arrested and exhausted on himself that healing instead of hurt is ours. He simply disarmed the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and then transmitted free and unincumbered the blessing which he had earned by his righteous obedience. It is the grace side of the shield, then, that we are gazing at when we stand facing the cross of Christ. There we hear only, “Father, forgive them!” But go behind that cross, and you will find the truth-side. There fall all the hurting penalties of the broken law; there rain all the chastisements of our broken peace; there descends the outer darkness of God’s hidden face. Sin must be punished, and he who is now “made sin for us,” bears witness to that truth in every wound and word and groan. For
he has put himself under the law that he may honor it while saving us. But we are "not under law, but under grace," since the Son of God has thus covered us with his own person. How shall I make it simple? Have you noticed how the glass which the gardener puts over the hot-beds serves two exactly opposite ends? It conveys the sunlight to the plants, and yet keeps out the cold. It is thus both a medium of the warmth which fructifies, and a barrier against the frost that kills. So of Christ's atonement. It arrests the rigors of God's justice, and transmits the blessing of his love. It keeps off from us the penalties which our sins deserve, and conveys to us pardon which Christ has deserved for us. And thus it is at once a barrier against that "wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," and a transparent medium for that "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that bringeth salvation" which "hath appeared to all men."

This explanation of grace I know may sound mechanical, — as though Christ's cross has power to decompose the rays of God's holiness, extracting the retribution which it bears against sin, and leaving the love which it contains for the sinner. It is not mechanical, however, but intensely human and natural. The indignation which you feel
towards the clerk who has robbed you and abused your confidence may lose all its fire in passing through the family circle which shields him,—the suffering wife and children bearing the heaviest penalties of his wrong-doing in the blasted home, and yet pleading for your leniency and compassion towards the offender. It is no far-fetched notion. Human life abounds in illustrations of grace coming to the guilty, because the sting of punishment has been lodged in some innocent substitute, and indignation refuses to press its demands any further. And, if human life did not contain it, the Bible does. And that must be enough. It is because “Christ suffered, the just for the unjust,” that we are brought to God and made to enjoy his favor, so that where sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded.

Will you, O hearer, receive that grace to-day? Will you accept the protection of the shield of the Son of God, which is offered to cover you from the wrath to come? Will you stand, gratefully, penitently, trustingly, when God has put you “under grace”? Or will you break through the very barriers which the Redeemer has erected for your defence against an injured justice, and put yourself once more under the law of God? That will expose you to a severer condemnation than you would otherwise have known, seeing you despise
the riches of his grace. The promise has been fulfilled to us and to our children, “The Lord will give grace.” He has not only given it, but he has enthroned it upon the mercy-seat, so that now we are told that “grace reigns” by Jesus Christ our Lord. To go back to the law is now disloyalty to grace, and to Jesus Christ, by whom grace came. “He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

But now we turn to the other part of the promise: “The Lord will give glory.” It is a well-nigh infinite step from the one thought to the other. Grace is a free gift; glory is a reward; grace is ours as sharers in Christ’s humiliation; glory is ours as partners in his triumph; grace is our earthly portion; glory is our heavenly recompense. And it cannot be too carefully noted, that the Christian is never either encouraged or expected to get his reward of glory in this life. Glory cannot reign in this present evil world. “The glory that thou hast given me,” says Jesus, “I have given them.” But as Christ never came into the possession of his glory till he ascended
to his Father and our Father, so we shall not till
we ascend. And even then our reward of glory
will be exactly according to our service here,— no
more, no less.

But, whatever differences in degree there may
be, all the redeemed shall share it. Every one
who has been in grace here will be in glory there.

That glory will be the joy of unhindered com-
munion with God and the sight of his open face.
It is the other side of the Christian's destiny, hid-
den from sight as yet, but then uncovered and
luminous as the unclouded sun: light instead of
darkness, joy instead of sorrow, sight instead of
faith, rest instead of toil. Three times the apostle
Peter sums up the believer's twofold inheritance
with these grand outlines: "The sufferings of
Christ and the glory that should follow." It is suf-
ferring now. The cross of Christ which shields us,
shadows us also. It brings us grace; but it binds
us into fellowship with our Lord's humiliation and
rejection. And so long as we are in the flesh that
shadow will still be over us, reminding us that
our portion here is self-denial, condescension, and
cross-bearing. Glory on earth would be as mis-
placed for a Christian, as suffering would be in
heaven. We are therefore to covet and rejoice in
the trials which belong to our present state. In-
stead of having that so common fault, an infirmity
for glory, we are rather to "glory in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake." The more of these things we take upon us, the more of the heavenly fruition will be our inheritance. The cross-bear-
ing that trains and inures us to Christ's sufferings here, is just the discipline that is to fit us for the nearest fellowship with his glory there. It is "by patient continuance in well doing" that we are to "seek for glory, honor, and immortality." And may God help us that with all our might we aspire to this heavenly reward. Christ died not simply to save us, but also to glorify us; not merely to give us an entrance into heaven, but to give us "an abundant entrance." He prayed for us, not simply that we might be kept, but that we might be with him where he is and behold his glory. and that attainment is to see God as he now sees him,—his face no longer veiled from us because of the infirmity of our flesh; his countenance no longer shielded, lest it may overwhelm us with its brightness. They shall see his face and live. They shall look upon his countenance "as the sun shineth in his strength," and not be afraid. Instead of the sins that hid his face from them, they shall be without fault before his throne. Instead of the clouds and darkness that shut them out from God, there will be the cloud of glory to shut
them in with him. Oh, blessed hope! Oh, bright reward! And "now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to preserve you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."
II.

HUMAN NATURE UPLIFTED BY THE DIVINE.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."—II. Pet. i: 4.

I KNOW not where we can find a more absolute and heaven-wide contrast than that which is here set before us. Man, by sin, plunged into utter corruption; man, by grace, made partaker of God's holy nature,—this is the shadowed and this is the illumined side of the apostle's theology as here compactly set forth.

As a faithful preacher I must lead you into both these hemispheres of truth. I have no power to heighten the light of the one; I have no inclination to deepen the shadow of the other. You must see how dark and dreadful the ruin which sin has wrought, in order to comprehend anything of the glory of that redemption which Christ has wrought out for us.

Let us consider, then, from the text:

I. Our fall, through human nature. "The corruption that is in the world through lust."
The words carry us back to the origin of sin. It is a story which has been scorned by many as puerile and incredible, but which has also been admitted even by skeptics to furnish the simplest solution of the mystery of the origin of evil. The forbidden fruit was plucked by our first parents. They lusted after what God had enjoined them not to touch; and, by their disobedience, fell from the innocency in which they had been created. Then death, spiritual and physical, which God had threatened, passed upon the offenders; and they who had been created immortal and incorruptible became mortal and corruptible. Their descendants inherited their fallen nature, aggravating the calamity by repeating the sin, deepening the ruin by continuing the transgression. Thus, "by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners." This is the simple history of the origin of evil, as given in the Scriptures.

The bare narration of the story, as credible and authentic, is likely to provoke a smile in these days. But there are the hard and dreadful facts of sin and a disordered nature, which cannot be brushed aside as incredible. History and experience answer to Scripture on this point as the impression answers to the die. You may deny the story of the fall as it is written in the Bible, but you cannot deny that story as reproduced in
the lives of men and women to-day. I bring the matter closer still, and ask you if you have never plucked forbidden fruit; if you have never, through desire for pleasure or hunger after self-indulgence, done what God has distinctly forbidden. And if, as the consequence of your transgression, repulsive sickness has come to your body, or intolerable self-loathing to your soul, have you not learned the meaning of "the corruption that is in the world through lust"? Yes, we all know what it is to fall, and we also know what it is to be down; to think of the realm of holiness and perfection as a distant sphere, "beauteous as heaven, and, alas! as remote," while the gravitation of our hearts carries us strongly and constantly away from this sphere.

This is the fact that most convicts me while it most oppresses me,—that my heart is so constantly running down; that I must be so repeatedly wound up to duty, and fastened there by the ratchets of will and resolution, or I shall utterly fail in well-doing. No man backslides into holiness. No man expects that if he were to lift the breaks of self-restraint he would glide irresistibly into a life of high moral service and consecration. In other words, charity and holiness and benevolence and virtue are not the spontaneous products of our nature. With most persons, at least, they are the
By the Divine.

fruit of serious toil and strenuous endeavor. The very word self-denial, which we so constantly use, teaches us this. It is a word which carries the fossil history of the fall in it, since it tells of a bad self that must constantly be denied, because its desires are evil and its demands improper. And then, if we go still deeper, and think of what we would not wish to see spread out in public speech, the secret faults of the soul, the thoughts that creep into our hearts and nestle there, so venomous that we wonder whence they could come,—the envy, the jealousy, the malice, the evil desire,—what shall we say? Of course there is a great difference in the kind and degree of these sins. But, however short the chapter, or however mild the complexion, it is enough that none of us would wish to have the catalogue read out in public. I suppose the angels before the throne would not shrink from having every thought of their hearts proclaimed with the voice of Gabriel's trumpet. I am sure that He who sounded that challenge never heard on earth before, "which of you convinceth me of sin," would have willingly read his heart to the universe. And if God made man innocent, something must have befallen him that he is writing such hidden histories in his thoughts; so many that the world itself could not contain the books, and so dark there is none that does not
shrink from the thought of a judgment day when all these secret thoughts shall be revealed.

And I press the indictment of God's word still closer, when I remind you of the resentment which you show against a charge which you know to be true, so that you are more provoked at one who tells you your sins than you are at the sins themselves. The Apostle James has described the uncandid hearer very graphically as "like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass, who beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was." It is his natural face which he so readily disowns and forgets. Show him an ideal face, all the scars and blemishes smoothed away, and the whole countenance touched and exalted with an unreal loveliness, and he will linger over the picture and return to it again and again, praising him who has produced it as one at least who is sensible and fair among the many harsh deciers of human nature. And this is sorely against us,—that we are so willing to deceive ourselves, and so eager to be deceived by others; that we are so proud in our bankruptcy that we still insist upon all the credit and consideration which belong to a solvent moral condition.

There is something pitiful, too, it seems to me, in the very terms which men employ in asserting their uprightness. They indicate an unconscious
reaching out after honors to which a perfect soul would never lay claim. "The majesty of conscience," "the dignity of human nature," who has detected in such phrases an attempt to fortify a weak condition with high assumptions?

And what truth is there in these terms? Alas! we have to admit that the voice of conscience is heard far more frequently in complaint than in approval. Instead of exhibiting that imperial authority which has only to command in order to be obeyed, its cry is oftener that of remonstrance; overruled and outvoted by its peers, the affections and the will, it raises its solemn protest and then relapses into silence. And are not most men constrained to confess that they are more familiar with the rebukes of conscience than with its commendations; with the pain of its reproofs than the joy of its approval? Thus, conscience, alas! which was meant to be an eye-glass for reading more distinctly the requirements of God's law, has become a burning-glass for concentrating and focalizing upon the soul the penalties of that law, to burn it with remorse. And to confess that we are chiefly conscious of an organ through the pain it gives, is a very strong implication of disorder somewhere in our constitution.

And, as for the dignity of human nature, this is the one thing of which sin has robbed us. It
cannot exist in connection with shame and self-condemnation. The sense of harboring desires that are contrary to God, of stooping to indulgences that are unworthy of ourselves, of being tempted into excesses to which even the beasts of the field are not inclined,—all this cannot but lower our self-respect, and thereby take from us that dignity which is the outward carriage and bearing of self-respect. The deceitful heart will assert this dignity indeed only the more vehemently in proportion to its loss; as, for instance, in treating of death which is the consummation of corruption. How often is it idealized into a good angel, and decked and garlanded with all manner of lovely titles! Scripture says that it is “the wages of sin;” and simple candor requires us all to admit that it is an event which puts the climax of humiliation and disgrace upon the body. We ought not to fear death, indeed, but we ought not to be proud of it. We should sooner be ashamed to die than to glory in it. It is not a natural event, as men have beguiled themselves into believing, but is just as truly unnatural as the resurrection is supernatural; and when I hear people applauding it as though it were a normal and beneficent arrangement, I feel like chiding them because they are puffed up, and have not rather mourned at that which has come upon them.
And so with the claim that all men are by nature the sons of God, which we hear so constantly asserted among us. What an indication it gives of man's determination to brave it out with the Almighty, and to deny the fall and forfeiture that have come through sin! God forbid that we should look at such a theme except through our tears. If by infinite grace any of us have become "children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," we shall tell men only with weeping of their fatherless condition while yet in their sins. Indeed, who that has looked deeply into the subject has not been almost moved with an apostle's sorrow to cry, I could wish myself orphaned for my brethren and kindred according to the flesh? And sometimes we have been startled from sorrowful meditations on this question, to ask for the moment whether we have not been dreaming, and whether, after all, this which so oppresses the spirit is not an illusion of a morbid theology, a nightmare of medieval superstition still haunting and pursuing us. But a glance at the great world lying in wickedness convinces us that we are awake, and that they are dreaming to whom this world appears an unfallen Paradise. O my brethren, kind hearts that can pity men with a Saviour's pity, loyal hearts that can believe God when he tells you what is hard to be received,—if, in these
"perilous times" when "men will not endure sound doctrine," you should hear any alleging the universal sonship of mankind, as though he had never heard the Master's solemn words, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," be not angry with such an one. It must be that he is confused and bewildered by the lingering dreams of primitive innocency that still haunt our race. But be not deceived by such an one. God made man upright; but something has happened; and that something must be a dreadful thing when we find such words written against us in Scripture as these, that we are, "by nature, the children of wrath," "without God, and without hope in the world."

A very lovely song may be constructed from the stray notes that have floated down to us from the innocency of Eden, or from the preludes of a Paradise regained, which we hear in the closing words of the Apocalypse. But the past is gone, and the future is not here. It is not what men were or what they may become that determines what they are. And truth—actual, present truth—is what the perishing soul must hear. And God forbid that when the Scriptures have told us plainly that "as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God," we should waste our ministry in trying to persuade men that by the
universal fatherhood all are the sons of God, whatever their condition. A single gospel sermon, heard and believed and obeyed, can make the deepest sinner a son of God, a partaker of the divine nature; but a thousand sermons can never make sons of God of those who, by nature, are the children of wrath, and by their wilful, persistent rejection of Christ are choosing that the wrath of God shall abide upon them.

"Woe is me for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Never should we have known how unfilial we are, and how unholy, had we not seen the holy Son of God, and beheld his spotless obedience to the Father's will. It is his sonship that reveals so glaringly our unfathered condition by nature; it is the searching light of his purity that tells us what we are while in our sins,—so beggared and orphaned by our disobedience. And it is best for us to face the stern and awful fact, and to hold our souls to it till they cry out after God. Men with little love for holiness and piety and faith in Christ talk confidently of God as their Father; and I would not angrily contradict them. I would be glad if in this careless and God-forgetting world any have seriousness enough to think at all whether there be a Father
in heaven. But I listen and hear Christ saying to some who were insisting on this claim, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,"—the most scorching words that could burn on human lips. But we will not be offended with thee, O Son of God, nor compel thee to say to us what thou didst say to these, "Because I tell you the truth ye believe me not." What must be the condition of such all around us as never pray from year to year, never recognize God by a breath of thanksgiving, or by an upward glance of the eye; "the lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," the men "whose God is their belly, and to whom the indulgence of their own lusts" is the chief end of life; the earthly, sensual, and devilish to whom the ruining of the souls and bodies of their fellow-men is a daily business; the betrayers of virtue, the defilers of the flesh, the lawless and disobedient, the unholy and profane, the murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, the men-slayers, the whoremongers, the men-stealers, the liars and perjurers! Must we make haste to throw over all these the shield of the divine fatherhood? If the charity which believeth all things were tempted to do so, there is the awful saying of Jesus about the Satanic fatherhood which we cannot forget. I hope the dark catalogue which I have just enumerated from the Scriptures has no
representative among my hearers to-day. God forbid! But there is a test of sonship which Jesus gives in this connection, which must come home to you all: "If God were your Father ye would love me." Do you love the Son of God, and have you thereby the token that you love the Father?

O friends! we must look at these things, however we might wish to shut our eyes to them. There are such facts as "the corruption that is in the world through lust," and "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and not subject to his law." If these lines of the inspired picture are rugged and repulsive, they are literally true to life. I do not say that sin has reduced human nature to a dead level of corruption and ruin. There are splendid natural virtues rising here and there; characters and deeds of alabaster whiteness. And these are the lofty and isolated pillars of the temple which we will not fail to admire and praise; but we cannot fail to see, also, on every hand, the ruins and the desolations, the wrecks and the rubbish, which lie about their base. God can reconstruct what sin has cast down; and this is what he has sent his Son to do. Let us study the ruin, and mourn over it, that it may make us glad and grateful for the redemption which is to be accomplished through Christ.
II. Our uplifting by divine nature. *That by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.*

Man fell by reaching up after the divine attributes; he is lifted up by God's reaching down to him and making him a partaker of the divine nature. “Ye shall be as gods,” was the lying promise of the tempter to our first parents, and by listening to this falsehood they were cast down to the level of the beasts. But now God comes with the veritable promise that they shall, through faith, be made godlike, sharers of his nature and conformed to his image. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” is the promise of the gospel. And this means not simply that our natural life shall be prolonged into endless duration; but that we shall be endowed with a supernatural life; that God's own immortal nature and being shall be communicated to us through regeneration.

Does it seem a strange thing that by one act of disobedience sin could come into the world with all its endless consequences of corruption and misery? But God will more than match his adversary. By one act of obedience to the gospel, life now comes back to the fallen soul with all its endless consequences of blessedness and incorruption. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life,” says Christ. He has it, that is, the instant he believes, by the
new birth from above, by the communication of
the divine nature. "Verily, verily, I say unto you,
he that heareth my word and believeth on him
that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not
come into condemnation; but is passed from death
into life." Is passed already,—not shall pass
when the narrow bridge of death is crossed, or
the lofty portals of heaven have been entered, but
is now "delivered from the power of darkness
and translated into the kingdom of God's dear
Son". "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the
Christ is born of God,"—is in this present world
a son of the Highest, and a citizen of heaven.
These are the exceeding great and precious
promises by which we are made partakers of the
divine nature. One forth-putting of the hand
towards "the tree of the knowledge of good and
evil" grasped eternal death, and spite of tears,
and cries, and struggles, that hand has never been
able to let go of it; one forth-putting of the
hand towards Christ takes eternal life, and spite
of sins, and falls, and failures that life will never let
go of us. "And I give unto them eternal life
and they shall never perish, neither shall any man
pluck them out of my hand."

The fallen life of Adam reproduces itself in end-
less corruption, sin begetting sin, death following
on death, and the stream of perverted life having
no power to arrest its own flow. The divine life of Christ in the soul is constantly unfolding in the fruits of righteousness; faith begetting faith and holiness blooming into holiness until the end. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God that liveth and abideth forever.” Oh, wondrous mystery! A word of Scripture truth is dropped into the heart and appropriated by a living faith; and henceforth this incorruptible seed is growing and expanding, the divine more and more mastering the human, when it is powerless to recover itself. This is God’s solution of the problem of evil, and the more I work upon that problem the more it seems to me to be the only conceivable solution. Humanity has proved itself impossible without divinity. Not only does it fail to rise above itself, but it more and more sinks below itself unless it is laid hold of and uplifted by the superhuman. God’s life alone can save us from falling into Satan’s life, which is death.

Science in its highest discoveries is perpetually stumbling on Scripture analogies. Feeling after the secrets of nature we are startled to find that, though all unconscious of it itself, it has grasped some secret of the gospel, which we can now use to translate and interpret the deep things of grace. Medical skill you know has recently succeeded in
curing by "transfusion," as it is called. When a patient's blood has become so impoverished that his case is hopeless they will open the veins of a healthy body and pour into his circulation some of this strong, rich blood. We may thank science for such a sermon preached by the surgeon's art. That is what God has been doing for centuries with our invalid and dying humanity,—restoring it by a divine transfusion. Through Christ's heart the healing tide has been pouring into our race to recover it from its mortal sickness. Regeneration is simply the pulse-beat of the eternal life throbbing in human hearts. Redemption, which began in the shedding of Christ's blood on the cross, is carried on from age to age by the communication of his life to men through the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Of course the illustration is inadequate, as every such analogy must be. It is not in this instance human life at its highest ebb helping human life at its lowest; it is the divine assisting the human; it is God yoking his holy nature up with our fallen, helpless nature that he may lift it out of its low estate. It is so great a fact—that communication of God's life to man—that one has well called it "the miracle of miracles, the sum of all miracles, the standing miracle of the ages."

And do you not see how all this bears on the ques-
tion of development and spiritual education which are so much commended among us? Development is the unfolding; but there must first be something to unfold. Education is the drawing out; but there must first be something from which to draw. And here is just the difficulty,—that naturally we lack the root and basis of holiness. Therefore culture, as a substitute for religion, instead of its supplement, is a mockery.

"My nature only needs training and nurturing," says one, "just as my garden only needs weeding and hoeing."—I am quoting the actual words of an objector.—Yes; but what fruit would you get from your garden if you only weeded and dug it? There must be the seed brought from the granary and cast into the soil, before a harvest is possible. And God teaches us that "the incorruptible seed of the word" must be cast into our hearts before they can bear the fruit of righteousness and true holiness. And, therefore, how practical, how direct, how immediate, is the duty which Christ puts upon us,—that of receiving the seed of the word by faith. He does not set us to training or pruning ourselves. He does not ask us to let him train or prune us, first of all. If we make that proposal to him he will repel it. "Master, we know thou art a teacher come from God," says Nicodemus. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except
a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God,” is his abrupt reply. It is not education, but regeneration, that you need first. And so how direct and simple our duty is. “Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls.” Clear away the stubble of pride and prejudice and self-conceit with which the ground is cumbered, and the underbrush of fruitless culture, if that is there, and into the meek soil of faith receive God's word. This is the process of regeneration. And this must be, before a true and profitable education can begin.

It is so wonderful how a strong, holy life will build itself, all silently and unconsciously, out of a single grain of Scripture truth accepted and believed. I have no doubt that to many it seems like a fine-spun theological fancy, this bringing in of a new and divine life by the belief in a single promise of God. But I am as sure of it as I am of the most unquestionable fact which you can mention; and the history of God's church bears incontrovertible testimony to the fact. Augustine, Luther, and Bilney were all regenerated by a single word of Scripture; the first from a dissolute life, the others from blind superstitions and agonizing failures in self-help; and
their regeneration meant a new age for their respective countries. They were not only new men, but mighty sons of God, who nursed whole empires into the faith of God. And yet they could say, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruit of his creatures.” Incredible! Yes, and how many things are incredible. Search the acorn or the kernel of wheat with your scalpel; peer into its heart with your microscope, and tell me if you can see the stalwart oak or the yellow waving harvest there. And you confess that you cannot. “The words that I speak unto you,” says Jesus, “they are spirit and they are life.” You cannot see that life; you cannot find that spirit by searching; but it is there. I hold up one of God’s exceeding great and precious promises. There are holy saints and faithful missionaries in that text; there are noble lives and great charities and mighty revolutions there. There are heaven and the eternal weight of glory lying in embryo there. So has the divine come into our fallen race by the simplest of methods, but with infinite consequences of blessing and grace. And this divine life waxes stronger and stronger within us, subduing our wayward natural impulses, subjecting to itself our turbulent and rebellious passions. Our growth in grace, therefore, is not the mending and improving of the
BY THE DIVINE.

old, but its conquest and subjection by the new till God becomes all in all within us as he shall become all in all without us.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” The Redeemer did not attempt to lift up our fallen race by standing outside of it and laying hold of it with an external grasp. He came into it and knit up all the fibres of his life with its flesh and its soul, and when he rose he raised us with him and as a part of him. And regeneration is the same process going on forever in the world; the holy nature of God weaving itself into our being, and making us one with the Father and the Son.

And thus we have something within us that tends heavenward by its own law; something that has in itself a divine buoyancy. It is the spirit of Christ in us, lifting us up into union with the personal Christ upon the throne. “My little children, of whom I travail in birth until Christ be formed within you.” — Each heart that opens itself to his entrance becomes a manger for Jesus; there the miracle of the incarnation is repeated, there the Holy Ghost again brings God and man into union in the same person, and one who was born from beneath in his human nature is now born from
above with a divine nature. He has Christ in him now as the power for attaining unto the likeness of Christ without him—a divine spirit to mould him to the divine person. As the iron in the blacksmith's blood makes him strong to wield the iron in the bar, so the believer has eternal life within him with which to "lay hold on eternal life," which is set before him.

And now, friends, I offer you this gift of God, which is eternal life. I want you to know its blessed help, to share its exalted privilege, to possess its eternal crown. Why will you die? Nay, why will you remain dead? Christ hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel. And they are yours now if you will by your faith and obedient choice deem yourself worthy of them. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God!" Do we sing this exultant strain without a sigh or a tear for those who are still rejecting the adoption of sons? God forbid. With the deepest longing we take up the prophet's question, "How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a goodly land and a pleasant heritage?"
III.

FAITH AND FRUITFULNESS.

"For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." — II. Pet. i: 8.

THE things referred to are those just enumerated. Having started with faith, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature, the apostle proceeds to evolve from this the whole system of spiritual graces. "Add to your faith virtue." And it is not simply add. The word is a much more vital one. It is, rather, furnish in your faith virtue, and in your virtue knowledge, and in your knowledge temperance. Let your faith be so prolific that out of it may be evolved the whole continuous and unfolding system of spiritual virtues. If these things be in you and abound, they will make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The inner and ever-expanding life of faith will appear in the outward fruits and actions of piety, thus advancing you towards the perfect knowledge of Christ, and full conformity to his character.
These words lead us to consider the twofold condition, and the twofold manifestation of the Christian life.

I. The twofold condition of a Christian life.

"If these things be in you and abound."

There must be inward life before there can be outward activity; and this inward life must abound before its outward manifestations can be multiplied.

How many are trying to work, without having been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" by the renewing of the Holy Spirit. Their activity is therefore detached and superficial, like the motion of the wheel upon its axle, which is impelled by contact with the earth instead of being driven by an inward impulse. When we act from the claims of duty, from the requirements of society, from the demands of public opinion, or from the authority of law, our good works are, in a certain sense, external to us. They are taken on, rather than lived out. Now, if you have said that a person is conscientious, you have paid a high tribute to him. But when you have said that a person is faithful, you have bestowed a yet higher tribute upon him. A faithful man is one who has faith in him as well as a conscience; something that is in love with Jesus Christ, as well as loyal to the ten commandments. Hence he has that which draws
him towards *well* doing, as well as towards right doing. For if it takes a conscientious man to do right, it takes a faithful man to do good; if it takes a conscientious man to be honest, it takes a faithful man to be self-denying; if it takes a conscientious man to love his neighbor as himself, it takes a faithful man to love his enemy and to do good to one that hates him. Indeed I know not that conscience, at its best estate, would ever have told us that when one smites us on the right cheek we should turn to him the other also; or, if one takes away our coat, we should also let him have our cloak. This is the gospel. Conscience is an inner law, but faith is an inner gospel.

Well, now we are taught that this faith must be in us, as something personal and living, before we can bring forth the external fruits and works of righteousness. Our faith may be in our creed, that half-way house between the Bible and the heart; it may be in our intellect, that mid-station between the mind of God and the will of man. But this is not enough. A creed religion is apt to be disputatious, busy with mere dogmatic moralities, defending nice distinctions, and hovering forever over sectarian issues; an intellectual religion is speculative, toiling at definitions and exhausting its energies on logical inferences. And if one's piety stops at either one of these stations — at the
intellect or the creed—that man's religion is vain. "If these things be in you."

Our faith must come to us through the brain indeed. But it cannot stop there. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The mind takes truth from the Scriptures, weighs it, perchance, in the scales of some tried and standard confession, and then distils it into the heart, its richest essence, its finest life, condensed and deposited there. And nothing can evolve from itself a holy, self-denying, and truly benevolent life like this. A germ of faith will make a giant in activity. That faith be in us rather than external to us is of the very highest importance then. You know the difference between an opinion and a conviction. The one is what we think; the other is what we are. Our opinions may sit lightly on us, but our convictions are the iron in our blood, which make the very strength and stalwartness of our moral manhood. And faith, as an active grace, is simply Christian conviction. It is what we believe and feel and are upon divine questions and promises. And it is the only thing which can give a rooted strength and stability to our Christian life.

And do we stop to think when we are taxed with some extraordinary service that the surest way to be fit for it is to have our faith strengthened;
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that we must believe more if we would be able to do more?

That is a fine touch of spiritual wisdom which appears in the disciple's answer to the Lord, when he instructed them in regard to the duty of forgiveness: "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Exceeding strain is this to put upon our patience, — offence crowding on offence, and injury treading on injury, till it has grown to a sevenfold affront. "Lord, teach us patience, train us in the secret of thy divine forbearance," do they ask? No. "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith." They asked that the root might be strengthened, to brace the tree for such trial and resistance.

Radical above all other systems is Christianity. It knows nothing of externals which are not the product and outcome of an internal life. Nay! not even an external morality or an external philanthropy. These things tend inevitably to become either powerless or disordered when cut loose from a personal faith. The Apostle Paul, after summarizing his prodigious labors, qualifies his statement thus: "Whereunto I also labor striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." And when he has exhorted us to a
holy and Christ-like example he is careful to add, as imparting the true secret of such an example, "Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith." Now, the danger is with us all, not so much that we shall become inactive, as that our activity shall get uncoupled from our personal faith. By our associations and fellowships we may be so geared into the great prevailing movements of Christian philanthropy and beneficence that we shall move without our will; our activity kept up while our spirituality is declining; our public testimony growing loud while our closet cries are growing silent. The very prevalence and popularity of Christianity constitutes one of our greatest dangers. The outward help which we get takes off the strain of inward necessity, so that we can be moved without our own motion, and be warmed without our own pulse-beat. And the greatest blessing which can come to any of us is to have some work assigned to us which is so peculiar and so unpopular that we can get no help for it in the prevailing Christian sentiment, and must, therefore, be driven back upon our solitary faith in God. Yes, to be led into some path of Christian service so new and so untrodden, that we have to cry out, as the Master did, "I am alone," is a sore and bitter trial; but if we can add, as he did, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with
me," it is a high privilege, since we are thus set apart unto God, by being set apart from men. It was the faith of one man, William Carey, the cobbler, that started and gave momentum to the great enterprise of modern missions. His friend, Andrew Fuller, has recorded his amazement at the boldness and invincible courage of that faith. But doubtless its strength was largely due to its solitariness. His conviction, which was rebuked at first and frowned upon by his brethren, had to take refuge in his own lonely heart; and there, shut up to God, and fed upon that meat which the world knows not of, it grew to such vigor and giant energy that nothing could resist it. Praise and bless the Lord for any discipline that drives our faith inward, and closets it with God, and so makes it something absolutely in ourselves, because so absolutely in God!

But there is yet another element in the twofold secret of Christian activity,—the abundance of our faith as well as its radical inwardness: "If these things be in you and abound." If we are to do any great work for God, we must have a large reserve of faith and spiritual power from which to draw. The force of what we expend depends upon the bulk and depth of that which is behind it. Hence God has been careful to enjoin fulness of the divine life as well as overflow. "I am come
that they might have life," says Jesus, "and that they might have it more abundantly." One of the greatest sins of Christians is that of spiritual improvidence. They are only careful for life, for the supply of their daily needs. And when they are called to give out, it is simply from a temporary provision that they bestow. Consequently there is a feebleness,—a lack of spiritual momentum in the service of many that renders it well-nigh powerless. Now, the simplest exercise of faith gives us life. "He that believeth on the Son hath life." But it is only a faith that "groweth exceedingly," day by day, that gives us abundant life. And for such a faith we ought to strive with all our heart. It is a shame that so much of our service for Christ is merely provisional; called into exercise to meet a present demand, instead of being the result of deep and permanent impulse, that it is so often the mere drainage of a superficial piety instead of being the welling up of the deep life of God in the soul. It is because of this that it lacks spontaneity as well as force. It depends for its flow on a favorable lay of the land, and not upon its communion with God, in whom all its fountains lie, and hence has no abiding perennial force. What a lesson to this point has Christ taught us in his discourse with the woman of Samaria: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that
I shall give him shall never thirst." But there he does not stop, howbeit that were enough to satisfy many who should read his words in after time. To have our own thirst satisfied, and to be assured that we shall never lift up our eyes in torment, and call for a drop of water to cool our parched tongue;—is not this practically, though unconsciously, the extent of many Christians' anxiety? But the heart of Christ is larger than ours. He gives abundant life as well as life. "But the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." What is so irrepressible as a living spring? You cannot stanch it with all your power, or resist the pressure of its crystal waters. The strength of the hills is given to it,—the hills, with their deep, hidden reservoirs which the droughts cannot find, and the sands cannot choke. And that is what the life of a true disciple ought to be,—not giving out mere intermittent streams of blessings, and these when he is drawn upon by the claims of duty, or the demands of suffering; but flowing down in perennial supply from the great deeps of God. A responsive piety is noble, but a spontaneous piety is nobler. The one goes out because it is called for; the other because it is sent. The one answers the cry of a famishing world; the other obeys the command of a bountiful Lord. The apostles spoke
with mighty power, because they were "filled with the Spirit," as the record again and again declares. It was this fact which gave such a penetrating force to their words. They were not winged words, moving with their own momentum simply; but projectile words, carried on by the almighty impulse of the Holy Ghost. Utterances to which we rise by an extraordinary effort; words which are above our real spiritual level, have but little force, and go but little way. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is what is behind our life and conduct and utterances that gives them power, not what is in them simply. Hence the double condition of inwardness and fulness of faith in order to attain abundant success.

II. The twofold manifestation of a Christian life:
"Ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful."

These two words, "barren and unfruitful," seem, as we read them, to be synonymous. But as they stand in the original there is a very sharp and significant distinction between them. The one refers to the active, and the other to the passive, products of the Christian life, and the words have been well translated by an old commentator:
"Neither unworkful nor unfruitful."

There is evidently a difference between fruit and works. The one is the spontaneous product of a divine life within the soul; the other the active
manifestation of that life in Christian service. Works may be easily counterfeited; fruit cannot be counterfeited. Fruit, because so entirely the product of the inner life, is made by our Lord the test of character. He does not say that by men's works we shall know them, but by their fruits. “Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits... A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Wherefore by their fruit ye shall know them.”

The world is full of works which have no root or nourishment in faith. They are useful and zealous and well directed, but are not necessarily the outcome of a holy heart. Charity has come to be fashionable, and men and women conform to its demands in order to be in style. Good works are the assessment which society makes on those who are prosperous, and many practise them to maintain their credit in polite circles. Benevolence has assumed the character of a joint-stock enterprise, by which one part of the public relieves the needs of the other; and so in fairs, and concerts, and collations, people will eke out their shares and get their dividends of entertainment and pleasure. But there is nothing of humble, self-denying, sanctified well-doing in all this. These are “the
dead works" spoken of in Scripture,—such as have no root in faith and love to God. For whatever is separated from its source becomes dead. Sunder a branch from the tree and it dies, though its form and substance may remain unchanged; and sunder the best and most approved Christian service from its relation to Christ, and it becomes dead works. It is equally true that apart from Christ we cannot be what God requires, and we cannot do what God requires. "Without me," that is, apart from and separated from me, "ye can do nothing," says Christ. It is not the whole question, then, whether our works are manly, but whether they are also godly; whether they are humane, but whether they are also divine; whether they command the praise of men, but whether men beholding them "shall glorify your Father which is in heaven."

And, to show how radical these distinctions are, you remember that the Scripture speaks of "re- pentance from dead works." We are not only to be sorry that we have sinned, but especially that we have been deceiving men and dishonoring God with the semblance of well-doing when the enduring root and vital principle have been wanting. No! the works of righteousness cannot be taken on. What we call the externals of Christianity are absolutely worthless, dead wood cumbering the
tree, unless they are the outcome of what is radically and divinely internal. And if there is one thing which we ought to be afraid of in these days of prevailing religious activity, it is that we may get overlaid with the outward forms of Christianity before we have been inlaid with its precious virtues; overlaid with its charities and its rituals, its sacraments and its ceremonies, its alms-deeds and its churchmanship, before we have been inlaid with its living mosaic of heavenly graces, faith, and virtue, and godliness and charity. Christ dwells within us except we be reprobates; and our hearts must worship towards him before they can work towards men. The law said, "This do and you shall live;" but grace has absolutely reversed this. It says, "Live that you may do this." Live in Christ the Saviour, that you may work out your own salvation; live in the Spirit that dwells within you, that you may labor for the world which lies about you. If we fail of this our good works will be bereft of their inner substance, and we shall deceive both ourselves and our fellow-men."

And so, because of the ease with which good works may be counterfeited, Christ does not stake the gospel on the doings which may appear in connection with it, but upon the fruits which are grown upon it. For fruit, ah! here is something which cannot be easily imitated. There is a fine
aroma which breathes from it, there is a delicate flavor which belongs to it, which none can quite counterfeit. And, though men may try to simulate it in the wax-work graces which they attach to their characters, nobody is deceived. Take the list which Scripture gives us as "the fruits of the Spirit:" "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." How these defy imitation! How they baffle all attempts to mere artificial construction!

Now, if faith be in us, and abound, these fruits will be found upon us. They will appear and develop unconsciously, like the husbandman's seed "which springeth and groweth up he knoweth not how." They will come through our communion with the Lord rather than through the energy of our own will. Exactly as Christ says, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." No effort here; no striving after fruitfulness. To be sure, in nature there must be the human planting and training. But here, even that is taken out of our hands. "My Father is the Husbandman." The whole process is divine from beginning to end. To beget the highest graces of the Christian life we have absolutely nothing to do but to abide in communion with Christ through faith and prayer and feeding on the word. "What had the branch to do with producing the
purple cluster of grapes, the rare compounding of its flavors, the exquisite tints of its skin, the perfect symmetry of its form,—what had it to do with all this? Nothing, except to maintain communion with the sap and root of the vine which bore it. And these lessons of our Lord from nature are wonderfully true to the spiritual facts which they set forth. "Consider the lilies," says Jesus, "they toil not, neither do they spin." Blessed admonition to you who have been trying to manufacture the fruits of the spirit; weaving meekness in the hand loom of self-culture, spinning gentleness out of the coarse fibres of your unhappy disposition, and toiling to produce the fabric of goodness from the texture of your natural badness. Cease your vain labor; consider the lilies. Nature grows her fruit, and God grows his; and no human skill will ever take this business out of his hands. If you covet humility, that "lily of the valley," remember that it comes not of toiling or spinning. Nothing is so absolutely beyond our power to produce as this. For, if we could attain humility through our own effort, we should be conscious of it. And the moment humility is self-conscious it becomes pride. If it is found in us at all it will be because we are in intimate communion with Christ, sharing his life and conformed to his example, who "made himself of no reputation;" who "humbled him-
self and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Or take another illustration—"the fruit of the lips," of which the Scripture speaks. "Let us therefore offer unto God the sacrifice of praise continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." None of all the divine fruits has been so laboriously imitated as this. The richest voices have been borrowed from the stage and the opera to offer the sacrifice of praise in God's house; all the training of musical science, all the triumphs of musical art, have been laid under contribution; but the illusion never satisfies a spiritual ear. There is nothing about which the most devout Christians are more certain than that fine singing is not worship. The genuine fruit of the lips can only be produced from the divine life within the soul. "I create the fruit of the lips," says Jehovah. Of the "new song" we are told that "no man could learn that song but the one hundred and forty-four thousand which were redeemed from the 'earth.'" And the same is true of the prelude of that song as of the full chorus. It takes a redeemed soul to rise to this great harmony. The unredeemed will attempt it, for men often venture in where angels fear to tread. Churches hire fine performers from the world to offer for them the sacrifice of praise. But no
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price is great enough to tempt an angel to undertake the new song. This is the fruit of redeemed lips only, and by that fruit the redeemed shall be known when the Lord shall judge his people. There is a divine harmony in the worship which is “in spirit and in truth,” that is as inimitable as the flavor of nature’s most delicious fruits. Art cannot compass it. Culture cannot rise to it. It is as foreign to nature as it is spontaneous to grace.

And now, my brethren, that we may make all this practical, how shall we become more fruitful and more workful as God’s children? The time is short, and we must not only work while it is day, but we must bear fruit while it is the season for fruit. There is no story which so affects a truly conscientious Christian as that of the barren fig-tree. Nothing but leaves—O Lord, shall it be so? Life passing, the services of God’s house coming and going, and so little forth-putting and ripening of the Christian graces! And the Lord is coming into his garden by and by, “to see if the vine flourish and the tender grape appear and the pomegranates bud forth;” and “what manner of fruits, new and old, we have laid up for our Beloved.” If Christ has not fruit in us, he has it nowhere in the world. The grapes grow on the branches, not on the vine, and “ye are the branches.” We are set here to represent Christ,
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by "being fruitful in every good work." If we fail, he fails just to that extent of being commended to men. And it is upon this issue that we shall be judged. "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away." It is not what we intended to be, but what we are, that will determine our destiny at the Master's coming. If the thorns and gnarls of unsanctified temper fill the place which God set apart and pruned for the sweet fruits of love and charity we shall suffer loss, and the shame which the Lord has threatened will come upon us. And if instead of works, good deeds done to the poor, the gospel preached to the heathen, and the sick and afflicted visited in the name of Christ, there be only the spreading leaves of a vain profession, then the "Inasmuch as ye did it not" will fall with fearful emphasis upon our ears. Oh, we are so careless and drowsy upon the great question of the works and fruits of faith! To bring them forth seems to many almost a gratuity,—something added after our salvation has been secured, but not something necessary to secure an entrance to heaven. How we forget, that just as there is an abundant faithfulness to which we are exhorted, so there is an abundant entrance to which we are invited. And the one is determined by the other. And therefore the writer of my text lays stress again upon "these things"
which he has twice mentioned, and says, "If ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."
IV.

SPIRITUAL NEAR-SIGHTEDNESS.

"But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off." — II. Pet. i: 9.

It would be difficult to imagine a more apt description of a worldly man than this. He is one who is spiritually near-sighted. He sees that which is near,—earthly good and gain; but cannot see that which is afar off,—the heavenly reward and glory. In perfect contrast with this is the character of the unworldly man,—the true Christian. He is far-sighted. His vision reaches on to the invisible things of God. His confession ever is, "We look not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Now, "these things" which are alluded to in the text,—the graces of faith, virtue, temperance, patience, and the rest,—can only be appreciated as they are viewed according to this divine perspective, and take their measure from the objects
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which are invisible and eternal. If there be nothing beyond our near horizon, then wealth and pleasure and self-indulgence are of great importance, and they may well have a large place in our esteem. But they grow less important as our vision extends, and the blue mountain-tops of the far-off world become visible. This is precisely the thought of our text. He that lacketh these things, — the faith which fastens to the invisible Christ, the virtue which toils for an unseen Master, the temperance which uses self-denial, in hope of a future reward, and the patience which endures and suffers, in view of a far-off crown of glory,— he that lacketh these things is near-sighted. He cannot see afar off. He has no vision for distant and eternal realities.

I. Consider, in the first place, the peril of spiritual near-sightedness.

It is the most dangerous and the most insidious disease with which mankind is to-day afflicted. It exposes one to fatal perils in this world, because it so effectually breaks his connection with the world to come. For the life that now is cannot be unmoored from that which is to be, without sooner or later incurring shipwreck. I speak not now of the present life as a preparation for the next; but rather of the next, as extending its discipline and control to this. A pilot who should undertake
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to steer his ship by looking only at the prow of his vessel, taking no observations of the sun, casting no glances at the pole-star, would be no more certain to miss his course and run upon rocks than the Christian would be to make shipwreck of his soul, who should consult only duty and expediency and conscience, without ever casting a glance heavenward towards the "day-star." Conscience is, indeed, the most trustworthy guide within us. But it is constantly liable to be deflected and turned aside by unconscious influences about us, as the ship's compass is deranged by the attraction of the iron which enters into the structure of the vessel. Therefore we need constantly to have our eye upon those greater lights which rule the day,—God and Christ and heaven,—and conscience requires every day to be rectified by these supreme standards.

How little we shall know of our real position and calling in the world if we take our observations merely from the things just around us, reckoning our duty from public opinion, finding our inspiration for service in the praise of men, drawing our work to please the world, and looking for our reward in the applause of the multitude! One may get utterly turned about in this way, if he lives in times when public opinion is askew, and the world at variance with God. And that is the
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condition of things a Christian is most likely to find in "this present evil age," as the apostle calls it. He may think that he is doing God service, when in fact he is only serving himself and a selfish age.

And not only so, the chances are that when one really fixes his bearings with sole reference to God he will be considered to be out of joint with his times, — deranged, because he has ranged himself according to the celestial standard; beside himself, because he has dared to side with God against the world; and eccentric, because he is trying to revolve around God as his centre instead of moving in the erratic orbit of a world that by wisdom knows not God.

Why, do you not remember what they said of Paul and Silas at Thessalonica? "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." The real fact was, that the world was upside down already, and these men were bent on the prodigious task of turning it right side up. I speak seriously. The Roman world, of which, in the days of Paul, the city of Thessalonica was a part, was at that time literally prone upon its back, when in its vaunting self-assurance it dreamed and boasted that it was standing erect upon its feet. It had become so hopelessly near-sighted that it saw nothing beyond the earthly horizon. Hence
its emperors had become its gods, sensuality its heaven, lust its worship, self-interest its decalogue, and evil its highest good. Man, whom God had created upright, had become turned so hopelessly downward, that earth and sense were at last his only heaven, and the sky was under his feet. What wonder that Paul,—whose earthly sight had become so suddenly blasted on his way to Damascus, while his heavenly vision had become so marvelously extended that he looked straight into heaven and saw Jesus whom he was persecuting,—what wonder that he should have reversed so instantly his estimate of the world! Christ, whom he had hated, he now began to preach. The gospel, which he had despised, now became to him the power of God unto salvation. He who had gone with the world now became crucified to the world. And he would hereafter set himself to adjusting this wretched world to his corrected vision; he would strike the scales from purblind eyes, and set man, whose countenance had so long been fallen, to gazing heavenward. No; this great apostle was seeking to turn the world right side up, and that was why, to blear-eyed worldlings, he seemed such a mad upsetting of established customs, and such a wanton upheaver of fixed opinions. For to a distorted and disordered age, whose head will seem so hopelessly turned as his who sets his face
steadfastly towards God? And to a generation which is digging with a muck-rake, who will seem such a star-gazer and lunatic as one who gets inspiration for his toil by "looking unto Jesus" on his throne?

We cannot wonder, therefore, at the bewilderment and confusion which the conduct of the early Christians everywhere produced among their neighbors. Men who would accept poverty for the sake of some invisible riches; submit to death for the sake of an unseen life; despise the rewards of the present world for the sake of a future crown of glory, were a perfect enigma to the heathen. The writings of the pagans at this period are full of exclamations of astonishment; and their attitude seems like a prolonged stare at these strange Christians, who are so long-sighted that they utterly overlook that which completely fills the vision of their neighbors.

Well, friends, though great changes have been wrought, the world has not been completely righted yet. And, therefore, honest Christians have not got beyond the possibility of seeming out of plumb with their generation. The gospel cannot bend. Its requirements fall straight as a plummet upon men. And if, perchance, the age is so tipped from the divine level that the gospel strikes it obliquely, then Christianity will be com-
plained of as unreasonable, and at war with all the instincts of sober judgment; and Christians in that case must share the reproach, since they are but the embodiment of the gospel. "The angle of reflection," says geometry, "is equal to the angle of incidence." And it is as true morally as mathematically. The divergence of Christianity from the accepted standard of the world will mark exactly the divergence which there should be between a Christian life and the world. And, therefore, we shall only be able to obey intelligently that requirement of Scripture, "Be not conformed to this world," by keeping our angle of vision always adjusted to that perfect rule of faith, which is given us in God's word. But woe to the Christian, be he preacher or obscurest disciple, who gauges his view of life and duty by the prevailing and perverted standard! For then will come expediency in the place of loyalty to Christ; world-pleasing in the place of obedience to the Lord; aspiration for popularity in the place of quiet endurance of reproach and contempt; the exchange of godliness for gain, instead of accepting godliness with all its crosses and privations as the greatest gain. Here is where the secret of an enervated and subservient Christianity is always found,—in that adjustment to the present age which throws us out of perpendicular with God, and, as a consequence, that
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spiritual short-sightedness which occupies us with present claims instead of those which are far off. Opticians affirm that the far greater prevalence of near-sightedness in cities than in the country is owing to the fact that men are accustomed to see only near objects in the city,—their range of vision being contracted within close limits by the narrow streets and the adjacent houses, with little opportunity of far-reaching views of blue hills and distant horizons. In spiritual things the law is unquestionable. Just in proportion as a Christian loves this world his spiritual sight will become abridged. In seeking honor from men he soon loses sight of "that honor that cometh from God only." In looking closely to laying up treasures on earth he becomes blind to the obligation to "lay up treasures in heaven." In eying sharply his earthly houses and estates he ere long obliterates all vision of that "building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." In gazing constantly towards some temporal and corruptible crown he ere long ceases utterly to "see that crown of righteousness which faileth not away." Oh, how full the world is and ever has been of these near-sighted sons of men! Demas, "who, having loved this present world," forsakes the self-denying Paul; Demetrius, the silversmith, setting gain above godliness, and ready to sacrifice a ser-
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vant of God to save his craft; Diotrephus, "loving the preeminence" and willing to rend the whole church for the sake of securing his own supremacy. It is the old and ever-recurring story, children of light blinding themselves by their avaricious gaze upon some petty object of present ambition to the utter disregard of those unseen and eternal things which are alone worthy of our pursuit.

And I warn you, Christian brethren, of this peril,—the most subtle and ruinous which you can encounter in this world. "Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see," says the Master, speaking to us from glory. The world will throw its dust into your face to confuse and bewilder you. It will try to confound expediency with duty in your view, that you may be won to its service. Ay, more; it will seek to put out your eyes as the Philistines did Samson's, that it may compel you to grind in its prison-house, serving its lusts and pleasures, siding with its unrighteous laws, and forwarding its self-aggrandizing ends. Be careful, Christian! Look keenly in this hazy atmosphere of public opinion. Anoint thy eyes with eye-salve that thou mayest see. Before you know it you may be serving the world, and thinking you are doing God service; adopting opinions that war against the faith; siding with measures that are hostile to virtue; upholding laws that are
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Subversive of temperance; approving doctrines that make not for godliness, and tending in ways that are contrary to charity and brotherly kindness. Though the eyes of your understanding have been opened you need that they be laved every morning in the fountain of light and purged every day with the Saviour's healing touch, lest you be of those who "having eyes see not."

And most solemnly do I warn you who have never had your eyesight quickened to see beyond the present world. The near pleasures, the immediate enjoyments, the present gains, are the easiest to see. They will, if possible, so preoccupy your attention that you shall be effectually cut off from all sight of what is beyond. So irresistibly alluring, so well-nigh omnipotent, is the power of the present life, that, in the language of Scripture, it is defined as "the god of the world,"—the god who rears himself up with such dimensions, and fills the sight with such attractions, as to throw the God of heaven into eclipse; so that thousands never see him or know him. "In whom the God of the world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

II. Let me speak now of the opposite truth, the use and blessing of far-sightedness.
I find the highest evidence of its importance in the fact that such careful provision and training are secured for it in the gospel. Christians sometimes imagine that a near object of contemplation is more influential than a distant one; that a visible agency, like the church, is more potential than an invisible one, like the personal Christ. But God has deemed it otherwise. He has been careful, by scores of prophecies and promises and exhortations, to lift the gaze of his people to the ascended and returning Christ.

How significant is it that in the first glimpse we get of the primitive Christians we find them "gazing up unto heaven"! This attitude was by no means rebuked by the angels, as has sometimes been supposed, but encouraged and confirmed by the promise of Christ's literal return, and thus simply changed from an attitude of reluctant farewell to one of glorious and eager expectation. And this posture became the permanent one; through all the apostolic age we find that the disciples "looked steadfastly towards heaven." In other words, Christ's living person on the throne became henceforth the object of faith, and his personal return in glory the object of hope. And do we not see how God thus trained his church at the outset to farsighted vision? It is exactly the reverse of our earthly habit. (We let near objects cut off our
view of heaven; God would have distant objects cut off our view of earth. By gazing at some prize of worldly ambition we hide the crown of glory. God would rivet our eye upon the crown of glory that we may become oblivious to the prizes of earth. We get weaned from heaven by casting down our eyes. God would wean us from earth by lifting up our eyes. Even the philosopher has struck this mighty secret. "Hitch your wagon to a star," says Emerson, little knowing that he was but repeating the words of him who taught his disciples to fasten all their life and hope and expectation to him who "is the bright and morning star," gazing amid all their toils and trials upon his invisible person, and amid all their discouragements and defeats "looking for that blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

And how real is the power of such a habit as it appears in the actual life of the Christian. Patriarchs and prophets and apostles were all long-sighted men. Such was Abraham, who "went out not knowing whither he went," because "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Such was Jacob, who, while "his eyes were dim with age that he could not see," yet looked on and beheld the blessings that should come upon his posterity "unto the utmost
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Such was Moses, who could "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," because "he endured as seeing him who is invisible." "These all died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth." Ah! it is only such far vision that can make pilgrims of us. Near-sightedness makes Christians contented citizens of earth, naturalized and acclimated dwellers in this transitory world. It makes them unpack all their goods and invest all their capital here, as though they were to remain on the earth forever. It sets them to planting and building and hoarding, tearing down their barns and building greater, increasing their stock, and multiplying their investments. "Why," exclaims the astonished worldling, "they do just as we do,—love the world just as much, dig just as deeply, build just as expensively. We thought you called them 'pilgrims and strangers'; but we don't see them carrying the pilgrim's staff, or speaking with the stranger's accent, or pining with the sojourner's homesickness. Pray what aileth them?" Ah! it is spiritual ophthalmia. The heart is wedded to earth, because the eye is sundered from heaven. Short-sightedness towards God has begotten far-reaching ambition towards
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the world. Oh, what is it, you ask, that can enable one to utter sincerely that sublimest confession recorded in Scripture: "For our citizenship is in heaven"? The secret is told in the next words, "from whence, also, we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." The eye is the index of the soul; where it points thither will the soul's affections tend; the longer its reach of vision towards the sky the shorter our outlook of desire and aspiration towards the world. Here is the secret of the endurance of the martyrs who loved not their lives unto death; of all sturdy workers who have counted all things but loss for Christ. Stephen, thou proto-martyr of the Church, how is it that, under the scorn and abuse of an enraged Jewish council, thy face, instead of reddening with anger, becomes transfigured like an angel's? How is it that, as the rage deepens and the gnashing of teeth is heard, and the furious crowd rushes upon thee and the murderous stones begin to wound thy body,—how is it that thou canst stand, calm and unmoved, only praying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" Hear the secret is told in a single word: "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."

Oh, wondrous victory! We walk not by sight, but by faith; but when faith becomes so kindled and intensified into spiritual sight that it can pierce
far into the heavens, and see Jesus crowned with glory and honor, how unconquerable it can make us!

Is it a mere theory? Is it the romance of Christianity, which can only be admired, but not realized; this kindling the soul and rendering it indomitable under suffering and trial and defeat, by the spiritual sight of that far-off being,—that one of whom an apostle speaks so beautifully, "Whom not having seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"? No, it is not fiction. It is a fact that has its illustrations in common life. I was reading this very week of the perils of a bewildered and storm-bound party on one of our western mountains. Pressing on in the blinding snow, the track lost, the cold increasing, one of the party at last sank down to die. In the drowse of approaching death no persuasions or expostulations could induce him to go forward, and he sank into a bank of snow to die. But taking from his pocket a picture of his wife and children for a farewell look, the vision of the dear ones in that far-off home suddenly broke upon his heart. It was resistless; what threats and entreaties from those near at hand could not effect was done in an instant by that one glance. He saw afar off his happy home, and he roused himself to press on to it; with the new power coming in
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It is but a pattern and fac-simile of God's dealing with us. When we are faint with toil and sinking under weariness and ready to yield the battle, we hear his voice, "Let us therefore run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God." And when we are appalled at the ravages of sin, and are ready to despair at the slowness of the church's progress, and the bareness of her conquests, we hear him saying, "Look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." This is our attitude in spite of all that tends to make us hang the head and close the eye. "Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

May the Lord keep up us from the downcast, shamefaced, earthward look, that implies that earth is all we have, and that for only a little while. May the Lord lift up our eyes in joyful, triumphant expectation, as those that have "turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven."

And now that I have set forth both sides of this
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matter, let me bring before you, in closing, a striking double illustration of my subject.

Stand with me at Christ's cross and look upon those two that are crucified with him, one on the right hand and one on the left.

This one rails on him, saying, "If thou be the Christ save thyself and us." To be rescued from the cross, to escape immediate pain and torture, this is all he thinks of. Utterly short-sighted so far as any aspiration for a future salvation is concerned!

The other yields in penitent submission to his crucifixion—"And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds;"—and then, with a clearness of onward vision which astonishes us, he prays, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." Here is the far-sightedness that lifts the eye from present pain and ignominy, and fills its vision with the glory that is to be when the Lord shall return to set up his throne, and establish his kingdom. Wonderful that such a sinner could have seen so far! It must be that a ray of light has fallen on his soul from the face of the central sufferer. Oh, let us pray that that ray may fall anew upon our souls, that we may learn so deeply that we cannot forget it, that great secret of patient cross-bearing,—"Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame!"
They said unto him, Rabbi, which is to say, being interpreted, Master, where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see.”—John i: 38.

There is something so frank and natural in this question of the two disciples of John, that it at once arrests our attention. If you see a person publicly who wins your interest and affection, your instinctive wish is that you might meet him privately, and have an interview with him at his home. Here were two persons who saw Jesus, for the first time, so far as we know, as he was walking past, when that wonderful announcement was made, “Behold the Lamb of God!” Instantly, they started to follow him. To the question what they were seeking, they answered, “Where dwellest thou?” We would like to see thee at home. We would like to converse with thee in the privacy and freedom of thine own house. “Come and see,” is the Master’s gracious reply; and, accepting the invitation, they came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day.
This experience of the earliest disciples of Jesus is the experience of the latest. To see Christ with the look of faith is not enough; we want to talk with him in the intercourse of love. To look upon him as the Lamb of God that takes away our sins, is not sufficient; we wish to know him as the friend of sinners, to sit at his table, and to listen to the gracious words that proceed out of his mouth. And this privilege is granted just as readily as the other.

Let us consider, then, from these words, first, the disciples' question, and, secondly, the Master's answer.

I. The disciples' question, "Where dwellest thou?"

We feel that we do not know a person till we know where he lives, and have seen him at his home. Personality and locality are the two great first conditions of knowledge. "Who is this man?" and "Where does he live?" are the questions which must be settled before we can consider ourselves really acquainted with any one. Hence, the doctrine of the divine omnipresence alone never satisfies us. We feel lonely and desolate in the everywhereness of God. The humblest fireside is more to us than all the infinite space of the heavens; and so to tell us where Christ's home is, is worth more to us than the knowledge that he fills all
space with his presence, and is "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." I remember what an impression of dreariness and homesickness it used to give, when thousands of miles out at sea, to find that there was not a single object by which to fix our location. A jutting rock, or a lonely island, would have instantly relieved the mind, by suggesting the idea of place and locality; but to see nothing for days or weeks but the vast, monotonous desert of waters, seemed like living in infinite vacancy. So eternity seems to me, without the thought of some local home; so the omnipresence of God seems to me, without the thought of some definite place of abode. And I wonder not, that after Job's three friends had uttered their lofty sayings about the infinity and omnipresence of God: "Canst thou, by searching, find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" . . . "Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not, and he walketh in the circuit of heaven" — I wonder not, that after all this, Job, like a homesick child, should have cried, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat." Place and a local habitation are just as necessary to finite beings as eternity is to the Infinite. And if God is so great that "the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him," man is also so small that the
heaven of heavens is too large for him, and he
would be eternally homesick were it not for the
"place" that Christ has gone to prepare for him.

So, then, this question of the text is one of the
most natural and instinctive that we can possibly
ask. And how much deeper significance it has
now than it had in the mouth of those who first
uttered it. Christ has been upon this earth of
ours, but not to tarry. He was a stranger here,
not a resident. And considering the brevity of
his sojourn in the world — his pilgrimage so tran­sient in its character and so short in its duration —
there is an exquisite fitness in the repeated refer­
ence to his earthly life as a visit. — "God hath
visited and redeemed his people." — "The day­
spring from on high hath visited us." — And now
that he is gone away we take up the disciples'
question, and press it with intensest eagerness:
"Master, where dwellest thou?"

And I wish you to notice how careful the New
Testament is to answer this question. If we desire
to know where Christ is to-day, we need be in no
possible doubt where to find him. Not only was
his departure from earth carefully chronicled, but
his arrival in heaven was announced with equal
definiteness. "He was received up into heaven,"
says Mark, — that tells of his exit from the earth,
— "and sat on the right hand of God" — that
fixes his arrival in heaven. "And while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight," says Luke — that describes his disappearance from human vision. "When he had by himself purged our sins," says Paul, "he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," — that determines his appearance and locality in heaven. And how explicit the word of God is in this matter is seen in the fact that this statement of Christ's being seated at God's right hand is repeated in more than a score of passages. In the Apocalypse the Master himself speaks to us and tells us that, having overcome, he is "set down with his Father on his throne." Now, a throne means a seat. It is the very synonym for a definite locality. If one is journeying we do not know where he is. If he has reached home and seated himself in his fireside chair, we know just where to find him. So, if we were told that our risen Lord is "walking in the circuit of the heavens," it would only confuse our thoughts and send them upon a wandering and uncertain search after him whom our soul desireth. But, "seated on the throne," — that expression fixes his abode. And though we know not precisely where in the heavens God's throne is, we know that it is somewhere; that it is in some bounded and defined locality, and this is enough.

And not only that. His being seated implies
that he is "at home for visitors,"—to use a household word,—ready to entertain guests, and to hear requests. This would seem to be what the two disciples wanted who are spoken of in my text. They saw Jesus walking; but there was no opportunity for familiar, confidential intercourse. They wished to see him at his house, where they could speak freely to him, and open their hearts without hurry or publicity.

And this, dear friends, is Christ's attitude to us: He is at home and seated. There is something cordial and inviting in a sitting posture. It seems to disarm timidity, and to invite approach. A stranger who wishes to speak with you, and to enlist your sympathy and help, may be afraid to approach you as he sees you standing at your desk closely occupied, or walking hurriedly through the streets on pressing business. But if, in the twilight hour, he gets sight of you through your window, seated quietly at your fireside, "Now," he will say, "is my opportunity; now I may speak to him." And, as human instincts are always the same, I can understand why, as Jesus was sitting, publicans and sinners drew near to him, and why "when he was set his disciples came unto him" to be taught. And I can understand also why the Holy Ghost is so careful to tell us again and again that Christ is now "seated at
the right hand of God." It means that he is in the place of power unquestionably. But it means more than that: it means that he is in the reception-room of everlasting mercy; in the audience chamber of grace and intercession. There he sits forever to receive the applicants for pardon, and to speak in the old familiar tones of mercy and compassion to those that come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, to sit down in the kingdom of God. "Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him," is the touching language with which the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son open. And it is most significant to me that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, after saying, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God," should then add, "Therefore let us draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Stand back, ye holy angels by the throne, who have never sinned, and therefore have no need of the blood of sprinkling! Stand back, ye self-righteous men, who say you have no sin, and so despise the sacrifice once offered! Make room for the publicans and sinners, who come to him that is sitting here, that they may get pardon and remission! They will be welcome, though angels were put off to grant them room; they will be welcome, though all the hosts
and hierarchies of heaven were thrust aside to give them audience. "I suppose," said a little child, with the wise simplicity that reasons so much about great questions, — "I suppose that if I were to go to heaven I should not get a chance to speak with Jesus for a long, long time, there would be so many great and good people who would wish to talk with him before I could have an opportunity." Oh, yes, you would, child! The child that has sins to be forgiven, and a heart to be washed and made white, will be received before the angels that come to offer praise. The ranks of cherubim and seraphim, that rise tier above tier about the throne, must make way for the poor publican, smiting on his breast, and crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" for the first and highest work in which Christ is employed in heaven is to give repentance and the remission of sins.

Take courage, therefore, O sinner! who art afraid to come to Christ, not knowing whether he will receive you. He who sat upon the stones of Jacob's well and talked with the woman of Samaria about the water of life, of which if a man drink he shall never thirst, is seated now upon the throne of heaven; and there is "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb;" and he that sitteth
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on the throne says, "And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely."

Thus I have emphasized this great fact that Christ is dwelling in a fixed and well-defined place; that he is always and fully accessible there to all who will come to him for grace. I think this truth is of vast importance. Men cannot pray into the air. They cannot worship towards the vague immensity. It may do well enough for schoolmen and philosophers to tell us that the home of God is "a circle, whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." But there is nothing inviting or attractive to us in such a home as that. The soul's cry is, "Where dwellest thou?" And I bless God, who has not hidden his presence-chamber from us, that I can tell you, first, that Christ lives as a real person, with a form the same as that he wore on earth,—the same face, the same features, the same nail-pierced hands; and, secondly, that he lives in a real place, just as definitely fixed and bounded as Boston or London.

To make this fact as real and as practical as possible, let us suppose that Christ were located to-day in the city of Jerusalem, and that telegraphic lines were established between that city and every city and town and village in the world. And suppose, farther, that he were to send out a procla-
mation that he would answer any request that should be sent for healing the sick, for pardoning the penitent, for helping the troubled, for relieving the poor. Imagine this to be a real fact, and the wonderful advances of science make it easy to conceive. What a scene would be witnessed! — messages flashing with lightning swiftness from every part of the globe; answers returning with instant despatch, and, as a consequence, sorrow and sin and sickness and poverty disappearing at the word of Jesus. Wonderful scene! you say. Yes; and it is real. Christ is in Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem above, which is just as definite a place as that in Palestine. His proclamation has gone out, "Ask what you will, and it shall be done for you." The telegraph has been strung to the ends of the earth,—the telegraph of prayer. I pray you now to believe it and make it real. Do you want eternal life this morning? Christ is at home to grant it. Send up your message. "O Son of God, I believe that thou art the Saviour of the world, and I now take thee for my Saviour;" and quick as thought you may find the answer recorded for you on the key-board of Scripture: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Oh that this were real to all of us! Then we should pray no longer with vague and aimless vision; then we should direct the eye of faith
no longer into spiritual vacancy. We should be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Behold him there, if you have asked, "Where dwellest thou?" Rest and rivet the eye of faith, and say, with all confidence, "I confess thee, O Christ, as my Saviour, and I believe in my heart that God hath raised thee from the dead;" therefore, according to thy promise, I know I am saved. Forget not where to find him for whom your soul longs. By his Spirit he dwells within us; but in his glorified body, as living intercessor and advocate with God, he is at the right hand of the Father.

II. Let us consider, secondly, Christ's answer: "Come and see."

It is not only our privilege to know where Christ is, but to be where he is. He is in a place, and he designs that that place shall be our place also. "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am there ye may be also."

Now, next to the question "Where dwellest thou?" Perhaps we press most eagerly the question, "What are the character and glory of that place?" Hence, what eager conjecture, what ardent anticipations, what indefinable longings,
to know concerning the abode which Christ has fixed as the home of his disciples! And yet he does not describe it; he gives no definite hint concerning it. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." It is simply impossible, in our present state, to apprehend these things. For the eye of the flesh has no retina fine enough to catch and hold the image of the heavenly beauty. The ear of the body has no sense of hearing acute enough to register the sounds of glory. Paul, caught up into glory, tells us that he "heard unspeakable things which it is not lawful to utter." In that entranced and enraptured state he could hear the celestial things, but he could not translate them into the coarser dialect of sense, into the ruder speech of earth. This is a fact, I believe, that pertains to all spiritual experiences: they cannot be described; they can only be known by being realized. Hence the Master meets our eager inquiries about our future dwelling-place with only this brief and significant invitation: "Come and see."

True seeing will only be realized when we have come and known all by actual experience. For sight is a kind of mother-tongue to all the senses, and every other faculty is simply engaged
in translating its experiences into her language. “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is gracious!” says the Psalmist. “Handle me and see that it is I,” says the risen Christ. “Come and see,” says the astonished Philip, after he had found “him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write”; as though sight, instead of being the mere external vision of an object, is in its truest sense the result of that knowledge which has been gained by those other and more intimate senses of taste and touch. Indeed, I think we can only truly see ourselves by coming to Christ. “Come and dine,” said the risen Lord to Peter and the other disciples, as he showed himself to them at the sea of Tiberias. Peter had betrayed his Lord, and his heart must have been full of conflicting emotions, shame putting faith to the blush, and self-condemnation frightening love into silence. “So when they had dined,” the narrative continues, “Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, loveth thou me?” Why did he not ask that question before they had dined? Why did he not say, “Simon, if thou loveth me, come and dine”? Ah, I venture to think that Peter might not have come at all upon such an invitation, so self-condemned and self-distrustful was he. But when he saw that he was not excluded in the Master’s invitation, and when he had sat down
with his Lord, seen those nail-pierced hands breaking the bread, heard that familiar voice saying, "Take, and eat," and looked into that face so transfigured with affection and forgiveness, then it was that he could say, with abounding affection, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee."

And, brethren, are any of you asking yourselves the question, "Do I love the Lord?" I say to you, in his name, "Come and see." Not by dwelling in the shadows of your own doubt and self-distrust, not by sorrowful visits to your wavering and dissatisfied heart can you find the answer to your question. Come and see Jesus, seated at the Father's right hand, showing still the wounds of your redemption in that visage so marred more than any man, and that form more than the sons of men; behold him offering himself as your advocate with the Father when you sin, inviting you to look unto him as the victor over the world for you when you are disheartened, confessing your name still before the Father and the holy angels when he might well be ashamed of you. Come and see Jesus, and behold all that he has done for you, and all he is doing for you in the place of glory where he dwelleth, and tell me then if you can help exclaiming, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee"? And lest our eyes might be
holden to the invisible presence and home of Christ, these are transferred in symbol and spirit to earth. The place of communion is a kind of border-land of glory, where Christ still meets his people, and shows "himself alive after his passion;" letting them see, in the emblems of his death and risen life, what the angels and the redeemed see literally,—his glorified body. And so, again and again, he invites us to sup with him, that by a fresh setting forth of his love our own may be kindled, and that, having dined with him, we may be able to answer his question, "Lovest thou me?" This is the universal order in God's dealings with us. We are not to come to Christ after we have seen and known him, but to come in order that we may see and know him; we are not to come to his table because we love him sufficiently; but we are to come in order that we may love him by beholding how he has loved us.

I have said that we can only see ourselves by coming to Christ. I may add also that we can only see heaven by coming to him. We speak of going to heaven to see Jesus. I think we shall have to go to Jesus in order to see heaven. It is the divine Person that gives us access to the place, and not the place to the divine Person. And unless we first have Paul's desire, "to depart and be
with Christ," I know not how any mere sentimental desire to be in heaven is ever going to be gratified.

How significantly Christ says, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." The King and the kingdom are inseparably related; and unless we have come to Christ to get the life of God within us, how can we apprehend the kingdom of God without us? This is simply repeating the saying of Scripture, that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." The horse and his rider may both gaze upon the same beautiful landscape, upon the same majestic sunset, upon the same resplendent rainbow. On the eye of the brute there is no apparent impression, while upon the eye of the man — because of the soul which is behind the eye — the impression is indescribably grand and delightful. And so the kingdom of heaven may be among us, as Christ declares that it is; its most conspicuous features may be visible in the lives of Christians, its most salient facts may be apparent in the history of the Church, but it will only be distinctly seen by such as have that spiritual vision which comes from spiritual renewal, — "Except a man be born again," — "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the
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Spirit of God.” Therefore it seems to me that if we expect to get any true outlook, either upon the world that now is, or the world that is to come, we must come to Christ to get it. Does the Scripture say that only the pure in heart can see God? But have you thought that only the pure in heart can see the godlike? Christians are the image of God, and it takes the same kind of vision to see the image which it does to see the original. And if you have been stumbling over God’s children, because perhaps they were so peculiar, or so consecrated, or so heavenly-minded, that you could not recognize them, it is pretty evident that you would not know God if he were to be revealed to you. “The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not,” says John; showing that just in proportion as we are ignorant of Christ shall we be ignorant of his brethren.

Applying this principle, now, to the life to come, I think we may say that all we know of our future blessed abode we have learned by looking at Christ. He has shown us heaven by showing us himself. His glorified person is the earnest and revelation of the glorified state. Hence, instead of attempting to describe to us what is unutterable, or to crowd the narrow vehicle of human speech with the eternal weight of glory, he simply lets us see himself risen and exalted.
Do we want to know what kind of bodies we shall have in the resurrection? "Handle me and see," he says; and by his repeated manifestations to his disciples before his ascension, he has given us, I believe, a better conception of the nature and capacities of the resurrection body than any mere verbal description could possibly convey. His several epiphanies are but so many object-lessons on the life to come; and in studying these we are but mastering the secret of that condition of being when we shall appear with him in glory. For to learn what Christ is in his exaltation is to learn what we shall be, since "we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

Oh, what shall it be to have gotten the victory and conquered all our foes, from that first enemy which confronts us when we wake to consciousness,—our own evil heart,—to that "last enemy that shall be destroyed, which is death"! The promise is distinct that all things shall be put in subjection under us. Not yet do we see it fulfilled, "but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor." One man has conquered. One who wears our nature has received the diadem of victory, and, beholding him, we behold ourselves certainly triumphant, exalted, glorified!
Such is the revelation that comes to us through the open door of heaven, and from the sight of Jesus Christ at home. What shall it be when we come into his actual presence, and see no longer "through a glass darkly," but "face to face"! "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle; neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever."
VI.

WHY LIFTED UP?

"How sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up?"

— John xii: 34.

THREE times, in the Gospel of John, we find our Lord speaking of his lifting up. By the expression "lifted up" is meant, beyond all question, his crucifixion on the cross; for so the evangelist interprets the words. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," says Jesus; and John adds, "This he said signifying what death he should die."

Now, such an event as this was so contrary to all the Jewish ideas that the people who heard Christ's prediction wondered, and asked with incredulity, "We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever; and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up?" What is the meaning of this lifting up? What is the necessity of it? It is a question whose echo has not ceased even unto the present day. And, instead of attempting to answer it ourselves, by reason or conjecture, we ask you to listen to three answers.
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which the Lord himself has given in several pas-
sages of the Gospel of John.

I. The Son of Man must be lifted up in
order to give a demonstration of his divine man-
hood. "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man,
then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do
nothing of myself" (John viii: 28).

Then shall ye know that I am what I have pro-
fessed to be,—the Son of God, sent from heaven
to do the work and speak the words of the Father,
and at the same time the Son of Man, wearing a
human nature and subject to human suffering. This
was what Christ repeatedly declared concerning
himself,—that he was the divine man, Son of God
and Son of man in one. And he seems to predict
that his crucifixion shall give a startling and con-
clusive vindication of the claim.

Now, it seems to me that if I wished to prove
beyond question that Jesus Christ was a man, I
should go to the cross and see him die. For man
only dies. God cannot die; the angels cannot die.
Not one of all the heavenly beings can ever feel
the icy touch of death laid upon him. But man
dies everywhere. Death is the one universal sign
and mark of humanity. Differing in a thousand
things,—in race, in feature, in complexion,—all
men are alike in this, that they die. "It is ap-
pointed unto men once to die." And the death
seal set upon the brow is, alas! the "one touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin."

Therefore, when I see Jesus bowing his head, and dying on the cross; and when I see them taking his body, all limp and pallid, and laying it in the tomb,—I say, "Surely this was the Son of man; for only a man can thus die and be buried." And when, from the exaltation of the cross, I hear him, in the exaltation of the throne, saying, "I am he that liveth and was dead," I exclaim yet once more, "Surely this is the Son of Man; for neither God, nor angels, nor cherubim, can say, 'I was dead.'" That language belongs solely to the vocabulary of man. So I repeat that the death on the cross establishes beyond question the manhood of Jesus Christ.

But, if Jesus proved himself human by dying as every man dies, he also proved himself divine by dying as no other man ever died. There are circumstances about his death that mark it as unlike any other that ever occurred on earth. Stand with me by the cross, and note these circumstances.

As he hangs there, in agony and suffering, the sun shuts his eye in horror upon the scene, and "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour." The veil of the temple, woven with strong and costly fibre, is rent,
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as though seized by some mighty and invisible hand, and torn from top to bottom. There is an earthquake, and a rending of the rocks. Dead men, in their graves, wake up, and come forth from their unlocked prison-house. These things were so startling and portentous that when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw them, they exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." Just as Jesus had predicted, — "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he."

But these are not the most striking witnesses to Christ's divinity in his death. How do men generally die? The strength grows feebler and feebler; the pulse beats fainter and fainter; the tones of the voice die away to a whisper, till, as the end draws near, the power of speech is lost, and, amid a silence broken only by gasping breath and stifled moan, the spirit is torn away from the body. But how did Jesus die? He "cried with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit." What does that loud voice signify but a man strong and mighty even in death? He who as death's master had stood at the grave in Bethany, and "cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth,'" proved himself death's master still by crying with a loud voice as he yields up his spirit. It is the voice of command, and not of
entreaty. It is the "Captain of our Salvation," who had once ordered the grave to open her doors to deliver up a prisoner, and was instantly obeyed, now, with the same sovereign authority, ordering death to open her doors, and receive such a prisoner as she had never held before,—that, by dying and rising again, he may become "Lord both of the dead and living."

And not only this,—"Jesus, when he had cried, again with a loud voice, yielded up his spirit." And what mean these words? When was ever such a thing said before? When a man dies his spirit is torn from him. He struggles with gasping breath and fluttering heart to retain it, but he cannot. "There is no man," says Solomon, "that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." But here is One who has "power over his spirit." He yields it up. Instead of passive submission, here is action in death. Instead of helpless overthrow, here is sovereign surrender. The spirit which is rent from mortal man Jesus calmly hands over to the Father. And here is One that has "power in the day of death." Did he not say, "I have power to lay down my life"? and in every act, and word, and circumstance of the crucifixion we find the proof of it. How significantly saith the Holy Ghost: "He became
obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Obedience implies freedom of will, not helpless necessity. None of us are obedient to death. We submit to go under his ghastly yoke because we can do no otherwise. But we loathe "The terrible Captain, Sepulchre, and his standard-bearer, Corruption," and most gladly, if we could, would we break from their tyranny. But Christ became obedient unto death. What we accept as a necessity, he obeyed as a duty. What we submit to because we must, he accepted because he willed to do it. Talk we of the two great parts of Christ's mission, as "his doing and his dying"? Yes! and his whole life of doing was a dying, as he lived in contact with our mortal nature; and his dying on the cross was the mightiest act of doing in all his earthly mission. For then, not in passive endurance, but in priestly agency and royal power, he laid down his life for the world. And thus Christ's prediction concerning his death was most literally fulfilled by the attending circumstances; and on the cross, at least, he stands proved to be the divine man. For God cannot die like men; but here is a man who dies like a God; death cannot lay his hand on the Almighty; but here is One, whose name is called the "Mighty God," taking his own life, and, with strong and omnipotent grasp, handing it over to death. Truly
this Son of God is human, or he could not die. Truly this Son of Man is divine, or he could not die in such a manner. We believe thy words, O thou Christ of God! "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he."

II. The Son of Man must be lifted up in order to bring to bear the most powerful divine attraction upon men. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John xii: 32).

You know very well what the strongest bonds of attraction are between man and man,—namely, love and sympathy. And these two are braided together into a twofold cord in Christ crucified. Sympathy drew him down from heaven to seek the lost, and love lifted him up from the earth to save the lost. And, since Christ's death is the summary of all his acts, the culmination of his doing as well as of his dying, we find all the other attractions of his love combined and concentrated in this. When St. Paul appeared so entranced and overmastered by the claims of the gospel that some accused him of being beside himself, this, you remember, was the only explanation he offered of his spiritual intensity: "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died."—"If one died for all."—Oh, this is the fact in the history of Jesus Christ that touches the heart and
draws it to God! The life of Christ inspires us; the example of Christ elevates us; the teachings of Christ convict us; but, beyond all things else, it is the death of Christ that draws us. And yet here is a point where evangelical religion finds a sharp issue springing up between itself and other forms of belief. "Divine love we insist on as strongly as you do," says the objector, "as the only true motive power for drawing souls to God; but in defining that love we take a wider sweep than you do. We find its presence and its inspiration in every flower, in every star, in every mountain and hill and valley, in the purple clouds, and in the deep-voiced sea,—these are its articulate voices. And if you recall us from nature to the Bible, even there we take a broader range than you do. In the life and example of Christ, in his works of mercy and beneficence, and in the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, we find the highest exhibition of divine love. Isn't it somewhat narrow in Paul to shut himself up so closely to the cross for the source of his inspiration and enthusiasm? Isn't it somewhat narrow in you to insist on the death of Christ on Calvary as the great motive to love?" Narrow, I admit. But I remember, also, that sometimes narrow things are the most powerful. I recall a stream with which I am familiar, which, at one point,
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broadens out for miles into a wide and beautiful expanse of waters. Nothing could be more lovely than the tranquil flow and calm, majestic sweep of the waters at this place. But a little further down, the stream gathers itself up and plunges through a narrow gorge between the hills. There is far less of beauty here. But here is the place of power. Here is where the huge wheels of industry are placed. Here is where the factories, with their ponderous machinery, have been reared. So we admit that nothing could be more majestic than the life of Jesus Christ; nothing could be more beautiful and inspiring than his lofty teachings; nothing could be more quickening to our love than the study of his works of mercy. But, after all, it is the cross where the love of Christ culminates and manifests its greatest power. There the current of divine love gathers itself up, and pours its mighty tide through one act,—the greatest and most powerful which the universe has witnessed. There is where great souls, like Paul, have placed themselves to get the fullest sway and sweep of the love of God.

But I speak not simply or chiefly of the power of the uplifted Christ to draw men to service, and inspire them with ardor, but also to win them from sin. There is nothing—there can be nothing—which will draw a man away from his sins like the
revelation that One has died to save him from those sins. And I think we can see at once why this must be so. It is undeserved love that forms the central attraction of the cross. It is love towards enemies,—the rarest thing in the universe to find. It is love that claims no requital or reward. But that is not all,—it is a love whose highest attribute is just the opposite to that of sin. The essence of sin is selfishness: the essence of atoning love is unselfishness. And so, while in a thousand voices God declares his love to us, the one great commendation of that love is found in the death of Christ. "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And such love must surely beget love.

The law commanded love—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." But the law was powerless to exact what it commanded. Its cold tables of stone had no tears to weep over the guilty and unloving. Its stern voice had no pathetic undertone of "Father, forgive them" for those who had broken the commandment and given hatred for affection. "But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God sent his own Son to do. He, stepping between us and the law, meets that law, on the one hand, and pays its utmost penalty, and then turns
to us, and says, "If you cannot love God, because it is commanded in the tables of stone, you surely cannot help loving, when God's love is commended to you in the fleshy tables of my bleeding heart." Oh, the depth of the riches of Christ's love! How marvellous the contrast between law and grace! The law exacting to the last particle, not a jot or a tittle remitted; failure in one single point counted failure in all. But grace not only forgiving freely, but abundantly. "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant." "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." Truly may we say, in those grand words of a great preacher, which I love to quote, "In the cross I see excess conquered by excess,—excess of sin conquered by excess of love."

And how can we resist such love? Is there a heart amongst us that can be indifferent to this divine attraction? I am sure there is not. You will be drawn. But will you be drawn out of your sins? That is the question. Clinging to your idols, loving still your sins, choosing your own will, you may, nevertheless, feel so strongly the power of Christ's sacrifice that you will find your heart powerfully attracted to him. But he was lifted up, that he might draw all men unto him by drawing them out of, and away from, the sins that had put them so far off from him.
The sun, lifted into the meridian heavens, draws through its far-reaching beams from ten thousand lakes and rivers and oceans. But there is separation as well as attraction. Here a crystal drop is lifted from a muddy pool, but with no trace of impurity remaining in it; and there another drop is drawn from the dead sea waters, but with no taint of the acrid salts left in it. There is attraction and separation in one process. So, as the beams of love from Christ's cross fall upon this sinful world, they draw men to Him who died. Oh, be sure, my friends, if you to-day have felt this divine attraction, as Christ has been set forth, evidently crucified in the midst of you, be sure that you yield to it; but be doubly sure to pray that, in being drawn to Christ, you may be drawn from your sins; that, with a ray of love from the cross attracting you, there may be also a drop of blood from the cross to cleanse you. For not alone to win you to himself did Jesus die; but also to win you away forever from the guilt that has held you in the bondage of corruption. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."

III. The Son of Man must be lifted up in order to accomplish a divine redemption for men. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever
believeth on him might not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii: 14).

Here we find man’s salvation absolutely fastened to Christ’s crucifixion. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission;” and so Jesus must be lifted up for the shedding of his blood. Every drop of blood sprinkled in worship, from the beginning of the world, pointed forward to his, which alone had power to take away sins. If he be not lifted up, all God’s types and sacrifices, throughout the ages, have deceived. Instead of being shadows of the true, they are only ritual falsehoods, telling of a sacrifice that shall never be offered. If he be not lifted up, God’s oath has been broken. He made a covenant to save those who should afterward believe. That covenant must be sealed with blood; and only in the veins of Christ’s sinless body was “the blood of the everlasting covenant” which could prove God true. The salvation of myriads upon myriads of human souls hangs on the question whether or not Christ shall be lifted up. What a question is this which we are considering! In the garden Christ prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me.” It was not possible. Had he not “tasted death for every man,” every man would have had to drink of “the cup of the fierceness of God’s wrath.” On the cross they said, “He saved others; himself he
cannot save." No; he could not save himself if he would save others. His death was the solemn and absolute condition of their life. You see, then, what a word this is,—"Must be lifted up." It is a word that has necessity woven into every fibre of its meaning. "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinners, and be crucified, and rise again the third day," he had said a little while ago — must, because he hears the wail of a perishing world piercing his tender heart, and calling for its help; must, because he sees the vision of a redeemed humanity kindling a holy joy above the blackness of his approaching sorrow; must, because for this cause he came unto this hour, that he might give his life a ransom for many.

"Voluntary!" do we say of Christ's sufferings? Yes: but with a holy being voluntariness is often the sternest necessity. The needle that swings so freely on its pivot, because it feels the attraction of the pole, cannot help turning always to the north. And because Christ's free will — not de­ ranged and perverted like ours — was always open to the Father's will, it could not help yielding to the drawing of that will. And, since God had purposed from the beginning to save men by the cross, Christ's holy will turned in unconstrained necessity to that cross, and said, "Even so must
the Son of Man be lifted up." Free, indeed, was he, and the master of his own life. But his was the freedom of duty, and not of self-pleasing. His will, moving free and unconstrained, was yet poised and possessed by the will of his Father. See how, in his own declaration, he thus binds freedom to holy necessity: "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Freedom, was this, and yet the freedom of filial obedience to his Father's command, which was holy necessity. "If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross," his enemies cried. And because he was the Son of God—the Son that "learned obedience by the things that he suffered"—he could not come down. If it had been only the iron nails that bound his hands and his feet to the cross, he could have torn them away easily enough. For what were spikes of steel in those hands that a little while ago had broken the bars of death for Lazarus and the widow's son! What were fetters of iron upon those feet that a little while ago had walked the stormy sea of Galilee as though it were a marble pavement! Spikes and cords! No strength of man could forge them strong enough to bind the Son of God to the cross, and hold him there. And yet it is true that he must be lifted up; and that, being lifted up, he
could not come down. The strength of love, the oath of the covenant,—this was the "nail fastened in a sure place," when the nail of the Roman soldier could have been torn from its socket by one forth-putting of his will. Oh, blessed necessity of holy love and holy loyalty! Where had we been to-day if it had not held him?

And now, friends, how clear it is that, if Christ must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, you must believe on him, or you will perish. Our necessity and our freedom are bound up in the same bond with those of Christ.

As he was free to lay down his life for us, or not, we are free to take eternal life from his hand, or not. As he must lay down his life that we might not perish, we must believe on him or we shall perish forever. O man, believe now! Behold, I have set before you this day life and death! As a free agent, choose ye; or, by an awful and resistless necessity, you must be lost.
VII.

PROPHECY AT THE TOMB OF CHRIST.

"After two days will he revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."—Hosea vi: 2.

The question has often been raised, whether the Old Testament contains any distinct and unquestionable prophecy of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. If we could not put the finger on such a prediction, we should yet be compelled to believe in its existence. For both Christ and his apostles are constantly referring to the Old Testament scriptures for the proof of the resurrection. And it is a striking evidence of the supreme authority of God's word that it is so constantly appealed to, both by the Lord and by his followers, as the unimpeachable witness to this fact. Sight might deceive, touch might mislead, the sound of the voice might be an illusion, but "the testimony of the Lord is sure." And so, instantly after the gracious appeal of the risen Lord,—"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself,"—we hear him saying, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise
from the dead the third day." And when he chides his disciples for their unbelief, it is rather in view of their distrust of the testimony of God than their doubt concerning the testimony of men,—"O fools and slow of heart to believe,"—not what the women reported who were early at the sepulchre and found it empty; not what Peter declared who stooped down and looked into the tomb, and saw there the linen clothes folded up and laid by themselves; but, "O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." And how striking it is, also, that Paul should begin his magnificent argument on the resurrection by appealing, before all, to the word of God, declaring to his readers, first, "how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures." The testimony of God is higher than the witness of men; the foresight of the prophets is surer than the eyesight of Cephas and the twelve. And is our text a fragment of such prophetic testimony? So it seems to me. It has just that blending of vagueness and vividness which characterize the great predictions concerning Christ. It is a burst of song which has no prelude to indicate its certain reference, but whose clear notes chime so perfectly with the Easter salutations of the disciples that we cannot
mistake it; while its apparent vagueness may indicate the breadth of its intended application, rather than the uncertainty of its meaning. For prophecy has repeated and ever widening fulfilments. While its literal accomplishment falls within the exactest limits of time and place, it has other fulfilments which sweep out in ever widening circles through all the ages. Such we believe to be the prophecy before us—definite, but manifold in its applications, having a literal and local fulfilment, and yet reaching beyond this into far wider spiritual and future meanings.

Let us look out through the prophet's vision, and see what we behold.

1. First, the words direct our thoughts to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That Christ rose from the dead on the third day is a fact of history, we say; but prophecy is a swifter witness than history. Both are disciples of Christ, borrowing their light, and learning their lessons from him, and both are witnesses of his death and resurrection. But while History was very early at the sepulchre, to bear testimony to the empty tomb, and the vision of angels, Prophecy, like "that other disciple," had outrun his tardier brother, and reached the place before him. For we remember that before the angels had whispered, "He is not here, but is
risen;" and before the disciples had uttered the salutation, "The Lord is risen, indeed," Christ had said, while yet the cross had not been reached, "The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." And this he seems to have spoken as an interpreter of prophecy, rather than as a prophet. Not that I question his divine foreknowledge of the things which were to happen to him; only that he speaks of them most significantly as among "the things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son," as though he were interpreting rather than predicting, and unfolding and applying the language of the inspired seers rather than speaking by himself. And who knows but that here he had put himself under the same limitations, by his humiliation, as elsewhere; so that as he had contracted his omnipotence in order to share in our weakness, and bounded his omniscience in order to take part with us in study and growth in knowledge, so he had also limited his foreknowledge that he might submit with us to the guidance and illumination of the prophets, who, speaking by the Holy Ghost, had "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow"?

At all events, the exact language of the prophet Hosea is taken up, and repeated again and again,
by the Lord Jesus, in application to himself,—

"The third day he shall rise again." So constantly was he reiterating these words that even his enemies had become familiar with them, and were haunted by their ominous echo after he was dead, so that they could not rest till they had gone to Pilate with their affrighted request,—"Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive he said, After three days I will rise again; command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead." Suppose we think of these oft-repeated words as a quotation rather than an assertion; as the utterance of a clear-sighted interpreter of the prophets rather than as the bare declaration of his own foreknowledge,—and what authority and strength is thereby given to the Old Testament scriptures! And this seems to me to be a warrantable view of the matter: that he, who, in dying, had pillowed his fainting soul upon the Bible, breathing out his life in the very words of Holy Writ, had also used the words of Scripture to throw over his approaching death the foregleams of a certain triumph, thus, as it were, anchoring himself and his church, as he went down into the pit of Hades, to the "Scriptures which cannot be broken."
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See what a firm tread and fearless confidence this rod and staff of Holy Scripture gives to Jesus as he enters the shadow of his approaching death! The temple of his body is to be desecrated by wicked hands; all its holy courts are to be invaded by the mockery and blasphemy and scorn of his enemies; his broken heart is to pour its blood into the very Holy of holies of that sanctuary. It is useless to say that he was so divine that he did not shrink from such indignity to his human body. The holier the temple the more dreadful the shudder and agony at its defilement. And I know not that the pangs of the spear-thrust and the nail-points could hurt him so deeply as the rude unhallowing of that body which, from the cradle to Calvary, had never admitted an impure indulgence or entertained an unholy suggestion. To those who understand best the dignity which God had put upon this fleshy frame even the most decent death is a dreadful disgrace; how much more a death that is purposely aggravated by all possible appliances of shame and torture! And such a desecration of the temple of his body is about to come upon the Son of Man. But he faces it with language unheard before, so far as we know. He does not say, "I will steel myself against the pain, and heroically bear the indignity, for it will soon be over." That, you see, would be
only a brave and manly submission to defeat,—nothing more. But the words of a wondrous prophecy are in his ears, and, seizing upon its mighty promise, he exclaims, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Instead of heroic submission to the inevitable, here is triumphant conquest,—the temple rebuilt with a yet higher glory, and all its dishonored courts restored, reconsecrated, and filled with the light of God's presence. This assurance of certain victory over death, the Master heard sounding down to him from the holy prophets, and under its inspiration he went with alacrity rather than with tardy submission to the grave. “The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will keep me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

And how yet more strongly, in the actual agony of the crucifixion, must the “sure word of prophecy” have sustained our Lord! As spectators of his sufferings, there is no point where our patience is so strained as under those bitter challenges, flung in his teeth, to prove his godhead by coming down from the cross. Invol-
untarily we find ourselves wishing for the moment that he would accept the challenge and rend himself from the wood to which he is nailed, and, by one startling display of his omnipotence, strike terrified conviction into the hearts of his scoffing foes. And when was his own endurance so tested, and when was such temptation put upon his self-restraint?—"Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross."—But had he come down, there would have been no rebuilding of the temple of his body. The atonement would have failed, and the resurrection also. Hence the challenge could not be accepted. "He saved others; himself he cannot save." Yes: he cannot save himself, because he will save others. "If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him." And he cannot come down because he is the Son of God. But there shall be a greater victory, after three days, than there could possibly be now, even with such display of power as is called for by his enemies. Then, instead of a yet living man tearing his hands from the nails with giant strength, and rending his bleeding feet from the iron spikes that hold them fast, far greater things shall be seen. A dead man, whose limp and helpless body has been laid in the tomb, swathed with the winding-sheet and
PROPHECY AT THE

shut in by the door of stone, shall suddenly break all the bars of death, and retake to himself all the powers of life, and stand again upon the earth in that human body so dear to all his disciples, yet now made so divine that it is forever beyond the touch of the malice and rage of his foes. This is a victory worth waiting for; this is a triumph that could well sweeten his cup of agony when "he tasted death for every man." Oh, blessed comfort of the Scriptures! The "voices of the prophets" follow Christ as he treads the bloody pathway of his passion; and above his dying groans, and above his plaintive "Eloi," and above his cry, "I thirst," they are heard cheering him on with their assurances of certain triumph. Well has the apostle called prophecy "a light that shineth in a dark place." The darkest place for all of us is "the valley of the shadow of death." But what was it for Jesus when, from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour, the sun withdrew his light, and when this outer darkness was eclipsed by the deeper inward night of the Father's averted face! And into this darkness he must go alone. Those holy prophets who appeared to him on Tabor, to speak of the "decease that he should accomplish at Jerusalem," could not attend him now. Alone he treads the wine-press of his agony; alone he lies in Joseph's tomb; alone he descends into
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the shadows of the underworld. But, though no prophet could accompany him, the prophet's lamp shines on undimmed, throwing its rays into the deepest shades, to reveal the coming resurrection. And if, in the faintness of his anguish, and the blindness of his desertion, hope should forsake him, this candle of the Lord yet shines brightly round about him. "Thou will not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." "After two days he will revive us." "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

II. But the words of our text have a yet wider application. They direct our thoughts to the resurrection of the Church of Christ.

The defeat, the darkness, the death, which came to Christ upon the cross, came not less utterly to his little band of followers. To the more timid of them, no doubt, all must have seemed ended, their ardent expectations wrecked, and their little Church dead and buried with its founder. For of some of them, at least, we know, that, "as yet, they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead." Perhaps others may have had deeper knowledge; perhaps it was the clearer and more confiding faith in the testimony of the Scriptures that brought the women early to the sepulchre. But, whether their
faith was stronger or weaker, the same clear lamp of prophecy burned on for all of them, through those dark days of burial and silence and contempt; and, while their foes were exulting in their utter discomfiture, they all, if they had the faith of their Master, might have joyfully chanted the prophet's strain through the gloomy night,—

"After two days he will revive us; in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

At all events, such was the actual fact. The return of Christ from the sepulchre was only more wonderful than the sudden uprising and rallying and reestablishing of the little Church that had been buried with him in his apparent overthrow. So striking is this fact that even sceptics have dwelt upon it with a kind of suppressed admiration. "The tomb of Jesus was found empty," says one; "this empty sepulchre becomes a ray of light to the disciples. Henceforth nothing can shake them." Ah, it is no mere ray of light from an empty sepulchre by which the clouds of that first Easter day are scattered, and in whose brightness the Church has been walking triumphantly these eighteen hundred years "with her garland and singing robes about her"! It is no ray from an empty sepulchre by which the risen Lord illumines the understanding of those with whom he talked on the way to Emmaus. "The
entrance of thy words giveth light." Then said Jesus unto them, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Now, this rallying and re- spiriting of the disciples, which took place upon the resurrection, is only the outward symbol of a much deeper spiritual fact. In Christ's rising from the dead his people are lifted into a new life and established on a higher plane. He was brought again from the grave as a vindication of his Sonship, and for the establishment of our sonship through him. His risen body, scarred with the marks of our chastisement, was also God's certificate, now returned to us, that the price of our redemption had been accepted, and the debt forever cancelled. Therefore, we are told that he was "crucified for our offences, and raised again for our justification." What he won for himself in this miracle he won necessarily and absolutely for us who are members of his mystical body. His destiny and that of his people, for whom he died, are inseparably linked together. Hence, the apostle who expounds the resurrection uses the very phraseology with the prophet who predicted it. "God, who is rich in mercy, . . . hath quickened us together with Christ and raised us up together."
And how significant the expression of Hosea, which our translation does not reveal,—"He will raise us up and we shall look before his face." That means reconciliation, the enjoyment of the divine approval. "Turn us again, O Lord, and cause thy face to shine upon us." "Lift upon us the light of thy countenance," are familiar prayers for such approval. And this is what Christ's victory over the grave brings us into,—the unclouded favor and approbation of God. Hear, again, the apostle: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." That forgiveness was fully accomplished when he pronounced the "It is finished," on the cross. For then had he blotted out the dark score of disobedience that was against us, having nailed it to his cross. But the pardon thus written in his blood waited to be sealed and attested by his resurrection. And so, while in the expiation of the dying Christ we find the title of our pardon, we wait for a luminous glance from the risen Christ to bring it out into full distinctness and significance. And this is what we receive as we greet the Lord coming forth from the tomb,—the light of God's peace now shining on us through the face of his Son. Because of our sins, which were laid upon him, the Father hid his countenance.
from him in that dreadful hour of his agony. But in the morning of the third day the light has come back. The open face of God is towards him and towards us, not the less, who are in him. Thus the resurrection of Christ, like an unclouded sunrise, lifts his whole Church into glad and triumphant light. Mountains buried in shadow, valleys covered with gloom, hamlets that had been hidden under the deep pall of darkness,—all start up from the tomb of enshrouding night at the instant summons of the dawn, to exult and rejoice in the light of the risen sun. So, when the morning of the resurrection dawned, it was not Christ alone that rose,—all his people rose with him from the dark enthralment of sin, from the heavy condemnation of the Lord, from the appalling woe of God’s displeasure, into the joy and sunlight of forgiveness. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.” Alas for us that with such quickening from the dead, we should still be found with the grave-clothes of corruption and the cerements of unmortified affections clinging fast to us! To crucify the Son of God afresh is also to roll again the stone before the door of his opened sepulchre, and make his resurrection as though it were not, to us. “Dead in trespasses and in sins,”—shall we still remain
after Christ has risen for our justification? All the light, the gladness, the exalted power of the new life forfeited, because we have chosen death instead! Oh, why do we choose the wages of sin rather than the gift of God, the bondage of corruption instead of the liberty of Christ? Why do we set our faces so steadfastly towards the earth and earthly things, instead of lifting them heavenward where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God? An act of honest, simple faith, expressed in a true confession, and you may stand with Christ upon resurrection ground. “For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

III. And now, with a yet wider reach of meaning, these words carry us on to the resurrection of the dead in Christ.

The prediction of the prophet has been confirmed and emphasized by the resurrection of Christ. What was true before in promise has now become true in fact. Prophecy and history join hands at the open sepulchre of the Lord, and both concur in witnessing to that yet future event,—the resurrection of all that sleep in Jesus. In other words, the resurrection of the dead has begun; the first instalment of prophetic promise has been fulfilled; one grave has been
opened, and its now living and glorified Occupant has taken his place in heaven as a witness to the truth of the Scriptures, as he proclaims forever: “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive forever more.” O brother! “believest thou the prophets?” In spite of the incredulity which asks, “How can our scattered dust be re-gathered?” in spite of the indifference which says, “I care not that this body should live again;” in spite of the speculation which puts the question, “How are the dead raised up?” — still does the word stand fast which God “promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” If you believe not the prophets, you must believe now that one has risen from the dead, and “showed himself alive, after his passion, by many infallible proofs.” Indeed, Christ’s resurrection has so out-shined all other testimony to this doctrine, by its luminous certainty, that we need go no further than his sepulchre for our faith. We may sum it all up in the apostle’s words: “For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.” Now, Christ’s resurrection is, I believe, the miniature and exact epitome of the great resurrection which will take place at his coming. His body was raised up; so shall ours be. “He shall also quicken your mortal body.” That body, though
glorified and made immortal, was still material,—
"flesh and bones" which could be touched and
handled and recognized by his friends. Ours shall
be the same. "Who shall change the body of
our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto
his glorious body?" He waited for his resurrec-
tion, in his disembodied state, till God's appointed
time had been fulfilled; so must we. "After three
days I will raise him up," was the promise by
which the flesh of Jesus rested in hope. Our
time of waiting shall be longer, but it is not less
definitely fixed in the counsels of God. "One
day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a
thousand years as one day," says the Scripture.
Hence many of the Christian fathers saw in my
text a mystical reference as well as a literal one;
and believed that, just as the third day witnessed
Christ's resurrection, so the third thousand-year
day after would witness the resurrection of the
dead who sleep in Jesus. I dwell not upon this
interpretation, since of its truth we have no knowl-
edge. But the general fact is true, that, as Christ
waited a fixed and definite time for the quickening
of his body, so shall his Church wait for a longer,
but not less definite, time for her resurrection.
Wonderful, therefore, is the prophet's vision, alike
in its minuteness and its magnitude. He saw,
methinks, Christ's fleshy body coming forth from
the tomb in Jerusalem; and then, with vaster sweep of sight, his mystical body coming forth from ten thousand graves throughout the whole earth. "On the third day," reckoned by man's chronology, he saw that grave in the Holy City opening; on the great unknown day of resurrection he saw all the graves of the sainted dead yielding up their tenants. It is the same vision which Paul has reproduced and transcribed in one master stroke of inspiration: "Christ, the first fruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." And when I note the marvellous harmony, the exquisite unison, which there is between the different notes of Scripture, on this theme, I seem to hear Christ and prophets and apostles and martyrs all chanting together a sublime antiphon of resurrection hope. It is one spirit speaking through many voices. "If a man die, shall he live again?" it asks by the mouth of the patriarch. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise," announces the prophet. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead." "Son of Man, can these bones live?" we hear from the seer of scattered and desolate Israel. "Behold, O my people! I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of
Israel," is the reply. "The third day I shall rise again," says the Lord, as he hastens to his cross: and all that sleep in Jesus,—the martyr who yielded up his spirit at the stake, the missionary who made his grave in pagan soil, the confessor who loved not his life unto death, the saint whose ashes were scattered to the winds, the prophet whose testimony was sealed with his blood, and the Israelite who wrung out the bitter dregs of God's indignation until the promised time of "life from the dead,"—all these have taken up and echoed back the words of the Son of Man, and shall prolong the strain until he come. "After two days will he revive us, and the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

And now, my brethren, I would that, by the inspiration of the subject, I might lift your hope and quicken your faith and kindle your aspirations so that you should count all things but loss "if by any means you might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." To deny this hope were bad enough; but I believe we may grieve the Lord yet more by being indifferent to it. To listen only with that kind of spiritual ennui that drowses and dreams under all its majestic promises,—how unworthy is this of us when God has deemed it so grand a theme that he has kept the whole orchestra of patriarchs and prophets and apostles and
evangelists chanting it through the ages! And this, it seems to me, is the special tendency of the present time. The resurrection seems too high and too remote a subject to challenge man's attention. "I shall die, and my spirit will return to God who gave it; and I care not what becomes of my dead body," is considered a good enough confession for a Christian. And so even believers fall into a kind of spiritual improvidence that looks no farther than the grave, and builds no hope beyond the disembodied state. But forget not that God cares what becomes of your body. He made it to be the companion and kinsman of the soul, and he is grieved at that estrangement which sin has brought in between the two. And the divorce of death is a woe, and not a blessing, since it is a putting asunder what God has joined together. But it is our Father's good pleasure to end this estrangement, to terminate this separation, and to bring the sanctified soul back to a glorified body,—all traces of that body's humiliation gone, the scars of sickness and deformity all healed, the shadows of earthly suffering all lifted; and, on the other hand, all the discipline which the Spirit wrought upon that body preserved; the lines of beauty which the patient virtues traced, the Christ-like features which love and self-denial moulded, all retained, only unspeakably glorified and trans-
figured. See that you despise not what God has held so great. See that you speak not lightly of what he has emphasized with such weight of inspiration. And, through his grace, may we all share at last the benediction: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; for on such the second death hath no power.”
THE REPULSIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

"And of the rest durst no man join himself to them." — Acts v: 13.

We dwell much upon the attractions of Christianity, but rarely stop to think that it may also have repulsions which are vitally necessary to its purity and permanence. If the Church of Christ draws to herself that which she cannot assimilate to herself, her life is at once imperilled; for the body of believers must be at one with itself, though it be at war with the world. Its purity and its power depend, first of all, upon its unity. So that if perchance the Church shall attract men without at the same time transforming them; if she shall attach them to her membership without assimilating them to her life,—she has only weakened herself by her increase, and diminished herself by her additions.

Is it a hard and ungracious saying, then, to declare that the Church of God in the world must be able to repel as well as to attract? Nature is
an austere teacher on this point. She has given to the rose its exquisite fragrance; but she has also armed it with thorns, so that, while the delicious odors allure, these little sentinels stand guard, with their drawn bayonets, to defend the flower, which is endangered by its very beauty and sweetness. And the Church of Christ has too much of loveliness and excellence to be trusted on earth without defences. Hypocrites will appropriate her beautiful garments; covetous men will make gain of her godliness; pleasure-seekers will turn the grace of God which she offers into licentiousness; and the avaricious will make merchandise out of her pearl of great price,—unless her outward attractiveness is guarded by some counter-defences. "The Bride of Christ," has the Church, with wonderful honor, been named. Are you that the Heavenly Bridegroom would leave her in this world without endowing her with that stern chastity of holiness, and that instinctive aversion to impurity, which should be her defense against such as would betray her? "The king's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is wrought gold. So shall she be brought unto the king in raiment of needle-work." But "as the lily among thorns so is my beloved among his daughters." The beauty of Christ's Church is guarded by the asperity of her discipline. H
graces are hedged about with self-denials; her gifts are compassed with crosses, and her triumphs are crowned with thorns. This is her only safety from such as might otherwise be won to her only to waste and dishonor her.

Such is the lesson that is impressed upon us by the text. The Church is just entering upon her first conquest. The gospel is preached with a freeness and breadth of offer unheard of before. Three thousand souls are added to the Church in a single day. The tide of success is rising higher and higher. The sect of the Nazarenes is fairly becoming popular. Multitudes are crowding up to lay their gifts at the apostles' feet. Is there not danger that the infant Church may be overwhelmed in the tide of her own prosperity? that upon the swelling wave of success the uncircumcised and the unclean may be borne into her communion to corrupt and destroy it? But look! Like a keen lightning flash the judgment of God falls in the midst of his mercies, and two who had "agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" lie dead at the apostle's feet. Is God about to close the gate of mercy, so widely opened, and to guard it with a flaming sword? No! Here is an exhibition of his holiness in the midst of his free grace. God is still just, though the justifier of them that believe; he still punishes the liar and the hypo-
crite, though he freely forgives the penitent. And before this unsheathed sword of his holiness the multitude instantly divides,—a part thrust back a part drawn nearer. No sincere disciples are repelled; for the record is, that “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes, both of men and women.” But “of the rest durst no man join himself to them.” The terror of the Lord puts afar off those who have not the love of the Lord to bring them nigh.

My brethren, I know of no lesson concerning the growth and development of Christ’s Church that needs to be more thoughtfully pondered than this. The tendency of our times is to multiply the attractions of Christianity. Those elements in doctrine, in worship, and in life which serve most strongly to win men’s interest, and to propitiate their prejudices, are sought with ever-increasing diligence. Never does it seem to occur to us that Christianity may be made too alluring for her own safety. Nature is more careful in adjusting her laws of growth. She has endowed the plant, the tell us, with these three functions: attraction, assimilation, and repulsion. The silent process of drawing in the substances that minister to life and growth goes on; but acting ever with it that wonderful repellency that rejects all noxious and alien elements. The Church is not less care
fully endowed. Faith is her great function of assimilation. No attraction can be too powerful, no charm can be too alluring, that acts for the single ends of drawing believers to Christ, and identifying them with his body. But the appeals which win men without transforming them, which join them to the Church without bringing them into fellowship with Christ, are fatal to a pure Christianity, and in the end must put the very existence of the Church in jeopardy. Hence we find, as we study the structure of the Church, how careful the Lord has been to furnish her with defences against the alien and the insincere and the hypocritical, as well as to provide her with allurements for the true and the faithful and the penitent. Let us consider some of these repulsions of Christianity, if we may name them so without offence.

In the first place, the sanctity of life and character which Christ requires in his Church is her most powerful defence. It is her native chastity, and constitutes her truest safeguard. Nothing is so severe as purity; nothing so effectually repels the familiarities of the wicked. We think to fence the fold of God with guards and restrictions so that the unsanctified and the unclean may not come in. This is a confession of weakness and frailty. The holy virgin of the Lord has been
endowed with a native purity which is her true shield and defence. What means the Scripture when it commands us to stand, "having on the breastplate of righteousness"? Is it not an intimation of that which all experience verifies, that righteousness is the strongest repellent of wickedness and corruption which the soul can wear? You say that purity shrinks from contact with impurity; but remember that this aversion is mutual. Uncleanliness recoils from purity; it slinks abashed from its presence as the wild beast cowers and quails before the imperial eye of a fearless man. I am not theorizing on this point. Ungodly men have confessed to a discomfort, amounting almost to torture, which the enforced association with the good and holy has produced. It is said that a profane French infidel and libertine rushed frantically from the presence of Fénelon, into whose society the chances of travel had thrown him, exclaiming, "I cannot endure the presence of this man and remain an atheist." Such I believe to be the powerful and imperious severity of holiness when it confronts sin. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" It needs no ban of the Church to keep them apart. They excommunicate each other as naturally and as inevitably as do the darkness and the light.

Or, take another exhortation of Scripture: "Let
us put on the armor of light." Here light is made the Christian's shield,—light whose beams search into every nook and corner of earth's impurity, and yet contract no defilement; absorbing from everything the clear crystal water, but rejecting every particle of uncleanness; attracting always, but always rebuking. These, O Church of God! are thy weapons of defence and conquest.

Well, then, to come to the practical application of this principle: I believe that the most effective discipline which any Church can have is a consecrated and devoted and unworldly piety in its members. Discipline is the morality of the Church, and its force depends upon the height of character in which it takes its rise,—"Ye which are spiritual restore such an one," is the divine rule. It requires a heart in communion with God to win an offending brother; and how much more to put away an incorrigible sinner from the body of Christ! I need not prove to you,—what is perfectly obvious to any one who has read at all the history of Christianity,—that those ecclesiastical bodies have been the least invaded by unworthy members whose piety has been the most simple and severe. The Church that is holy is armed with a perpetual decree of excision against the hypocritical and profane and unclean. It says to the worldly and ungodly and
impure, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me, for I am holier than thou,"—words which were most improper for any man to speak with his lips, but most honorable for the Church to express by her silent, unconscious example. Do I speak coldly and harshly of the relations of Christians to the world, as though it were their principal care to keep aloof from it, or, if touching it by enforced association, to gather up their garments lest they be defiled by its contact? God forbid that I should so think. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them," is the blessed tribute which was paid to Jesus Christ by his enemies. If we at all bear his character, and do his works, we shall be like him in this respect. Indeed, it is the shame of the modern Church that it has so little contact with sinners; that it enters so little into their houses, and sits so rarely at their tables, to tell them the glad tidings of salvation. But it is to make sinners like Christ that we are to go to them, and not to make ourselves like them. If we level our conduct downward to the grade of the worldling's; if we drink wine with him at his clubs and his banquets; if we sit by his side in the theatre, and whirl with him in the dance, and compete with him upon the race-course; if we live in the same luxury, and dress with the same extravagance, and drift in the same tides of fashion; if
we seek wealth with the same greed, and pursue pleasure with the same fondness, and love society with the same devotion,—and if, with all this, we are popular preachers and eminent Christians and zealous churchmen, we shall win multitudes to our faith. We shall have made men think well of themselves, by these cordial affiliations, which is the surest step to making them think well of us and of our Church. And so we have won them.

But, alas! what have we done? We have gained them by being ourselves “conformed to this world,” instead of by their being “transformed by the renewing of their minds.” We have brought them into the Church by lowering its fellowship to them, instead of raising them to its fellowship. And in so doing we have inflicted a cruelty upon them instead of conferring a kindness. For, of all injuries done to an unbelieving and unregenerated man, I know of none greater than that of putting him into the Church of Christ. It confers upon him responsibilities for which he is utterly unfitted, and therefore makes him liable to a condemnation to which he were not otherwise exposed. Were there no liars and defrauders in Jerusalem, think you, but Ananias and Sapphira, that they should be visited by such terrible judgment? Doubtless there were scores. But these were in the Church, and therefore were lying to God, and not to men;
and that he might show for all time how sacred a place his Church is, how sanctified and guarded it must be from the approach of the impure and the insincere, he breaks forth in terrible judgment upon the offenders. He speaks from the burning throne of his holiness, saying to such in all time as should presume to enter his Church with unwashed feet and impure hearts, “Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

It is not only for the purity of the Church, but for the safety of the sinner, that he should be kept aloof from it, unless he has been fitted by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost to stand within its pale. Therefore let the holiness of Christians keep guard about this sacred enclosure; let the light of God’s purity shine through them like a keen noontide brightness, to ward off unsanctified fellowships. The purity of the Lord which woos and wins the penitent and believing, as it shines out of a saintly soul, is also terrible in its rebuke of sinners and hypocrites. But there is no danger that it shall drive off those who ought to be brought nigh. What if it should be said again, as on this day, that “great fear came upon all the Church and as many as heard these things”? Need we be alarmed lest the progress of the gospel should be stayed, and
men frightened from its acceptance? Surely not. For even the fear of the Lord can attract as well as repel. And if it should cause some to cry, in terror, "Oh, whither shall I go from Thy presence?" it will win others to say, in those grand, sweet words of Augustine: "I am afraid of God, therefore I will run to his arms."

Then, again, the Church of God has a strong protection in her doctrines and ordinances. The preaching of these, when they are set forth in their purity and simplicity, acts upon the multitude as a process of discrimination, challenging every man's sincerity while it enlists his interest. The institutions of the gospel have been wonderfully adjusted to this end. A true theology blends in itself the elements both of beauty and severity. When either one of these is exaggerated, harm must ensue. Let there be excessive severity in our faith, and asceticism is the result,—that stern, forbidding religion which draws away from the world, and drives the world away from itself. Let the beautiful in Christianity be too exclusively cultivated, and the tendency is either to liberalism,—that religion which compromises with the world by flattering it,—or to ritualism, which seeks to charm the world by appealing to its senses with shows and scenic displays. Hence, we find in the doctrines and invitations of the gospel just that mingling
of tenderness and sternness which is calculated to draw men from their sins, instead of drawing them in their sins: “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” and, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” What worldling is likely to run hastily after Christ in obedience to such a summons? What disciple is likely to be captured with such an invitation before his heart is really won? There is the check of rigid exaction in Christ’s calls, as well as the allurements of gracious love; so that while men are drawn, they may not be hurried into an impulsive, premature profession. We should not err indeed in uttering this paradox—that the attractions of the religion of Christ are its repulsions, and its repulsions are its attractions. That in it which charms the heart is one and the same thing with that which offends the intellect. The gospel, in a word, may be said to give to man exactly what he wants, and yet to give it in such a way that it is precisely that from which he most revolts unless his will is ready to submit to God.

Have you thought to analyze the attraction of Christ’s cross, to see how strongly this principle holds there? “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,” says Jesus. But what is it that is thus set forth as the central attraction
of Christianity? The most repulsive object on which the natural man can look, — "Christ crucified; unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." Draw men it will, as long as there is a sinner sighing for pardon, or a penitent seeking peace; draw men it will, when they have guilt to be cleansed, and burdens to be lifted, and stains to be washed. But it will draw no one through his aesthetic tastes, or his sense of the beautiful, or his poetic sentiment. There is a cross which can do so: that jewelled and exquisitely carved adornment which hangs upon the neck of beauty, — that cross wrought with diamonds and robbed of its "offence,"

"Which Jews might kiss and infidels adore;"

that can attract men without converting them. And who knows what evil it has done to men's souls on this account, — this cross in which beauty culminates and ignominy utterly disappears. How it has filled eyes with its charms which have thereby been cut off from beholding the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world!" how it has helped to substitute sentiment for faith, and poetic feeling for godly sorrow, and the crucifix for the Crucified! You see what the true cross of Christ did when Peter held it up on the day of
Pentecost. It wrought intense conviction as it showed men what their sin had done. Its nails seemed to be plucked out and driven into the breasts of the multitude, till, being "pricked in their hearts," they cried out: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" And then it brought peace as quickly as it had brought contrition, when it was made known that this Crucified One had "borne their sins in his own body on the tree." This is the attraction of that cross which is ordained to be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It is an attraction which pierces while it draws, and wounds while it wins, and thus proves a worthy instrument of God's electing love. And we have seen in the history of the Church what the spurious cross could do; as, for example, when the monks went forth among our ancestors in Britain to win them to Christianity. The crucifix was lifted high; it was supplemented by all the pomp and splendors of an imposing ritual; chants were poured forth, censers were swung, bodies were prostrated, and thousands in a day gave in their allegiance to the new religion. But it was the senses that were won, not the hearts; and baptized pagans were brought into the Church only to paganize Christianity. This is an illustration of the evil that always comes of magnifying the attractions of the cross while diminishing its wholesome
repulsions; of augmenting the charm of the gospel while utterly obscuring its severity.

And the same law holds in regard to all the institutions of Christianity. Its baptism is described as a "burial with Christ," a "baptism into death;" so that he who submits to it must, in spirit, become like his Lord,—"obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Its sacrament of fellowship is "a communion of the blood of Christ," and "a communion of the body of Christ,"—expressions from which natural religion has always revolted. Its worship is required to be "in spirit and in truth;" its music the "sacrifice of praise;" its gospel "the foolishness of preaching," its example before the world "in simplicity and godly sincerity." Enough here, surely, to temper the inducements of Christianity! But this is evidently according to the divine plan,—that the gospel should act upon men by an elective affinity, winning their faith, but offending their pride; constraining the sincere by their love of Christ, but testing the superficial with the searching question of Christ, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

My brethren, we are living in a time when men are bent on making a luxury of religion. They demand that our doctrine shall be pleasant, our
worship refined and artistic, our ordinances beautiful and alluring. No "bitter herbs" must be upon our tables as we keep our passover; no heavy crosses must be laid upon our shoulders as we follow Christ. Not first the true, do they require of us,—for that is often rigid, ungracious and repulsive,—but first the beautiful, in preaching, in doctrine, in service and in life. The embellishments of worship are constantly multiplied in the attempt to win men's hearts by ministering to their tastes. All manner of sanctified amusements are devised in the hope that when the people have been drawn to church through curiosity, they may be gained to Christ by faith. Even the inducements of heaven are enhanced by the promise that the life to come shall be as this life, and much more abundantly. Oh, what shall all this profit, even though it bring the body to church, and enlist the five senses in devotion? Faith is the only sense that can taste and see how good the Lord is. And faith is more likely to be discovered by the sword of the Spirit that divides to the piercing asunder of the soul and the spirit, than by the beauties of art, which only charm the imagination.

And so what if God shall call us to stand for the harsher truths and requirements of Christianity, as well as the more congenial? Shall we willingly
accept the duty, though men complain of our austerity and are repelled by our plainness? Shall we consent to make discord with men's tastes when we might make harmony, and be to them as "a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument"? Shall we "preach Christ crucified in a crucified style," — putting the nail through those refinements of reason that so often cover up the blood of expiation, and pressing the thorns into that intellectual pride which would soften propitiation to a moral influence, and so "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ"? Shall we be content with that plainness in worship, and strive for that holiness of life, which can commend Christ while humbling us, and gain men's hearts, though offending their tastes? Oh, ungracious calling, that we must displease the world when we might perchance delight it, and turn its impatient gaze upon its sins, when we might rivet its admiration on ourselves! But so long as good and evil are in the world, grace and severity must be in our lives and our doctrines. Wonderful is that high commendation of the Son of God, — "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Would that God would overrule even the repellent words
of my sermon to draw some soul to Christ. In his name and for his glory I have spoken. And he says, "Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me."
IX.

THE TWOFOLD MINISTRY OF CHRIST.

"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."
—Ps. ciii: 3.

WE have in these words a striking instance of what is known as the Hebrew parallelism. It is one of the most rhythmical and beautifully balanced sentences in the whole book of Psalms. But we see in the words something more than the rhythm and cadence of poetic measure. There is a parallelism of thought and doctrine here. Forth from the divine fountain flow two streams of blessing—forgiveness and health; recovery for the soul and restoration for the body. And these are not merely consecutive in God's plan, forgiveness now and healing hereafter,—they are parallel; they move side by side as a double manifestation of the same divine power. They are not two facts even, but the twofold expression of one fact—the life of God communicated to man, and invigorating and repairing by the same energy both his spirit and his flesh,—"Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases."
Considering Jesus Christ now as the manifestation of God's life and grace, let us see how this twofold blessing comes to man through him. Observe, then,—

I. Christ's twofold ministry while on earth.

You have to take only the most casual glance at his life to discover how constantly he exercised a double ministration to men. He healed the sick and forgave the sinner. He fed the hungry with bread for their bodies, and he fed the penitent with bread for their souls. He said to one suffering woman, "Thou art loosed from thine infirmity," and he said to another sinning woman "Thy sins are forgiven thee." From the day he began his earthly ministry till the day he finished it by entering into glory, two things could be said of him, and the one just as truly as the other: "Himself took on our infirmities, and bear our sicknesses," and, "Who himself bear our sins in his own body on the tree."

And the reason why he carried on for us this double service is obvious. Man is a double being, and Christ could only be a perfect Saviour by meeting and ministering to him in both elements of his nature. There is a wonderful pith and force in that Saxon word whole, as applied to man—"Thou art made whole." Sin has halved us; it has so divided this house of our tabernacle against
itself that it must fall. The forgiven soul in a sick body is but half a man: the well body enclosing an unforgiven soul is but half a man. And this dreadful schism in our nature Christ came to heal; not by widening the breach, putting the soul into heaven, and the body in the grave, and dooming them to eternal separation. In that case all the Saviour could say would be, “Thou art made half”; one fragment of thy dual nature has been rescued and made immortal, but the other half has perished. Strictly speaking, man can never be made whole till he has been made holy—till his sanctified soul has had prepared for it a sanctified body and the two have been remarried forever in the land of Beulah.

How blended and interdependent are these two elements of our life!—so one that it is almost inaccurate to speak of them even as a duality. The blush on the cheek is but the tide of the soul’s emotion breaking upon this outward shore; the smile was on the spirit before it was on the face, and the frown was on the soul before its shadow crept across the outward visage. So truly a unit is man as to his inner and outer being, that none has been able to fix the boundary between the spirit and the body. The coast-line of flesh and blood is so flooded and overflowed by the waves of feeling and emotion which are constantly
rolling in from the deeps of the soul, and the deeps of the soul are so perpetually stirred by the sensations and impressions of the body, that none can exactly define the bounds of either. And so Christ's action upon man was of that twofold nature which touched his whole life. There went out from him "saving health" as well as saving grace.

Now, we dwell much on the sinlessness of Christ and the power which he thereby possessed of redeeming men from their sins; but have we thought also that he was the only being, so far as we know, who had perfect healthfulness? It must have been so. Sickness is the fruit and consequence of sin, either actual or ancestral. But Christ had neither personal nor hereditary taint. If he knew pain and suffering of body, it was imputed, not original; it was ours, not his. "In him was life,"—that divine, unfallen life in which no seed or germ of sickness could be present. Hence those who came in believing contact with him received healing as inevitably as they received pardon. "And as many as touched him were made perfectly whole," says the evangelist. Man in his fallen state can impart disease, but not health. It is the most pathetic comment on our corrupt condition by nature, that sickness is the only thing we have that is contagious. We can give out an infectious
disease from our very breath, or through the slightest touch of the body; but who has been able to communicate health to another? This is the solitary glory of the Virgin's Son. Here, for once in our poor world, is contagious life. Here is a being in whom an abounding, infectious health is present, so that it only needs the contact of a finger-tip, that it may leap like the electric current to thrill and vitalize the sickly body. This spontaneity, this outgushing fulness of the divine healing from the person of Jesus Christ, is, to me, a fact of the greatest significance. Whatever help man imparts to his brother is through medicine and the vital agencies of nature. If he attempts at all to cure by transmitting his own vitality he does it only by the most strained and laborious effort,—as though the life currents in him were so low and feeble that they must be forced before they can be made to yield even the smallest assistance to another. But not so with the Son of Man. His healing was an overflow, not an effort. Witness the marvellous miracle of the recovery of the woman with an issue of blood. It is a work so unconscious and so utterly passive that it seems like a miracle spilt over from the fulness of his divine life, rather than a miracle put forth. She came behind him in the crowd and touched the hem of his garment, " and immediately
he perceived that virtue had gone out of him," we are told. No effort at healing here; no gathering up of the powers of his divine manhood for the mighty miracle! Where human skill had exhausted itself only to fail, this heavenly man succeeded without even an effort of the will,—as though it were an accident of his omnipotence, a spontaneous overflow from him "in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Have you run through the list of Christ's miracles to notice how often the word "touch" occurs in connection with them?

Sometimes it is Christ touching the sufferer, and sometimes it is the sufferer touching Christ. But nothing more energetic or vigorous seems necessary. And that is a striking tribute to the life-giving power of Christ.

Great forces need but small conductors to transmit them. The surcharged battery requires only a finger-tip to unlade its mighty energy. An engine needs but a single coupling to transmit all its prodigious force and momentum. And Christ, because he is mighty to save, needs nothing of us but our consenting faith, and, because he is mighty to heal, needs only the touch of our faith that all his "saving health" may become ours. Touch indeed, is but the gesture of faith. It is the visible confession of confidence in the power of Christ to
make whole. Hence it is all one, whether it is said of the ministry of Christ that "as many as believed on him were made whole," or "as many as touched him were made whole." In either case saving virtue went forth from him.

You see, then, how all through his life the double ministry of Jesus was in exercise. Men believed on him, and were forgiven; men touched him, and were healed. His abounding grace made instant response to the sinner's faith. His abounding life gave instant answer to the sick man's touch. And so blended and interlaced are these two elements in the ministry of our Lord that they are constantly crossing.—healing emerging in forgiveness, and forgiveness in healing. It is because sin and sickness are so related that grace must take such direction in pursuing them. Like two converging lines of an angle, each of which when followed leads to the other, so with transgression and disease. Follow sickness back to its remotest cause, and you will find sin; follow sin to its last effect, and you will find disease. Blessed be God, then, that in Christ we have the double man, who could confront and master the double problem. He was the sin-pardoner, who could cleanse transgression back to its original fountain. He was the life-giver, who could reach disease in the last and remotest
retreat and heal it. Hence the constant contact and interfusion of these two offices of the Son of God. Recall that striking instance of his dealing with the man sick of the palsy. The first word we should expect to hear from his lips as he gazed upon the helpless sufferer would be, "Thou art made whole." That was what the man wanted and that was what the friends who brought him expected. But, instead of that, "He said to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." And when they which stood by murmured in themselves that he had presumed to pardon sin, he asked whether is it easier to say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," or to say "Arise and walk"? It matters not to the Lord whether he reaches the body through the soul, or reaches the soul through the body. He is the Redeemer of both. Did the sufferer expect healing, and get pardon? Yes, but he received what he asked. The Master simply went behind the curtain of the flesh, and healed the fountain of the soul's impurity. He laid his hand on the spiritual cause instead of dealing at once with the bodily result. He reached back over all the turbid and troubled streams of disease and physical impurity and cured the fountain of the heart by his authoritative absolution from sin. And then, as though to humor the ignorance that could not discern the
cause, but only the effect, that could not see that
pardon is healing in its utmost springs, he adds,
"But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath
power on earth to forgive sins, Arise, take up thy
bed, and go into thine own house." It is the two-
fold grace of Christ which we discover running
through all his earthly life. He is the second
Adam come to repair the ruin of the first. And
in order to accomplish this he will follow the lines
of man's transgression back to their origin, and
forward to their remotest issue. He will pursue
the serpent trail of sin, dispensing his forgiveness
and compassion as he goes, till at last he finds the
wages of sin, and dies its death on the cross; and
he will follow the wretched track of disease with
his healing and recovery till in his resurrection he
shall exhibit to the world the first fruits of these
redeemed bodies, in which "this corruptible shall
have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall
have put on immortality."

II. Christ's twofold ministry in heaven.

We are never to forget that our Lord is simply
carrying on in glory what he began on earth. His
ministry has not changed as to its character and
offices. The only essential difference is that he
exercises that ministry now by the Holy Ghost,
and through the church, instead of by his own
personal and visible agency. All the character-
istics of his ministry remain unaltered. Hence we find that when he had ascended up on high, and committed the preaching of the gospel to apostles and evangelists, the same traits marked their work which distinguished his own. The twofold ministry goes on just as it did while Christ was on the earth. Indeed, it must be so, or the Master's word has not been kept. Just before his ascension he had breathed the Holy Ghost upon his disciples and said, "Whosesover sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them;" and he had said also "These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay their hands on the sick, and they shall recover." No question can there be as to the promise, and none as to the fulfilment. Read Peter's words in the opening pages of the Acts. In one chapter we hear him saying, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins;" in the next we hear him saying to the lame man," In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." It is Christ's ministry still prolonged,—the same twofold grace, the same double blessing, to the sinner and to the sufferer. And the whole apostolic age is stamped with
similar marks. By the same authority with which Paul says to the jailer of Philippi, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," he says to the cripple of Lystra, "perceiving that he had faith to be healed," "Stand upright upon thy feet."

And how is it that this twofold cord of our ministry has been unbraided, leaving us but a single strand? How is it that we still preach the remission of sins, but dare not, on the pain of being deemed enthusiasts and fanatics, hold out the hope that sickness can be remitted by faith in Jesus Christ? O Church of the ascended Christ, carrying still in thy hands thy Master's commission, with no clause annulled and no vestige of authority revoked, what has happened to thee, that the lame must lie at thy doors, and none can take him by the hand and lift him up; that the sick must pine on his couch, and never a cure must be expected through the prayer of faith? Hast thou ceased to walk in the light of the Sun of righteousness that thou hast no longer any healing shadow to throw upon the sick and dying? And how is it that, instead of mourning and being humbled at the loss of these apostolic gifts, thou art lifted up with self-complacency, speaking reproachfully of such as seek for their revival, and visiting them with cold rebukes? Is it an occasion for pride that
“thou hast no healing medicines for the sick,” and that thou must say to the lame and leprous, “Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wounds are grievous; there is none to plead thy cause that thou mayest be bound up”? My brethren, we cannot ask these questions too earnestly or repeatedly. There is a cautious reserve of faith which may carry one very near the perilous edge of scepticism; and to let go our confidence in what is highest and hardest to credit in the promises of God may be a token of our wilful choice of what is lowest and most superficial in Christian consecration. I am weary, for one, of the excuses which Christians have framed for their impotence; telling the world that the age of miracles has passed, and that the gifts of healing have been withdrawn. The age of miracles has passed indeed, and perhaps the only reason is, that the age of faith has passed. Christ has given no intimation on the pages of Scripture that the age of miracles is passed with him. He has not grown old, that the fountains of his saving health must run dry. He who healed the withered hand has not lost the use of his own right hand through infirmity of age. “His arm is not shortened that it cannot save, neither is his ear heavy that he cannot hear.” I feel as sure as I am of anything that the loss of a healing ministry is due to a change in the church, and not to a change in Christ. It is
because we have backslidden from the foundation of apostles and prophets, and not that Christ has retreated from his ground. Because we know not how to rise to the height of this great privilege, we bring down the promises of God to our level; and what we cannot do, we hold that God does not allow. Would it not be better to keep the standard of power and privilege where the Lord put it, if it served no other purpose than to humble and condemn us for our unbelief. There is no evidence that since the day that Christ entered into heaven, and through the Holy Ghost gave gifts to men, "to one, the word of wisdom, and to another, the word of knowledge, by the same spirit; and to another, faith, by the same spirit; and to another, the gift of healing, by the same spirit," there has been any change in the Lord's order for his Church. There has been a change in the Church's attitude towards these gifts.

1 The evidence seems to be incontestable that the signs promised, in the great commission, to those who should believe (Mark xvi: 17) and fulfilled under the ministry of the apostles, continued in unbroken succession into the third century after Christ. "Witnesses who are above suspicion," says Uhlhorn, "leave no room for doubt that the miraculous powers of the apostolic age continued to operate at least into the third century." (Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism, p. 169.) Mosheim, Milner, Dodwell, and Tillotson bear equally strong testimony. (See references to the Fathers, in notes to work above cited, p. 486.) If these gifts remained to the third century, why might they not continue into the nineteenth?
She has learned to discredit what she has forgotten how to use. She has come to condemn as fanatical what she once rejoiced in as divine. But her divine right and charter remain unchanged, and only wait for her resumption when she gets back her ancient faith. Do I say this in criticism, speaking of others as one who has himself attained? Indeed not. Nor is personal attainment the indispensable condition to strong faith and positive assertion. Have you never read the saying of a Christian father, "Certum est quia impossibile," —It is true because it is impossible? It seems like an audacious paradox; but it was learned from the Master himself: "The things which are impossible with man are possible with God," says Jesus. And faith has to do with God, not with man. It takes the measure of its creed from the power and promise of the Almighty, not from the experience of the creature. Hence, with the revelation, "All things are possible with God," Christ has taught us to join the confession, "All things are possible to him that believeth." What, then, has God written of his power and will concerning us? This is the one question for us to settle. We are not to level down God's words to the grade of our own experiences. "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us." And it is not for us to modify and
condition them to every various shade of faith or feeling. What has the Lord declared concerning the great matter which we are discussing? This question must be held supreme. Tell me, then, what these words mean: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him." Here is a double promise, bearing the distinctest impress and seal of that double ministry of which I am speaking. The latter half of it you have no doubt about. With the fullest assurance you fall upon your knees to pray for a friend that his sins may be forgiven him, and if you see that he has faith to be forgiven, you do not hesitate, on the strength of God's word, to declare his absolution. But of the first part of the passage you say, this does not apply to present times; this was for the apostles and primitive believers. And who gave you warrant for cleaving this text in twain, and using one-half of the promise and remanding the other to an outgrown age of miracles and wonders?¹ Let

¹"Oh, happy simplicity," exclaims Bengel, commenting on this text, "interrupted or lost through unbelief." Thomas Erskine declares his conviction that the gifts of healing were intended to be "the permanent endowment of the Church," and that "had the faith of the Church continued pure and full, these gifts of the Spirit would never have disappeared." (Brazen Serpent, p. 203. See also Dr. Basham's powerful defence of the proposition, "Miracles and spiritual gifts not discontinued." Nature and the Supernatural, chap. XIV.)
us beware. To a true Christian the very life of a text is in its undivided wholeness, and, like the true mother in the judgment of Solomon, he would rather surrender it entire than have it sundered by the sword. I have said all this in the revolt which I feel at the arbitrary license which so many are exercising, in setting aside as impossible what the Scriptures promise without reserve. And I am glad to believe that in many parts of the world, and in many branches of the Church, God is signally reviving these ancient gifts. The great soul of Edward Irving burned to see the fires of prophecy and miracle breaking forth once more from the smouldering embers of modern faith. For this he prayed and pleaded, exhorting his flock, as he says, "to live by faith continually on Jesus, for the body as well as the soul." And I know of no sublimer exhibition of faith than that which appears in the story of his own mastery of disease through prayer. Prostrate in the pangs of deathly sickness, he yet asked God to give proof of his promise by healing him, and letting him stand in his place on Sunday morning before his flock. Sabbath morning came, and still his request was unanswered. He was carried to his church in spite of the entreaties of his friends; he was helped into his place, and there stood the pallid, pain-racked preacher, holding on to the sides of the
pulpit, and pleading silently with God to have respect unto his word, in which he had caused his servant to hope. And then he tells us how, as he opened his Bible, the bands of disease were loosed, and the power of the Holy Ghost came upon him, and how he preached with an unction and impressiveness never surpassed in his history, and then walked joyfully home at the close of the service, praising God for his faithfulness. Many Christians will explain the incident on the same natural principles with which the sceptic explains the miracles of our Lord. But why should it be thought a thing incredible?

And such instances, resting on incontestable evidence, are crowding upon us in these days. I believe in their possibility, because I believe in God's word. Not that we are to suppose that the sick will always be raised at our asking. The same question of the limitations of prayer and its subjection to God's will comes in here as elsewhere. But the Scripture cannot be broken, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." It has been so in multitudes of instances. It is doing so to-day. Two tides of blessing and life flowed

1 Luther assents to this promise with his usual heartiness and frankness. He says, "How often has it happened, and still does, that devils have been driven out in the name of Christ, also by the calling on his name and prayer, that the sick have been healed."
forth from the Redeemer's life, even as the water and the blood flowed from his dying heart,—the one for cleansing the soul, the other for reanimating the body; and God never meant they should cease to flow till the entire man had been redeemed and perfected.

III. Christ's twofold ministry at his second coming.

The return of the Lord from heaven will put the climax and seal of completion upon both elements of this ministry. Then the soul will be “presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;” and “the body of our humiliation” will be transformed and “fashioned like unto the body of his glory.” Sanctification, the final perfection of the spirit, and resurrection, the final perfection of the body,—these are the two events which will signalize the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Some, indeed, are accustomed to speak of sanctification as taking place at death. It is enough for us to note how invariably the Scriptures connect the event with our Lord's second advent. “To the end he may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints,” is the apostle's language. And again, “He that hath begun a good work in you will perform
it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Does the spirit drop from the body at death like the ripened grain from the husk, needing its support and protection no longer now that it has come to maturity? And does the body, like a dead and sapless husk, now fall into the grave, since it has served its purpose of bearing and ripening the soul? Nay! these two factors of our being are not so related. The perfection of each is to be found in its sanctified reunion with the other,—the soul cleansed from its sins and the body healed of its sicknesses, and the two dwelling together at last in harmonious unity. Whatever holiness and bliss the soul may attain out of the body and in the presence of the Lord, it is yet in an imperfect state. It lacks the vehicle of action and the organs of life, and is therefore imperfect; and whatever is imperfect is as yet unsanctified. For holiness is not a dead white purity, the perfection of the faultless marble statue. Life, as well as pureness, enters into the idea of holiness. They who are “without fault before the throne” are they who “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,”—holy activity attending and expressing their holy state.

And for the highest life and activity the soul must have a body; we can no more conceive of the spirit’s truest, most exalted life apart from the body than of the body’s life as continuing at all
We do well to study the wondrous mystery of the union of the flesh and spirit. It is a prophecy as well as an enigma, emotion reporting itself in smiles and tears; the soul hanging out its storm-signals in the face, so that we can see the coming anger in the look before it breaks forth in words; and the body, on the other hand, clouding the soul with its humors or lightening it with its health. Can it be that this marvellous union and interplay of mind and matter is only temporary and provisional? I believe, on the contrary, that all this is but an imperfect foreshadowing of what shall be when the discord which sin has brought in between soul and body shall be ended, and when the redeemed body shall become at last the perfect organ and instrument of the redeemed soul. Perfection of relation, as well as perfection of the parts of our nature, is the end of God's purposes. It is not enough that the disembodied soul shall be completely cleansed from sin and perfected in holiness. God will give to it a body perfectly fitted to its needs,—a body capable of expressing all its exalted emotions, of bearing it on in its swift and tireless ministries and of executing without impediment its holy affections and desires.

Here, then, is where the lines of Christ's twofold ministry terminate,—in sanctification, the...
perfection of the spirit's holiness, and in resurrection, the perfection of the body's health.

If we carry ourselves forward to the state immediately succeeding the first resurrection, as it is described in the closing chapters of the Apocalypse, we find it to be a state of perfect healthfulness. The body has not been discarded, but resumed in glory. The corruptible has put on incorruption, and the mortal has put on immortality; and a state has been reached where not only sin has been abolished, but sickness also. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." No more pain,—the nerves returned at last from the discord which sin had introduced, and henceforth conveying only sensations of delight and comfort; and no more death,—the wages of sin no longer exacted, because the service of sin is no longer pursued. What is all this but God's final, perfect healing of these bodies? And what glory does it shed upon Christ's redemption! This marvellous mechanism of the human frame, so disordered by transgressions, so deranged with disease, "Throw it away, as beyond the possibility of repair," says the man of little faith; "give me happiness by effecting my release from the body of this death."
"He shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you," is the triumphant assurance of the Scripture. What God made he can repair; what sin has marred he can restore; and while man in despair would abandon this mortal frame to the grave, he teaches us to "wait for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Oh, blessed hope! In a world smitten with pestilence, where death reigns over all and "the mourners go about the streets," we are summoned to look towards a city whose "inhabitants shall not say I am sick, and the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

And now "take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." I summon you to believe not what I have seen, or heard, or proved, but only what God has spoken. Do not deceive yourselves by going beyond what is written; but do not I entreat you, defraud yourselves by coming short of what is written. God has not called you to partial redemption, but to a full and eternal recovery both from the curse and from the consequences of sin. If you are struggling and battling with a rebellious and evil heart, wondering if God can ever forgive and make holy such a one as you hear what he saith: "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and wil
not remember thy sins." And are you sick in body, compassed with infirmity, or burdened with some inherited malady from which you expect no relief except in the grave, hear again what God saith: "I am the Lord that healeth thee."—"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."
THE SIGHS OF JESUS.

"And, looking up to heaven, he sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." —Mark vii: 34.

THE sigh of Jesus in the midst of his miracle is a not less striking token of his greatness than the miracle itself. It gives proof of a human heart thrilling to the touch of sorrow, while an omnipotent hand is stretched forth to relieve that sorrow. It is so rare in this world to find superiority to suffering accompanied with deepest sympathy with the suffering. Why should one heave a groan over an anguish which he can instantly relieve? You and I, if we were conscious of having power to heal a sick man with a word, would doubtless be so elated as to render it quite impossible to sigh or cry over the distressed victim. Christ seems to have sighed deeply, because he saw deeply. Each fresh instance of misery was to him a rift opening into the deep and fathomless abyss of human wretchedness; and it may be that his groan was over the vast woe still remaining
unhealed, rather than over the single case now about to be relieved. At all events this sigh of Jesus is a very deep revelation of his humanity. He was the man of sorrows, because he was so truly a man in a world of sorrow. His suffering seems to have deepened just as his contact with the world widened. Human anguish woke up the suffering of the tenderest and most responsive heart this earth has ever known.

Now, every genuine nature has a hidden reservoir of sorrow within itself which time is sure to uncover. The light-heartedness of childhood happily carries us past the revelation for a few years, but adversity too soon arrives, with its deeper sounding line, to discover the fountain of tears. To discover, I say; for it finds out our sadness rather than creates it. It plays upon chords already strung to its use; and chords which are so sensitive that they can vibrate without any external touch. This will be apparent when we remember that those who have been the subjects of the deepest melancholy have often been persons whose outward condition was comparatively happy. Sadness is not the wound of affliction, or the ache of adversity necessarily. In its truest manifestations it is rather the response of a heart deeply tuned to the suffering of the world. It was so preeminently in the case of our Lord.
His was the grief of sympathy, so much deeper
and nobler than the grief of pain. He was "ac­
quainted with grief" before he reached the garden
or the cross; and the strongest expressions of
mental distress recorded of him, with perhaps a
single exception, are those called out by the sins
and sufferings of others. He "groaned in spirit;"
we are told; but it was at the grief of a death­
stricken family. He "sighed;" but it was at the
sight of the ravages of disease in a poor sufferer.
He "wept;" but it was over the wickedness and
impending doom of the devoted city. He "sighed
deeply;" but it was at a fresh revelation of the
rebellious unbelief of his people. Unbelief, wick­
edness, sickness, and death,—how much in­
struction do the sighs of Jesus give us in regard
to our proper attitude towards these evils with
which the world is filled!

I start with the assertion that we should not
meet these things with the spirit of despair. And
yet it may be reasonably questioned whether de­
spair is not less to be dreaded than complacency.
The former at least sees the wretchedness that is
in the world, though it is hopeless concerning its
relief; while the latter is generally hopeful only be­
cause it does not see, and because, in happy in­
do­lence, it will not trouble itself to see. The mature
fruit of each is the same: inaction, indifference,
unsympathy; and these we do not want. And yet it cannot be denied that a sorrow for humanity that is desperate almost to despair often stirs its possessor to the mightiest service for the world. When Paul is so moved with a sense of the sin and misery of his race that he says “I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh,” we are not surprised at the prodigious toils and sufferings which he undergoes for their salvation. And something like this agony of compassion for the woe and wretchedness of the world is greatly needed in the church of God to-day. The conviction of personal sin which we insist on so strongly needs to be extended. There is wanted a deeper conviction of corporate sin, of the sin of society, the sin of humanity, the sin of the church. The age needs more weeping prophets smiting on the breast, and sitting in sackcloth, to mourn over the wickedness of the city, the guilt of the nation, and the misery of the world. We need this, I say; and with equal emphasis I assert that the greatest danger of our time is the prevalence of the opposite habit; that shallow optimism which glides over the surface of things, and utterly refuses to see the depths of wickedness that lie below. There seems to be in our day a growing and mighty purpose to wink sin and sorrow out of
existence in some way. What of the world's crumbling ruin cannot be covered up with the ivy of luxuriant self-congratulation, with boasts about the millennium of science, the golden age of progress, and all that, is faced with a bland and smiling resignation, and we are counselled to cease troubling ourselves about it, since it cannot be helped. How many, to select a single example, give this advice in regard to the frightful ravages of strong drink in our nation, and the alarming political and social demoralization with which it is connected! We cannot abolish these evils, they say, so long as human nature is what it is, and it is useless to fret ourselves about them. And so from indifference they glide into easy toleration of crime, and from toleration into actual support; and Christians are found every year voting for laws and measures that have been already ratified in Satan's caucus without a dissenting voice. And, passing from things preventable to evils which are really inevitable,—sickness, and death, and the grave,—the tendency is to push this complacency almost to the verge of homage.

Now may it not be that, even in Christian teaching, the doctrine of resignation has been pressed too far? God certainly made the nerves which ache from contact with the world's evil; we do not believe that he made the evil. And shall we
be in haste, then, to require these nerves to hush their anguish, and repress their pain, in homage to the violence that afflicts them? On the contrary, I venture to affirm that there are some things to which we ought not to be resigned,—things which are so contrary to nature, and so at war with God's original design, that, while enduring them because we must, we are justified in being angry every day at them. I thank God for the conviction I have that Jesus Christ was never resigned to the reign of death in the world. At the grave of Lazarus he not simply "groaned in spirit," but he was "indignant in spirit;" for so the words mean. While weeping for the bereaved, his holy resentment kindled at the ravages of the destroyer and all the dreadful havoc of the tomb which was spread out before him; and he was angry at death. Let us be careful that our submission to the consequences of sin does not become consent, and our resignation, in view of the wages of sin, does not become death-worship.

I say this because it seems to me that just as there is a rebellious atheistic unsubmission which calls good evil, there is a sentimental complacency that calls evil good. And, for one, I shrink with horror from crediting God with sickness and death and affliction, when he has so distinctly taught us that he is not their author. What a salutary
The lesson we learn from Scripture on this point, if we read carefully! The Apostle Paul could glory in tribulation, as the permitted means, under God of working patience and experience and hope. But he never glorifies tribulation or deifies it: author. Hear him excusing himself to the Thesalonians for not visiting them as he intended. Instead of saying, as might have been expected that he was providentially detained, he declares with great vigor of speech, “we would have come unto you, but Satan hindered us.” And when he speaks of the thorn in the flesh, which he had been clearly taught to regard as having been sent for his discipline and humbling, he nevertheless boldly calls it “a messenger of Satan.” He was never bewildered by his afflictions so that he could not distinguish between their source and their providential end. If he and the martyr who came after him could sing songs in their prison, they surely did not make the Lord their jailer, or forget the words of the ascended Saviour: “And Satan shall cast some of you into prison.” What do such examples teach us, but that, while afflictions are to be borne with patience they are not to be caressed with unseemly fondness. Resignation should be intelligent as well as submissive,—able to distinguish the gracious touch of a Father’s hand from the malignan
stroke of the great enemy. Be not so certain when
you look upon the maniac foaming and gnashing
his teeth and pining away, that the Lord's hand is
laid upon him. When the Lord's hand is laid
upon such an one, it is to rebuke the foul spirit,
saying, "I charge thee come out of him, and enter
no more into him." And tell me not, when death
suddenly transfixes some fair youthful Christian,
that the Master has come and called for her.
When the Master comes, he says, "Daughter, I
say unto thee, Arise." In other words, Christ is
the healer, not the afflicter; the resurrection and
the life, not the sorrow and the death of his
people. Let us, then, discriminate in our endur-
ance of evil; let us be careful to remember that
the saying, "Whatever is is right," is not found
in the Bible; let us be very sure that, in allowing
that God permits sin, we do not fall into the
unconscious admission that he is the author
of it.

"Resignation is the courage of Christian sor-
row," says Vinet. Excellent definition. It is not
the effeminacy of luxurious grief which makes
an idol of trouble. It is the brave, heroic endur-
ance which says of the ravages of sin, "An enemy
hath done this," and of the cruel affliction of sick-
ness and death, "This work bears the finger-marks
of the adversary; nevertheless, I will bear these
ills in such a manner as to snatch a victory from
the foe, and turn his evil purpose to my good.'
In a word, let us sorrow without losing either
our self-respect or our reverence. Let us grieve
deeply at the moral disorder with which the world
is filled, without trying to reason ourselves into
the conviction that it is order under a different
guise. Let us submit to sickness without trying
to believe that it is only the reverse side of spir­
itual health; let us bow to bereavement without
feeling called upon to deny that there is such a
thing as "the sting of death," and that there is a
dreadful enemy, from which Jesus came to deliver
us; but an enemy still,—even "him that hath the
power of death, that is, the devil."

And now I ask you to look, with me, at the
simple record of the text concerning Jesus of
Nazareth, and to see how full of instruction it
is upon these points which we have been con­
sidering.

1. First, the sorrow of Christ looked heavenward;
therefore it was not despair. "And, looking up to
heaven, he sighed."

The whole question of the value of sorrow
depends upon its direction: whether its gaze is
downcast or uplifted; whether its sighs have the
falling or the rising inflection. The apostle has
pointed out this distinction very clearly in defin-
ing the two kinds of sorrow: the "sorrow of this world, which worketh death," and the "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance unto salvation." The one grieves, but does not hope; it groans, but does not pray; it pities the world with weeping, but does not plead for it "with strong crying and tears unto him that is able to save." It is a sorrow that works only death. Its bitter cry simply helps to swell and deepen the wail of a creation that already "groaneth and travaileth together in pain." We meet this kind of grief constantly among men. There are those who have gained appalling views of the world's misery, but who believe nothing in God's power or purpose to rescue and redeem; and hence they can only brood over the wretchedness of society without the power of bearing it up a single degree on the wings of faith. They sorrow downward, not upward; they have sympathy with human woe so that they can suffer with others, but no faith to lift them into fellowship with Christ's sufferings, where theirs may be soothed and healed and remitted. Voltaire had a heart that sometimes bled for the miseries of humanity; but when he had poured out his complaint over the anguish of this world he could only turn in bitter indignation towards God, and say, "The author of such a world as this deserves to be hissed rather than worshipped."
It is the sorrow of the world working death; it is despair mocking despair, by sending back to it the hollow echoes of its own lament. Alas for the man who only measures sorrow to increase it! Tears are a rich benefaction to a grief-stricken world. But what if these tears only fall downward to be drunk up by the earth, and never in their glistening uplifted drops reflect God's light of hope, or bear up before men the rainbow of his covenant of promise?

But there is a godly sorrow of which the Scripture speaks. Very strikingly the phrase is rendered in the margin of our Bibles, "the sorrow according to God." The sorrow of this world is shortsighted, narrow, and selfish. This is far-reaching and intelligent, since it views the world from God's standpoint, and looks at it through his eyes. O my brethren, I long for you all that you may sorrow more after this godly sort. Shrink not from probing the open sore of the world's misery; fail not of being acquainted with the world's grief, as you would keep your heart humane and prayerful; but be doubly careful that all your sorrow be according to God. Go up in prayer each morning into his watch-tower, and gaze down upon the ruin of the world, and then out upon the redemption that is yet to be completed. Thus, while the downward look begets sorrow, let the
outward and onward look prevent despair. As Moses went up to God in Pisgah and let him show him all the promised land, though he himself was to die in his pilgrimage, and to be buried in Moab, so let us ask God every morning to show us his glory and our inheritance, and then our eyes will not be cast down nor our countenance fallen while we battle and mourn in the midst of sin. Like Jesus let us look up to heaven when we sigh. Thus, while our sorrow is dark with brooding grief, it shall be bright and luminous with "the patience of hope."

Observe, again, from my text that

II. The sorrow of Christ reached outward to man, therefore it was not misanthropy. "He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, Be opened."

There is no place in God's service for empty and idle grief. This is only a counterfeit of godly sorrow; a debased currency of sympathy which may deceive men, but can never pass with God. And of all religious unrealities this to me is the most offensive,—an insincere grief; the sorrow that sighs and moans over the ravages of sin and crime, but will not stretch forth a finger to relieve it. The heartless trifler is no worse, certainly, than the solemn idler. And we need be no more shocked to hear the one mocking the misery of the world, by his shallow laughter, than to
hear the other sighing out his effeminate grief over human wretchedness, crying out, "Alas! alas!" and then adding, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep."

And, on the other hand, I cannot express my sense of the honor and blessedness from God which they deserve who choose Christ's sigh in preference to the world's laughter, and voluntarily consent to mourn with the wretched rather than to dance with the light-hearted; and who, having chosen this better part, attest their sincerity by self-denying love for the saving of the sinner, and the arrest of the sin. Nothing is clearer from Scripture than this: that the height of our heavenly blessedness with Christ will take its measure from the depth of our earthly suffering with Christ. You will not sing loudly in glory unless you have sighed deeply on earth. "When God tunes a soul," says Bunyan, "he commonly begins with the lowest note." He is tuning our voices now for the song of the Lamb. And unless you learn to strike the lowest notes of the world's "Miserere" be sure you can never reach the highest strains of heaven's "Te deum." Of Christ in his exaltation we are told that God hath "anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows"; and the reason is, I am sure, because, in his hu-
miliation, he drank so much deeper of the cup of sadness than his fellows.

Why is it that "grief is so akin to joy"? according to the oft-repeated saying. I answer by asking you why it is that when you strike one string of a well-tuned harp all the rest are set vibrating? Sorrow is only one of the lower notes in the oratorio of our blessedness. Strike it for Christ's sake, and you will hear its vibrations coming back from heaven in the strains of that joy unspeakable and full of glory. The dearest happiness you will ever know on earth, in other words, will come from the endurance of voluntary self-denial and suffering for Christ. God has so tuned these two elements together in his plan and providence that it must be so. Learn from the prophet Ezekiel the value which God attaches to this compassionate sorrow: "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof." And what else? When the avenger goes forth to execute judgment, and to punish iniquity, "Come not near any man upon whom is the mark," saith the Lord. This, O toiling and compassionate worker for Christ, is the estimate which God puts upon your sighs and tears; sighs which often seem so unavailing, tears
THE SIGNS OF JESUS.

which seem to fall upon the stony conscience of society as ineffectual as the rain-drops that patter on the granite pavement. The Lord on high notes them, and sets his mark of approbation upon them. “Put thou my tears into thy bottle; are they not in thy book?” cries David. Indeed they are; and by and by the books will be opened, and the tear-bottles will be poured out before God together with “the golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of saints.” And in that day his rejoicing will be very faint, and his song very shallow, whose tear-bottle is found empty. “Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” But “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you and cast out your name as evil for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice ye in that day and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven.” Fill your tear-bottles now. O Christian, unless you are willing to have them empty forever. In that world where God shall “wipe away the tears from off all faces” it will be too late. There is but one world where you can sorrow over perishing souls, and that is this; there is but one opportunity for you to weep an sigh over the abominations of the wicked, and that is now. Will you miss this opportunity?

Do you say that you do not know about thes...
things, and have not been aware of their existence? I solemnly believe that, at the last, we shall be held responsible, not simply for what we knew of God's will, but also for what we might have known with this Bible within our reach; and so I believe that it will not be the decisive test at the great day, how much we realized of the world's sorrow, but how much we might have realized with that sorrow all about us. And, therefore, I say to you, men and women, that it is a fearful thing for you to live in the great, wicked city, and be ignorant of the wail of ruined innocence; of the shriek of the drunkard's children; of the anguish of the rumseller's victims. These are cries that never cease; like the moan of the sobbing sea they know no cessation from year to year. I pity you if you never hear them; and most of all if you are so complacent about them that you never sigh yourself, and even treat the sighs of others as a pitiable fanaticism. If we are deaf to these things now a dreadful sound will be in our ears in the other world; the echo of the gurgling cry of the victim drowning in the perdition of ungodly men, whom we were too busy or too indifferent to help, and now the opportunity removed forever.

O my brethren, let us study the example of Jesus of Nazareth in this as in other things. Let
us sigh deeply over the world's misery; but as we

do so let us lift our eyes to those mighty hands

on which we depend in heaven; and let us reach

out to men those feeble hands on which God de­

pends on earth.
XI.

OUR TRUE YOKE-FELLOW.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." — Matt. xi: 29.

The symbols which are employed in the Scriptures to set forth divine truth always impress us with their fitness. But the more we ponder them the more they must impress us also with their marvellous comprehensiveness. It is not too much to say that some of them epitomize the whole system of Christianity, and present it in a flash to the mind. Of the emblems employed in baptism and the Lord’s Supper this is true. They are not simply striking symbols; they are miniature presentations of the vast scheme of redemption, and set forth in one impression truths which it requires a lifetime to comprehend in detail. The emblem of the yoke is just one of these prolific figures of speech. It condenses and packs into itself the whole gospel, giving us "infinite riches in a little room." It involves the deepest principles of discipleship,
and so gives us that from which we can evolve the most vital suggestions and instructions for Christian living.

Let us consider the relations which are most obviously suggested by this language.

I. First, these words tell us of the constraints of Christ.—“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.”

The strong ox cannot be made serviceable to man except by being brought under restraint; neither can man be of any use to his Lord, or to himself, till his freedom has been restricted. This indeed is a universal principle, extending to all animate and inanimate forces alike. The whole course of discovery and progress has been simply a yoking up of the powers and energies of nature, and attaching them to man’s car. The water-wheel is but a yoke put upon the neck of the river, that it may be compelled to spin and weave for us; the sail is simply a yoke attached to the winds to make them plough the great deeps with the furrows of a nation’s commerce; the telegraph wire is only a yoke for harnessing the electricity, that it may run our errands and flash our thoughts to the ends of the world. Nothing in earth or air or sea is of use to us till it has been restrained and made obedient to our will. And so, instead of contradicting the general order, Christ by these
words lays down one of the most universal of principles. Freedom for service comes through repression of self. We must be narrowed into liberty, and constrained into true power. "Take my yoke upon you, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Does Christ speak in paradoxes? But who does not know that rest is found in no dead calm of wilfulness? Let one be given up to have his own way, and he is certain to be wretched so long as he has a conscience. Between the truth of belonging entirely to God, and the condition of living entirely for self, there can be no accord.

"Our wills are ours we know not how,
Our wills are ours to make them Thine."

And never can we have peace with ourselves till we find it in submitting to the restraints of God.
I cannot follow this principle into all its applications; but I would ask you to consider it especially in relation to the intellectual constraints of Christ.

When he says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me," there is a suggestion at once of intellectual restraint. And this is perhaps the hardest of all to be submitted to; for man naturally prefers to be a free-thinker. The fall which threw him out of moral conformity to God threw him out of intellectual obedience also; and
ever since, his thoughts have tended to go astray, and his imagination to play truant from the school of God. And this license in thinking and reasoning he claims as an inalienable right, so that many a man who admits the wholesomeness of moral restraints considers himself justified in utterly revolting from intellectual restraints. Hence the constant outcry against the bondage of creeds and the tyranny of theological yokes, as though it were a mighty affront to ask one to believe anything which he is not inclined to believe.

But has not God the same dominion in the sphere of thought as in the sphere of morals? And does not the lordship of Christ extend equally to both? If so, our obedience is just as binding in the one as in the other. And this, for one, I loyally concede. I own myself just as much bound to believe what Christ teaches as to do what he commands; just as truly holden to think his thoughts after him, in intellectual submission, as to trace his steps after him in practical obedience. There is an ethics of belief as well as an ethics of conduct; and whoever admits that he is required to bring the wayward passions of his body under restraint to Christ must admit an equal obligation to "bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." What if we are called to assent to doctrines which are hard to
receive? The practice of a virtuous life is hard, and it often lays on us a necessity for the sternest self-repression; but that fact gives no excuse for our surrender to a liberal and easy-going morality. And why should the severity of truth be deemed a justification for doctrinal laxity? O my hearers, permit me to warn you against a danger too little recognized as such in ordinary teaching,—the danger of unrestrained license in thinking; of the free indulgence of a wanton reason. There are other profligates in the world besides those whose bodies have been stained by impurity. Adultery can lurk in the thoughts, as Christ has plainly taught us, when those thoughts run riot in the lusts of the flesh; but what is it, pray, when those thoughts take license to believe what God has forbidden, and to doubt what he has declared? I need not remind you that in common usage we apply the same word to marital inconstancy and to religious unbelief,—we call it "infidelity" in either case. And the Bible abounds in similar terms when rebuking unfaithfulness to truth. Love to God is the moral chastity of the soul. But how can the soul love God, and keep itself from unlawful affections, if it assumes the liberty now to think him out of existence, and now to think him altogether such an one as itself; now to doubt his instructions, and now to reply.
against his precepts? "My thoughts are not your thoughts," saith Jehovah. And until we submit our thoughts to God's, and bow the neck of our reason to his authority, we can neither attain to a true intellectual freedom nor a true intellectual purity.

How strongly and clearly Christ announces this idea to certain Jews who had believed on him? "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Freedom by submission is the law here laid down; the yoke of discipleship emancipating us from galling errors, and introducing us into the sweet liberty of truth. And why should such conditions be deemed unreasonable? What student rebels against the hard axioms of geometry or the inexorable formulas of mathematics? In submitting to them he accepts a most rigid limitation to his thoughts; but he well knows that only by such limitation can his mind be broadened and his knowledge enlarged. And, if Christ is an unerring Master, how reasonable it is that we should put ourselves under the most absolute and unquestioning submission to his teaching? It is thus, he declares, that we shall be made free indeed. Men will ridicule our freedom, perhaps, as slavish subserviency, and we shall have an equally distinct opinion of
their boasted freedom. And it is plain with whom the advantage of judgment will lie,—the one who reckons his position from the truth, or the one who reckons it from his own opinions. "If ye continue in my word."—No man is worth listening to, on questions of Christian faith and doctrine, who is not himself a reverent listener to Christ. If one presumes thus to talk, without being talked to by the great Teacher, the humblest disciple of the Lord will detect the crudeness and incoherency of his utterances. Have you not noticed how soon, when one has become deaf, his speech loses its sharpness of utterance and its fineness of articulation? The tongue cannot retain its cunning without the cooperation of the ear. It is even so with those who are deaf to the word of the Lord, who have unyoked their ears from the instruction and authority of Christ. They may think to speak profoundly and wisely on the great questions of truth and righteousness, but their speech bewrayeth them, and they only give proof of how impossible it is for one to be an expounder of the truth who is not first a disciple of the Truth. "When the world by wisdom knew not God;" "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise that they are vain,"—thus speaks the Spirit concerning that in which the men of this world pride themselves. And so we are not called
back from the paths in which our feet have gone astray alone, but also from those in which our reason has wandered. "Let the unrighteous man forsake his thoughts." Ah, friends, there is nobler word than "I think." It is "I believe. The one is the confession of reason, the other of faith; the one is a declaration of independence, the other the avowal of submission; the one is the language of self-sufficiency, the other the sentiment of filial trust. "Wherefore, gird up the loins of your mind," says the Scripture. Even in the race of intellect faith will have the advantage since it keeps the beaten path, and follows a sur- guide, and is held trim and tight by "the girdle of truth." But reason must explore as it goes its ungirt robes catching every idle kind of doc- trine, and becoming tangled with every obstruction of doubt. It is considered indeed a high tribut to one to say that "he thinks for himself." But O my Father, leave me not to think for myself amid the mazes and mysteries of thy universe wherein I am a stranger. Think for me, and permit me reverently and obediently to follow thy steps as a child treads in the footprints of its parent. To think for myself would leave me bewildered in this desert, where thy provi- dence has cast me, to find my way out as best I might. Surely, I can never think myself out o
this world of darkness into thy world of light. Therefore, praise the Lord for that true saying of his prophet: "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth." When the passions begin to lead astray towards lawless love, and when the thoughts begin to be tempted to disport themselves in the inviting pastures of doubt and speculation, how blessed it is to be yoked up with the Holy Son of God! His example can hold us back alike from perilous indulgences and from perilous thoughts. He asks us, therefore, to subject not only our affections, but our reason also, to him. His yoke is easy, since it can save us from that hardest bondage, the slavery of doubt and darkness. His burden is light, since it can lift us from that heaviest of burdens, the weight of sin and disobedience.

II. These words speak to us, secondly, of The fellowship of Christ. "Take my yoke upon you." It is a yoke, then, of which our Lord bears one end, so that the weight and strain and pressure may come upon him, and we be eased of them. If, therefore, there be anything in the requirements of the gospel which is hard to be received, we have to remember that we are only called to bear it with our Master. The responsibility, the severity, the hardship, he has shouldered, before he asks us to take it, and he now simply invites us to share
it with him. This is true, indeed, of all which I laid upon us in the gospel. In enduring trial we are only called "to the fellowship of his sufferings." In bearing the weight of the heavy mysteries of faith it is but "the fellowship of the mystery" which we share with him. Before we are required of God to accept any of the sterile doctrines and responsibilities of his service we are first "called unto the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord." Yoke-fellowship with the Son of God, in other words, is the ground and support of all faith-fellowship, and truth-fellowship, an work-fellowship.

Do you not see that this is the very thin which men most deeply want? What is the demand so constantly heard for an infallible authority? Is it not a cry for some one to bear the heavy end of the yoke of doctrine? Men shrink from accepting a creed on their own responsibility. Before they bow their necks to an confession they must be sure that they have trustworthy confessor; one who can command their unquestioning assent, and take the responsibility for their most implicit belief. And while this outreaching one is laying hold of Reason and another of Intuition, while one is resting on Science, and another on the Pope, we ask men to believe the truth of the gospel only in accord an
partnership with One who is so absolutely and unchangeably true that he has dared to take to himself the name of "The Truth." When we have conceded his right to this title, what saying of his is too hard for us, what doctrine too severe, what mystery too appalling? With an authority in which one has perfect confidence, faith can become heroic even unto ignominy, and contempt, and excommunication, and such faith, even when misplaced, commands our admiration in this age of doubt. Therefore, instead of heaping reproach upon these men of science, who have accepted such odious conclusions in regard to the origin of our race, we rather intensely covet their faith for Christ. For if, in obedience to what they regard as the authority of science, they can face the scorn of the civilized world in maintaining that man, now so high in the scale of being, has ascended from the beasts by evolution, how splendidly, if they had Christ for their master, might they stand by that doctrine of his, so odious to reason, that man fallen and ruined by sin can yet ascend to kinship with God by regeneration, being born from above of the Holy Spirit! It is not less faith that is wanted, but an exaltation of Christ as the one central and supreme object of faith, and a transfer to him who is the only master of all truth of man's misplaced and wayward trust.
I have spoken of submission to the teachings of Christ. Remember, then, that he does not ask us to believe anything which he does not believe, or to be bound by any stricter creed than that to which he has assented, or to gall ourselves with any severer theology than that which he taught. "It is enough that the disciple be as his Lord," he says; and we surely ought to ask no more.

Have we sufficiently apprehended the fact that Christ, in asking us to learn of him, is simply asking us to do as he has done? "As my Father hath taught me, so I speak," he says. Though he were the Son of the Highest, he did not insist on intellectual independence, or press his divine right to think for himself. "The words which Thou gavest me I have given them," he says again. He was a disciple as well as a Son, and he only asks us to take the place which he took, and to be his "disciples indeed." Do you say that it is hard for you to bear witness to many of the doctrines of the Bible? And I presume it was hard for Christ to do so. That dreadful doctrine of eternal punishment,—that stern decree of divine election,—do you not think his tender heart must have grieved as he held up these truths before those who would only hate him, and gnash on him with their teeth, for proclaiming them? I imagine so. And the yoke of theological ignominy which he
took upon himself is the only one which he imposes on us.

But more than this. He bears the heavy end of the yoke. The responsibility for the truth of his doctrines; their harmony with the justice and mercy of God; the danger that they may repel men's reason or provoke their enmity,—all these matters which so perplex and trouble us he takes upon himself. It is only ours to believe his word; it is his to bear all the weight of mystery and contradiction which that word involves. There is nothing which he has which he does not invite us to share with him; but it is for our help and our uplifting, and not for our intellectual oppression. Even the cross—that yoke of redemption by which he drew a lost world from its ruin, and lifted it into reconciliation with God—we are to endure with him. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Perhaps the heaviest cross to the natural reason is the doctrine of the cross. Not what can be extracted from the doctrine,—the tender peace and the sweet grace of forgiveness,—but the bare truth that Christ "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Grace stained with the blood of expiation, forgiveness founded on vicarious satisfaction,—this has been "the offence of the cross" in all time. But it is not for us to
be oppressed and staggered and crushed by it. "The joy that was set before him," as he endured the cross and despised the shame, is our inheritance; his the bloody sweat and travail of soul and "contradiction of sinners against himself," and ours the unspeakable privilege of being his copartners in all this. Do you not know what a holy bond there is in a common trial or reproach: Souls that have passed through the fire together have become in a certain sense fused. Friendship makes men intimate; suffering alone makes them one. And so it is that the opprobrium of truth identifies us with Christ in the tenderest and closest sense. It was not surely greediness for contempt which led Paul to glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. By it he tells us he was crucified unto the world, and the world unto him. That which cut him off from men joined him the more closely to the Lord; that which oppressed him from the human side liberated him towards the divine. This is, doubtless, the secret of his glory. Just as when the houses become crowded in the dense and populous city, they begin to climb heavenward for room, piling story upon story, so the more a Christian is pushed by the world's opposition, by their dislike of his zeal and their contempt of his doctrine, the more he is likely to rise heavenward and Christward in his communion
Thus it is equally true that the fellowship of Christ sustains us and supports us in maintaining his truth, and that maintaining his truth strengthens and intensifies our fellowship with him. Blessed yoke of Christ, then, which lifts us up while it bears upon us; which draws us to Christ just in proportion as it withdraws us from "this present evil world." May it be ours to take that yoke without reluctance; to bear it without repining; to rejoice in it without murmuring; and to march on with it without halting or stumbling.

III. These words suggest to us, thirdly, the service of Christ.

They are an invitation to cooperation with him in his great ministry to a lost world. "We, then, as workers together with him," is the apostolic phrase. Blessed exaltation! We are not called to work for Christ, or to work under Christ, but to work with Christ. He has gone into heaven, indeed, and is out of sight; but by the Holy Spirit he still joins us to himself in active, living fellowship. "He does not need our strength," you may say; but he needs and will have our cooperation. Without us he cannot work to-day in the world; just as without him we cannot pray in heaven. Have you thought how necessary we are to Christ in all the relations which we hold to him? "I am the vine, ye are the branches." If the branches
do not bear fruit, there will not be any. The vine is in heaven, out of sight; and, unless the branches are productive, there will be nothing for the world to see to indicate that Christianity is a living fact. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me," says Jesus. And unless we keep up our testimony there will be silence in the earth. There is not a living voice to speak for him but that of Christians. "Ye are the light of the world," he says again. And unless we shine there will be utter darkness. The only reflectors, on earth, of the light of Christ are his disciples. Angels may serve as messengers; seraphim may act as worshippers; the Spirit may fill the office of teacher and guide,—but all these are invisible beings, like Christ himself. And thus the only visible exponents of the divine truth and light are Christians,—the disciples and representatives of the Lord upon earth. Therefore brethren, you see that it is your obedience and your fidelity and your zeal and your steadfastness on which the Lord relies for the furtherance of his gospel; and so he can never cease, so long as you are in the flesh, to press his yoke of service upon you.

Never was there a time when the Lord was calling more loudly to his servants to learn of him and never a time when his disciples should pray more earnestly, "Lord, teach us," than now.
doctrines are slipping from the hands of those who have been commissioned to hold them fast; old and long-neglected truths are struggling to regain their lost place in the faith of Christians, often, alas! only to be treated as novelties and innovations. In the pride of intellect many are putting their own wisdom before God's, and are given over to believe a lie. Nothing is greater than a faithful Christian life; and therefore nothing is more important than Christian truth, on which alone such a life can be built and maintained. Well may the Apostle John have written, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." Such a walk is only possible, however, as we are strongly and constantly yoked to Christ,—who is the Truth,—that he may determine our track and restrain our wanderings, and bear up our shoulders, which so often shirk the burden, and slip from the responsibility of his doctrine. And what the apostle names, in the next verse, "fellow helpers to the truth," is what the Lord is calling for to-day most loudly. May the Spirit of Truth so enlighten and persuade us that we shall willingly submit our necks to Christ, and covet with all our hearts the constraint and the fellowship and the service of his yoke.
A SIGN is some outward and visible token which addresses the eye. It pleased the Lord while on earth to give many such tokens of his power and godhead,—by the wonders which he wrought before men, and by the miraculous events which attended him from his birth to his ascension. At the same time he was constantly rebuking men for looking for signs, when the ought to have apprehended him by a finer spiritual discernment. Signs, like ordinances, have the place. They are outward seals and evidences of truth. But to be taken up with these, instead of being occupied with the truth, is formalism and not faith,—is to look to the letter instead of the spirit. Hence the sharp rebukes of our Lord on this point. To the formalists of his age he said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign." To the stupid and unspiritual hearers who listened to him he said, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." Thus he spoke repeatedly to those who, with a curiosity
and carnal spirit, were constantly saying to him, "Master, we would see a sign from thee."

But to his people he does give signs,—distinct, striking, and unmistakable,—signs which constitute at once the seal and epitome of the truths for which they stand. And so I ask you, this morning, to accompany me not in a curious search after a sign from God, but rather in a reverent study of signs which he has given for our instruction and guidance.

I. Consider, first, the sign of Christ's humiliation. "And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." (Luke ii: 12.)

A most disappointing sign this must have been to the shepherds, if they shared the current expectation of a regal and triumphant Messiah. "A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,"—that might be, since the prophets had foretold that he was to be born of a virgin. But "lying in a manger,"—how could that be if he were the Prince of the house of David? Princes are found in palaces; in royal attire, not in homespun garments; in a regal couch, not in a rude crib of the oxen's stall. Hence what wonder that, as the aged Simeon took this child in his arms to bless it, he should have foreseen the offence and scandal which his lowly birth and humble surroundings would bring to
the Jews, and should have uttered the prediction: "Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against." The manger sign, to those who looked for the tokens of regal splendor and dignity and greatness,—how disappointing it must be, and how certain to be rejected!

But how true this sign was,—that is, according to the meaning of the word, how significant, how characteristic, it was? To use a colloquial expression, that birth in a manger was "of a piece" with Christ's whole earthly life, and therefore was truly a sign.

Let us for a moment try to sketch the ideal which the Israelites had formed of him who was to be born King of the Jews, and to see how at every point it was contradicted. In other words, put the picture which their Jewish imagination drew beside that which stands in the New Testament, and see how unlike they are. "He will be a man of great reputation," we may imagine the Jew saying. "He made himself of no reputation," says the Scripture. "He will be recognized at once as a born ruler and master," says the Jew. "He took upon himself the form of a servant," says the Scripture again. He will exalt himself into preeminence, and compel all to be obedient to him, thinks the Jew. "He humbled himself, and became obedient
unto death, even the death of the cross,” says the word of God. “He will take the throne of David, and we will crown him king,” says the Jew. “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force and make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone,” writes John. He will have the wealth and splendor of his father, David, thinks the Jew. “Though he were rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich,” says the Scripture. “He will have a palace more magnificent than Solomon’s,” says the Jew. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head,” says the Scripture. “When he comes all will at once recognize him by his royal bearing, and hasten to give him their allegiance,” thinks the Jew. “He came to his own, and his own received him not,” says the Scripture. “He is despised and rejected of men.” “He will put all his foes under his feet, and be lifted up on a loftier throne than any of the kings of the earth,” imagines the Israelite. “And they crucified him between two thieves, the one on the right hand and the other on the left,” wrote the evangelist. And so it is from beginning to end,—humiliation, poverty, lowliness, subjection, defeat, death. The manger sign sets its seal upon everything. That lowliest birth in
Bethlehem's stall is the entry to the lowliest life ever lived on earth; and that lowliest life was the pathway to the most ignominious death ever appointed to man,—even the death of the cross.

But if this sign was an offence and a bitter disappointment to the Jew, it is a sign of exquisite tenderness and attractiveness to us. What does it signify? It signifies the depth to which Christ stooped in his incarnation in order to lift us up. The Saviour need not have been born an infant, we should say. If he was to come into the world by a miracle, he might have come in at manhood as easily as at infancy. The first Adam was created a full-grown man. Why not the second Adam? Why send him down to the gate of feeble infancy to find his way into life? Why need he begin as a weakling when he may just as easily commence as a man of strength? Because he would link himself to every stage and condition of our humanity. He would become an infant that henceforth each helpless babe might lie in a hallowed cradle; and he would become "obedient unto death" that henceforth each dying saint might lie in a hallowed tomb. What precious thoughts of tenderness and sympathy and compassion this manger sign awakens! The crib and the sepulchre are the nearest spots to heaven,—the one
marking our entry into life, and the other our exit out of life. So the cradle always seems to be rocking just on the border line of heaven. As its little tenant sways to and fro, one hardly knows as yet to which world he belongs. Like the waif on the beach, now tossed upon the strand, and now swept out to sea by the refluent wave, so the little life hangs between two worlds. A sudden pain, a slight touch of sickness at some vital point, and life swings back over the boundary line, and the casket takes the place of the cradle. How precarious the tenure of existence! How feeble the thread of life! And to think that the "Ancient of days" hung his life on that thread for me is as wonderful as that he, the Prince of life, hung his body upon the cross for me. It is the mystic sign of Bethlehem touching life at both extremes, and stamping it with the same signature,—almightiness in weakness. He whose name was to be "the mighty God, the Everlasting Father," becomes "a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes;" he who alone among men had power over his own life is "crucified through weakness." Thus with his condescension he touches and sanctifies every stage and every condition of our human being. He who stretches his arms of love on the cross, that he may gather a helpless world to his heart, is the same over whom
a mother's arms were stretched as she gathered him, a helpless babe, to her heart.

Now to us, familiar with every stage and circumstance of the Saviour's life, there is nothing perplexing or stumbling in the sign of the Son of Man of which we have been speaking. Why, then, should it have been a sign spoken against by the Jew? Because he misread prophecy concerning Christ, and saw only the advent of his glory, and not the previous advent of his humiliation. He was right in looking for Messiah to appear as king; but he was wrong in overlooking his appearing as Saviour and sufferer. I may find the best illustration of the matter in that which is used as a symbol of Christ's advent,—a star. In the midnight heavens we see a single star, as it seems to us, shining in the far-off sky. An astronomer points his telescope to it, and discovers that there are two stars where we had seen but one,—the one afar off beyond and behind the other; yet lying so exactly in its line that the light from both blends and mingles as it falls upon the eye of the earthly gazer. So of that star of Messiah, whose light fell upon the eye of Jewish sages and prophets. Baalam, standing on Mt. Peor, caught sight of this star, and said: "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh. There shall come a star out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of
Israel.” Doubtless his vision, as well as that of all the prophets, detected only a single advent star, if they saw clearly even that. In their predictions there are the blended lights of suffering and triumph. From Isaiah come the words “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” mingling their tones with the other words, “He shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” From David come the plaintive strains of the passion Psalm, the twenty-second, telling of the sorrows of Christ, and the victorious song of the seventy-second, revealing the triumph that was to follow. It is the prophecy of humiliation and the prophecy of exaltation everywhere blending. What wonder that even the devout Jew might not know how to interpret them? But we know that that star which Balaam saw coming out of Jacob was a double star. It was the star of Bethlehem standing over the cradle of Christ in his humiliation; and centuries beyond the bright and morning star of the Apocalypse, flaming in the new heavens, wherein dwelleth righteousness, which Christ will bring in at his second coming. To the Jew both these events were future. To us one is future and one is past, and we stand between them, able to separate and distinguish their once mingling light. We know clearly now; we understand what the Spirit signified when, as Peter writes, he “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the
glory that should follow." The suffering is past. Its sign and symbol were found in Bethlehem's stable. The glory is before us, and we are to look for its sign blazing in the morning sky. As the shepherds of Judea keeping watch over their flock by night eyed that star which led them to the manger, we, the shepherds of the flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost has set us, are to fix our gaze upon that throned and yet triumphant one who says, "I am the bright and morning star." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Let us, therefore, give heed unto that "more sure word of prophecy until the day dawn and the day-star arise."

II. Consider now, secondly, the sign of Christ's glory,—"The sign of the Son of Man in heaven."

Our Lord, in answer to the question of the disciples, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" sketches a solemn prophetic picture of the events that are to precede it,—the apostasies and wars and famines and tribulations,—and then finishes with this as the final omen: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." Vast conjecture and speculation have been awakened as to the nature of this sign. Many of the early fathers supposed that it would be the appearance of a cross, burning in glowing splendor in the clouds. Others have
believed that the advent star will reappear, shining in unearthly brilliancy in the heavens. All agree that it indicates some visible and intensely glorious appearance, which all eyes will see, and before which the world will be astonished with great wonder. It would seem the most reasonable to suppose that it will be simply the visible and personal splendor that accompanies the Son of Man in glory. You will notice, if you examine the matter, that the many descriptions of Christ's coming given in Scripture all agree in one particular, that he comes in clouds. "Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, when they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Clouds, moving like golden chariots beneath him, as he rides upon the wings of the wind; glory above the splendor of the noon-day sun, raying in halo about his person; power, and such accompaniments and insignia of power, as shall fasten upon him the astonished gaze of all mankind,—these are the invariable features of the scene wherever throughout Scripture it is pictured. From the vision of Daniel in Babylon, "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like unto the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven," to the vision of John in Patmos, "Behold He cometh with clouds;" from the prophecy of Zechariah, "They shall look
upon him whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for him," to the prophecy of the Apocalypse, "Every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him," — from each the description is the same in its great salient features. And I believe that it is in these circumstances of visible majesty and glory and power that we find the sign of the Son of Man to which our Lord refers.

Let us for a moment examine this sign, and see to interpret it as we did the other.

Now it seems very probable that the cloud in which the Son of Man will appear at last is none else than that Shechinah glory in which from the very beginning God has invariably revealed himself to men. It is called a cloud, because doubtless that is the nearest description that in human language can be given of it. And yet it is not a wreath of mist or vapor. It is the garment of God's glory, in which he appears to talk with men and deal with men, — a garment which at once reveals and conceals, — now hiding the burning splendor of his face in mercy from those who cannot bear it, and now revealing in its fiery blush his anger and indignation against his enemies. Do you not remember the illustrations of this which occur in Exodus, — how that cloud went before the Hebrews in calm splendor, to direct their
wanderings, and how out of it the Lord looked forth in fiery wrath to trouble and discomfit the Egyptians; how Jehovah now talked with Moses on the mount out of the clouds; and how afterwards the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel? It is called the "cloud of glory." And glory is no general word descriptive of a vague and undefinable splendor. It is a specific word for the brightness of Jehovah's presence. To say that we shall see "the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens," then, is equivalent, I think, to saying that we shall see the Son of Man in his glory. At his first advent he put off his glory. At his second advent he will put on his glory. His first coming was in weakness; his second coming will be in power. He came at first as "God manifest in the flesh." He will come the second time as man revealed in his godhead. Put now these two signs side by side and read their meaning. An infant lying in a manger,—God stooping to the lowest stage of human weakness. The King of glory appearing in the heavens,—man exalted to the highest stage of divine power. "A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes,"—the divine clothing himself with the feebleness of human flesh. "The Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven,"—"the man
Christ Jesus reclothing himself with light as with a garment." Behold the man! Behold the God!

But mark now, as in the sign of Christ's first coming there were marks of glory accompanying the marks of humiliation, so in the sign of his second coming there will be marks of humiliation accompanying the marks of his glory. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced." The wounds of his cross and agony will be on that body still as it shall break upon the gaze of the world. Beneath the diadem of light that encircles his head will be the scars of the crown of thorns; and upon his glorified form the prints of the nails and of the spear will still be visible. "And all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." How can they help it, if they have rejected him, and despised him, and crucified him? Oh, to think, that if we are lost it will be that right hand that was once nailed to the cross that will wave the gesture, "Depart from me" that it will be from beneath that once wounded brow that the sad and pathetic words will fall, "never knew you." But that which condemns the rejecters of Christ will be the confidence of his followers. Have you noticed the significant ending of that solemn description which Paul gives of the coming of the Lord, "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey no
THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN.

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the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; "When
he comes to be glorified in his saints and to be
admired in all them that believe"? Yes, those
wounds, O Christian, will be your admiration in that
day. You will see in them the pledge and creden­
tial of your salvation; the reason and assuran­
ship of your acceptance with the Father. And while
some will call upon rocks and mountains to fall
upon them, to hide them from the wrath of the
Lamb, you will call rocks and mountains to echo
your song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." I
beseech you to look now upon the sign of Christ's
humiliation, and let it humble you, and
melt you, and lead you to cast away your pride.
Let it stamp upon your soul these words of Scrip­
ture, "Except ye be converted and become as
little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom
of God," and ask yourselves if at this moment you
were to see it blazing out in the heavens it would
be to you a token of joy or a signal of despair.
And I cannot forbear adding a thought for you,
Christians, who have been instructed out of the
word. You remember that out of all the Jewish
people who had been taught in the oracles of
God, only a few recognized the sign of the Son
of Man in his humiliation and accepted it. They
spoke against it, as Simeon had predicted; they
denied and rejected it. So taken up were they with the thought of a triumphant and royal Messiah, that only an humble few knew him when he appeared as a lowly and suffering Messiah. Is it not true, on the other hand, that we are so absorbed with the idea of the suffering, peace-bringing Messiah,—and we cannot be too deeply absorbed with him,—that we have largely ceased to watch for the sign of the victorious, conquering Messiah, coming to reign on earth as a prince, and to sit upon the throne of his father, David? And is it not in the Church to-day a sign that is spoken against? Both signs are true. They shine on the pages of prophecy as we read, like the dazzling lenses of a revolving light-house, first one and then the other; now the glory and now the humiliation, now the suffering and now the conquest. The one has been fulfilled; the other is yet to be fulfilled. Glory, then, in the accomplishment of the one; watch for the appearing of the other. “What I say unto one I say unto all, Watch.”
THE LIVING DEAD AND THE DEAD LIVING.

"Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."
—Rev. 3: 1.

The question, Who among men are the dead and who are the living? is often the most difficult to answer. Indeed, there is but one person who can determine this point with absolute certainty, and that is he who alone among men has dared to take to himself the name of "The Life." He, looking at those who seemed to bear every semblance and feature of living men, startled and maddened them by declaring that they were but "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful without, but are within full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Looking, again, upon one who was lying upon her couch, pale and pulseless and without breath, he allowed himself to be laughed to scorn for saying "The maid is not dead, but sleepeath."

These are but illustrations of Christ's deep discrimination, and of the divine answers which he
constantly gives to the questions, Who are the dead and who are the living? The Lord of life often places a tombstone where we should put a door-plate, telling us that here is a sepulchre instead of a residence; while, on the other hand, he writes in the book of life many a name that we should consign to the list of the dead. And looking through his eyes this world presents a strange medley of moving corpses and inanimate lives,—the living who are dead, and the dead who are living. Let us, in the light of Scripture, try to unravel this mystery, and to sort and separate in this strange conglomeration those who belong on the muster-roll of the living, and those who belong on the list of the dead.

I. Let us consider, in the first place, the living dead that are in the world.

There are such. St. Paul declares, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." Crucifixion certainly means death; not a mere maimed and mutilated life, as some have supposed. It was not simply that Paul was constantly finding his Master's cross in the midst of his labors, and being wounded by the offence and persecuted by the enmity which it stirred up. In a very real, though mystical, sense he had been crucified with Christ in his crucifixion on Calvary, and had become dead with him. Nor was he alone in this.
He was constantly addressing his fellow-Christians as those that were dead. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him." These and similar passages emphasize in the most solemn manner the fact that the believer has died in Christ; but this death is everywhere represented as the counterpart and condition of a far more exalted life than was ever known before. The cross has cut us off from the world only that we might be joined on to God; the nail has penetrated and slain the old life only that it might find and lay open the fountains of a new life in the wounded heart of Jesus Christ. "Dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord," — this is the signature which has been stamped upon all who have been new created after the image of Christ. "The church is born crucified," says Lacordaire. The death of the outer man is the birth of the inner man, and the cross that slays our sins is the door through which we pass into the risen life of Christ in God.

Now, that this doctrine may not be mystical to you, but practical and real, let me throw light upon it from several passages of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul exclaims: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and
Is not his meaning plain? His attachment to this present evil world, his bondage to its laws and principles, had been sundered by a stroke of crucifixion light. But the blow that cleft him from his earthly connections liberated him unto the life of God through Jesus Christ. Have we seen nothing like this in nature and human experience? What does the husbandman's axe do which lays the branches of a tree sundered and dead upon the ground? It cuts off the limbs indeed, but it sends their sap upward, and turns into fruit the life which was wasting itself in building wood and leaves. That we know is the philosophy of pruning,—cutting off and making dead the suckers that are wasting the vitality of the tree, that the fruitful boughs may have more abundant life. And the cross is God's pruning knife, for severing his people from the world, that the life of their souls, which has been going to feed the fleshly lusts and appetites, may be turned upward into the fruits of righteousness and true holiness. So, as a matter of fact, you will find that it is those who have died in some part of their nature that have the most abundant life towards God. If affections have been slain by the cutting off of some cherished object; if the selfishness has been pruned by the loss of property; if the pride has been slain by some great humiliation;
if the self-reliance has been weakened by some
sore defeat or sickness, then God's strength, which
is made perfect in weakness, has an opportunity
for exercise unknown before. And this necessity
has passed into a law of grace. Repression, morti­
tification, death, have to be going on all the time
in our carnal natures if the life of God is to be
made manifest in our mortal bodies.

This is a hard saying I know, and we can only
understand it by remembering that the two parts
of the Christian, the flesh and the spirit, are "con­
trary one to the other." What is given to the
flesh is generally taken from the spirit: so that
one cannot feed his pride and his pleasure, his
love of gain and his love of applause, without at
the same time starving his soul. Every cent of
your wealth which you put into needless luxuries
constitutes a draft on your spirituality; every
redundant pleasure which you indulge in is a lien
upon your religious life. And this is the contest
that is going on with every one of you, unless you
have surrendered or made a truce with your self­
love, the contest for supremacy between the two
elements of your double nature. It is the question
which shall gain the mastery and finally subdue
the other, and change it into its own substance.
Shall the spirit subdue the flesh more and more,
assimilating it to itself, warming it with divine life
and energy while quenching its unnatural ardors; or shall the flesh chill the spirit, and reduce it little by little to its own temperature, till in the end it freezes it, and the spirit passes into flesh, hard, stolid, relentless, the two no longer different substances but one, and the end of that corruption? Oh, if there is anything for which we ought to pray with strong crying to God, it is that we may be saved from such a living death!

Here is the secret of the apostle’s glorying in the cross that had crucified him to the world. His old man he declared had been slain with Christ; the rooted affections of the natural heart, the insatiable ambitions of the carnal man, had been pierced with the nail of crucifixion. Not utterly freed from them all was he as yet. But they had been delivered over to death, and their destruction was certain. And now life was dominating him, and not death. “They that are Christ’s,” says the same apostle, “have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” Here certainly are living men,—“they that are Christ’s.” They are the only living men according to Scripture. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” But the condition and proof of this life is that they have died with Christ as to their carnal natures; that they have given over their lusts and affections to be mocked and
scourged in the judgment-hall of self-denial; to be nailed to the cross of mortification; to be answered in their cries for indulgence with the vinegar and gall of sharper and sharper refusals, till they have become dead indeed. This is the austere and exacting ideal of the Christian who is wholly Christ's.

But you will ask with astonishment, perhaps, why the Lord Jesus must be so hard a Master. Does he delight in the stern exactions that gall and hurt, and perhaps repel us from his service? He is a hard Master in this matter only because he has a hard master with which to contend. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And what cannot be subdued to God must be slain. Hence the Son of God, having borne the cross himself, has left it for us to bear after him, that it may complete in our persons what it began for us in his; that, as we have been justified by the cross which he endured for us, we may be sanctified by the cross which we endure for him. Christ did not die to exempt us from crucifixion, but to lead our way to it. "Forasmuch, then, as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh," says Peter, "arm yourselves likewise with the same mind." And all this is that we may have life instead of death, and be heavenly men instead of earthly. For we are to
remember that self-denial is never an end, but always a means. We are to reduce the area of our carnal affections only that we may broaden and extend the horizon of our heavenly.

Have you never observed how the privation or any bodily sense increases the power of those that remain? If one's sight is impaired, his touch becomes more acute; if his hearing is lost, his sight learns to read, from the lips, the sounds which the ear can no longer interpret. It is a striking illustration of death in one part working life in another. And the principle holds just as truly of the outer senses in their relation to the inner. When worldly affections have been blunted, and selfish desires have been denied, and carnal appetite have been repressed, then it often is that for the first time the spiritual senses come into the largest and finest exercise. It is just as the apostle describes it, — the outward man perishing and the inward man renewed day by day.

It is not always so. Indeed, there may be such result with one whose moral life has never been quickened by the Spirit of God. But with those in whom the heart has been renewed by the Holy Ghost it is quite certain that this will be the issue. Think you, then, that God is a cruel Master that he sometimes permits the avenues of eternal sense to be closed by affliction, and that h
requires you to narrow them rather than to widen them to the pleasures of this world? It is only that he may compel you to retreat to the inner sanctuary of the spirit, where he reveals himself. The Holy of Holies of the Temple had no windows. It was left utterly dark, that it might be lighted by the glory of God. And when the High Priest entered the Holiest he left the sun behind him only to behold a brightness above the sun at noonday. And so when the outer courts of our bodies, those temples of the Holy Ghost, are closed to pleasure, barred to the lusts of the flesh and the lusts of the eye, then it is as never before that we enter into the inner shrine of the spirit, where God reveals himself to us and the light of life shines upon us. Man is alive unto God just in proportion as his spirit is in contact with God's spirit, and as his moral faculties are quickened and refined to commune with that spirit. And whatever, therefore, throws added necessity for exercise and action upon these faculties intensifies this life. One's physical vitality is measured, other things being equal, by the soundness and activity of his five senses. It is the man that can see most, and hear most, and taste most, that can live most in the earthward and temporal direction. Reflect, then, that the spiritual senses are the reverse of the physical; faith the opposite of
sight; hope the opposite of experience; love of God the opposite of love of this world; and how evident it becomes that the cutting off of outward gratifications is likely to result in the increasing of spiritual communion. We close the eyes in prayer in order to open wider our spiritual vision, and it is an unconscious sermon on the truth which we are considering. We look not upon the things that are seen, in order that we may look more deeply and clearly into the things that are not seen. We fast from bread, that we may feed more hungrily upon every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

This is the ideal of Christian living set before us in the Scriptures. Let us not shrink from it, and yet let us be very careful that in seeking to attain it we are not drawn into any morbid and unsanctified asceticisms. It is the spirit within us that must carry on this discipline. The flesh cannot subdue itself, and if the spirit presides over our self-chastening, it will be sober, temperate, and divinely reasonable. It will not make the mistake, so blind and fatal, of putting an inquisition in the place of a cross. We are to be dead with Christ, not for any morbid love of death, but in order to the highest life,—the life lived not in self, but by faith in the Son of God. That life is joyful, sweet, and healthful. It prepares one for service, instead of...
training him to prolonged spiritual sickness, as asceticism has so often done. It makes him active in blessing the world, and blessed in all his acting. It enables him, in a word, to live not for himself but for Him that loved him, and gave himself for him.

II. Let me speak, in the second place, of the dead living that are in the world.

There are such all about us,—those who exhibit the form and motions of life, but are really without it. Men call them alive. God calls them dead. "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead."

And these thus chided were Christians by profession. They were not without activity, for their works are spoken of; they were not without orthodoxy, for they had the name of true disciples still. But their works, we judge, were "dead works." They wrought in the energy of the flesh, perhaps, rather than in the power of the spirit; they were impelled by the zeal of ecclesiastical ambition, may be, rather than by the fire of love. At all events their service was so defective that neither their soundness nor their activity could save them from the awful sentence of death.

It is a startling thing to see how the symptoms of life and of death cross each other, and reappear in their opposites. Activities, which seem to give the most evident token of a living faith,
may be but the ferment of a decaying faith. It is
the instinct of a dying zeal to exhibit unwonted
motion and stir, even as a drowning man struggles
more violently than he who is safe upon the shore.
So I am sorry to believe that we have to be on
our guard against an unsanctified activity as well
as a sanctified idleness. It is not, of course, that
we are in danger of too much effort, but that there
may be too little life inspiring it. There are ser-
vices in God’s Church which may be impelled by
the same force that drives a factory or directs a
warehouse. God save us from belting on our
worldly wisdom or fleshly energy to the Church of
Christ to move its activities, instead of depending
upon “the living spirit within the wheels.”

Here is where we touch the secret of the Sar-
dian condemnation, “I know thy works, that thou
art dead.” It is in serving God with the spirit of
the world, in working for Christ with the zeal of a
man, in doing our duty with a lifeless heart, that
we fall under this judgment. “Without Me ye can
do nothing,” says Jesus. Activity may still go on
after the pulse-beat of Christ’s heart has ceased to
be felt within us in token of our communion with
him; but however we are bestirring ourselves the
Master says we are doing nothing all the while.
Let these words be a serious warning to us all to
watch with a vigilant eye even our service for
Christ, lest it may be corrupted. If the minister preaches to entertain and win applause, and visits his flock only for social calls, what does he more than others? Do not the men of the world the same? If the singers only employ a trained and skilful voice in the service of God's house, with no toil, and prayer, and consecration of the heart, what do they more than others? Do they not the same upon the stage and in the concert hall? If there are women in the Church who are taken up with fashionable charities, and popular and luxurious self-denials for the poor, what do they more than others? Hundreds are busy in these things who make no profession of being religious. If there are men in the Church who give themselves up to its secularities, collecting its tithes, serving on its committees, keeping its books, and treasuring its moneys, what do they more than others? Those without do all these things and never think of calling it Christian service. These things must be done, and all praise to those who do them well. But, if you value your life in Christ, do not neglect those other things which can be done only by the Spirit of God dwelling within you: leading lost souls to Christ; offering prevailing prayer for the sick and afflicted; testifying in our assemblies with such power of God as to quicken the dead in trespasses and sins, and living
such sober and godly lives as to convince the world that Christ is in you. "For if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of God."

And the same principle holds in regard to doctrinal soundness. It may be only the lifeless shell of an empty spirituality, and thus become a stigma instead of a glory. And such is the crossing and confounding of religious symptoms, that here also you are more than likely to find defection from the spirit of the gospel marked by increased zeal for the letter. And it is not difficult to see why this should be so. It is easier to defend a dogma than to live a life. Life is the movement of the Christian soul; creeds are its pauses. If one is tired of advancing he can sit down behind the breastworks of his doctrinal belief and stand his ground at least, guarding every point and punctilio of his theology with the utmost determination. This may not cost any very strenuous effort. But the Lord more than intimates that such a stand for doctrine may mean a surrender to spiritual death: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, art art dead." Do not, I beg you, suppose that I am depreciating any faithful and loyal defence of God's truth. I am only pointing out one of the insidious and deceptive counter-symptoms of
spiritual decay, and one that has many distressing manifestations in our time.

Theological soundness ought to be the glory of the Church, and it is only when made a buttress to spiritual decay and corruption that it becomes a reproach. Doctrine is the framework of life. It is the skeleton of truth, to be clothed and rounded out by the living graces of a holy life. It is only the lean creature whose bones become offensive. And it is only a lean Christian and a lean Church whose theological rigidness repels us. It is when the outward life has shrunk away from the doctrine, leaving it bare and angular and protruding, that we are offended. There is none too much of doctrine, perhaps; but it has been left exposed by the falling away in the spirituality of the body, and so has suffered an unseemly exposure. Woe to us if by our indifferent or worldly lives we turn into a dishonor that which should be the strength and security of the Christian life! We remember that it is written: "The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life." And if we have not the spirit, no matter how sound the letter, we are hastening to decay, and nothing can arrest us.

My brethren, where is your Christianity to-day? Is it packed away in the snug compartments of your reed? Is it found distributed through certain articles of faith and certain theories of Church
order and religious observance? It is not amis
that it should be there; but if it is not found als-
in the corpuscles of your blood, in the fibres o
your muscles, in the moisture of your eye, in th
warmth of your hand, in the figures of your ledge:
in the list of your expenditures, in visits to th
fatherless and widows in their affliction, and i
strong crying and tears over lost souls, you hav
not a living Christianity. There is such a thin
in this day as having a name to live and bein
dead. This death begins at the heart, and ma
be going on to corruption while the outward fom
and observances are steadily carried on. Oh, t
not afraid to die, Christian, when your time sha
come; but be terribly afraid of being buried alin
the tomb of formalism, the white robes of yo
profession turned into a winding-sheet of cold ar
respectable decay. I am distressed at this pe
that is confronting us in every branch of tl
Church. How has the fine gold become dir
How has Jerusalem, with its tongues of fire ar
its whole band of disciples filled with the Spir
relapsed into Sardis, with its “things that remai
that are ready to die,” and its “few names whi
have not defiled their garments!” “Remembe
therefore, how thou hast received and heard, a
hold fast and repent.”

But these dead living men are not found in tl
Church alone. They are found among all who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and who live for the world instead of living for heaven. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," are the words of the apostle. And they have the widest application. Just as we said, a moment ago, that the crucifixion and denial of the outward man intensify the life of the inward, so of the reverse. Indulging the flesh, pampering the appetites, gratifying the ambitions, feeding the pride, all tend to quench whatever life there may be in the spirit. "Fleshly lusts that war against the soul," is the language of Scripture. And it is a war which in hundreds of lives knows no truce till it has slain its victims. Dead while he liveth! What a kind of ghastliness and horror the words suggest! We shudder and the knees smite together at the apparition of a ghost. And what is a ghost? A soul bereft of its body, which is death. But is the death any less real when the body has been bereft of its soul; when the flesh has slowly consumed the spirit,—drunk it up through its lusts and passions,—till all traces of spiritual light and glory have gone out of the face, leaving only a body of dull, sodden, soulless flesh? You will not see a ghost; but you will see many such apparitions as this moving through our streets. And a spiritual man will have more shrinking from
THE LIVING DEAD

them than from the bloodless ghost. I do not say you must fly from such an one, and withhold you touch from the clammy, repulsive hand; but I say you should beseech God every day upon your knees to spare you from becoming such an one,—dead while you live.

"To God everything is possible; even of stone he can make children to Abraham. But there is something more rebellious than stones; it is the heart of the voluptuary. With him the soul had degenerated into flesh. The sources of love mercy, and faith have dried up. The heart which sent all its life to the senses is withered. There is darkness, cold, and horror within the soul; while around it, I mean in the flesh, everything is light and inflamed by the fire of lust,—a house lighten with a thousand lamps as on the evening of a festival,—house of gladness you would say; enter it you will find within only a corpse and demon dancing round it."

And to think how such beings transmit and extend their moral death and multiply it constantly in wretched victims! No man dies to himself alone. We talk of the drunkard's grave. What is it? Not the narrow house where he lies at last so narrow that it can hold only his own selfish self. The real drunkard's grave is that deep, and wide and insatiable tomb, where he has buried all sacre
affectations and holy vows,—position, honor, usefulness, and immortal life; a wife's heart and children's hope, and a mother's unavailing prayers. And thus it is with all who slay themselves through pleasure. They become the propagators of moral ruin, and dispensers of the diseases of which they die. And so they are, in Scripture phrase, "twice dead," as every man is who ruins another by his sin.

But we must pause. It is necessary that we should sometimes look into this region and shadow of death, in order that we may be warned to flee from it. And now let us search our hearts by the light of God's Spirit, and discover what beginnings of spiritual decay are there; let us try our souls by the light of Scripture, to see what germs of growing and spreading death are there. And, remembering how deceitful our own hearts are, let us call mightily and unceasingly upon God, "O Lord, my God, lighten mine eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death!"
"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance; let us plead together: declare thou that thou mayest be justified."

— Isaiah xliii: 25.

A BURST of marvellous grace is this in the midst of sternest rebuke and condemnation. Did we not read the prophet in the light of the gospel we might be surprised to find mercy so obtruding itself upon guilt and hardness of heart. And yet how like Christ's own words,—"And when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both!" Helpless indebtedness met at once with frank, unasked, and unconditional forgiveness.

And so this sentence from Isaiah is but a fragment of the gospel found in the prophets, the most unqualified declaration of free grace perhaps which can be found in Scripture. For here is the sternest arraignment of the transgressor. "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither
hast thou honored me with thy sacrifices. But thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities." And what then? Punishment we should have said, stern and unmitigated; or, at least, a threat of punishment unless there should be instant repentance.

But instead of this God breaks upon this sinning people in unrestrained and overwhelming forgiveness, and "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." In circumstances where he can do absolutely nothing for his people's sake, he magnifies his name by doing all for his own sake.

These words teach us—

I. The ground of forgiveness is in the Lord alone.

God does not look to us to see what we have done to deserve forgiveness, but he looks upon Jesus Christ to see what he has done to procure forgiveness. It is a suffering Saviour, not a penitent sinner, that calls out his mercy and pardon. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake." This sentence, you see, does away at a stroke with priest and penance, with works and worthiness, with tears and contritions, as the basis of forgiveness. It finds the whole reason and justification for divine pardon in the broken heart of Christ upon the cross, instead of seeking them in the broken heart of the sinner.
at the foot of the cross. This is not saying that penitence and contrition have no place in the forgiveness of the sinner. They have a most important place. But they are not the foundation-stones of grace. They rest on God's action, instead of God's action resting on them; they are the result of divine compassion, not its procuring cause.

For what is the distinguishing feature of the Christian faith? It is called in Scripture "the gospel of the grace of God." And by this title it is shown to be separated heaven-wide from every other system of religion. All other religions proceed upon the idea that a guilty sinner must do something to propitiate God's favor and make him reconciled to us. The glad tidings of the gospel are, that "God hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." And this is the message which we are sent to proclaim, this is the ministry of reconciliation which has been committed to us,—"to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." In other words, we are not sent to show men how they can procure pardon by their penitence and importunity, but how pardon has been procured for them in Jesus Christ; and how that pardon has now come begging at their stubborn hearts and beseeching for acceptance. If this i:
not so, then "grace is no more grace." If Christ's work must be supplemented with some work of ours; if his atonement and intercession must be assisted and made efficacious by our importunity,—then the "mine own sake" of God has been tinctured and conditioned by the "thine own sake" of the sinner, and the quality of pure grace is gone. It is humbling, I know, to the transgressor that even his tears must be ruled out of court as having no weight in determining his acquittal. Let tears be shed, indeed; but not as the showers that are to soften and propitiate the unrelenting heart of God! Let them be poured out as the streams of a fountain that has at last been opened, and its great deeps broken up by the revelation of the amazing truth that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Here is the sovereignty of God in mercy, as it appears elsewhere in judgment. The divine Lord becomes incarnate, and then settles in himself the whole question of sin and pardon. In himself he fills up the appalling measure of wrath which guilt deserves; and from himself he pours out the marvellous measure of grace which the sinner could never deserve. Hear the echo of the prophet's words as they are repeated by the Apostle Paul: "And be ye kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's
sake hath forgiven you.” It is even stronger in the original: “Even as God in Christ hath forgiven you,” — as though in the act of pardon the Lord did not even look upon the sinner; as though he determined the question entirely outside of him and independently of him. It is not the penitent’s tears, but the Saviour’s atonement, that refracts the white beam of justice, and sends it forth in the divided rays of grace, mercy, and peace. Judgment fell upon our Substitute till he cried out, “My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” and thereby pardon fell upon us in the “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” You say, “I have understood it differently. I have supposed that our penitence and faith were the conditions on which God pardons us.” Surely it cannot be so. Faith is the condition of our receiving forgiveness, but it is not the condition of God’s bestowing it. We were forgiven in Christ before we believed, just as truly as we were forgiven in ourselves after we believed. Our hand must be stretched out to take God’s gift, but our extended hand is not the condition on which that gift is bestowed. It is Christ’s extended hands that constitute that condition,—hands extended to grasp the awful penalty of sin, that they might thereby hold out the blessed gift of peace; hands bearing in their pierced palms the pains of our
transgression, that they thereby might lift up before the world a free grace and an unconditional remission of sins. Here is where the controversy between God and man was settled; here is where the release of the condemned transgressor was procured; here is where the sole condition of the sinner's pardon was met, and met to the full.

It comes to this, then, that we are to receive the atonement of Christ as a finished work, not as a work that needs to be supplemented or augmented by ourselves. Instead of begging and importuning God to have mercy upon us, we are to lift our eyes to the Redeemer's cross, and behold there how he has had mercy on us; and penitently and humbly and believingly accept the mercy that he has bestowed. It is not by making friendship with God that we are to become reconciled to him; for "when we were enemies we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son." It is not by making our peace with God that we are to find rest of soul; for "he is our peace" who hath "abolished in his flesh the enmity, . . . so making peace." It is for us, in other words, to see what God has done in Jesus Christ; and with shame-facedness at our long obstinacy, and melting contrition at our continued rejection of his grace, fall at his feet and accept it.

Do you not see, then, how God has forestalled
you in the whole matter of reconciliation, doing for his own sake what you were proposing to have him do for your sakes? "I will call upon him," you said, "and continue to call till at last he shall relent and have mercy upon me!" "And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer," saith the Lord. Christ's atonement on the cross is God's answer to the sinner before he has called; it is the Father coming out to meet him while yet he is a great way off. Look and be amazed, O sinner! And if you have thought to beseech God to have compassion on you, let us show you "God beseeching you by us," while we, according to his command, "pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God." He has done before you asked it more than you would have ever dared to ask.

There is a beautiful oriental custom, of which I have read, that tells the story very perfectly. When a debt had been settled, either by full payment or forgiveness, it was the usage for the creditor to take the cancelled bond and nail it over the door of him who had owed it, that all passers-by might see that it was paid. Oh, blessed story of our remission! There is the cross, the door of grace, behind which a bankrupt world lies in hopeless debt to the law. See Jesus, our bondsman and brother, coming forth with the long list of our indebtedness in his hand. He lifts it up
where God and angels and men may see it, and then as the nail goes through his hand it goes through the bond of our transgressions to cancel it forever, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, that was contrary to us, he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." Come to that cross, O sinner! Not in order that you may wash out your sins by your tears, or atone for them by your good works, or efface them by your sophistries and self-deceptions. But come rather that you may read the long black list which is against you, and be pierced to your heart by compunction and sorrow that you have offended such a being; and then that, lifting up your eyes, you may see God turning his eyes to the same cross at which you are looking, and saying, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Will not remember.—"The true penitent never forgives himself," is the saying of the ascetic. If he is only a penitent it may be so. But if he becomes a believer then he learns to forgive himself in God's importunate forgiveness of him; to forget his past sins in God's gracious oblivion of them; so that, instead of trying to write the lines of condemnation deeper and deeper in his heart, he reads them written in the wounds of Christ, and blotted out by the
blood of Christ, and thereby the sentence of death has been changed to a proclamation of life.

II. The object of faith is the Lord alone.

None of us regards faith as a work; and yet we unconsciously fall into the habit of trying to exercise a laborious faith, as though its efficacy depended on the strength of its own activity. But the whole office of saving belief is to rest upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. It does nothing, it creates nothing, it changes nothing. It simply accepts an accomplished fact, and trusts in it, and rejoices in it. Do you remember that twice in the New Testament we have the honest question, "What shall I do?" met by the startling answer, "Thou shalt believe;" as though it had been said, we are done with doing as a ground of salvation, since man has failed and become utterly bankrupt on that score, and now a new and gracious order of things has been introduced by which a sinner is saved by believing. They said unto him, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" "This," says Jesus, "is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." An utter rejection, you see, of the proffer of works. But this is not saying that obedience, and service, and well doing are no longer required as a satisfaction to God's law, and that by some arbitrary fiat the paper currency of a creed is henceforth to
be accepted in place of the solid gold of obedience. No; not a requirement of God's law has been relaxed, not a duty has been abrogated, not a claim has been compromised, not a penalty has been remitted. And the only reason why we are saved by faith instead of by works is that Christ has stepped into our place, and become "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." So that "do" has now been conjugated into "done," and instead of the "This do" of Moses, God holds up before us the "It is finished" of Christ. This is what the gospel means by giving such an unexpected and seemingly inadequate answer to the honest question about works. "What shall I do to be saved?" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," —which means, being interpreted, accept what God has done to save you. Behold how in the incarnate Son he has taken the whole record of your sins,—the not doing, the undoing, and the evil doing,—and expiated it on the cross, and blotted it out, and consigned it to oblivion, if you will have it so; and how he has given you eternal life if you will take it, that henceforth, relieved of your tormenting past, and having eternal life within you, you may work from life instead of working for life. We neither ask the Lord now to do something to save us, nor does he
ask us to do something to be saved. All has been done. "Put me in remembrance," he says now, "let us plead together." All Christ's heavenly intercession is but a calling to mind of his earthly obedience and death. He who by the Eternal Spirit offered up himself without spot to God, has "by his own blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." And now his sprinkled blood is pleading, and his wounded hands are pleading, and pierced feet are pleading, and his gracious lips are pleading. "Let us plead together," he says to the sinner; plead not against me by persisting in thy sins, for I have atoned for them; plead not with me to forgive thy sins, for I am waiting to be gracious; but let us plead together; join thy faith to my atonement and unite thy trust with my tears. God will be put in remembrance of his Son, who gave his life a ransom for many, and for his sake he "will no remember thy sins."

Faith, then,—I mean the faith by which we are justified and saved,—is the simple apprehension and trustful acceptance of Jesus Christ and his accomplished work. Its efficacy is not in changing God and making him gracious to us, but in changing us by making us acquainted with God and showing us how he has been gracious to us. "Look unto me and be ye saved," he says.
look creates nothing; it only reveals to us what already is. The opened eye takes in the external scene and transfers it to the mind, and makes an inward experience of what was before an outward fact. Even so faith, which is the eye of the soul, apprehends that which is set before it in the gospel, and makes that true in ourselves which was true for us before in Christ. It is already a fact that God has reconciled us unto himself by the death of his Son; and when our faith lays hold of this fact, believes it, and accepts it, then we are reconciled to God.

Thus, as we have said, the object of faith is always in the Lord, and not in ourselves. Its eye can never look inward. It may strain after an introverted vision, trying to get assurance from the depths of the heart; and it may produce some artificial light there, even as we get fire-flashes by exciting the optic nerve; but it will be only momentary and transient, and utterly unsatisfying. Faith's field of vision is all in Christ, his work, his atonement, his word; and all its light and confidence must come in resting in that work and believing in that word.

It seems to me not true, then, that we are to persuade God to be merciful to us by the intensity and persistency of our repentance. That were to set up a cross in our hearts for God to look at,
instead of ourselves looking at the cross which he has set up on Calvary for us to look at; and that were to change ends of faith, making it God's consent to our contrition for sin, instead of our consent to God's atonement for sin. Alas for us, if we are thinking to invite the Lord to look to us and save us, instead of heeding his word and looking unto him and being saved! The sovereign gracious settlement of the question of sin has been effected in our Redeemer, and there we are to meet God in all our dealings on that subject. Feel our sins, sorrow over them, be condemned and pierced through and through by them, confess them, forsake them, we most assuredly must, or we can never have forgiveness. But where did the Jewish worshipper confess his sins and the sins of the people? He confessed them on the scapegoat that was to bear them away. And we are to confess our transgressions on Jesus Christ "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." We may smite upon our breasts forever, and cry, "Unworthy, unworthy;" but it will not avail unless we lift up our eyes to him of whom the Lord hath laid the iniquities of us all, and cry, "Worthy the Lamb that was slain." Faith is the obverse side of repentance. They are the two faces of the same coin of redemption. Repentance looks towards our sin, and faith look
towards our sin-bearer; and, no matter how long
our repentings may go on, they cannot save us
unless our faith sees our transgressions laid on
Christ and borne away. “Look to the wounds of
Christ, brother Martin,” said the monk who led
Luther from his wretched penance to God’s peace;
“look to the wounds of Christ, and there you will
learn how God feels towards you.” Aye, there we
learn all that we need to know about our contro­
versy with the Lord. Nowhere are the lines of
God’s condemnation of sin written so deeply as
there. Put these two sayings of Scripture side
by side: “This is my beloved Son, in whom
I am well pleased;” and yet, when our sins
are found upon him, “It pleased the Lord to
bruise him.” Oh, appalling words! Judgment
upon guilt was never proclaimed in more awful
language.

And yet now God looks out upon the world,
through that beloved Son, in perfect and change­
less reconciliation. And it is only for us to look
also to him, and be reconciled. His heart is in
the attitude of permanent forgiveness, and it is
only for us to believe and be forgiven. The sun
of his love is always shining unclouded, and we
have but to turn to it our faces and be enlight­
ened. And the Psalmist’s cry is the true one
for us to utter,—not, “Turn thyself to us,” but,
"Turn us, O Lord, and cause thy face to shine upon us, that we may be saved." It is we that have the averted face and the downcast eyes and the unreconciled heart, and it is we that need to be turned that God's face may shine upon us. And this is the test which determines now our relation to God,—whether our faith is fixed submissively, consentingly, obediently, upon his Son. Stand with your back to the sun, and your shadow is before you, and you walk in it with every step you take. And condemnation is the shadow of a sinner with his back upon Christ. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light." Turn your face to the sun, and your shadow is behind you, and you are walking ever out of darkness. And justification is the light of a soul with its face towards Christ. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Which is yours, O hearer,—the averted, or the uplifted, reconciled, joyful face?

III. The object of confession is the Lord alone.
"Declare, that thou mayest be justified." And what are we to declare,—something about ourselves, about what we are and what we have done? By no means. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,"—this is the sole object of our profession. In settling the question of sal-
vation nothing else is to be mentioned,—not even our faith, as though that were a ground or reason of our justification. On the contrary, faith simply mentions Christ: owns him in words, declares him in profession, as unconscious of itself as the eye is of its own vision when absorbed in some glorious prospect.

We hear persons talking about "making a profession of religion." It is the thing, above all others, which we ought not to do. The Pharisee made a profession of religion,—"I thank Thee that I am not as other men; . . . I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all I possess." And we know how odious all this was to God.

The true penitent will profess nothing concerning himself, except his sins; and put nothing before God, except Christ. Look not upon me, but, "Behold, O God! our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed," will be his cry and his confession. And with such a perfect and all-satisfying object of declaration before his eyes, and on his tongue, he can credit the marvellous promise, that "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

But there is a profession towards men as well as towards God; and of that also Christ is the sole object. "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my
Father which is in heaven." To put any claim of worthiness or sanctity or holiness before men is as offensive as to put it before God. And yet Christ is to be professed in the sight of all; and this in the life, and not merely in the speech. We are justified by our faith in Christ; but our faith is justified by our works for Christ. Faith holds up Christ before God as the ground of salvation, and holy living holds up Christ before men as the evidence of salvation. And here is the supreme test of the genuineness of our piety. If our faith is not living itself out before the world, in an obedient and holy life, in doing the works which the Lord commanded, in bearing the cross which he enjoined, and in maintaining the purity which he requires, then have we no evidence that our faith is looking up to God, and finding acceptance with him in the Beloved. If we are not with all our heart and life declaring the Lord Jesus before men, I know not what evidence we have that he is continuing to make mention of us before the Father and the holy angels.

And now, my brethren, let this awful freeness of God's grace alarm you while it melts you! What a sin it is to do despite to such grace by continued rejection of God's Son! What an even darker sin it is to render it of none effect by your unholy living, apostatizing from God
in your flesh at the same moment that you are professing to obey him in your spirit, and so "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ"!
LOVE ABOUNDING THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment." — Phil. i: 9.

THERE is something very striking and unexpected in the climax of this prayer. That the love of Christians should abound is a frequent exhortation and petition of the apostle. But we should expect the direction of that love to be differently defined. "In fervor and in all charity, in zeal and in all self-sacrifice," would perhaps be the terms which we should have chosen to indicate its course. But instead of this the direction is upward, from the heart to the head,—"that your love may abound in all knowledge and in all judgment," or discipline, as the word means more exactly. This is the course in which the affections must flow in order that they may deepen and widen and strengthen. And a little reflection will doubtless show us that it is necessarily so; that love can abound most fully only through knowledge.

I. The truth of these words appears, in the firs
place, from the fact that knowledge reveals character, and character draws out love.

That is to say, we can only love a person as we know him to be possessed of amiable and praiseworthy traits. There may be such a thing as love without acquaintance; but it will only be transitory and evanescent, unless, upon more intimate relations being established, the character is found to be worthy of it.

This holds especially true of our relations to God. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace." Enmity to the Lord comes of ignorance of him. For ignorance is the mother of suspicion as well as of superstition. It sees just enough of God to be perplexed and estranged, but not enough to have its perplexities relieved; it encounters his austere attributes as they are displayed in providence, without knowing his gracious attributes as they are hidden in his heart. It is this half acquaintance which often proves the most fatal ignorance. "When the world by wisdom knew not God." The open eye without the open heart, the busy thoughts unaccompanied with the active affections, these are the conditions of the most dangerous estrangement. "When I knew nothing of God I was indifferent to him; when I knew a little of God I mistrusted him and complained of him; when I knew much of God I trusted him
and loved him," — would be the honest confession of many who have traversed the field from utter ignorance to the largest knowledge. How suggestive upon this point are those words of Jesus in his last prayer, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee"! This is his plaintive lament, and this is too plainly the secret of men's hatred of the Father, of which he so often speaks. But hear what he adds concerning his disciples: "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them." The doors of the heart, which ignorance has barred against the Father, knowledge opens, and affections flow out through the avenues by which light has come in. Such is the effect of divine knowledge upon those who have also divine faith.

Now, it is clear what attributes of the Almighty's character the men of this world are most likely to encounter. They know most of sin and disobedience in their experience, and therefore they are most likely to collide with the justice and judgment of God which sin calls out. And it is dreadful thing, when we stop to think of it, for one to have only such acquaintance as this with the Lord. To know a father only by his corrections, and never by his caresses; to be reminded of him by a scourging conscience, and never by
loving heart,—is the most dreary destiny to which one can be consigned. And yet this is about all the contact with God that thousands have in this world,—in pains of conscience and pains of body and pains of fearful looking for of judgment. And little affection for him is engendered by it all.

And if perchance the conscience is quickened by a clearer knowledge of God's holiness, the estrangement is only deepened. To be better acquainted with God as the judge of all the earth doing right, does not certainly help to win the affections of his subjects, if this is all that is known. And therefore the mere example and teaching of Jesus Christ tended rather to deepen the enmity of men to God than to win their affection to him. This he himself plainly declares: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Therefore there was a solemn necessity for the cross, that the Son of God might thereby conquer the enmity which his words and works had rather deepened than assuaged. It was not enough that men should see God's hands put forth in miracles, and his holiness shining out in a pure example;
they must see his heart laid open before they will love him. Here, then, in Christ crucified is the revelation that gives men the knowledge of God that could be found nowhere else. "God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." How with blind desire and helpless longing had the poor heart of humanity been feeling after such a revelation! If they had found hints of it in nature they at least never had an exhibition powerful enough at once to lift the heart to God and detach its affections from the world. The affections of the human soul are certainly not devoid of heavenly aspirations; but what if they do not clearly know God? Then, like the vine stretching up its tendril fingers and finding no support, and so falling back again to creep upon the earth from which it sprung, the heart that fails to find God, only loves the world the more desperately and hopelessly. Blessed be God, therefore, for the cross of Christ,—that trellis for the heart's affections. It is this by which the soul learns to know the love of God; and upon it the renewed affections climb higher and higher; beneath it they strike their roots deeper and deeper; upon its arms they reach out farther and farther, evermore increasing in love by increasing in knowledge, as they seek to "comprehend with all saints what is
the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

It cannot but be true that a study of God's character as revealed in redemption shall deepen and strengthen our love as no other study can. Barren knowledge is common in other fields; it seems impossible here, unless indeed the atonement is utterly robbed of its evangelical meaning. Who has found it possible to unfold the precious doctrine of the cross without infolding, at every turn, new delights of joy and affection in his own heart? And even the knowledge gained in other departments of biblical study seems to be fructified in the atmosphere of this. Our hearts burn within us, in pacing the courts of the temple, studying its brazen altar and gazing on its mercy-seat, when once a ray from the cross has fallen there. With faith, as the eye through which we look, the dullest facts of biblical lore kindle and glow before us as we ponder them. "Knowledge is power"—does philosophy teach us? Knowledge is love, we say, if only it be the acquirement of faith, and not of reason; for it shows us God, and brings us into a perpetual study of his character. And since knowledge is the abiding of the mind in the subject of its study, to know God is to dwell in God, and hence to dwell in
love; for "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

How full our Church life is of testimonies to the contrary truth! "My people is destroyed for lack of knowledge" is the epitaph written over the graves of scores of dead Christians. Neglecting the diligent study of the Scriptures, they have no nutriment for their love, and it starves. They sigh after their "first love," strangely forgetting that God's love is the first love; that "we love him because he first loved us;" and that our spiritual affections can only be kept ardent and glowing by a daily finding out from the Bible how immeasurably and persistently God has loved us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins." And how he thus loved us is written everywhere in Scripture: in the blood of the paschal lamb sprinkled on the door-posts; in the solemn ordinance of the scapegoat; in the holy rites of the great day of atonement; in the vessels of the tabernacle, in its altar and laver and ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold; in the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean; in the predictions of the prophets and the psalms; in the story of the evangelists; in the doctrines of the Apostle, and in the lofty strains of the Apoca-
lyse,—in all these myriad types and voices the same story is repeated, of the true "Lamb of God" giving his life a ransom for many, and "hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." They who do not search into these things know not what hid treasures they miss. And neglect of study ministers sure decay in the spiritual life. Where gross temptation slays one Christian, ignorance slays scores. It defeats the believer by cutting off his supplies; it puts him into darkness by withholding the oil which should feed his lamp; it nurses him into unbelief by giving him nothing to believe. A rebellious, wayward heart is sad enough; but a sterile heart is a bitter trial to one who is called to care for God's Church,—a heart that yields nothing of testimony, or fruit, or self-sacrifice, year by year, because it is too indifferent to receive from God the seed of the word, and so lies perpetually fallow.

My brethren, as you value your souls, and know your accountability to the Lord who bought you, remember that word of the apostle, "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." You cannot grow in grace except you grow in knowledge; and you cannot grow in knowledge except you daily search the Scriptures, wherein you have eternal life.
II. Let us consider, again, that knowledge of God brings us into communion with that divine life which is the spring of all divine love.

Divine love is the measure of the divine life. If God is love the more we come into fellowship with himself the more we shall come into the exercise and experience of his love. But it is only through knowledge that we come into this fellowship with God's life. "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." So, then, the chain of our reasoning is this: the word of God gives knowledge of God; knowledge of God gives the life of God, and the life of God begets the love of God.

Do you not see, then, how small a place the religion of ignorance has in the word of God? We want a heart religion, but we must have an intellectual religion too. And if anybody, in his zeal for a religion of the heart, thinks to make short cut of it, by closing the gates of the understanding and carrying on all his communication with God through the affections, he will find very little entering into the fulness of divine grace. Nay! Both mind and heart must be called into fullest exercise in order that the grace of God may abound in us. And the word of God has this rare attribute of ministering to every element of our...
nature, giving nutriment to the mind and incite-
ment to the affections; affording food for thought and delight to the emotions. Like the juices of the grape, which nature has distributed in such mild and even mixture that they minister nourishment and sweetness in the most perfect proportion, so the life of God, which is contained in his word, has all that can delight the affections, while it builds us up in our most holy faith. The curse of in-toxication comes when man compresses and fer-ments these juices of the grape, and by violating nature's proportions produces the hot stimulant which "sets on fire the whole course of nature." And the evil of religious fanaticism comes when the divine proportion is violated, and all the juices of thought are distilled into the intoxicants of emo-
tion and transport, on the one hand; or all the sweet and nourishing sap of inspiration and love is turned into mere intellectual incitement on the other. As Christ, while on earth, rounded out the largest intellectual sphere, and yet filled that sphere to its utmost limit with moral life and love, so Christ in us, if we receive him in his fulness, will quicken our highest intelligence, and sound our deepest love; and he will so blend and har-
omize the offices of reason and the offices of affection that our love of God will be but knowl-
edge of God kindled into a flame of adoration,
and our knowledge of God will be but the love of God clarified and transfigured in his perfect light.

We cannot lay too much stress on this idea, the necessity of an even cooperation of all our spiritual powers in order to the highest consecration. “Know ye not that Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?” And, though our capacity is very meagre, we must seek to take in the whole Christ “to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,” as well as to be filled with his love which passeth knowledge.

There are those who would fain eke out a narrow apprehension of his atoning love by a larger adoration of his matchless wisdom. There are those who would cover a criminal ignorance of his word by a parade of fondling phrases and trite endearments of his person. There are those who, letting all the channels of biblical knowledge run dry in their souls, are seeking to irrigate their parched and thirsty heart by revolving the wheel of an endlessly repeated religious experience. But such make-shifts will soon exhaust themselves. There is no way in which the current of love can be strengthened except by deepening the channel of knowledge. We have accepted Christ, not because we know him, but in order to know him. And if he has become to us a Saviour, he has become a lifelong subject of study and contemplation.
tion. And such study is the only thing which can furnish an inexhaustible stimulant to our affections. Hence the love of ease is a dangerous neighbor to the love of Christ. It will borrow from it more and more till all its store is exhausted, and will pay back nothing. In other words, it is impossible for one to maintain a love for the Saviour except he maintains a patient and painstaking search of the Scriptures, which reveal the heights and depths of his love to us. "Continue ye in my love," says the Master. And when we ask, "How shall we, Lord?" his answer comes, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." It is right that we should long for devout feelings and warm spiritual exercises. And the Lord, so far from rebuking such aspirations, I am sure, rebukes us only because we are so barren in this respect. But we can find these exercises only in the way which he has pointed out: by "being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." The more we study to know the love of God from the record of it which he has written, the more will our devout affections be kindled. We must think God's thoughts after him, in order to love God's love after him. And if you will study the lives of Christ's most consecrated servants, such as Edwards and Pascal and Brainerd and Howe, you will find that their highest ascents
into the regions of spiritual joy and delight were made, not on the wing of the soaring affections, but along the ladder of patient search after God and in surmounting round after round of the *scala sancta* of revealed truth. Of Edwards this is pre-eminently so. His love seems to be knowledge set on fire, thought glowing with the incandescent heat of its own holy ardor. It is when his intense intellect is searching out God’s ways, sounding the depths of his foreknowledge, or measuring the reaches of his great atonement, that he seems most utterly to lose himself in Christ, and to be rapt away in inexpressible spiritual delight.

Oh, it is not more incitements and stimulants to love which we need, but a deeper insight into the mystery of redemption! The contact of Christian heart with Christian heart is blessed. The communion of spirit with spirit among believers is vastly helpful; but, after all the study, the pondering, the looking into, the grasping and the exulting in, the story of redemption passes all else for opening the deepest fountains of affection. “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us by the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?” The key which opens to us the Word must open our hearts also, by revealing Christ, who is the Alpha and Omega of the Word.
And the same principle which applies to love of Christ applies to love among brethren. This cannot be a sentimental and reciprocal thing merely. Two burnished reflectors can radiate the brightness from one to the other if there be a light between them. But, if each only reflects from the other, there can be no illumination; because neither furnishes any supply of light. So two Christians, reciprocating each other's affections, will make but a poor exhibit of brotherly love, unless they have Christ between them as the centre and source of their life. We speak contemptuously of mutual admiration between friends, as we ought. And there is just as little to admire in mutual fellowship among Christians, unless Christ be in the midst of them as the centre of that fellowship. To exhort one another, to comfort one another, and to love one another, are all most solemn duties. But where will be the profit in them unless Christ be the central theme, and his grace and glory the central objects of our admiration and praise? The cherubim stood with "their faces one toward another;" but the mercy-seat was between. And it was upon faces bending in eager gaze upon those "things which the angels desire to look into," that the glory of God was reflected. And, brethren, if we get any cheer or brightness from looking into each other's faces,
LOVE ABOUNDING

and communing with each other in the services of God's house, it will be because Christ stands in the midst of us, the object of all our meditations and the fountain of all our joys. We want you to come to the place of prayer; but unless you have been bending over God's Word during the week, unless you have been facing and fronting the Lord as he stands revealed in that Word, what can you impart? And the danger to-day in our meetings for social prayer and testimony is that, instead of lifting each other up, we let each other down by our superficial experiences and our empty reiterations of dead words. It is an old Book about which we are talking, but I am certain that any of you, by studying it patiently each week, can make discoveries of truth which will thrill you as a startling piece of news does. Indeed, the old Book is "the good news from a far country." And if a score of you should get possessed and fired with a piece of this divine intelligence, and were to come into our assembly and pour it out, what a kindling there would be among the embers on our spiritual hearthstone! O brethren, light your fires anew at God's Word! Let us cease coming to one another for help and enrichment, and come to the Lord and abide in the Lord, "in whom are hid all the riches of knowledge and wisdom."
Here, then, if we would be obedient children and useful servants and true witnesses, is one of our highest and most sacred duties. The maxim, "Know thyself," was considered among the heathen philosophers to contain the sum of all wisdom. Let us remember what we have learned by the revelation of Christ and his apostles: "This is eternal life, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."
XVI.

THE OBEDIENCE OF SONS.

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." — 1. Pet. 1: 14.

THIS is one of the household exhortations which so abound in Scripture, given, not to them that are without, but exclusively to those who are of the family of Christ. The revelation of God's fatherhood must of necessity contain a revelation of the duties and obligations of such as have received the calling of sons. Hence with the declaration of our Father's love comes the endearing designation of our privilege and duty as his sons; and we read the title of "dear children" in one epistle, of "little children" in another, of "obedient children" in another, — all of which reminds us how truly at home we are with God, as members of his family.

The words of the apostle which we are now to consider suggest three thoughts: —

1. There can be no sonship to God without regeneration.
"Children" are those here addressed. "And ye are children of God by faith in Jesus Christ," writes Paul in his letter to the Galatians. We are not sons of God by revelation then, as many teach, but by recreation. This is so explicitly declared in the opening chapters of John's Gospel that there would seem to be no possibility of question on the point. We read of the "sons of God," indeed, once or twice in the Old Testament; but the use of the words in the Gospel seems constantly to imply a new and wonderful privilege belonging to the dispensation of grace. Who is not impressed with this idea in listening to the glad, exultant, and almost surprised tone of the Apostle John? "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" It may be questioned whether the high privilege to which he thus refers does not belong entirely to the dispensation of the Spirit, as it is clearly limited exclusively to such as have believed on the Son of God. Not that we would narrow the affections of the Eternal, or set bounds to his divine paternity. It is only the question of what he has taught. And here all seems plain. There is a new birth from God, and such as are in its registry are named the "sons of God." Distinctly are we told that these were "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of
map, but of God." No high caste of saintship is there however, — no exclusive aristocracy of heavenly blood. It is a rank open to the lowest and poorest and most simple; only one must be born into it, and born through his own consenting faith. And this is more gracious far than the condition of natural generation. "I was not asked of what parentage I should be born," you may have said complainingly; "or indeed whether I should be born into this world at all." But you are asked whether you shall receive this divine nativity; and here you can choose who shall be your Father. Your consent is invited, and, being given, the eternal life is yours. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

Have you noticed how and why Christ received his title of Son of God? It is a very instructive lesson on this point to study his divine genealogy. The angel announced to Mary her conception through the Holy Ghost, and then added, "Therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." He was named the Son of God because he was begotten of the Spirit of God. And as with Christ so with his followers, since he is but "the first-born among many brethren." Their sonship comes through their begetting of the Spirit, and they are children of God because new-born of God. This seems to
be the doctrine of Scripture, which we reiterate, not for the sake of limiting God's love, or of consigning any of his creatures to a dreary and desolate orphanage; but rather to show how exalted and divine is the position to which the gospel invites all, even into a heavenly nativity, into kinship with the Lord of glory.

II. There can be no obedience to God without sonship.

"As obedient children," is the language of the apostle, you will observe. Children have a claim and a motive to obedience laid upon them which none others have. We cannot say, "Our Father who art in heaven," and say it intelligently, without in the same instant recognizing our obligation to do the will of that Father. In other words, there is a birthright duty which is stronger than any other that can be mentioned. The tie of blood is a tie of obligation; to be begotten of a father is to be beholden to that father as to no other being in the universe. And therefore I say that the highest obedience can neither be required or fulfilled except we are the sons of God.

Why is it that you never think of giving orders to your neighbor's children, and that they would be little disposed to obey you if you should? It is because they stand in an utterly different relation to you from that of your own children. You
might indeed as a citizen command them to do things which you would have the legal right to require. If you were a magistrate, you might order the children to desist from marring the trees or defacing the statuary of the public park. But you would never think of ordering your neighbor's boys to run your errands for you; to wash their soiled faces and sit at the table and eat what you had set before them. These are family obligations, and as such they can only be enjoined upon those who have been born in the house. Now the Scripture speaks to us of "the household of faith," and of the children of that household who are to be "sons of God without rebuke." And in that family there are duties and requirements which relate exclusively to its members. How significantly saith Jesus, "If ye love me, keep my commandments!" Love is the household tie; law is the citizen's tie. Never does the civil statute say, "If you love the magistrate, obey his laws:" the father, the mother, the brother, are always using this motive. That delicate, holy claim of birthright affection rules the home with an authority that all the laws on all the statute books could never compass.

Now, God is the Supreme Magistrate of the world, and as such he commands obedience from all his creatures; but because it was found impos-
sible to enforce that obedience, since the law was
"weak through the flesh," he sent his Son to
establish a new and gracious relationship, that so
he might secure the obedience of sons where he
had failed to gain the obedience of subjects.

Therefore, after the new birth by the Spirit, there
comes the witness of the Spirit to our sonship. First,
"God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made
under the law, to redeem them that were under
the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.
And because ye are sons God hath sent forth the
spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba,
Father." With the child's first cry of parental
recognition comes the instinct of obedience; with
the babe's first reading of the name of mother in
tender, brooding eyes comes the throb of depend­
ent affection. And the witness of the Spirit is the
child cry of the regenerated soul answering to and
owning the call of the heavenly Father.

Do you not see, then, what is secured by this
wondrous gift of sonship?

There is first a divine heredity, if we may use
the word. That well-nigh irresistible impulse
which comes from birth and inheritance the re­
newed soul now possesses. It has a native ten­
dency to purity and truth and goodness. Instead
of battling hopelessly with hereditary traits that
are only evil, it now has had secured to it the
mighty reinforcement of God's own transmitted life. It has consanguinity with the Holy One; it has an ancestral descent from the Father of Lights; it has, in a word, been "created after God, in righteousness and true holiness." We cannot admire too profoundly this marvellous interposition of God in our behalf. The stream of natural generation has a force that few can resist. Like father like son is the prevailing law, — a law unspeakably beneficent if every father were good, but unutterably sorrowful in a world where so many are only evil. What awful emphasis Christ lays upon the principle when he says to some, "Ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do"! Nothing can resist an hereditary bias, — unless perchance such an amazing thing could happen that one could be reborn, and get a new and holy fatherhood. And that has happened to as many as have received the Son of God and believed on his name. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," and that means not only a birthright which entitles us to a divine inheritance, but also a birth impulse, which secures to us divine affections and holy desires and heavenly longings. Life, not law, is the cure for our heritage of spiritual disobedience and death. I have seen the dead leaves hanging all winter upon the trees, in spite of driving winds, and furious storms, and biting frosts;
but when, in the renewal of spring, the sap has once more coursed in the veins of the wood, and green buds have put forth, these sere and decaying leaves have been pushed off irresistibly. Death cannot stand before life; the stubborn inborn traits of the old man cannot resist the indwelling life of the new man in the Lord. "Life, not law," we said; it is rather life, so inbred that it has become a law in our members, subduing and ruling till our fitful, intermittent obedience shall become a holy habit, and we can say triumphantly, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

And as sons we have not only this right hereditary bias, but we have the love of sonship as the spring of obedience. Love is the strongest force for executing that to which the new nature inclines one.

Watch the growing child, and see how the father's features, in his conduct, traits, tones, and disposition, come out day by day. No training or discipline could ever have wrought these things into the constitution from without. But these habits being natural and instinctive, love will constantly strengthen them, if the father be such an one as the love can admire and imitate. Love is the executor of life. It is the sweet and potent force that confirms us in that obedience to which
the Spirit first inclines us. One cannot love God strongly enough to obey him unless he has first been made akin to him by regeneration. For affections are the fruit of birth, not its cause. We love God because he first loved us; loved us so greatly as to constitute and call us his sons. And when, in our own spiritual affections, we become sensible of this relation, and enter into it, we have something with which to obey that we never knew before.

And so we find that this is the test, as it is the fruit, of our sonship to God,—obedience. "If ye know that he is righteous," writes John, "ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of God." Here is the family likeness, the ancestral trait that proves us children of God. If this be wanting, no matter what name we bear, our genealogy is spurious, and our faith is vain. "Did you never observe," writes Southey to a friend "how remarkably old age brings out family resem blances? I now see my father's lineaments in the looking-glass where they never used to appear.' Brethren of the Lord Jesus, and sons of God, do your Father's image appear more and more visible every year as you look into the mirror of the word? Unless you are deepening the lines of kindredship, by holy and prolonged obedience, it cannot be so. There are children that stamp ou
their father’s features by their fleshly indulgences and worldly conformity, and thus despoil themselves of even the faint traces of likeness to him which were found in them as new-born babes. Here is the solemn, practical test of your real ancestry: “He that doeth righteousness is righteous.” If this mark of kinship be wanting, alas for us! we are but still-born children, brought forth in death, remaining in death, and never knowing the voice of the living spirit crying within us, Abba, Father!

III. *There can be no conformity to God without obedience.*

“Not fashioning yourselves.” The true disciple is one who has given himself up to be fashioned by God, instead of insisting on moulding himself. He does not even select the pattern of his life while asking the Lord to fit him to it; but he leaves both the pattern and the fashioning with God alone. All this is beautifully told in this connection: “Not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in your ignorance,” shaping your conduct by your ambition, your pride, your selfish desire, and stubborn will; “but, according to the pattern of that Holy One, who hath called you, be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” It is the exchange of self-guidance for God’s guidance; of the human model for the

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1 So Lange’s Commentary translates.
divine. "Every man the architect of his own fortune" is a current maxim among men, but "every man's life a plan of God" is the doctrine of the gospel concerning the Christian. And what this plan is you readily discover in the Scriptures. "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," says the apostle. And every impression of the Spirit on the heart, every stroke of the divine hand in discipline, every loss and every gain, every trial and every blessing, has this definite aim,—to bring out the image of Christ from your life, even as the sculptor's chisel brings out the perfect statue from the marble.

Why is it, then, that there are comparatively so few eminently Christlike men and women in the Church of God? It is not that there are not high aims, and lofty standards, and earnest endeavors among them. No, there are thousands who are zealously affected who still seem to fail of being moulded to the image of God. The secret of failure lies, doubtless, in an unsubmitted plan of life. We choose our own sphere of service, our own type of character, our own order of development, and then ask God to work out our plan—as though the Infinite One could do anything with our little, contracted, disjointed models. Alas that so many of us want to make God the executor of our wills; that we in-
 sist on holding the reins of his providence, so that while he draws the chariot we may guide its course. The Almighty is only Infinite when he works according to his own determinate counsel. If we think to hamper and harness him with our petty preferences, we are simply proposing to reduce his omnipotence to impotence. God cannot do anything with an unsubmitted will; and if we present ourselves to him as clay models for him to execute in marble, instead of offering ourselves as plastic clay for him to pour into the mould of his eternal purpose, our ideal will remain forever unexecuted. Why, what do we expect,—that we are to use God, or let him use us? That we are to submit proposals to him, or that we are to submit to his proposals? Noble example was he whose words I have just quoted. He had his campaign all planned, his maps and charts he bore upon his person; the ideal of a Pharisee of the Pharisees he was hastening with impetuous footsteps to fulfil, when suddenly, as he neared Damascus, he was struck to the earth, and instantly we find him casting all his plans at Christ's feet, and asking the question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Paul has been called, you know, "the fusile apostle," which means that, like molten iron, he was poured into the matrix of the divine purpose, and instantly recast. It was literally so. He was fused with a
single lightning stroke of divine revelation, and in a moment transformed to the will of God. The process will be slower with us probably, but it must be the same in fact. We must be melted before we can be moulded; we must be fused before we can be fashioned. The old will and purposes and plans must go down, in the subduing fires of the Spirit, even as the old form and fashion of the iron disappears in the liquid burning of the furnace, and then we are ready to be renewed after the image of Him who created us. Not fashioning ourselves, but submitting ourselves to be fashioned. — Oh that God would bring us to this point even while we speak, for he only is able; that we might surrender our wills, our ways, our plans, our purposes, our possessions, our very personality to the Lord, and then be restamped into his perfect image. And this is only possible as we have “the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience,” to use Peter’s words. We not merely must obey the Spirit, but we must have the Spirit by whom to obey. An obedient spirit in us is not sufficient, unless we have the spirit of obedience from God. O Holy Ghost, thou fire of heaven, melt us, subdue us, dissolve us, till we shall become utterly plastic to the Master’s touch!

Have you ever marked carefully that saying of Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, “God be
I XV1.

THE OBEDIENCE OF SONS.

thanked that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you? The idea, somewhat obscured in our English version, is, "Ye have obeyed from the heart that type of doctrine to which you were committed." The form of doctrine, the pattern and model of Christian faith, is Christ crucified and risen, as the context shows. And this idea of dead to sin and alive unto God you have obeyed, he says. You have submitted yourselves to be moulded to it, to be poured into it and completely recast by it. That is obedience: not so much a strenuous endeavor, but a strenuous submission,—an intense activity indeed, but the activity of mighty self-surrender, "doing the will of God from the heart."

Do you not see the difference between conforming yourself to the Lord, and being wrought into conformity by the Lord himself? Christ is my example, you say; and you study each day to copy and reproduce his likeness by painful imitation. What is wanted is, that you should press up against him with a yielding and ductile heart. Imitation makes us like Christ; but an obedient faith makes us to be in Christ, which is to be a new creature, and one with Christ even as he is one with the Father. Crucified and risen with Christ,—that is our model. And are we to
conform to it by self-crucifixion, by trying to kill our natural affections and to slay ourselves upon God's altar? Nay, what the gospel says to us is,
"Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Obey from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were committed. Lie down upon this divine ideal of faith till, through your plastic submission and yielding obedience, you become stamped into conformity to it. Reckoning ourselves is an act of faith through which God works in transforming us, while doing is an act of working by which we seek to transform ourselves. And the first is God's appointed method. With our strong hands we can do much for ourselves, but through our obedience God can do everything for us. Obedience, in accepting God's will, in doing his service, in following his guidance,—here is the all-potent secret of conformity to the Lord Jesus. If we have a submitted will, there is nothing too hard for the Holy Spirit to do in us. "We all with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." And so, brethren, the test of your conformity to God is here, whether you have the obedient mind that pliantly yields to and matches the crucified and risen Christ.
There is an ancient usage of which I have read, by which a covenant of friendship was ratified. The host took a piece of soft clay, and, stamping it with his seal and leaving it to harden, then gave it to his guest; and whenever and wherever, in after years, the two met, the clay formed an instant pledge of good-will, because it answered exactly to the Master's seal. And, my brethren, Christ crucified and risen is our seal. Whether we are his brethren or not does not depend upon our saying, "Lord, Lord;" but in our doing the things which he commands. Do our lives form the divine complement to his? Does his example match our heart, fitting into every turn and fold of our daily experience? Is our daily conduct a signature and fac-simile of Christ? Oh, we cannot search too eagerly for the answer to this question. We cannot pray too earnestly that we may give to it the right answer. If we wear the name of Christ, and yet have to confess that worldly conformity has been gradually effacing the lines of our likeness to the Lord Jesus, when our obedience should have daily deepened them, it were almost better that we had never known the Lord. Set the Lord always before you, and, looking daily unto him who liveth and was dead, pray with your deepest longing that you may "know him, and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings."
THE TWO ADVOCATES.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." — John xiv: 16.

The contrasts and the comparison suggested by these words are very striking; and perhaps nowhere in Scripture shall we find the relations of the second and the third persons of the Godhead more distinctly outlined than here. The Comforter promised, we shall speak of as the Advocate, since this is the rendering of the word as found in another Scripture, and since this term probably expresses more nearly the meaning of the original than any other that we can find. And remembering that Christ himself is the other Advocate, let us study the relations of the two as they are here indicated.

We shall consider, then, —

I. The personal relationship of the two Advocates.

For the very word "another" carries a strong argument for the personality of the Spirit. There
can be no comparison between a man and an influence, between a person and an attribute. If I say, "I am a man and you are another," the implication is immediate and obvious that you are another man. And so this word "another" establishes an equation between Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is like the mechanic's level laid across two objects to bring them upon the same plane. It gauges the mysterious Being who is to come by the greatness and divinity of him who is about to depart. And nowhere do we have the co-equality of Christ and the Paraclete more strongly argued than by the use of this single word, another.

I have said that the term Comforter means exactly an advocate or intercessor. Jesus was about to go to the Father, to take his place as our heavenly Advocate, and before going he pledges another Advocate to take his place on earth. What must this be that shall be deemed worthy to fill so exalted a sphere? Is it only the abiding personal influence of Jesus, as intangible as that which we name the "spirit of the age," or the "spirit of antiquity," — the shadow of Christ's personality lingering on the earth after he has gone, but fading out more and more as he recedes? No, this Comforter must be a holy and abiding person,—distinct from Jesus, or he could not be called another; coördinate with Jesus, or he could not be called
another Advocate. And so we find these predictions of what the Spirit should be, verified in every particular by his actual manifestations when he came. Not the waning influence of the departed Christ, his posthumous fame treasured in the loving traditions and holy memories of his followers, but surely dying out as the years go on,—not this was the heritage which the Lord left to his disciples as he went away. If he were only a man that is all he could have left.

Napoleon is said to have declared, a little while before he died, "When I am gone my spirit will return to France, to throb with ceaseless life in new revolutions." And his prediction was fulfilled; his military genius, the inspiration of his wonderful personality, was felt for a generation in European politics. But that influence has waned year by year, as inevitably as the echo dies away when the voice that woke it has been silenced. Not so concerning the Spirit which Jesus promised after he should depart. Instead of the diminished and ever diminishing impression of his personal presence, it was rather an augmenting of it. Christ was now alive from the dead, having all power in heaven and in earth given unto him, and another has been installed in his Church, who shall communicate his power, and execute his authority and prolong his ministry. It is not a lesser being, but
another self; not the abiding of Christ's personal influence, but the abiding of another person who is yet one with Jesus in essence.

Christ called himself "The Truth." The one whom he was to send after his departure, was to be "The Spirit of Truth." Will the light diminish then, and the instruction be curtailed, in this exchange of teachers? It is not probable; for disciples do not graduate downward in God's school any more than in man's; they who are to be taught of God are not suddenly dismissed from the tuition of a living Master to the training of a vague, impersonal influence. Hence listen to Jesus committing his disciples to his divine successor: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." I have led you a little way, he shall lead you further; I have taught you many truths, he shall teach you all truth. And he shall do this because he shall "take of mine and show it unto you." The Spirit of truth, then, is no mere effluence of the Truth, no feebler emanation of the living Teacher. He is rather an augmenting of his presence than a diminishing of it; he is a living lense for transmitting the light of Christ to eyes that were holden before his immediate personality,—nay, rather, he is himself a light, only within instead of without, impinging immediately
on the spirit instead of addressing men through the external senses.

Again, Jesus is "The Life," and he whom he should send is named "The Spirit of Life." And will there be less of renewing energy and quickening power under the ministry of the latter? So far from this, our Lord declares, "He that believeth on me the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." His going to the Father was the condition of the coming of the Spirit; and under this Spirit the Lord's own ministry was to be surpassed, and his own mighty works were to be transcended. And so it was. Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, brought three thousand to repentance by a single sermon, where the Master's preaching had won but comparatively few. The Church baptized by the Holy Ghost moves forward with an energy unapproached under the Lord's own personal guidance. Who is this that has transformed timid disciples into dauntless confessors, and ignorant apostles into illumined and burning heralds of redemption? Who is this that has multiplied the ministry of Christ in scores of preachers, and expanded and unfolded the germs of truth which he left in history and epistle and apocalypse? Surely the Church has not exchanged a person for an inspiration,— a living
being for a communicated life,—a great teacher and wonder-worker for a heavenly influence and impression. On the contrary, so personal and divine and all-powerful is this Spirit, that Christ identifies him with himself as absolutely as he distinguishes him from himself. "Another Comforter" he names him now, and immediately he says, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." That "I," which is the symbol and epitome of personality,—that in which all being and powers and attributes stand,—he freely ascribes to this Holy Being. So truly one are these two, that when he has said "I go away," he can declare, with equal emphasis, "I am with you always." Absent, yet present; another, yet the same! Surely we have touched the mysterious bounds of the Trinity here; and as those who profess to be led by the Spirit, we must be assured that we are just as truly under a personal divine guidance as were the disciples who followed Christ and were instructed by the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth.

II. The local relationship of the two Advocates.

"If I depart I will send him unto you," are words that indicate at once the two paths which bring us to these two beings. One path is upward, from earth to heaven; the other downward, from heaven to earth. If we follow the ascended
Saviour, we find him in the midst of the throne above; if we follow the descending Spirit, we find him in the midst of the Church below. How carefully and clearly is the abode of each of these divine persons defined by the Word of God! For, after all, it is the presence of God more than his omnipresence of which the Christian heart desires to be assured. God's omnipresence expands the thoughts as we meditate upon it, and realizes to us his immanence in the universe; but it is the apprehension of his presence that concentrates our thoughts, and gives us a sense of personal communion and companionship with the Holy One. Hence the distinctness with which the Scriptures localize the persons of the Trinity.

Following the path of Christ's ascension we find him established on his Father's throne. "He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." And, as though to emphasize this declaration, we have it reiterated nearly a score of times in the gospels and epistles and apocalypse. Into the temple above, into the Holy of Holies of heaven itself, Jesus, the Son of God, has now entered, and there he remains and will remain till he shall "appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

But as Christ sat down at the right hand of God at his ascension, so the Spirit, after his descent, sat
down in the Church of the redeemed on earth. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," is the record of the coming of the Comforter on the day of Pentecost. Striking symbol is this, and one on which many interpreters have dwelt, of the abiding presence, of the perpetual dwelling of the Spirit in the earthly Church. And one has only to search the Scriptures carefully to find this truth confirmed in a multitude of passages. The Church of the redeemed on earth is henceforth the "habitation of God through the Spirit." These hearts of ours, sprinkled with the blood of Christ are the Holy of holies where the Lord dwells. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost that is in you?" Oh, matchless mystery! The apostate Church has proudly arrogated to herself the title of "The Holy See;" but the lowliest tabernacle of flesh, if only it has been sanctified by the sprinkling of the blood, and hallowed by the renewing of the Spirit, is constituted by God's own authority the Holy See, the seat of the Holy One, the dwelling-place of the Most High through the Spirit.

This fact of the present, personal abiding of the Holy Spirit in the Church on earth cannot be too strongly emphasized. There is danger that we
grieve the Spirit by the unbelief that regards him as distant from us, when God has given him to abide with us perpetually. To forget an absent friend is a serious slight; but to forget a present friend, and to be so little sensible of his nearness that we put him afar off in our thoughts, is a most grievous affront. The sin of the Jews was that they knew not "the day of their visitation," and looked and prayed for a Messiah yet to come, instead of recognizing his presence when he had already come. So many pray for the Spirit now, calling to him beyond the stars to descend to us, as though we knew not that he had been here for eighteen hundred years, perpetually bearing witness on earth, and making his abode in the Church, which is "the body of Christ." I sometimes think that if Christ were to speak to us from the heavens he might repeat the words which John the Baptist uttered concerning him, —"There standeth one among you whom ye know not," — so little do we seem to apprehend this marvellous fact that the Spirit of God is personally with us and in us.

It was not so in the early Church. The presence of the Comforter seems to have been just as real a fact to the first disciples as that of Jesus had been before his departure. Read a single testimony on this point, found in the book of the Acts, — so
assured, so quiet, so almost unconscious, — "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," says Peter. The first serious controversy and dissen­sion had arisen in the Church. If Christ were present, how quickly would he be sought out to give his counsel and direction in the exigency! But he had gone into heaven, to be the Advocate of his people; yet the other Advocate had come, and so real was his presence to the disciples, so plain and decisive was his advice, that they could say with all the positiveness of a client returning from a conference with his lawyer, "It seemed good to my counsellor and myself." Would such faith were in the Church to-day! Then we should not have to determine our action merely by hand counts and majorities; then we should not forever measure the power of our churches by the number and character of names on our roll; then should we not constantly pray the Lord to be present with us according to his promise, instead of rejoicing in the fact of his presence. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." He does not come at our call: he is present by our coming. As the cloud of glory attended the tabernacle, moving where it moved and halting where it halted, so the Spirit attends the Church. The two or three believers constitute the Spirit's presence, because they are
those to whom it was said "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

If all this were very real to us, how strong should we be in the sense of divine companionship; how assured in the conviction of divine guidance; how triumphant in the sense of divine fellowship! It is not the question with the believer who is against him, but who is with him. And did he but know that he carries Christ, what obstacle could daunt him, what ignominy could turn him aside? "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye," writes Peter; "for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you." With such a convoy there should be little in this present evil world to trouble or disturb us. And least of all need we go wrong in our plans and endeavors, as God's servants, with such a counsellor attending us. He is with us as sure as Christ's word is true. And oh for the finer hearing than that of the ear, that, amid all the clashing of opinions and the confusion of counsels, we might discern the voice that has been given expressly to say to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it"!

III. The official relationship of the two Advocates.

Christ's ministry is carried on in heaven, and the Spirit's ministry is carried on in the human soul; but the two are most intimately related. "If any
man sin, *we have an Advocate with the Father,* Jesus Christ the righteous." But the other Advocate in the heart is ever counselling and cooperating with the one on high. He convinces us of the sins for whose forgiveness Jesus pleads with God. He persuades us of the righteousness which Christ exhibits before the Father. He convinces us of the judgment against sin, of which Jesus' wounded but living body is the pledge and certificate in the courts of heaven; and thus he brings our convictions, our faith, and our prayers into harmony with Christ's intercessions. For this must be so if we are to prevail with God. "Let us plead together," saith the Lord; but our hearts must not say one thing while our Intercessor says another. If we plead innocent while he pleads guilty, or if we condemn ourselves after he has procured our absolution, how can our suit succeed, and how can we find peace with God? When the client and his lawyer are not agreed, it is of no use to enter court. And that is the rash and hopeless attitude of all who pray without the Spirit,—they are ignorant of their own case, they ask for things that are contrary to the will of God,—and hence Christ cannot undertake for them, and they appear before God without counsel.

And therefore nowhere is the blessedness of the Spirit's ministry within us more apparent than here.
If a black and hideous stain were on your face, and you did not know it, would it not be the greatest kindness for one to point it out to you, especially if you were about to stand before a public assembly? The Holy Spirit is here to show us the sins, the faults, the imperfections, the stains which we could not discover ourselves, that we may not make Christ and the angels ashamed of us by going into their presence with these things all unknown and unconfessed. What shall I say? The Spirit prepares our case for Christ's advocacy, by discovering to us our heart, harmonizing our will with God's, and bringing us so into accord with Christ that he can stand for us, and with the whole energy and sympathy of his heart enter into our condition.

And what is true of individuals is equally true of the Church. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them," says Jesus. And that word "agreed" is a beautiful one in the original, meaning, to be in symphony or musical accord. But it is not possible for two to be in holy agreement among themselves unless each is attuned to the third,—the Holy Comforter. The harp-strings must be keyed to a common pitch in order to chord with each other. And this is the ministry of the Spirit within us,—to give us the divine standard, even the holy mind of God, that our
minds may be brought to chime in with it. "If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." But how can we know his will, and how can we be sure then that we do not ask amiss? Here the service of our bosom counsellor comes in. "The Spirit maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." He matches our desires to Christ's intercessions, inclines our wills to God's purposes, and so harmonizes perfectly the prayer on earth with that in heaven. Do you not see how absolutely necessary this is? Christians must be "of one accord" if they are to prevail with God. It is with their prayers as with music,—discords destroy each other by their crashing and colliding; only the harmonies sustain and bear each other upward and onward. Guided by their own will alone, a score of Christians might all be praying at cross-purposes, one desiring this thing and one the opposite, and each thereby nullifying the petition of the other. How shall they come to agreement? By the worldly method of getting the sense of the majority? Nay, "the unity of the Spirit" is the only unity that can put us in accord with heaven. Human agreements, however unanimous, are good for nothing in prayer, unless they have taken their key from God. Therefore, because "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," God
has sent this inner counsellor into our hearts, to bring our thoughts and desires into obedience to his holy mind. The earthly intercession answers at every point to the heavenly. In heaven we have an High Priest who can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." On earth "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." He "who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and sup­plications, with strong crying and tears," also pro­longs his ministry for his people above, "seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them;" while here below, in the hearts of his children, "the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." And if we cannot always interpret the language of the Spirit; if we confess ourselves unable to determine exactly what he would have us ask,—yet we are to remember the gracious saying of Scripture, that "He that searcheth the hearts," the all-seeing, holy God, "knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit." It is for us to yield our wills utterly, and to pray in the Spirit instead of in ourselves. An obedient mind will sometimes be led in prayer, as a blind man is led by his guide,—in the right way, and yet unable to see the path or to trace the footsteps. Oh, blessed privilege sometimes accorded to God's saints, to be so in the Spirit that thoughts come unbidden, language shapes
itself, and desires breathe spontaneously, as though we were in the unbroken circuit between the throne and the footstool, and God's desires were only flowing through us and returning to himself again.

But this is too rare and exalted an experience to be dwelt upon. I would rather make this truth so practical that the weakest disciple might grasp it. We read in Scripture that "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits." It is not to our spirits, as though with some distinct and supernatural voice he spoke to us to reveal the Father's will. It is rather that he addresses us through our own thoughts,—thoughts so good and true, unselfish, that we may know that they are born of God. It is no deep mystery. If you have longings after another's soul that prompt you to pray for him; if you have sympathy with another's sorrow that leads you to plead for him with the tender High Priest; if you have impulses to duties which are against the natural inclinations, and yet eminently in harmony with God's word,—you can hardly be mistaken in regarding these as the counsels of the Advocate within you. This is his mission,—to bring us into communion with God, to make our thoughts become as his thoughts, and our ways as his ways, that so we may be at one in all our supplications with the Most High.
And now, O Holy Spirit, help us to receive thee in the fulness of thine indwelling; to pray ever under the power of thy prevailing intercession; to walk according to thy holy guidance, and to live in the power of thine endless life. Discover our secret sins by thine all-searching light; kindle our dead affections with thy heavenly life, and so possess us and abide in us forever, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Amen.
XVIII.
CHRIST CALMING THE HEART.

"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come."

All the miracles of Christ are parables, and all his parables are miracles. When he does some great work of healing or life-giving he seems careful to do it in such manner as that every line and feature of it may teach us vivid spiritual truths. And when he frames some parable to illustrate the way of grace he fashions it with such power and grandeur as to make it seem a very miracle of words.

With this familiar story before us, of Christ coming to his disciples on the stormy sea, let us see what suggestions we may find in it for our spiritual instruction and comfort.

I. Consider the Master's invitation, — "And he said, Come."

There are two ways in which Christ gives peace to the tempest-tossed soul, — by quieting the winds and waves without, or by calming the doubts and
fears within. Once, when the disciples were affrighted in the storm, he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. Here he rebukes the disciples' fears by his words, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid;" and instantly in their hearts there is a great calm. This is evident from the readiness of Peter to step out upon the water. Instead of fear, such an extraordinary fearlessness has been inspired by the Master's words that he proposes to go to him on the waves. "Come," says the Lord. It is what he is always saying to his people, who are in perils on the deep and in the stress of temptation and suffering. He calls them out into his divine protection and fellowship, where is perfect peace. How striking his words: "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." The world can only effect the outward conditions of peace. By law or by force, by treaty or by truce, it may quiet the tumult of the waters or the rage of wicked men. But this is all. It knows nothing of giving the inner peace of the soul. That secret is with the "God of peace," and with his Son, whom he has sent to give it to men. Hence, Christ's way for the present is to speak to the heart rather than to the winds and waves. He says, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid," rather than to the sea, "Peace, be
still." In other words, the Lord's present purpose with his Church seems to be to give it his peace in the world rather than to give it the peace of the world.

How perfectly did his prophetic eye, ranging through this present age, discern what we are now beholding,—"Distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear"! And, for the time that now is, this state of things must continue unchecked. But to us who are toiling in the waves, battling with sin, buffeted with men's defiant godlessness and swelling pride, he says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." That is all we need,—for the heart of Christ is in eternal calm. It is the centre of the worlds where all agitations cease and the stillness of God reigns unbroken. And this calm he calls us to share. "Peace I leave with you." That is enough. A peaceful heart can silence all the storms of the world without, and make them as though they were not. No matter what sins and tumults and terrors rage about us, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee."

And this is the meaning and purpose of Christ's call to us who are in this present evil world;—not, first, to the conquest of the world, or the subjection of its warring elements to our will. That
is impossible for the present at least. But he calls us unto himself; into the blessed tranquillity which he has won for us by his own conquest. “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world,” he says. And what, then, are we to do? Battle with our own weapons; fortify our own will; assail evil in our own strength,—in order that we, as imitators of him, may overcome the world also? Nay, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Surrender to Christ, not conquest of the world, is our first business. Hence, the great gospel-call that sounds through this age, to the tempted and storm-tossed, is not “conquer,” but “come.” Instead of fighting for peace, get Christ’s peace to fight from and with, first of all.

If, then, we designate this miracle as a calming of the sailor, instead of a calming of the sea, it will suggest to us the truest picture of that change which takes place in the heart when it comes to Christ. Conversion is not the harmonizing of the soul with its surroundings, or the adjustment of the surroundings to the soul. It is rather the harmonization of the soul with its Lord, so that it may have the peace of God amid the tumult of the elements, and the rest of Christ amid the rage and riot of surrounding evil. Like the ship’s chronometer, which is so curiously adjusted by its compound bearings that it remains perfectly
motionless amid the most tumultuous motion of the sea, maintains its perfect level when the vessel is plunging and careening in every direction, and keeps perfect time with the hidden sun when all the lights of heaven have been put out; so with the soul which Christ takes into communion with himself, while yet abiding in the flesh and in the world. It has the peace of heaven amid the rage and tempests of earth. It has fellowship with the divine righteousness amid all the evil and unrighteousness of this sinful world; and thus it learns the secret of the prophet's words, that "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever."

II. Consider Peter's venture. "And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus."

He came down out of the ship. The true way of peace is "out of self and into Christ." Self is the frail and unseaworthy bark on which we are trying to sail over the sea of life. Buffeted and beaten and tempest-tossed as men are, they yet have a great reluctance to leave the ship and go to Christ. They would rather take a new tack in the old life than to abandon it for a new. They would rather tighten and repair the old vessel than to have it condemned, and "sent out of com-
mission," as the phrase is. Peter might have said, "Oh, well, notwithstanding the peril to which we are exposed, we haven't gone down yet; and the old boat that has carried us through many storms will weather this, I think. I believe I will stand by the ship." But, no! He said, "Here is a man that can walk on the water, that can rule the raging of the sea and still the waves thereof. I am likely to be shipwrecked if I stay in the vessel. I cannot be wrecked if I am in the arms of Christ." And so he comes down out of the ship and goes to Jesus.

And here, friends, in type and figure you have the whole question between moralism and faith. "Rouse your moral principle, stir up the good that is in you, bend your will in doing right," shouts the hopeful moralist in the ear of the man who is struggling in the waves of temptation. "That is what I have been trying to do these many years," answers the poor man; "and all the time I have been failing and failing. And now I am nigh unto shipwreck: my rudder is gone; I have lost my will-power; I have no anchor, and I am just drifting on a perilous and unknown sea. I am fast going to pieces; sin and misery seem to be pouring in through every crack and fissure of my shattered nature. Tell me, is there no escape for me?" Yes: "out of self into Christ." Renounce
self-help, flee from your own strength, and lay hold of Jesus Christ.

Now, I know how humiliating this doctrine is to many among us. The nobility and dignity of human nature are favorite terms. To depreciate or question man's natural capacity for doing right is to many a greater offence than to speak slightly of Jesus Christ. And so high an estimate do some seem to put upon man's natural and inherent worth, that it is easier to convince them of the divinity of human nature than of the divinity of Jesus Christ. "This religion that sends all men into spiritual chancery," they say; "that compels them to take the poor debtor's oath, and to acknowledge that all their moral assets are only as so much filthy rags, we cannot, away with it."

But, in saying that man is naturally inclined to evil, and powerless to find full deliverance from sin except through Jesus Christ, I affirm what I am sure is not only according to Scripture, but according to the universal experience of human nature. An honest heart, that of Paul, uttered the confession, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" and myriads of hearts have echoed it back. There is such an aptitude to sin in our nature, such an affinity for evil,—and, alas! such an inability, if not disinclination, for good. We
have to confess that the heart is by nature more inclined to evil than to good; more tenacious of wrong impressions than of right; more prone to habits of sin than of righteousness. Just as Scripture says: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." And one could not frame language to express the doctrine of depravity in stronger terms than that. Therefore, because human nature is not only weak and helpless, but incapable of saving itself, I exhort you to let go of confidence in it, and lay hold on Christ, and become "partaker of the divine nature" which is in him. It requires courage and fortitude, I confess, to take this step. From self-righteousness to self-abandonment, from doing to trusting, is almost as great a change as from standing in the boat to stepping on the water. "Peter walked on the water to go to Jesus," Faith is like walking on the waves. We do not see what is going to hold us up; how we are going to be saved. Christ calls us to come to him; but in going we have to "walk by faith and not by sight." We have to step upon the promise which we cannot see, in order to reach the Lord whom we can see. We have to trust, in order to get the assurance of salvation, instead of trusting because we have the assurance of salvation. Be-
between sinking self and the solid Christ, lies the word of faith upon which we must venture, with nothing to hold us up but the "Verily, verily" of our Lord. If we step upon the promise we shall certainly find the Promiser, but not without. The law of grace is unchanging in this particular. As the waters of the Jordan stood between the Israelites and the land of Canaan, so the promise of God stands between us and salvation,—a barrier to keep us out, if we refuse to believe; a boundary to mark our entrance, if we believe. But, as that water divided and revealed the solid earth the very moment the feet of the priests touched its brim, so with the promise. The slightest act of faith, the trust of the heart expressed in the confession of the mouth, is enough, to bring us from trust to assurance, from submission to the experience of everlasting life.

"The steps of faith fall on the seeming void,
And find the rock beneath."

III. Consider Peter's momentary despair and his final safety. "And when he saw the wind boisterous he was afraid, and began to sink."

The perilous time for the soul comes at the moment between letting go of self and laying hold of Christ. It is the trough of the sea, between self-surrender and faith, where many a soul has
been submerged. For the man that gives up self, without at once laying hold of Christ, is almost certain to sink into despair. Repentance is the repudiation of self, and faith is the acceptance of Christ, and between the two is a gulf where many a man has been drowned in perdition. Let a person become utterly discouraged in battling with the winds and waves of temptation, and, if he goes no further, the chances are that he will surrender to despair and go to the bottom. To be half converted, therefore, which is to be penitent and sorry and humble, is a dangerous thing, unless you are wholly converted by believing and trusting and hoping in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And yet I have no doubt that the Lord lets men fall into this condition of temporary despair sometimes, for the sake of testing them and disciplining them. Peter was full of self-confidence, and so, no doubt, the Lord let him sink just enough to take the pride out of him. He would not have drowned him, on any condition, after he had bid him come to him. But he wished to dampen his self-confidence and deepen his humility. And the experience was effective. Instantly he cries, "Lord, save me." He might have put his fingers in his ears and gone down, hearing only the wild gurgling and the dismal moan of the waters as he sunk. That would have been self-despair, ending in
death; but instead of that, his faith laid hold of Christ, and self-despair ended in salvation. For immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him, and said unto him, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” He had a little faith, but more doubt; and hence would have quickly gone down, like a ship whose ballast is greater than its buoyancy, had not the Master interposed. But, mark you, the Lord saved him, even with his little faith. For he only asks for faith like a grain of mustard-seed in order to insure his interposition. He does not set us to throwing over the ballast of our doubts, or unloading the rubbish of unbelief, before he will do anything for us. A little faith, because it can cry “Lord, save,” is enough to bring deliverance to us. And so “the same Lord over all, who is rich unto all that call upon him,” says to the woman of Canaan, “O woman, great is thy faith;” and to the man of Galilee, “O thou of little faith,”—and then crowns the great faith and the little faith with the same blessing. For it is written that “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

So, friends, who have fallen into temporary self-despair, take courage. Like Peter, you may have been vain confident, and from your elevation of assurance you may have fallen into the hollow of
the sea. Behind you is the crest of the wave on which you stood a moment ago, so reliant and self-assured; but now you are in the deep, crying, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me." But be of good cheer. The Son of God is standing on the crest of the next wave. And in the volume of the book it is written of him, "The floods have lifted up, O Lord! the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up the waves. The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." There is no surge of anger or temptation which he cannot instantly still. There is no depth of despair from which he cannot instantly lift you. The little faith, that cries, "Lord, save," will instantly insure the help of Him who "stilleth the noise of the seas and the tumult of the people."—"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught him." We can hold on to Christ when we are strong; he holds on to us when we are weak. And we may thank God for any adversity or overthrow which changes our position from that of holding to that of being held. An old saint, who had very vivid experiences of temptation, says, "Satan came to me and said, 'What are you doing?'—'Holding on to Christ,' I replied. 'I will cut off your hands then, so that you cannot hold on,' he replied. 'If you cut off my hands, so that
I cannot hold on to Christ,' I replied, 'then he will reach out his hands and hold on to me, and you cannot cut off his hands.' Oh, blessedly true are these words! God sometimes sends us sharp adversities to sunder our hands, and bitter defeats to paralyze our arms; but it is only that in our helplessness of self we may fall into his hands, and learn trust instead of self-confidence, and exchange holding on, for resting in, the everlasting arms.

The sense of being laid hold of by Christ's mighty grasp is what the strongest and the weakest of us alike need. The faith that holds to Christ may be numbed by doubt or temptation. But there is a promise that doubt cannot touch: "I, the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will keep thee." Doubt may pluck Christ out of our hands, and we may for a while seem to lose him; but doubt cannot pluck us out of his hands. For he says, "Neither shall any pluck them out of my hands." May God help us amid all trials and tempests to the end, that we may be brought into a more constant resting in the hands of the Lord our Keeper.
XIX.

THE VIRGIN'S LAMP.

"Watch therefore: for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."—Matt. xxv: 13.

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." We have no startling prediction to make, my brethren, of the nearness of the Lord's return. But it is surely always becoming that we should trim the lamp which the Master has put into our hand, with which to watch out the unknown interval of his absence, and to watch in his triumphant advent to the earth. The "beaten oil" of the sanctuary which we are wont to commend so highly, you remember, was "for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually." The sanctuary has disappeared, and the seven-branched golden candlestick is no more. But "Ye are the temple of God," and Christ is in you "the hope of glory"; and, with all our preaching of faith and charity, we must not forget sometimes to trim the lamp of hope, to feed it with the promises and prophecies which the Spirit has appointed to this end.
And, therefore, let us attend, while the text shall open to us these two thoughts:—

I. The event of Christ's second personal coming is most distinctly revealed.

We are not called to watch for a merely possible or remotely probable occurrence. Never are we admonished that we know not whether our Lord shall come, though we are admonished that we know not the hour of his coming. On the contrary, the Scriptures are crowded with statements of the certainty, of the literalness, of the visibility, and of the personality of his return to the earth. And, lest there should be any mistake, reiteration comes in to enforce assertion, and emphasis to enforce reiteration. "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." It must be evident, from these texts, that inspiration anticipated the denials, refinings, and misconceptions from which this doctrine should suffer, and so provided against them. For a bare repetition of these texts furnishes the best possible answer to all the various theories of a figurative or spiritual advent.

"The destruction of Jerusalem was the coming of Christ," says one. "When Titus descended upon the doomed city, with the shout of his Ro-
man legions, then was the promise fulfilled."—
"The Lord himself shall descend," repeats the
word of God. "The occurrence of death is
Christ's coming to receive his people," says
another.—"This same Jesus shall so come," reit­
erates the Holy Scripture. "The diffusion of the
gospel, and the gradual transformation which it
effects in human civilization, is the coming of the
 Redeemer," says another.—"The Lord himself
shall descend," still resounds the word. All this
is plain, and yet, alas! that the Master has need
again to convince his servants of his continued
personality; that they have so diffused him into
history, so confounded him with death, so dissi­
pated him into a vague and shadowy presence that
we can almost hear him saying to them, as of old
he did to his disciples when they mistook him for
an apparition: "Behold my hands and my feet,
that it is I myself." Jesus has not lost his identity,
or so merged it with history, or with providence,
or with death, that we must look in these things
for his coming. "I will come again," he says.
"Behold I come quickly." And this "I," which
is the sacred seal of personality, "that by which
one knows and is to be known throughout eternity,"
he has never lent or transferred to another,—
except only to the Holy Spirit, who is one and
coequal with himself. He did come, invisibly and
spiritation, in the advent of the Comforter. But his visible, bodily return still remained as an unfulfilled promise. And on the last page of Revelation we hear him speaking: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. . . . Surely I come quickly. Amen."

Still farther is the real and personal return of Christ enforced by the explicit descriptions of the event given in the Scriptures. It is not simply the same Jesus,—no substitute, no commissioned messenger, no typical event,—but he "shall so come in like manner" as he went. He went up visibly, from eager eyes that recognized him as the veritable Lord; from outstretched hands that had handled him as the Word of life, and as he was parted from them "a cloud received him out of their sight." And so shall he return, visibly, personally, gloriously. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him."

All this, if heeded and pondered, is calculated to keep us from the error so especially prevalent in these times,—the error of spiritualizing the substance and reality out of Christ's promises. Reason always allegorizes the grand realities of Scripture when it touches them; but the heart is a rigid literalist. Its affections are never content with shadows, or semblances, or substitutes. If
the Church had always kept her bridal love for her absent Lord, she would never have admitted even the suggestion of an impersonal advent. It must be suspected that only a fondness for this present world, and an indifference to the glorious hope of the Church, could ever have begotten such a thought. What we dread, or dislike to believe, we easily dissipate into vagueness and unreality. The unbelieving, to whom Christ's coming means only judgment and terror, would naturally wish to forget it, and explain away its reality. But what of her of whom the apostle wrote, "I have espoused you unto one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"? Will the bride with the letter from her betrothed husband in her hand, saying, "Surely I come quickly," admit the suggestion that he means simply that he will send some mysterious stranger to bring her to himself, or forward some kindly provisions for rendering her comfortable and contented with his absence, so that she shall be less inclined to "love his appearing," and to look for it?

"Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." He shall come to save from the world those whom he is now saving in the world; to complete their redemption, to present them "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," and to
usher in the marriage of the Lamb. He shall come to right all wrong, to consummate all good; to remove the curse from our groaning earth; to wipe away all tears from off all faces; to silence pain, and to swallow up death in victory. No promise is more constantly repeated, as none is more sacred than this. If Christians shall cease to wait for their returning Lord, creation groaning and travailing together in pain will not. If those whom he has redeemed with his precious blood do not rejoice with singing at every sign of his approach then "let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then let all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth."

Personal coming?—"If I know not that God is a person, I know not that I am a person," said a great theologian. We may say likewise: If I am not sure of Christ's personal return, I am not sure of my personal vision of his face. If I am not certain that he shall "appear in glory," I am not certain that I shall "appear with him in glory." His identity at the advent with the man of Nazareth, the man of Calvary, the man of Olivet, is the pledge of my own identity at that day. All reality, recognition, reunion, remembrance, and
fellowship in the resurrection state seem to me to be involved in the question whether he who shall come is the same Jesus, or only some shadowy substitute, or some veiled and providential manifestation of his presence. "Blessed," therefore, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." The personality that survived the grave has survived all the intervening centuries unchanged and unchangeable. And when his appearing shall be ushered in, it will be that of the man Christ Jesus, the same holy face, the same pierced hands, the same gracious voice, as at the first. This, then, is the doctrine to which the Scriptures commit your faith. You may believe in Christ coming in temporal judgment, coming in the crises of history, coming in the triumphs of Christianity, coming in the article of death; but do you believe and confess "Jesus Christ coming in the flesh," 1 — in that veritable body of flesh and bones which he carried up into heaven? This was the confession of apostles and martyrs and reformers; and this is the creed that needs to be emphasized anew in

1 1 John 1: 7. So Lange and Alford translate εκ τοῦ θρόνου,—the same word as in Rev. 1: 8, "which is, which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."
an age so given to spiritualizing and attenuating
the plain and literal facts of Scripture.

II. The time of Christ's second coming is abso-
lutely unrevealed.

"Why should we watch for an event of whose
date we are entirely ignorant?" is a question often
asked. That is the very reason why, according to
the Scripture, we should watch for it: "Watch,
therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

There is the same dogmatic uncertainty in regard
to the time of Christ's second coming, as there is
dogmatic certainty in regard to the fact. The
date is as truly an inspired secret as the event is
an inspired revelation. "Know ye not?" is a ques-
tion which Christ and the apostles are constantly
asking. And we find the words always applied to
something so distinctly revealed that there should
be no excuse for being ignorant of it. But when
the question of the date of Christ's second advent
is raised, we find just the opposite language used:
"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons
which the Father hath put in his own power." "But
of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the
angels of heaven, but my Father only." And it is
because of this ignorance of the date of the Lord's
appearing, that we are so earnestly enjoined to
watch; or, to reverse the statement, we may sup-
pose that God withholds the revelation of this
secret in order to train his Church in watchfulness and hope and vigilant expectation. For have you never reflected that the union of a certainty and an uncertainty constitutes the very strongest motive to activity? The sight of the firm, rocky shore gives hope and courage to the drifting mariner; but the unknown shoals and the unsounded depths lying between make him exceedingly careful in guiding his course, lest he be wrecked. What is known inspires confidence; what is unknown begets circumspection. If the date of Christ's return were as certain as the fact of it, the expectant watchfulness and carefulness, which he enjoined upon his disciples in view of the event, could hardly have been maintained. Had he told them, for example, that he would certainly come back, and that his coming would be exactly two thousand years from his ascension, how impossible it would have been for his Church to keep her lamp trimmed and burning, in perpetual anticipation of his return, and her loins girded about in diligent occupying till he should come! Wisely did he join with the declared certainty of his advent, the explicit uncertainty as to its time, that so the returning Bridegroom "might live in our faith and hope, remote yet near, pledged to no moment, possible at any; worshipped not with the consternation of a near, or the indifference
of a distant certainty, but with the anxious vigilance that awaits a contingency ever at hand.”

And this solemn duty of watchfulness is still further enforced by startling declarations of immediateness joined with those of chronological uncertainty. With the “Ye know neither the day nor the hour” is blended the “Behold, I come quickly;” with the “In such an hour as ye think not” is mingled the “Behold, the Judge standeth before the door.” There are no contradictions; no retractions in later Scriptures of what has been declared in earlier; no emendations or modifications. But, taken altogether, the advent texts constitute a most marvellous blending of checks and incentives,—checks upon the presumption that would fix the time of the Lord's return, with incentives to alert and eager looking for the event of that return. And these admonitions must be apprehended in their mutual relations and received with an unquestioning faith, and neither a cold unbelief nor a calculating exegesis must be allowed to disorder the delicate mechanism of motives which they constitute. For here emerges a theoretical difficulty, which we must note in passing. “If the apostles lived in the constant expectation of the Lord’s return, they entertained a mistaken hope,” says the skeptic, “and there-

1 Archer Butler.
fore they were not inspired.” The Christian interpreter, taking alarm at this objection, has sometimes been ready to defend the apostles by attempting to show that they did not really cherish such expectation. For us, we are bold to say that they maintained the expectation, and were not mistaken, and were inspired. They did but simply cherish the watchful anticipation which the Master had enjoined upon them, and teach it to their disciples. They give proof of their inspiration by prolonging and reiterating the doctrine they had received from him, of the certainty, the unknown date, and the ever-impending nearness of this great event. Paul but echoes the words of Jesus when he writes to Titus of “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” and the Thessalonian Christians showed their true spiritual kinship with Christ's immediate disciples, in that Paul could write to them commendingly that they had “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven.”

And if we study the New Testament as a whole, we find that the impression which it makes upon the mind is consistent and unvarying respecting this point. It seems to have been ordained and shaped so as to keep the Church in a state of constant and
kindled expectancy. The same peculiarity which marks Old Testament prophecy characterizes that of the New Testament, — the absence of perspective in its pictures of future events. Near and distant horizons are so blended in the outlining of the Spirit that they seem to be equally close to us, and are only separated by the fulfilments of history. We hear Jesus, in his great discourse upon the end, thus constantly bringing together the immediate and the remote. He blends predictions of the end of the Jewish age and the end of the Christian age without distinguishing them; descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem are mingled mysteriously with those of the judgment, of which it is a type. He says that "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled;" and in saying so he employs a word that not only can be applied to those then living, but be expanded to the scattered but indestructible Jewish race, which is to remain till his return. He declares that the gospel must first be preached among all nations before the end can come. And within a narrower interpretation so it was preached in the apostles' own time.1 And now we behold the prophecy sweeping out into its larger and world-wide fulfilment. Thus it is all through the discourse, — the figurative pointing onward to the literal, the type

1 Col. i: 23.
to the reality, the briefer period to the longer.
“A little while and ye shall not see me, and again
a little while and ye shall see me,” says the Lord;
and the perplexed question of his disciples, “What
is this that he saith, a little while?” has never since
ceased to be asked and repeated. The words had
their fulfilment in the resurrection of Christ, after
his three days’ absence in the grave. Glorious
prophecy and epitome was this of that other com­
ing back, after the unknown days of the Church’s
bereavement and widowhood while the Bridegroom
should be absent. But the epitome is not the
whole. For after Christ is risen, and gone into
heaven, the Spirit takes up the words once more,
and in the Epistle to the Hebrews repeats them
to us: “For yet a little while, and he that shall
come will come, and will not tarry.” Thus each
promise leads forward to another; mountain peak
of fulfilling prophecy looks onward to mountain
peak; the vision is perpetually lifted up, the steps
are constantly beckoned on. We know not how
soon the “little while” shall be completed, but at
every turn in the fulfilling prophecy we can say,
“Now is our salvation nearer than when we be­
lieved.” If the Church of the whole apostolic age
continued watching; if for three hundred years
onward this watching was prolonged, and believers lived under the perpetual inspiration of this
great hope, — were they disappointed? Surely not. Those who implicitly believe and faithfully obey the Lord cannot be disappointed; but the Lord, we fear, is sadly and painfully disappointed with us if we have put out our lamps, and taken up the unfaithful servant's creed, "My Lord delayeth his coming."

The Master has set us upon the look-out; and all his commands and promises, as well as all fulfilling prophecy, conspire to keep us there. We remember sailing over a beautiful lake in Switzerland, journeying to the village that lay at its opposite end. Again and again, as the encircling hills shut in about us, the further shore seemed certainly close at hand, and our destination nearly reached. But, rounding a projecting point, the aspect would change, the mountains would part once more, and another broad expanse of water would lie stretched out before us. Thus, by a singular peculiarity of the landscape, the journey's end seemed always imminent, and yet constantly receding. It was striking to observe how this feature of the journey affected the voyagers. Not a passenger was found at the ship's stern gazing backward. Every one was on the look-out. All eyes were bent forward in eager expectation, till at last the destined harbor was reached. Now all the commands and promises
of Christ put us on the outlook; every great juncture of fulfilling history sets us on the watch to discern whether the day-dawn is not approaching, whether the eternal hills are not closing in to bring the end of the age. The impulse which is inspired to watch, to expect, to be ready to disembark, however vain it may seem to men, has the authority of God's word, and the admonitions of all the history of the Church, for its support. And, more than this, while none can know the day or the hour of the advent, we carry with us a chart of the Church's history to tell us approximately where in our stormy and perilous voyage we are. The Apocalypse is like the sealed orders given to an admiral, which he is not to open till on the sea. Its weird, mysterious pages contain the whole map and delineation of the Church's career from the ascension to the return of the Lord; but it was left to time to break the seals of this book and to discover its meaning. This it has been doing; and as, corresponding to this chart, headland after headland of prophetic history has been descried, these have been recognized by the students who have been searching diligently what and what manner of time the Spirit did signify in penning this prophecy; and, though they have read no announcement of day or hour upon them, they have found them displaying the same cautionary
signal with which the Church started. "Behold, I come as a thief; blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments." It is a warning startling enough to indicate, that, though we know not how near the end of the age we may be, yet we are nearing it.

"Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning," therefore. There is enough of certainty in this subject to feed the lamp of our faith; and enough of uncertainty to make us very careful and solicitous, lest when the Bridegroom comes we be found among the foolish virgins, saying, "Our lamps are gone out."

The chief point is, that this hope have a living and abiding place in our affections and our thoughts. "Thought," says a Christian father, "is the sleepless lamp of the soul." It is a lamp, indeed, that burns with varying brightness,—flaming up in moments of intense study and utterance, and dying down in sleep till there is only the pale glimmer that remains in dreams. But it is a lamp that is never really quenched; for, however profound the slumber, it only requires a word to wake us and to bring all our mental powers into instant activity. Thus must it be with the holy lamp of watchfulness,—always trimmed and burning, but not of necessity shining always in full strength.
That is to say, we need not be every moment thinking of Christ's return, talking of it and preaching it. There should be ever in our hearts the calm certainty and the sober hope that keep us ready for this event at any moment. But this hope should rather minister to us than be ministered to by us. Instead of perpetually dwelling on it and reiterating it, we should be lighted by it in our busy toil of gathering the guests for the marriage-feast, and doing the work which our absent Lord has committed to us. Ready always to give to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in us, we should yet show the value of our lamp by the holy service into which it guides our feet, and the diligent piety which it makes visible in our lives.

Little can men believe that such an expectation as this can have any very practical effect upon the life. The current opinion is that an accomplished event must exert more influence over us than an unaccomplished; that faith must affect us more powerfully than hope, experience than expectation. But God's thoughts are not always our thoughts. He has made this hope of Christ's return the supreme incentive to service and consecration. Are we exorted to patience? This is the motive. "Be ye also patient; stablish your heart; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Would we be
inspired to diligence, we hear the Master saying to us, "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be." Would we discover the secret of purity, we find it written that "Every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." Are we encouraged to endure trial? This is the motive, that we "may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Are we exhorted to abide in constant communion with Christ? It is "that when he shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

And thus it is written in scores of texts. All our service and worship and comfort are keyed to this divine hope. The command is, "Occupy till I come;" to observe the Lord's Supper "till he come;" "Hold fast till I come;" and "judge nothing until the Lord come."

Up, therefore, Christian! Trim your lamp; let its beams shine forth to meet and mingle with the first advancing rays of the bright and morning star. And let its light meantime show you the way to every path of self-denial, to every work of faithful service and testimony, and to every avenue of holiness and purity of life. Thus, with girded loins, with busy hands, with uplifted eyes and with radiant faces, may you be ready to meet your de-
scending Lord, and to exult in his glorious appearing, saying, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."
"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them which were nigh." — Eph. ii: 17.

"THINK not I am come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword," says Jesus. And how can we reconcile the words with those now before us? Evidently by remembering that he brings peace by the sword; conversion comes through conviction, healing through wounding, the peace of God through the word of God, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit." When Christ crucified is preached, and we see how he was wounded for our transgressions, it must bring contrition if the Spirit applies the word, and we shall be pricked in the heart as they were on the day of Pentecost. But the risen Christ appears preaching peace to those who have been convicted and slain by his word and his cross. And to such let our text speak to-day.
I. The peace which Christ preaches is the result of his conflict and victory on the cross.

In the passage from which my text is taken it is first said that Christ "made peace," and then that he "preached peace." And this is very important to be noted. He did not make peace by declaring it; he declared it because he had made it. Men often put words before deeds, and promises before performances; but Christ never does. His work stands ever as the solid background of his word. What he promises to us is always backed and buttressed by what he has performed for us.

Now, I think the great mistake which superficial readers of the New Testament make about the gospel is, that they do not recognize the antecedent relation of Christ's work to his gifts and promises. The scheme of salvation which they deduce from the Scriptures is deficient in this, that it lacks perspective, if I may say so; like a Chinese picture, in which all the objects are in the foreground, with no relief of darker shades and deeper lines, so that they see Christ's peace and pardon as the prominent things in the gospel, without seeing the cross, the punishment of sin, the battle with death, and the bloody victory over the powers of darkness, which constitute the groundwork of this peace. Why cannot God pardon sin, and give the
sinner peace, it is asked, without the intervention of atonement? When your child has offended, and is sorry, and asks forgiveness, you do not feel obliged to require one of the other children to stand as substitute for him, and to receive the chastisement that belongs to him, before you can consent to pardon him; and why should God require such a condition? Well, perhaps the family is not a perfect picture of the universe. There may be holy spectators to the scene of human guilt to whom it may be needful to make an exhibition of God's hatred of sin. There may be other worlds than ours which have heard of God's ancient decree, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and before whom a righteous God must show himself true to his word. There is much of mystery about the punishment of sin, as there is about the origin of sin. We do not profess to solve the mystery. But, since human relationships have been referred to, we do assert that in the dealing of man with man it is constantly found impossible to forgive and remit the penalty of wrong-doing. When a man in the highest circles of society has committed forgery, and confesses his crime, and is deeply penitent, declaring that he did it under the pressure of overwhelming and well-nigh irresistible temptation, why cannot the governor pardon him at once? Ah! there is the sanctity of law,
which he is sworn to protect; there are the claims of justice, which must be vindicated; there is public sentiment, watching with its hundred jealous eyes, which he dare not defy. Hence, however deeply the heart of the chief magistrate may be touched at the sorrow of the offender and the distress of his family, he cannot, he dare not, pardon him. And so I take the question which is often asked, and asked with an assurance which implies that it settles the whole controversy, "Is God less merciful than man?" I answer, No! He is infinitely more merciful. He can pardon where man can only punish. He can make heaven's doors swing open to men whose prison doors we dare not open. He can accept men in the other world whom we have been obliged to swing out of this world on a gallows. Aye; man can be merciful where the claims of justice do not forbid; but only of God can that magnificent thing be said, that he is "just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

To come back now to the point which I am emphasizing. The thing which we want as sinners is peace with God. And I say to you now, with the fullest confidence in the truth of what I utter, that that peace may be yours, on this very day and at this very hour, if you will accept it. It is not a peace which is fenced about by hard condi-
tions. It is not a peace that has to be wrung from God's hand by any prolonged toil and agony of soul. It is yours, if by the simplest exercise of faith you will receive it. "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But, while this is all true, it is equally true that, on Christ's part, that peace is at the cost of unutterable toil and conflict. Pluck the fruit of peace with God, O sinner! — it is ripe and ready to drop into your soul at the gentlest touch of faith. But, oh, forget not that the only tree in the universe that yields that peace is the cross of Christ. And that tree is a tree of life to us only because it was a tree of death to Christ. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations only because he was punished there "by whose stripes ye were healed." It gives peace to the world now only because there the Captain of our Salvation fought with death and conquered for us. And this is the answer we would make those who object to the terms of peace which we propose, on the ground that they make no demand for heroic endeavor on our part; that they lay no necessity on us for spiritual effort and toil; that they call for surrender instead of conflict and valor. Yes; but there was conflict enough on the part of the Redeemer to purchase that peace for us. If it is a free gift to us, it was costly enough
for him. When Cæsar had bestowed a rare present upon one of his friends, the recipient of the gift said to him, "This is too costly a gift for me to receive."—"But it is not too costly for me to give," said the emperor. The peace of God may be too costly a gift for us to receive, for the mere taking of it; but it is not too costly for Christ to give. He earned it, if we are not required to earn it. He paid enough for it, though it is without money and without price to us. No, we are not mistaken in saying that peace is proclaimed from the cross of Christ, and that it can come to you through a single look at that cross. But let us go around to the back side of the cross and study the awful conflict that was behind this front of blessed peace. We shall find that each benediction that is offered to us is rooted in the exceeding sorrow of him who for our sakes was made a curse. We shall find that each thread in that robe of righteousness that is put on us was wrought by his bleeding toil who was made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." And thus we shall learn anew that Christ preached peace to us only because by his death he had conquered peace for us. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God." It costs us only faith to be justified. "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." It cost Christ
his own blood to justify us. "My peace I give unto you," says Jesus. — Nothing for us to do but simply to take it. "Having slain the enmity by the cross, so making peace," that is what it cost Christ to give us peace. And that great price must always be kept before us, lest we lightly esteem our peace. And, more, it must be always kept before us, that we may be assured of the solid ground on which that peace rests.

Have you ever noticed as bearing on this point that inimitable description of Christ's first announcement of his peace after his resurrection? If an ambassador were to go to a rebellious people carrying the tidings of peace he would be likely first to announce the proclamation of peace, and then to show them the written documents and credentials to support it. So did Jesus. He had just risen from the dead. "And at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, then came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you;' and when he had so said he showed them his hands and his side." Yes, thou mighty ambassador from God! These were the proofs and credentials of thy peace! These scars of thy conflict are our security. These marks of thy passion are our title-deeds of peace; these nail-prints and spear-marks are our certificates to
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assure us that thy ransom was accepted when thou didst offer up thyself without spot unto God. Here, then, O believer, is the ground on which your assurance rests. Christ's conflict, waged for us, and waged to the end, is the present and eternal security for our entering into peace. And when that gentle benediction is let fall upon your heads, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus," remember that that benediction rests upon the accomplished and eternal fact that "the God of peace hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, in the blood of the Everlasting Covenant."

Observe again, that —

II. The peace which Christ preached has its security now in the person of Christ on the throne.

For in this connection we find it said not only that he "made peace," but that "he is our peace." This, you see, refers to his person, as the other expression refers to his work. And this again corresponds with what is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews in regard to Christ's present office,—he has gone "into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us;" not to do for us or to die for us any more, but to appear for us, to present himself to God on our behalf. Since, then, he who is our peace is there, our assurance of faith
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depends not upon that clear, discriminating inlook by which we can say, "I see where I stand," but upon that penetrating and unclouded uplook by which, with the dying Stephen, we can say, "I see Jesus standing at the right of God."

Understand what I mean. It is the external fact that gives value and certainty to inward experience, and not *vice versa*. If you are a believer you have "Christ in you the hope of glory;" but Christ in you is but the appropriation and realization of that unchanging fact of Christ for you on the throne. Therefore no inner experience is of any value which does not come to us as the apprehension and transcript of this outward reality. And to fix your faith on Christ within you as the basis of your assurance were like the astronomer pointing his telescope to the reflection of a star in the water, instead of pointing it to the star itself in the heavens. I am not disparaging Christian experience, or undervaluing the testimony of consciousness for establishing the believer's peace; only it is not sufficient of itself. Feeling may be the reflection of feeling, emotion the reflection of emotion, all beginning and ending in the heart itself. One, by too habitual attention to his frames and feelings, can turn his soul into a whispering-gallery for echoing, and resounding his own emotions, instead of making it, as he ought, an
oratory for receiving and recording communications from the Lord. There is no authority in feeling. There is no infallibility in consciousness. The "I am" and the "I say" of our Lord are our final appeal, and ever must be. And it is faith's supreme office to transform that which is true for us in Christ into something true, and living, and real, in our own experience. It strikes the revealed and indisputable fact of what Christ is, and reasons down to what we are by virtue of our union with him through faith. "As he is so are we in this world," says John. And we are not to reverse God's method, and in searching for peace to gather up the hints and intimations which we find in our own hearts, and frame them into an assurance. We are to grasp the great central fact of Christ our peace and rest in it as the end of all controversy, — no longer trying to make peace or to keep peace with God, but letting the peace of God that passeth all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Have we sufficiently noticed how the Scriptures, in seeking to assure us of our standing as Christians, take our eyes away from ourselves and carry our vision always up to the risen Lord upon the throne? Hear Paul. "Who is he that condemneth?" And what follows as the ground of his exulting challenge? Does he appeal to the testimony
of an unwavering personal conviction? Does he bring forward the evidence of a clear conscience? No. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God." He knew not simply that he had believed, but he knew whom he had believed. And the sight of his radiant, glorified form above, was for him the end of all controversy. He knew that God's eye, resting on his Son, saw an adequate reason for the salvation of every believing soul, and he rested and riveted his eye upon the same object, and challenged the world to shake him from his confidence. There stands our Redeemer, preaching peace, not by what he says, but by what he is. O brethren, it is not the eloquence of fervid speech and pathetic intercession by which he pleads our cause. "He is our peace." The ineffaceable wounds of his passion and his obedience unto death are sufficient. His scars are our security; his crucifixion marks are our credentials. He need not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets of the New Jerusalem. He, he himself, is there, and that is enough. And from all the tumult and perplexity of a troubled conscience we may lift up our eyes to him, saying, "I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at thy right hand I shall not be moved." I am persuaded that it is at just
this point that we most frequently pervert the simplicity of the gospel. We want to believe because we feel, when God wants us to feel because we believe, and to believe because of what Christ is and has done. Our faith should rest on his word, as his written or spoken word rests upon himself, the living Word.

Now, it seems to me that when it is said of Christ that “he is our peace,” it is an expression that comprehends all else that is said about him. For in his glorified person we have a summary of his whole redemptive work. The scars of his vicarious woe, still visible on his body, are the perpetual reiteration of his atonement; the unchanged and unchangeable human form which he forever wears is the archive in which all he has done and suffered for us is treasured up. Think of that sublime definition of himself which he gives from the throne: “I am he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore.” — “Was dead” points backward to the cross and the sacrifice, never to be forgotten and never to lose its power in all the endless years. “Alive forevermore” tells of the glorified life to which the Master taught us to fasten our hope, when he said, “Because I live ye shall live also.” All past, present, and future are contained in this definition. Let us see, then, how it meets our needs. I stand looking towards the throne, guilty
and trembling, and asking the question, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, and who shall stand in his holy place?" And the answer comes, "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." I look at my hands, and they are unclean. The stain of countless wrong-doing is upon them. I look at my heart; it is all impure. The guilt of untold sinful thoughts and motives is there. And, no matter how long and how intently I look, the case grows worse and worse, and I get no comfort. But from self I look up, and "Lo, in the midst of the throne" there stands "a Lamb as it had been slain." I know him; I accept him; I believe in him; and I am at peace. For this is he that was dead. By his death we have the blood that cleanseth from all sin. And through this blood I have clean hands and a pure heart. I stand no longer afar off smiting on my breast. I hear the summons, and I obey it: "Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw nigh with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

This is what a look of faith towards him, who is "our peace," can do for us. And this is what I mean by Christ's glorified body containing in itself a summary of his redemptive work. He
comprehends all his past in his present living personality. We drop our former years one by one, and they perish. He gathers up all the years of his redeeming toil and travail spent on earth, and lives them in perpetual offering in heaven. As the tree gathers up all the growths of successive summers, and contains them in its trunk, so Christ, in his ever-living person, is all that he ever has been, and preserves all for our redemption that he has ever done. I see peace written in his cross, written in his blood, written in his words; but in his exalted and enthroned person I read it as in a living word that sums up all other expressions in one, "For he is our peace." See, then, O believer, how every question concerning your peace with God is answered there. Did Christ die for your sins, proffering to God his own blood as the price of your redemption? How know you that the price has been accepted? There is the receipt in the throned and glorified One above. Did Christ conquer death and the grave for you? How know you that that conquest is complete? There is the indisputable evidence of it, the Victor returned from the conquest, having "led captivity captive." There is no question touching our peace that is not answered there.

And now this peace is preached "to you which are afar off, and to them which were nigh," that is,
to both Gentiles and Jews. We Gentiles were once afar from God, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus are we not only "made nigh by the blood of Christ," — as nigh as the Jew ever was, — but as members of that "new man," taken from both Jew and Gentile, we are brought into a nearness to God which the Jew knew nothing of. We are brought into his very presence-chamber, where we can speak to him face to face, and hold with him direct and unhindered communion; "for through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Such, O believer, is your heritage. And now let this peace of God rule within you, making you strong and victorious in all your conflicts with temptation, while you wait for the day when "the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet."