

1879

The Highway to Fortune, Happiness & Heaven (Part Three)

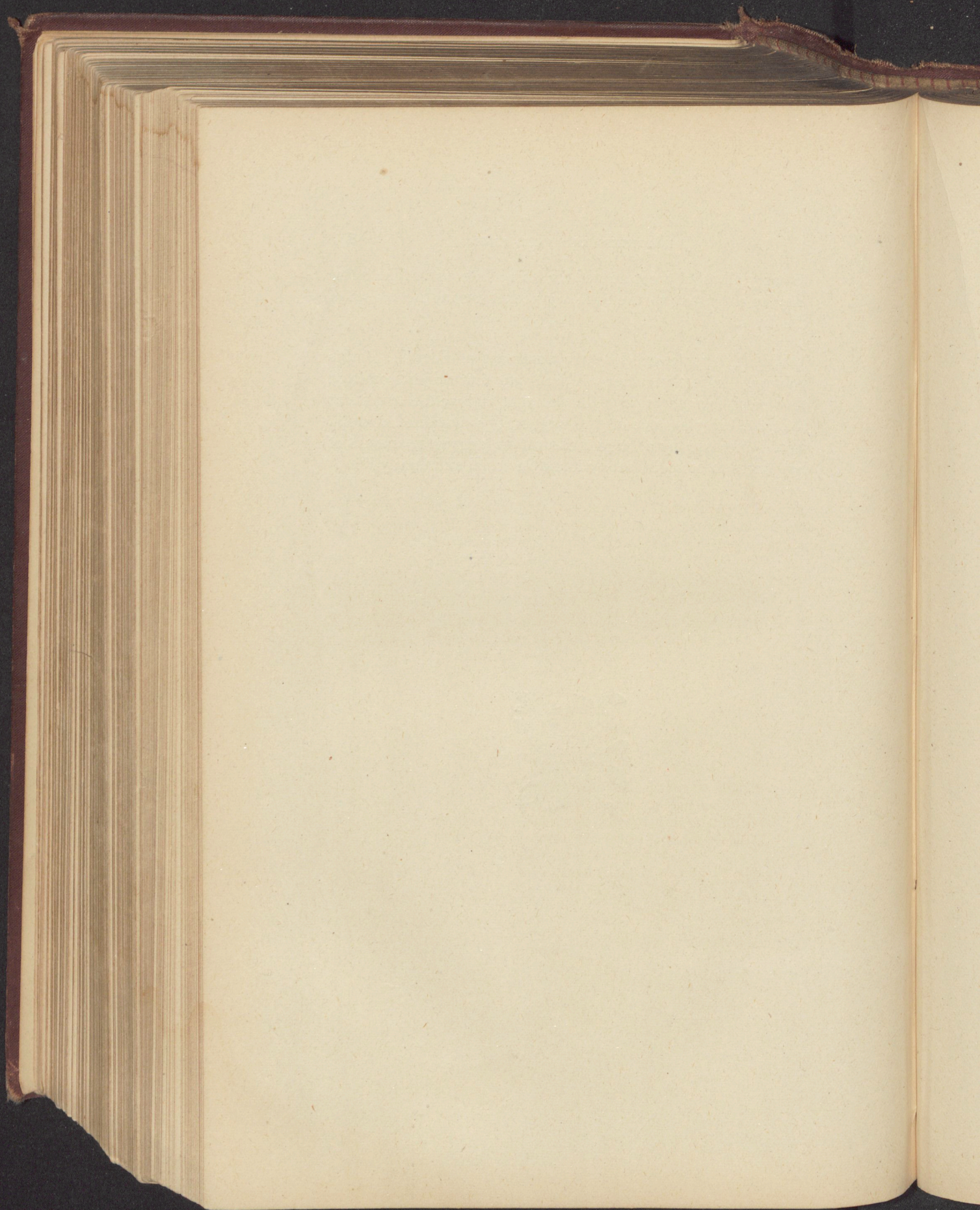
Jerome Paine Bates

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PART III.

THE HEAVENLY HIGHWAY TO ETERNAL LIFE.

And an Highway shall be there, and it shall be called The way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; no lion, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon; but the Redeemed shall walk there.

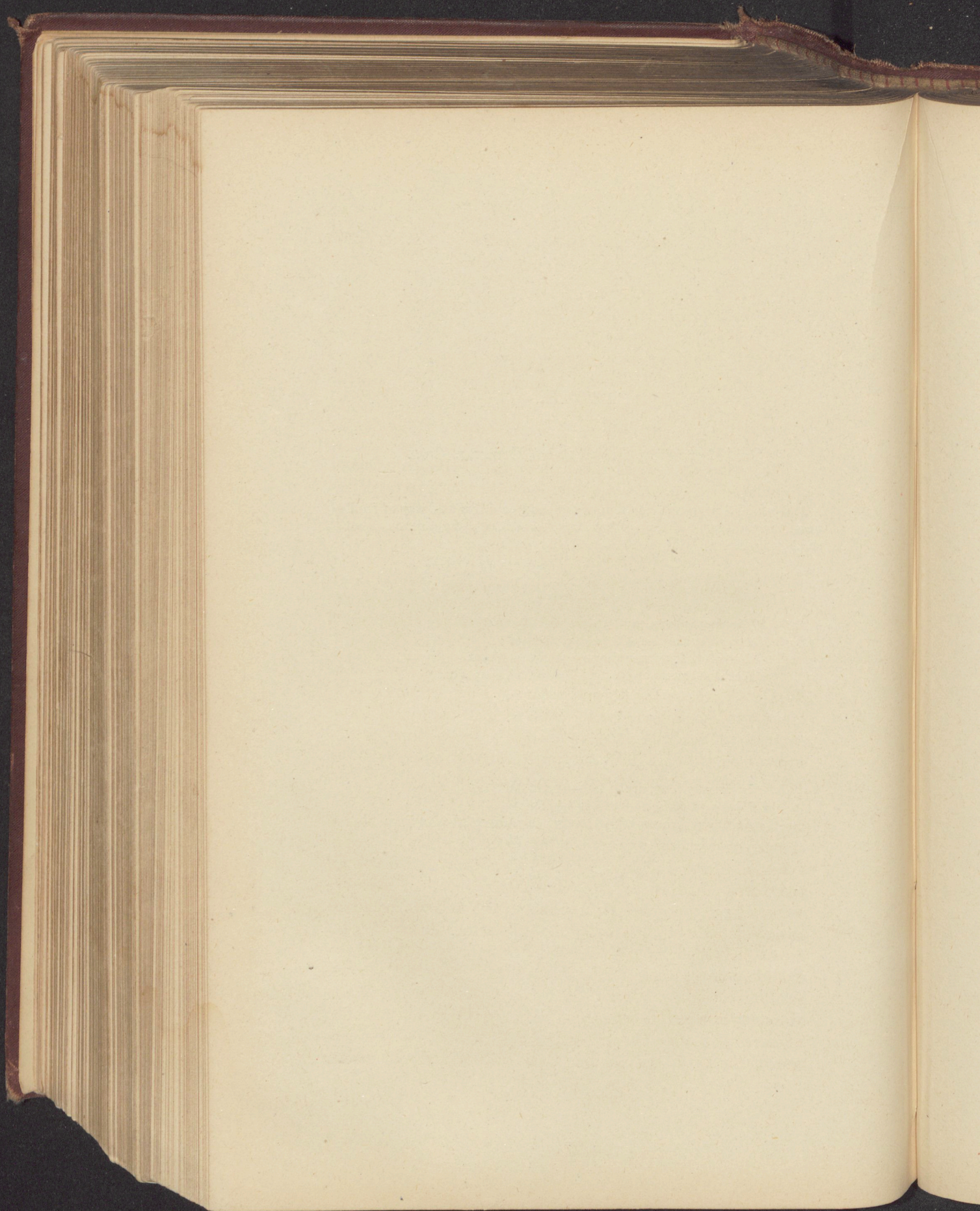
ISAIAH, xxxv: 8, 9.

COMPLAINT.

"The way is long, my Father! and my soul
Longs for the rest and quiet of the goal:
While yet I journey through this weary land,
Keep me from wandering. Father, take my hand;
Quickly and straight
Lead to Heaven's gate,
Thy child!"

ANSWER.

"Is the way long, my child? But it shall be
Not one step longer than is best for thee,
And thou shalt know, at last, when thou shalt stand
Safe at the goal, how I did take thy hand,
And quick and straight
Led to Heaven's gate
My child!"



INTRODUCTORY.

The writer approaches this part of his work with a degree of solicitude. It is no easy or light thing to point out the highway to eternal life. If, on all other subjects, "many men have many minds," the same is doubly true of religious subjects. Dryden wrote a long time ago that

Divines do say but what themselves believe;
Strong proofs they have, but not demonstrative.
For, were all plain, then all sides must agree,
And faith itself be lost in certainty.

There is some truth in the thought conveyed in these lines. Even St. Paul acknowledges that "great is the mystery of godliness," and such it surely is. Still, religion in its origin and nature is no more mysterious than a hundred other things with which we have to do in this world, and, therefore, it is not to be shunned or ignored on this account.

Besides, whatever men may say or think, religion is one of the indisputable *facts* of life, and, therefore, is a proper object of study and investigation. As the world in which we live is a fact, so is God, its great Creator; since it is absurd to suppose there could be an effect like this, without an adequate cause. The existence of the human soul and its immortal nature are facts of which every one is conscious within his own breast—any amount of so-called scientific supposition or deduction to the contrary, notwithstanding. There is, therefore, a future world, and a future life for the soul in that world, the character of which is dependent upon the life we now possess. There must also be two states of being in that future world corresponding to the popular ideas embodied in the words,

heaven and hell. Furthermore, the Christian church is a fact, demonstrated, real, tangible. Worship and prayer are realities, both to the soul and to the eye. Sin and holiness are not only opposite, but determinative and definite quantities in the world. So are faith and love, as well as hate and unbelief. The Bible, too, is a fact, as well as a book.

Here we are, then, surrounded by a vast host of religious facts and spiritual realities which, properly understood and arranged, make up the heavenly highway to eternal life. We propose to deal with these now, just as we have with the facts and realities pertaining to success in business life, and happiness in social and family life. It will be no more necessary to stop and prove the existence of things connected with religious life, than it has been with business or social life. One set of facts is just as common as the other, and just as generally understood and recognized. It is true, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," but this class constitute only a very small and minor portion of the race. The large majority of people on the earth have a God and a religion of some kind. Our chief concern, therefore, will be more to point out the *true* religion, than to waste time and space endeavoring to prove the existence of one. We shall try to so marshal the facts of religious life that the reader can see before him the path of safety through this world to that brighter and better one above to which we give the name of Heaven.

The writer is aware that there is a large lot of stuff and nonsense in the world, passing under the name of religion, which disgusts every sensible person who comes in contact with it; all of which will be very carefully avoided in this volume. We shall cling tenaciously in what we have to say to the shores of common sense, and be guided by admitted facts in human nature, in the outside world, and in the Bible. We shall try to build up no particular creed or sect, nor, on the other hand, shall we be knowingly false to any clearly-revealed truth pertaining to our theme. With these preliminary observations, reader, let us at once set out on the Heavenly Highway.

CHAPTER I.

OUTLINES OF TRUE RELIGION.

"Life's mystery—deep, restless as the ocean—
Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro;
Earth's generations watch its ceaseless motion,
As in and out its hollow moanings flow.
Shivering and yearning by that unknown sea,
Let my soul calm itself, O God! in Thee.

"The many waves of thought, the mighty tides,
The ground-swell that rolls up from other lands,
From far-off worlds, from dim, eternal shores,
Whose echo dashes o'er life's wave-worn strands;
This vague, dark tumult of the inner sea
Grows calm, grows bright, O risen Lord! in Thee.

"Thy pierced hand guides the mysterious wheels,
Thy thorn-crowned brow now wears the crown of power;
And when the dark enigma presseth sore,
And thy calm voice saith, 'Watch with me one hour,'
Then, as sinks a moaning river in the sea,
So sinks my soul, in silent peace, in Thee."

Although religions of various kinds are as old as the race, and their doctrines and phenomena, long since settled into a positive science, constitute an object of study and investigation; although the gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached for more than eighteen hundred years, and what is known as Christianity has permeated all departments of business and social, private and public life, and has become as familiar to us as any other earthly experience, yet, if one were to ask a hundred representative persons this precise, definite question: What is true religion? the variation in the answers would be not only a matter of surprise, but calculated to awaken within the mind profound solicitude and anxious thought. These answers would doubtless arouse in the mind such queries as

these: Is it possible that the vast majority of mankind are mistaking, after all, the true highway and are walking in the "broad road" under erroneous convictions or views of truth? Is it possible that all the manifold means of enlightenment respecting the true interpretation of Scripture avail nothing? Is the race, in spite of all efforts put forth to the contrary, inevitably blinded and foredoomed to destruction on account of incorrigible perverseness of nature? It would seem so, verily; and Christ's words faintly foreshadow as much, when he says, mournfully, concerning the true way, "and few there be who find it."

The causes of this variation in belief are manifold and complex. Prominent among them is the lack of diligent, earnest, protracted study of the New Testament; a study that goes down to the *roots* of words and doctrines, instead of merely skimming the surface. Again, the power of early religious training and associations has much to do with it; peculiarities of temperament and disposition; the strength and depth of one's native ability and intellectual culture—all combining to make up the individual lens through which religion is regarded.

If a mounted globe, with its surface divisions into islands, seas, and continents, all painted in different colors, were placed in the center of a school-room, and each scholar, from where he sat should be called upon to answer this precise, definite question, What is the earth? the variation in the answers would doubtless be fully as great as in the case before instanced, respecting the question, What is religion? And for precisely the same reasons. The scholar's position in the room, his antecedents and advantages, the accuracy and extent of his information, his mental ability, and especially the influence of those who sat near him, all combining, would determine his reply. Now, both the earth and religion are alike in that both are spherical in their completeness and therefore many-sided; in that both are practically inexhaustible in extent; yet by proper study and accurate observation both can be so far comprehended as that no fatal mistakes shall arise on account of

necessary ignorance. Says Dr. Goulburn: "There are several points of view from which Christianity may be surveyed; and although it be one and the same object from whatever point we look, yet eyes placed on different levels will see it grouped in different perspectives."

Inasmuch, then, as upon our right understanding of what religion is, depends our welfare for two worlds; inasmuch as many biases and predispositions are liable to warp and pervert our definition of it, can we do better than examine at the outset a few of the fundamental facts and considerations respecting it, which must be taken into the account before we can ever hope to gain a just and accurate understanding of its nature.

To begin with, in ascertaining the nature of true religion it will be necessary to have a true conception of *the character of God*. All religion starts here; and very much more depends upon this article of faith than is generally supposed. A wrong view of the character of God will thoroughly vitiate a whole system of doctrinal belief. Every false system of doctrine in the world, every erroneous religious belief, every false sect, or denomination, every heretical church, every system of idolatry the world over, among civilized or uncivilized, springs from a false view of the character of God. This may not appear to be the leading defect or error, in some cases, but when any system is thoroughly analyzed, and the taint is traced to its true source, it will lead to this fundamental conception; and from this apparently insignificant fountain, this little spring of error, the fatal heresy widens and deepens, as it reaches out into conclusions and results, until the whole system is poisoned.

What, then, let us ask with some degree of earnestness, is the real and true character of God; what the leading and central attribute in his infinite personality; and if we were called upon to describe the character of God in a single word, what would that word be? We answer, God is a Holy Being; holiness being the substratum of his character, the foundation of all his attributes and perfections, and the leading principle

actuating all his dealings with his creatures. This quality may be said to constitute the nucleus of the Godhead; to be the one central characteristic or attribute of his nature to which all the others yield homage, and by which they are measured and modified. Everything bends to this; this determines the nature of God's government over the world; this is the source of all moral law; this furnishes the only complete and consistent explanation of all his arrangements with men.

Turning back to those primeval revelations of his character which God himself made to the world under the Mosaic dispensation, we hear him styling himself "the Holy One;" we hear him saying, "I, the Lord your God, am holy." (Lev., xx:25, and 26.) The same truth underlies and gives significance to the whole Jewish system of sacrifices; it stamps, as it were, all the surroundings of Deity. Thus his angels, who wait on him, are the Holy Angels; the Scriptures, containing his will, are the Holy Scriptures; the faith he imparts to the soul, is a most Holy faith, Christ his Son, is the Holy One and the Just; and the Spirit who proceeds from him to sanctify his children, is the Holy Spirit. Holiness is also set forth as the end of Christian attainment and perfection here on earth. "Be ye holy, for I am holy, saith the Lord." "Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

The importance of love in the Divine character has been excessively advocated of late years, because it is the sheet-anchor of all those who hope to be saved somehow without that new birth or change of heart so absolutely indispensable. While allowing its just and true place in the collection and classification of attributes, it can never be placed first and foremost without giving us a distorted view of God's character; and as we have already seen, such a distorted view will prevent us from ever obtaining a correct answer to our question: What is religion?

In thinking of God, then, we should look upon him as a Being holy, just, and good, and in that order; as containing within himself all power, wisdom, and love, and in that order;

as Creator of the Universe and God of all grace, and in that order; as the great omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent Spirit, eternal and immutable, and as exercising both a natural and moral government over the earth. Says the well-known hymn:

Holy and reverend is the name
Of God, our only King,
And holy, holy, holy cry
The angels when they sing.

The deepest reverence of the mind
Pay, O my soul! to God;
Lift with thy hands a holy heart
To his sublime abode.

Just and true are all thy ways,
And great thy works above all praise;
Humbled in the dust, we own,
Thou art holy, thou alone.

The *second* prerequisite in understanding the nature of true religion, is to have a proper view of *the character of man*. Is it like or unlike that of God, just considered? Is holiness or unholiness the distinguishing and predominating trait? By the word holiness, as applied to God, is meant "infinite moral purity seeking purity, and delighting in it." Can the same be said to be the characteristic of man?

The Bible has never been sufficiently valued as containing the most accurate description of human nature ever given to the world, or ever found in any writings human or divine. There are multitudes who accept readily and cheerfully all that the Bible reveals to us concerning the character of God, who inwardly or openly repudiate much of what is therein found concerning the character of man. But why should this be done? Does not the experience of the world confirm the statements of the Bible? Are not the records of human history, corroborative of the records of Scripture? Does not observation tell the same story? And are not the facts of daily life all on one side? That man who denies human guilt and a transmitted, hereditary bias toward sin and wickedness, de-

nie's the plain testimony of his senses. What would any human science be good for that ignored the facts relating to it, or that refused to admit the actual state of the case? And how can any one hope to have a true idea of religion if he will not admit the facts concerning the nature of man; or of what value would that religion be which ignored the true state of the case? Side by side, therefore, with a right view of the character of God, must be placed an equally correct view of the nature of man. What is that nature?

To describe it in a single word, as with the character of God, man is unholy; morally unclean and impure; just the opposite of his Maker. Whatever may have been his original state, or however he may have transferred himself from that state into his present one, man's moral character now, as demonstrated by the facts of daily life, by the records of history, is one of unlikeness to that of God; and this fact must ever stand at the basis of any true system of religion. Not that this is all of man's complex nature; but so far as religion is concerned, this is the deepest and most underlying fact of his being. Not that man is entirely destitute of goodness, as we commonly use the word goodness; for man is still created in the image of God as before the fall. But whatever may be the amount of his goodness, as estimated by our earthly standards, he has no goodness or holiness which can justify him at the bar of God. Examine any man's life and character, and while there will be many things amiable and noble, as estimated among men; yet, when the heart is held up to inspection, and the character of its motives are examined, and the secret, all-controlling purpose of its existence exposed, it will be found to be in direct antagonism with those two fundamental canons of moral obligation, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself." And on account of this want of conformity to *God's* standard of goodness and holiness, is man pronounced morally unclean; the opposite of that which he should be and must be before he can hope to find that heavenly way which leads unto eternal life.

And with this conclusion agree all the poets, and all careful,
experienced observers of mankind. Says Shakespere:

There's no trust,
No faith, no honesty in men; all perjured,
All forsworn, all naught, all dissemblers.

Says Otway:

Trust not man who is by nature false,
Dissembling, subtle, cruel and inconstant.

Says Dean Swift:

Vain human kind! fantastic race,
Thy various follies who can trace?
Self-love, ambition, envy, pride,
Their empire in our hearts divide.

Says Thomson:

What is the mind of man? A restless scene
Of vanity and weakness; shifting still,
As shift the lights of his uncertain knowledge,
Or as the various gale of passion breathes.

Says Ralph Waldo Emerson:

Man crouches and blushes, absconds and conceals,
He creepeth and peepeth, he palters and steals;
Infirm, melancholy, jealous, glancing around,
An oaf, an accomplice, he poisons the ground.

Then Young, looking on both sides of human nature, ex-
claims:

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august,
How complicate, how wonderful is man!
An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!

Having now considered the character of God and man sep-
arately, let us look at them *in their mutual relations*.

It is evident that before a holy God and sinful men can ever
be brought together, or brought into sympathy with each

other, one or the other party must be changed into the moral likeness of the other, so that there can be some basis of union, and some ground for fellowship; for "what concord hath light with darkness." It is still further evident that God cannot change himself to the state of man, without destroying his own nature and the foundations of the moral universe, and upturning all the established laws of right and truth; and it is also evident, both from the testimony of Scripture and the results of continued experience, that man, without some higher power operating upon him, cannot change himself into the moral likeness of God.

There is now imperatively needed a Being in whom both parties can meet and unite; and that being is Christ, the God-man who forms in himself the connecting link between the divine and human, Creator and created. Consequently, there can be no true religion which in any way depreciates, ignores, or perverts the mediatorship of Christ; there can be no such thing as a true view of the nature of religion, where Christ does not at once occupy the central position and throne, and where he is not at once the way to God, the truth of God incarnate, and the very life of God in the soul. A religion without Christ must either be a low, degraded, blind superstition, or at best, a cold, abstract, monotonous contemplation. God and man, in their mutual relations, can meet and be in harmony only in Christ, who embodies both in himself and so mediates, reconciles, satisfies.

Next, there is needed some power to change man's nature and bring it into oneness with God; to create within man's soul, now alienated from God, a *desire* to repent and seek forgiveness; a desire to pray for strength and light from above; and this power is the Holy Spirit sent from God to dwell in man's soul. Accordingly no religion can be the true one which leaves out the offices of the Spirit. Christ the mediator, as now situated, is nearer God than man; for we read that "he ever liveth to make intercession at God's right hand in Heaven." But when Christ left the earth, he told his disciples he would send unto them the Spirit, who should be even

nearer to them than he himself had been while with them, for the Spirit should be *in* them, and should *dwell* with them, which he himself, of course, could not forever do. And so the Spirit stands in the same relation to man, that Christ does to God; thus making a communication of power both instant and effective between the heart and the throne. This Spirit changes man's nature by changing the direction of his moral affections, and thus starting him on that course of religious development which brings him nearer to God the longer it is continued. This Spirit leads man to see himself, enlightens the mind, clarifies the perceptions and understanding, and shows him Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. He also leads him and helps him to pray for assistance from God in the effort to be like him. In a word, there could be no mutual relations established between God and man in a religious sense, without the offices of both of these intercessors; Christ with the Father, the Holy Spirit in the soul.

One thing more is requisite, and that is a Guide-Book of instructions. For if man is to be like God, or one with him in nature, he must know what God is, and what he requires; and this necessitates a Revelation of God's will, which is given to man in the Bible. In crossing over that immense moral space between man and God, man would surely be lost but for explicit instructions from the *farther end* of the route; and these are given to him in the Bible. In entering into mutual relations with God, there must needs be articles of specification, and some general fundamental principles and laws; and these are given to man in the Bible. Still more, there must needs be an external, objective test or standard by which to measure and gauge man's inward, spiritual experiences; and this infallible test-book is the Bible. As Bishop Burgess puts it: "All true religion must be Scripture religion, all worship Scripture worship, all zeal, Scripture Zeal; so that, let a man have never such sublime knowledge, such burning zeal, yet if it be not according to the law and the testimony, there is no light in him. To say, 'it's upon my conscience, or it's upon my spirit, I find much comfort and sweetness in such and such

things'—is nothing; for all false religions can and do say as much. But hast thou the Word of God to warrant thee? Doth that justify thee? All things else are but an empty shadow." Therefore we must ever say of the Bible as did Barton,

Lamp of our feet! whereby we trace
Our path when wont to stray;
Our guide, our chart! wherein we learn
Of realms of endless day.

Childhood's preceptor! manhood's trust!
Old age's firm ally!
Pillar of fire, through watches dark,
To radiant courts on high.

There are now before us five constituent parts which enter into and compose what must be the true religion, since it takes into account all the *facts* on which such a religion must build. These facts are, as we have seen, a correct view of the nature of God; an equally correct view of the nature of man, and a consideration of God and man in their mutual relations as established through the offices of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible. And these facts are the way-marks of the heavenly highway that leadeth unto life eternal. Such a religion must be the true one because it is reasonable, systematic, consistent, and complete; making adequate provision for the honor of God and the welfare of man; it embraces all the essential ideas of religion, and no single part can be left out, or modified, without destroying the value of it all. Indeed, so important are each and all of these different features, that it requires some attention and care on the part of man to give each part its due and proper regard.

There are hosts of people who are *partly* right; who accept some one or more of these constituent ideas and doctrines of true religion; who are sometimes in the right way; but, alas! they incorporate so much of error into their system, and reject so many of the facts which must be received in order to include the essentials; and they are so often outside the true way, that their aberrations, their departures, their unlawful ex-

cursions into the "broad road," are more numerous than their straight-forward steps.

Truth and error in religion, as in everything else, are both absolute and relative quantities; that is, they not only exist separately and independantly, but in connection and in conjunction with each other. They sometimes run like the two parallel tracks of a railway, side by side, with numerous and open switches between, so that a man can pass from one to the other before he is himself aware of the transition. There is but one path of safety, and a hundred paths of danger. By leaving out, or by explaining away, any one of the five elements mentioned in this chapter, man leaves the heavenly highway and starts off into a wilderness of weary wanderings where paths of all sorts and kinds intersect and cross each other in such a bewildering maze, that the only possible ending of his search is to be hopelessly lost. Thousands upon thousands of human beings are now, and have been wandering about in this wilderness; therefore our great concern, as already stated, is to guide the reader, if possible, into the true path which has but one ending in life and peace above. Hence we repeat that God, man, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible, are the five foundation stones on which the Heavenly Temple is built, and if any one is omitted from the ground-work of your faith, the temple for you will always remain closed.

Does the reader feel inclined to ask, How do we know that this constitutes the true religion? We reply, because it rests upon admitted facts in human nature, in the outside world, and in the Bible; because it is inherently complete and harmonious; and because it is in full accordance with the highest permanent results of the best thinking which the world of mind has yet produced. Millions have accepted these truths and facts and have been saved, and millions more are now clinging to them as shipwrecked mariners to a rock in the midst of dashing billows. As the pious Faber has sung:

To angels' eyes
This Rock its shadow multiplies,
And at this hour in countless places lies.

THE IMPERIAL HIGHWAY.

One Rock, one shade
O'er thousands laid—
Rest in the Shadow of this Rock!

In the Shadow of this Rock
Abide! Abide!
Ages are laid beneath its shade.

'Mid skies storm-riven
It gathers shadows out of heaven,
And holds them o'er us all night cool and even.
Through the charmed air
Dew falls not there—
Rest in the Shadow of this Rock!



CHAPTER II.

INVISIBILITY OF GOD AND HEAVEN.

There's a land far away 'mid the stars, we are told,
Where they know not the sorrows of time,
Where the sweet waters wander through valleys of gold,
And life is a treasure sublime.
'Tis the land of our God, 'tis the home of the soul,
Where rivers of pleasure unceasingly roll,
And the way-worn traveler reaches his goal
On the Evergreen Mountains of Life.

Our gaze cannot soar to that beautiful land,
But our visions have told of its bliss;
And our souls by the gale from its gardens are fanned,
When we faint in the desert of this.

JAMES G. CLARK.

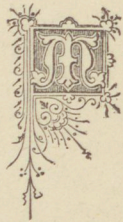
"The way is dark, my child, but leads to light,
I would not always have thee walk by sight.
My dealings now thou canst not understand.
I meant it so; but I will take thy hand,
And through the gloom
Lead safely home
My child!"

Heaven lies around us like a cloud—
A world we do not see;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.

MRS. H. B. STOWE.

"Upon the frontier of this shadowy land
We pilgrims of eternal sorrow stand:
The realm that lies forward with its happier store

Of forests green and deep,
Of valleys hushed in sleep,
And lakes most peaceful, is the land of
Evermore."



ANY years ago, Prof. Austin Phelps of Andover, Mass., in a little work entitled "The Still Hour," wrote: "One of the most impressive mysteries of the condition of man on this earth, is his deprivation of all visible and audible representations of God. Christians seem to be living in a state of seclusion from the rest of the universe, and from that peculiar presence of God in which angels dwell, and in which departed saints serve him day and night. We do not see him in the fire; we do not hear him in the wind; we do not feel him in the darkness."

Now, we think it can be satisfactorily shown that this condition of invisibility with regard to God and heaven is no "impressive mystery" at all, but simply a divinely-ordained *fact* established for the best and wisest of purposes. Such language as the above is more redolent of the spirit of the Old Testament than of the New. There are many passages in the Old Testament which contain the same idea, but none in the New. Thus David says, speaking of God, "Clouds and darkness are round about him." And the poor, afflicted Patriarch of Uz also exclaims, "Oh that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat. Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, but I cannot behold him; on the right hand, but I cannot see him. For he is not a man as I am, that we should come together."

Still, nearly all minds have at times without doubt felt the same perplexity. There is in human nature a strong craving after the same visibility and tangibility in heavenly things, that exist among the earthly. We are ourselves visible and tangible, and all material objects and interests about us are so, and we naturally desire that the objects of our faith should partake of the same character; forgetting that "the things

that are seen are temporal, *while the things that are not seen are eternal;*" forgetting, as the Pharisees did at one time, that the kingdom of God is within and hidden, rather than without and observable.

So far as viewing the upper world is concerned, we are, while in life, imprisoned within material walls. And in our weak, imperfect, unchristian moods we can easily see how the pathetic and piteous language of Job would become the natural plaint of universal human nature. Especially would this be true, when one was wearied and fainting from incessant battling against spiritual difficulties, or when surrounded by immediate and appalling dangers: For it has been true for 1800 years that the heavens o'erhead, wrapped in unbroken silence, look down with seeming indifference upon the struggling masses beneath, while the earth, in sluggish muteness, gives no sign of sympathy. It is true that from out the clear, blue depths above, no glimpse of God or Heaven hath ever been vouchsafed to man since Jesus ascended, and John closed up all outward visions at Patmos; neither has any audible voice been heard. It is true, that so far as outward manifestations are concerned, we all worship a God appreciable to us only through his Works, and his Word. But what of it, so long as we have so many better things to take the place of all this?

Sometimes, too, this feeling is liable to be engendered by a continued reading and study of the Old Testament to the exclusion of the New. There we learn that in former days God, through his messengers and angels, talked with his special, chosen ones as a man talketh with his friend; that these messengers often came to earth, and even ate and drank with men; that intercourse with the spirit-world was common and general; and that visible manifestations of supernal glory were often given. We read of Noah and Abraham and Moses and Samuel, all holding some sort of converse with the inhabitants of the unseen realm.

And not only this, but even in the earlier days of the New Dispensation, the same state of things was perpetuated. God

was then actually manifest in the flesh, and lived and ate and walked with men for the space of thirty-three years, and all could see his person, and hear the gracious words which proceeded from his mouth, and were even privileged to sit at his feet and learn the ways of truth. And we further see that the twelve Apostles carried about with them the same supernatural power, and at times seemed more like inhabitants of another world, than poor, finite, limited denizens of this. And without doubt the wish has been uttered by thousands that they could have lived in those days, instead of now; but the wish has been idle and vain. The clouds which closed after Christ's ascending form, closed up also all visible representations of God until the day when those clouds shall again be parted to let through this same Jesus coming in the capacity of the Judge of all the earth; while in the grave of John, the last of the Apostles, was buried the last link of that chain of direct outward communication with the upper world, which had reached back, almost without a break, to the garden of Eden. But what of *this*, if "God has provided some better things for *us*, that they without us, should not be made perfect?"

With right views of the nature of the present spiritual dispensation, this invisibility, so far from being any hindrance to spiritual life, is, on the contrary, a great and positive blessing. The question is: Have we been put *forward* or *backward* by the change from past to present? Are we better off, or worse, than those who lived in former times? We think the former view to be the true one.

Let us draw a contrast between the times of these visible manifestations, and our own time, and see who would be willing to make an exchange. To place ourselves in the steps of those who enjoyed such manifestations, we should be obliged to throw away at the outset all definite knowledge of Christ, as our Redeemer; to be able as we looked back, to see no Bethlehem, no Calvary, no Olivet; but be content with what we call a type or shadow, the significance of which we could at best very imperfectly comprehend. We should have to

dispense with all printed Bibles, and in fact with printed books of all kinds, and content ourselves with a few rolls of parchment, containing some portions of the Old Testament. We should deprive ourselves, to a good degree, of the sustaining power of surrounding Christian example; we should have to blot out from our minds the memory of all the Christian teaching we have ever received from Sabbaths and sanctuaries; from Bible-classes, Sabbath schools, and prayer-meetings; and content ourselves with knowing or perhaps seeing that here and there lived one who walked with God, and occasionally received a visit or a vision from some heavenly intelligence who would talk with him a few minutes and then disappear, leaving the returning darkness ten-fold more dense and unbearable than before. We should also be obliged to leave behind us our schools, our educational, eleemosynary, and benevolent institutions of all kinds, yea, our civilization itself; and content ourselves with semi-barbarous customs and experiences. Who is prepared to trade?

It is true, this picture is of the days of Enoch and Noah and Abraham, but one would be welcome to all the additional features of interest they could draw from the time of Moses to the birth of Christ, or from the birth to the day of Pentecost, which broke up the old system and ushered in the new. While there would be some ameliorating circumstances discoverable in subsequent ages that were not visible at first, yet there would be no time when the contrast would not be as sharp and clearly-drawn as has already been seen. And who does not feel that no amount of visible and audible representations could possibly compensate for the loss of all which so emphatically constitutes our glory and our crown!

We never shall regard the spiritual Past in its true light until we look upon it as a season of pupilage and tutorship. The race were so ignorant religiously, so crude and undeveloped, that God was obliged to employ a kind of religious object-teaching and pictorial illustration-system in his dealings with them, just as our missionaries now do with rude and semi-barbarous heathen, or as we now do with children.

Instruction had to be simple, plain, open, direct, and outward, rather than abstract and ethical. But when in the fulness of time, God gave the world not simply the patterns of things in the heavens but rather the heavenly things themselves, then humanity went up from the primary and intermediate departments of religious teaching, into rooms of a higher grade; and miracles and audible voices and wonderful events were only continued long enough to set the new system in motion, and then they were quietly withdrawn. And to desire to go backward to those times and things, is to desire to be treated as children rather than as those that are matured, cultured, and ripened in Christian growth and attainments.

Another reason why the spiritual Present is better than the Past, is because of the superiority of a completed Bible, over all imperfect and half revelations of truth. It is quite a significant fact that the Bible was completed and the old order of communications closed up, by one and the same man, and at the same time. John the Revelator received the last celestial vision, and also wrote the last page of Scripture; and this coincidence clearly intimates that thereafter God desired men should read, rather than dream or see. The religious knowledge of those who lived under this dispensation of dreams and visions, was very imperfect as compared with that which is in the possession of every one to-day. Without doubt, to have possessed a copy of our completed Bible, Abraham would gladly have given all his wealth, and all his peculiar privileges, if indeed they can rightly be called such. At the best, the ancients had but the alphabet, while we have the full treatise. And although there is to us no Urim and Thummim, no Holy of Holies out of which come audible responses; no supernatural light, or visible mercy-seat; no pillar of cloud and fire; yet as a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, we have a Guide and a Book which speak plainer, fuller and better things than were ever before delivered to men by prophet or oracle. And what though the Heavens are closed above us, the Bible is open before us; and what though visible signs and wonders have ceased about us, yet the Truth and the Life have taken

up their abode within us. And in value the last is first, and the first is last.

Still another reason for the superiority of the invisible over the visible is found in the active operations of the Holy Spirit who, as a distinct person, and a distinct power in the world, was hardly so much as known or heard of under the former dispensation. As proof of this we need cite only the express words of Christ to his disciples, "If I go not away the Spirit will not come;" intimating most decidedly that the Holy Spirit as a distinct person and power was to take his place on earth and carry on and out his work in the hearts of his people; thus making the new, in contradistinction from the old, a pre-eminently spiritual dispensation. More than this, these silent, inaudible communications of the Spirit to the heart, were also to take the place of all verbal messages addressed to the ear.

These two modes of communication, so far as effectiveness is concerned, can best be set forth by a practical illustration. Two men are stationed on distant hill-tops, desiring to talk with each other. The natural voice is unable to span the intervening gulf with a bridge of natural sound, and so recourse is had to large speaking trumpets. The loud, resounding clangor of blasts and words reverberate through the air and down the hill-sides, but the noise nearly or quite drowns the substance of the communication. As a method, it would be best described as slow, difficult, and imperfect. At a later time and in another place, two men are stationed at even a greater distance and for the same purpose; but instead of employing trumpets, they pass between them an electric wire with batteries at either end, and lo! they can as freely and easily talk as though seated side by side.

And so the writer to the Hebrews says, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; but unto Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to God, the Judge of all, and to an innumerable company of angels and to the Church of the first-born,

which are written in Heaven." The first method indicated might be called the Sinaitic; but Christ introduced a method of spiritual communication which may not be inappropriately called telegraphic and heavenly. And shall we say that because the first method was more demonstrative and noisy and outwardly impressive, that therefore it was the more effective and the highest and best method? Does not our experience tell us that the chords of the heart vibrate more quickly and strongly to the pulsations of a spiritual current, than to mere words and sounds addressed to the ear, and unaccompanied by the Spirit?

In the case of all verbal messages, the message is more or less subordinate to the messenger; but with spiritual communications, the agent being invisible, the message itself has full sway, and is all-powerful. And so it has proved in modern, as contrasted with ancient spiritual life.

A fourth reason why the invisible is superior to the visible is because it calls into exercise the ennobling power of faith. The maxim of the visible system was, "Obey and live;" but the motto of the new and spiritual is, "Believe and be saved." All visible manifestations, by appealing to the senses, tend to encourage and directly promote unbelief; so that when Christ came, the greatest obstacle he encountered in his work was that very lack of faith which was the natural result of the visible system. Is it any wonder, then, that these audible communications and visible signs and miracles were withdrawn as soon as possible, when their continuance was hindering the growth of that inward grace by which alone man could draw near to God and God to man, in saving relations? And for this very reason the system has never been revived again, because it would have a direct tendency to ultimately destroy the only power in man's depraved heart that can change it from bad to good in God's sight.

The keynote of all true spiritual progress, as it is the keynote of the spiritual dispensation, is the one, golden, transforming, heavenly word, BELIEVE. This gives to Christian character a healthy, robust, manly, vigorous development; and by

the exercise of faith we become strong in all good thinking and right acting. We pass from childish bondage to mature freedom; from a thralldom to the outward senses, to the liberty of inward trust and love. Under the former and visible system God led his people as it were by the hand, but it placed them in the position of little children whom we dare not trust alone. It made them weak, fitful and inconstant; bold indeed to execute when under the eye of their leader, and under the inspiration of an immediate, direct lease of power; but the moment their mission was accomplished, and the work at hand over, they sank back into comparative hesitancy and feebleness.

On the contrary, God deals with us as with free, responsible agents. He gives us his will in general instructions and laws which are sufficiently explicit to cover the whole ground of duty when carefully and faithfully carried out; but the application of those principles to details and circumstances, he commits entirely to us. He holds us responsible for a diligent study of the rules, and for the exercise of our highest wisdom and prudence in discharging the obligations they impose; but the liberty given us is that of a son and heir, rather than a servant in bondage to tutors and governors. And as a result, while we may not, perhaps, be so bold and positive and confident as they were *at times*, we can be more uniform and steady, and never so much at a loss.

And when we find it difficult to take hold of spiritual things by the eye and power of faith alone, receiving no help from external signs and symbols; when we feel sometimes like crying out for aid in grasping the intangible and the eternal, yet let us remember this is the very kind of inward warfare which will make us valiant and true soldiers of Jesus Christ, and the very kind which will lead us on to ultimate and glorious victory. A sacrifice in the temple of Solomon might have been more outwardly impressive than a season of spiritual communion in a modern prayer-meeting, but Christ knew that these prayer-meetings would be more conducive to our spiritual progress, and better fitted to qualify us for the life to come.

Job and Paul may stand as fair representatives of the two types of character which the two systems of communication under consideration were fitted and calculated to produce. Had Job lived in Paul's time we should have had a far different book from him than we have now, while to throw back Paul to Job's day would be to deprive the world of one of the grandest and noblest and most inspiring characters of history, and to take from his writings all that is precious and powerful.

Is it any longer, therefore, an "impressive mystery" why we have been deprived (if deprivation it can be called) of visible signs and audible sounds? When God shut us up to the Bible and to faith, and made us dependent on the Holy Spirit, he immeasurably advanced us in privilege and conferred upon us his highest favors and blessings. All that is truly valuable in our modern civilization, all that is truly great and noble in individual character, has come directly from this change of the Old to the New.

Still, we are not even now deprived entirely of visible representations of God. Over us to-day hang the same heavens that looked down upon Abraham, and these heavens declare to us, as to David, the glory of God, while the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech to our hearts, as to theirs; while the rolling year is as full of Him now, as ever. God is also the same in his providences and judgments, though he has changed somewhat the manner of executing them; now working *through* natural laws, instead of outside them as formerly. In fact, to us as to the Hebrews, "the external universe is only a black screen concealing God. All things are full of, yet all distinct from Him. The cloud on the mountain is his covering, the muttering of the thunder is his voice; in the wind which bends the forest or curls the clouds, he is walking; the sun is still his commanding eye. Whither can we go from his presence or spirit? At every step and in every condition we are God-enclosed, God-filled, God-breathing men, while a spiritual presence lowers or smiles on us from the sky, sounds in the wild tem-

pest, or creeps in panic stillness along the surface of the ground. Then if we turn within, lo! He is there also, as an eye hung in the central darkness of our hearts."

Then we have his completed Word, containing this sentence which all the ancients never had heard or learned, "God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." We have also the tangible history of the life and teachings of the incarnate and historic Christ, and besides we have a special and powerful method of communication with the heavenly world, which, if not absolutely new, is at least more general and practical than ever before in the world's history; and this is prayer. "Hitherto," said Christ when on earth, "ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and receive now that your joy may be full." We are shut up to this, as to the Bible; and the soul that never uses this means of approach unto God, and never receives spiritual blessings from God in answer to prayer, has indeed good reason to complain of its fearful isolation and darkness.

And finally we have the promise that after walking by faith here on earth, and enduring its conflicts, and maintaining our hold steadfastly upon the things which are unseen, as did Moses, of whom it is written that he "endured as seeing him who is invisible, having respect unto the recompense of the reward," we shall go at length where there will be no veil, no shadow, no night, no darkness or concealment. For if now we are compelled to see through a glass darkly; yet then, face to face; if now we know but in part, yet then we shall know even as we are known!

CHAPTER III.

GROUNDS OF RELIGIOUS CERTAINTY.

"Tossed with rough winds and faint with fear,
Above the tempest, soft and clear,
What still small accents greet my ear?
'Tis I; be not afraid.

'Tis I who led thy steps aright,
'Tis I who gave thy blind eyes sight,
'Tis I, thy Lord and Life and Light;
Be not afraid."



NOT long since, in the course of some miscellaneous reading we came upon the following sentence: "Within the dim twilight of revealed spirituality, troubled ones are constantly groping for the heart's-ease that is ever denied the traveler this side of immortality."

This sentence, when analyzed, is found to be as full of meaning as it is of beauty. From the writer's standpoint, he makes here three assertions:—first, that Revelation is a dim twilight; second, that all troubled or anxious ones are groping here for a foothold; third, that certainty in spiritual matters is ever denied the traveler this side of immortality, or the future state.

The thought at once springs up in a believing mind, is there no better posture or state in which the mind can rest than the one indicated by this sentence? Or in other words, are there no good and sufficient grounds of certainty in religious life? Is it a fact that we are condemned to grope evermore on this side of eternity in a dim twilight of doubt? Has not God done better than that for us with regard to Himself and his truth?

In striking contrast with this state of uncertainty are the words which we find coming from the lips of holy men of old. Listen to some of them. Says Job, "I *know* that my Redeemer liveth." Says Jethro, the priest of Midian, to Moses, "Now I *know* that the Lord is greater than all gods." Says David, "Now I *know* that the Lord saveth his anointed." Says Peter, "Now I *know of a surety* that the Lord hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod." Says Paul, "For I *know* whom I have believed." And again, "For we *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And finally John says, "These things have I written unto you that ye may *know* that ye have eternal life."

Was the confident faith expressed by these writers a reasonable one? Can it be justified on ordinary grounds of evidence? Is Christ a living God and Saviour? Is the Bible true? Is religion a reality? And how may one *know* all this, or what are the grounds of religious certainty?

We answer, that one may know the certainty of religious things by *the testimony of the senses*, or that evidence which comes to the soul through the eye and ear. There exists in the universe an unvarying law which is called the law of cause and effect, and this law is recognized on all hands as constituting not only an irrefragable species of evidence, but also as constituting one of the very sources of all knowledge and all certainty. This law stated in plain terms is this: Every Cause must have an Effect, and every Effect must have an equal or adequate Cause; and the two factors of the proposition must correspond one to the other, *i. e.*, the effect must be like the cause, and the cause must be equal to the effect.

This law forms the basis of all human thinking; it is one of the groves of the human mind in which all thought-wheels run, when they run at all; it is a primary, a necessary, a universal truth; and by a *necessary* truth we mean a truth the contrary of which is unthinkable. But that no one may still stumble over these terms, cause and effect, we will explain them

further. By *Cause* we mean any power or force that is capable of producing a result; and by *Effect* we mean simply the result produced. Thus, the sun is the cause of light and heat; and light and heat are the effect of this cause. And so indissolubly associated are these two ideas that if you should say to a blind man there is a sun, he would reply at once, then there must be light and heat. But how does he *know* it? Because his mind is incapable of thinking in any other way. It is a necessary law of his thought that he should at once predicate the existence of light and heat, when he is informed of the existence of the cause of these properties. If a locomotive runs at all, it must run upon the rails; so if the mind works at all, it must work according to its laws, and the mental wheels must run in the grooves which God, the Creator, has scooped out for them in the nature and constitution of things.

Again, let a blind man walk forth into the air and feel the effects of light and heat upon his senses, and he knows instantly that there must be a cause for this effect, and that the cause must correspond to the effect, *i. e.*, be equal to it, and of the same kind. This kind of knowledge is so organic and inevitable and necessary that whenever we can be assured through the testimony of the senses of the existence of *either one* of these two factors, the existence of the other follows necessarily, because the laws of thought compel it. There is no alternative, and there can be no change without having a different mind, and a different world. Logic is a science, reason has its rules, and thought its necessary modifications; and every mind in its normal state recognizes and obeys these mental statutes. If it does not, we say that it is diseased or shattered, and instead of thinking sense, it thinks nonsense.

Now, let us apply this law of thought to the determination of our questions: Is Christ a living King and Saviour, is the Bible true, is religion a reality? Or what are the grounds of certainty by which we may *know*, as well as we know anything, that all these questions can be answered in the affirmative?

By the testimony of our senses, we know that there exists

a very extensive organization called the Christian Church, embracing the whole body of Christian believers. We see it before us, we hear of its doings, we feel its influence. The existence of the church, therefore, is an effect or result which must have an adequately producing power, or an adequate cause. This cause cannot be human because the effect is not human, there is nothing human which is analogous to the church; it is unique, it stands apart from every other fact in the universe. Its very existence is in itself a marvel; it survives all changes, it endures all trials and persecutions, it overcomes all opposition, it continually spreads and grows; and that, too, without any compulsion or bonds, aside from the voluntary love of its adherents; and this cannot be said of any other existing organization on earth.

Moreover, this christian church counts and has counted among its followers a considerable share of the very best people of the world, living and dead; the ablest minds, the noblest hearts, the purest lives. The power which the church exerts upon society and upon government is something very salutary and very extensive; nothing can compare with it in this respect. And, in short, looking upon the church in its origin and career, in its organization and structure, in its history and work, the conclusion is inevitable that it is something superhuman or divine. And if it is a divine effect, it must have a divine cause. Or in other words, the existence of the Christian church proves the existence of Christ, the truth of the Bible, and the reality of religion. It is one ground of real certainty by which we may *know* these things as well as we know anything.

The fact is, the existence of the Christian church cannot be accounted for satisfactorily upon any other hypothesis than that furnished by the Bible. If Christ is not a living God and Saviour, and the Bible is not true, and religion is not a reality, then you have before you the greatest anomaly in the world, the greatest wonder of time, the greatest miracle of history; yea, more than this, you have before you an astounding, gigantic effect without any adequate cause; which is an

impossibility in itself, and an absurdity in thought. To believe such a thing would at once be an evidence of insanity.

How then can one know that these things are true? We answer just the same as we know that the Governor of any State lives, although we may never have seen him, or that the President lives, or that the law of gravitation exists, or any other invisible power, or cause; know it by the visible *effects* which are produced. The existence of the Christian church is a real, solid fact, and cannot be set aside or rubbed out; and being a fact it must be properly and adequately accounted for. Every effect must have an adequate cause; institutions like the Christian church, do not spring into existence of themselves; they must have a Founder and a foundation; they embody within themselves substantial verities; they exist because there is a living power behind and within them. No human principle accounts for the existence of the Christian Church; no human facts would warrant its continuance through a single generation; and yet it lives on through one generation after another, growing stronger, reaching out wider, and becoming more powerful each year. The first evidence, therefore, by which I know that religious things are real and true, is the plain testimony of my senses, and this is just as much a valid ground of certainty in religion, as in law or business. This single principle alone makes faith in God and Christ and the Bible, a *reasonable* faith.

A second ground of certainty in religious things is *the clear testimony of history*. Christianity not only exists all around us to-day as an actual fact, but it has existed in substantially its present form for more than 1,800 years. There is no more doubt of this than there is of the ancient existence of the British Empire. It is a plain matter of history and we know it just as really, and in just the same way, as we know any historical fact. Weighed according to any standard there is stronger and clearer evidence of the historical existence of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, than there is of the historical existence of Julius Cæsar and his famous generals, or of Alexander the Great and his famous wars.

Inside the church an unbroken line of testimony to the existence of Christianity goes straight back through Iranæus and Polycarp to the Apostle John. Outside the church, another line of testimony goes back through Tacitus, the younger Pliny and Josephus, to about the same point and date.

And what is true of Christianity and Christ is equally true of the Bible. To a large extent the Christian's faith rests upon a book; a book radically unlike every other, and by common consent superior to every other as a moral guide. Testimonies to the historical existence of the Bible also go back uninterruptedly to within a very short period of the collection and formation of the New Testament Canon (A. D. 120), while the existence of the Old Testament goes back into the very dawn of all history. Any method of skeptical criticism which seeks to invalidate this historical testimony to the genuineness of the Bible, destroys at the same time the value of every historical book in existence, and makes any knowledge of the past impossible. For example: Archbishop Whately of England took up the principles and rules by which some modern critics were attempting to prove the Bible false, and by them also proved logically and conclusively that Napoleon Bonaparte never lived; that all records concerning him were legends and myths, and had no true, reliable, historical basis; which, of course, was a plain absurdity.

In the British Museum there is to-day an original manuscript of a religious document written by Clement of Rome about the year 95, a few years after the death of the Apostle John. This document purports to be an epistle to the Corinthians somewhat after the manner of Paul's, written to heal some further divisions in that church which had arisen after Paul's death; and not only by the blessed and Christian spirit which it breathes, but by express and valuable testimony it establishes the historical existence of Christianity and the Bible at that early period. We mention this not because it stands alone in this respect, but simply as a sample of the undoubted historical basis on which and by which we may know the certainty of what is revealed, and what to believe.

How then can one *know* that the Bible is genuine and true? We answer, in just the same way as we know that any history is true; know it just as really and as certainly, and by the same kind of evidence. In every college in the land there are read and translated what are called the books of Livy and Herodotus, the first written in Latin, and the second in Greek. They purport to be the early histories of the empires of Greece and Rome. And their statements have been substantially accepted by all scholars as veritable and correct from the beginning of learning until now. But the evidences for the genuineness of the Bible, as every scholar knows, are as ten to one when compared with either Livy or Herodotus or Xenophon or in fact any of the so-called ancient classics.

Besides this, it is a principle of law, and so acted upon in all legal tribunals (I quote now from two of the highest legal authorities, viz: "Greenleaf and Starkie on Evidence") that all documents apparently ancient, not bearing on their face the marks of forgery, and *found in proper custody* (mark this), are held in law to be genuine until sufficient evidence is brought forward to the contrary. Now, where were these ancient documents, the Gospels and Epistles, found? We answer they were found in the custody of the church; of those who believed in them and regarded them as sacred; of those who had to defend them against the persecutions and attacks of enemies; of those who were willing to die giving testimony to their purity and truth. Any motive for deception here? Not the slightest.

And what characteristics do these ancient documents bear upon their face as to their own genuineness? Look at them closely, study them attentively; mark the simplicity and directness of statement in them; the calmness of tone, the precision and comprehensiveness of expression, even upon the most difficult questions; observe the almost measureless separation of them from all other books and literary productions in all ages; look at their subject-matter; see how it rises to the heights and reaches down to the depths of humanity; how it measures all states and conditions of life; touches every

chord of sympathy and contains the spiritual biography of every human heart; suited to every class of society, king and beggar, philosopher and child, and reaching in its declarations not only through the limits of time, but forward into the boundless regions of eternity. Consider all this, and then ask if these documents are forgeries? Why, such a forgery would be a greater miracle than any recorded in the documents themselves. This, then, is the second ground of certainty in religious things, the clear testimony of history.

Still another is the internal *testimony of consciousness*. And this undoubtedly is the kind of testimony referred to in Paul's declaration, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to his hands."

By this word *consciousness*, we mean *the soul's knowing in itself* that a thing is true. Consciousness sustains the same relation to the soul, that the senses do to the body. It is the certainty of intellectual and moral conviction; or, speaking religiously, the certainty of faith.

Is this kind of testimony good for anything? Will any man say that the firm convictions of so many millions of intelligent and earnest minds, respecting a subject of so much consequence as religion, have no weight as a matter of evidence? To believe or declare that such a vast number of rational and sober and clear-minded beings could all be deceived upon the questions whether Christ was a living Lord, the Bible true, and religion a reality; that this deception could last for eighteen centuries without any one finding it out, and not only last but continue to grow stronger and increase in extent as time rolled on,—to say this, is to utterly destroy the value of human testimony upon any and every subject under heaven.

The fact that an organization lives right on amidst the most bitter conflicts within, and the most relentless persecutions without, and continues to increase steadily, is proof positive that such an organization not only embodies within itself substantial facts and verities, but that it meets and supplies the heaven-born wants of the human soul. It is an incontrovert-

ible fact that a lie, a falsehood, an error, a sham, never perpetuates itself. This fact is established by human experience, observation and history. False things have no inherent, recuperative energy. As Bryant puts it: "Error, when wounded, writhes in pain and dies even amidst its worshippers." And this is not simply poetry, but it is fact, also, and is so recognized by all.

The millions of souls who have constituted the membership of the Christian Church have not all been fools, neither were they all deranged; but they have simply declared what to them were the words of truth and soberness. And the fact that so many have thus declared these sentiments, and are still declaring them, is a strong presumptive proof that the sentiments themselves are just and true.

Presumptive proof? Yea, more; *positive* proof. You have already been referred to one unvarying law, called the law of Cause and Effect. We point now to another, equally valid, relating to the value of human testimony. It is this: Mankind universally cannot honestly believe a lie. If they could there would be no such thing as truth, for there would be nobody to determine what was truth. To suppose that universal human intelligence can be outwitted and hoodwinked and deceived by any cunningly-devised fable, is to destroy the value of intelligence itself, and practically to blot it out of existence forever. Where do we go to find out what is truth, but to concurrent human testimony? Why do we submit a case of life and death to the decision of twelve men? Because it is a fundamental dictate of reason and common sense that a collection of minds, all earnestly examining the same point, in a majority of cases, cannot be deceived. And if this is true of twelve men, what shall we say of hundreds and thousands and millions, running on through one age after another, and each taking up the subject for himself, and going over it afresh? Is it possible for them *all* to go astray? If it is, then farewell to any and all testimony respecting any subject, for it is not worth a straw. Farewell to all distinctions between right and wrong, truth and error; for no one can tell or de-

termine which is correct; farewell to all knowledge and science and human learning, for one man's opinion is as good as another; farewell to all courts of justice and legal decisions, for no one can be sure that they are right; farewell to all business and commercial intercourse, for no man's declaration can be relied upon.

It is true that *one* man or a *number* of men are liable to be deceived, but not true that *all* men are. The case therefore stands thus: all men believe in the existence of a God; a universal belief cannot be false; therefore, God exists. All men have some kind of religion; all men cannot be deceived; therefore, religion is a reality.

These, then, are the three grounds of religious certainty, the testimony of the senses, the testimony of history, the testimony of consciousness; a three-fold cord which is not easily broken. The first is a matter of plain, every-day observation, the second, a matter of reason and judgment, the third, a matter of inward conviction and feeling. Can any stronger proofs be brought forward concerning any subject appealing to human credibility or asking human acceptance?

No one is compelled to say that he *rather thinks* religion is true; that *possibly* Christ is a living Saviour; that *perhaps* the Bible is the book of God; but on the contrary all can say in the language of Job, Paul, David, Peter and John, "WE KNOW." Because all can know the truth of these things just as firmly and certainly as they know any other well-attested truth or fact; and by the same kind of evidence. Christianity is not a cunningly-devised fable, neither has it been kept hidden in a corner; neither

"Need we any wings
To soar aloft to realms of higher things,
But only feet which walk the paths of peace,
Guided by Him whose voice
Greets every ear, and makes all hearts rejoice."

CHAPTER IV.

REPENTANCE.

"Return, return thee to thine only rest,
 Lone pilgrim of the world!
 Far erring from the fold,
 By the dark night and risen storms distressed,
 List, weary one, the Shepherd's anxious voice.

Return, return, thy fair white fleece is soiled,
 And by sharp briers rent;
 Thy little strength is spent,
 Yet He will pity thee, thou torn and spoiled."

"Amid the shadows and the fears
 That overcloud this home of tears,
 Amid my poverty and sin,
 The tempest and the war within,
 I cast my soul on thee,
 Mighty to save e'en me,
 Jesus, thou Son of God!

Drifting across a sunless sea,
 Cold, heavy mist encurtaining me;
 Toiling along life's broken road,
 With snares around and foes abroad,
 I cast my soul on thee,
 Mighty to save e'en me,
 Jesus, thou Son of God!"



It is a coincidence not to be overlooked that both John the herald and Christ the King began their public ministry by preaching the same subject in the same words; those words being: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The subject of repentance then must be the keynote of the new dispensation and a door opening into

the kingdom of heaven itself. And whether we view it historically or experimentally, repentance *is* the first step towards a new and divine life; a life that God will own and bless here, and abundantly reward hereafter.

Very much of the popular religion of our day, addresses men as if by nature they were already fit for heaven and already ripe for translation. But not so said Christ, not so says experience, observation, internal consciousness, good judgment, history; not so says *everything* to which we can appeal for enlightenment, confirmation, or proof. One of two things therefore must be true: either the Bible makes a great mistake, or such a representation as the above is radically and vitally wrong. Is it not a plain matter of common sense (to go no higher) that if men are already fit for heaven, naturally, there is no need of being born again or created anew within; no need of any Scriptures, or means of grace; more than this, no need of a Saviour at all? Christ's work and life and death were all superfluous, a mere waste of time and effort, an exhibition of useless self-imposed hardship and suffering. God made a very foolish move when he sent his Son into the world to die that man might live, if man could live just as well without him, and die just as well without him, and be saved just as well without him; if by nature he is already fit and ready for each when it comes. Are we prepared to accept this last conclusion? Hardly; and yet we must accept it or else believe that both John and Christ came preaching repentance as the first step towards a new and higher life, because repentance first of all was necessary; because without this there could be no such thing as religion at all; without this, no progress in holiness or purity of heart and life; without this, no room or chance for a seat at God's right hand.

What do men do when they wish to irrigate and fertilize a barren piece of land? What do they do in Egypt along the banks of the Nile, where the land is naturally a desert? They cut out canals or channels leading from the river, and take away all natural obstacles so that the water may flow over the soil and deposit upon it its fertilizing sediment, thus creating

a kind of new soil upon a naturally barren bottom. Now, spiritually, some hearts before God are like the barren desert; he sees no blessed fruitage there; they are destitute of holiness, destitute of moral purity in his sight. They need heavenly irrigation; they need the water of life, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the influx of Christ's power to enable them to live a higher and better life. And before they can get all this, there must be cut out a channel in which the water can flow from the river of God on high into and over their souls, and deposit there its spiritual sediment, thus creating a kind of new soil on the basis of the old, barren one. And the cutting out of this channel, and the clearing away of all the old sinful rubbish and natural obstacles, such as pride, obstinacy, love of sin, rocks of hardness and indifference, underbrush of sinful habits and practices, tangled thickets of deceit and dishonesty and general wickedness—the clearing away of all this, and the digging out of a direct source of communication with the river of God above—*this* is the work of repentance.

Spiritually, all human hearts, whatever may be their natural differences or natural qualities—and there is a vast diversity in personal natures, some being much more amiable than others, but yet, emphasizing the word,—*all* human hearts, whatever their natural state or condition, need and must have more spirituality, more religion in them than they possess naturally, before they can live a true Christian life here, or be saved at last. The Bible rings out its messages of warning to all mankind alike, saying, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Unless your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, (which was merely formal,) ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." The one thing insisted upon is the possession of a pure and holy character, the indwelling of a new and divine life, derived from Christ.

And now, the amount of repentance and faith necessary to secure this, depends upon the quality of one's natural character. As already remarked, there are great differences in people religiously, as well as in every other way. Some hearts

are like the desert, naturally barren and sterile, and need a new soil entirely before any religious fruit can grow. Some are like natural trees that bear plenty of fruit of a poor quality; these need grafting with a new and higher life. Some are like marshes and fens, foul and rank with noxious weeds and plants that need killing out or pulling up by the roots, before anything better can have room to grow. Some are like rocks, utterly hard and insensible, and need to be blasted and broken up with great shocks of calamity, or accident, or suffering, before they begin to move or feel at all. Some are like wild vines that are frail, tender, clinging and loving, and these need to be taught and cultivated and strengthened by the power of faith, and the help which Christ alone can give. Some are like the timid, retiring wild-flower in the forest that needs to be brought out into the sunlight of God's reconciled countenance and be made to grow with new strength and beauty. Some are like gardens that bring forth fruits, flowers and weeds in about equal proportion; these need cleaning and ploughing and replanting. Some are gnarled and twisted like a bush, almost beyond the power of redemption by any ordinary means. Some are already putrid with lust, sin, and crime, like decayed wood or herbage. And others are naturally lovely and amiable, and inclined towards the good and lovely, just as rootlets strike out towards water by an inherent instinct; who are what may be called religiously inclined, but still not spiritual, not holy according to the Scriptures and the requirements of Christ, not Christians in the true sense of the word.

But all alike, whatever their natural variations or excellences, need to be converted before they can be saved. With some the process of conversion would be longer and more difficult than with others, but still all alike must be born again before they can enter the kingdom of heaven. "There is none that doeth good," *i. e.* absolutely and perfectly good in the divine sense of the word, "no, not one." For all alike have gone astray upon some points, and in some respects, however right they may be in others; and hence the universal

necessity of repentance as the first step towards a new and higher and purer life.

This conclusion is further enforced by the fact that moral and spiritual qualities are not transmissible like almost every other quality of mind and nature. If a man develops his physical strength and vigor, and toughens his constitution and native hardihood, and makes his stock and blood good and healthy, the law is that unless some corrupting influence come in to vitiate the blood, his children will naturally inherit somewhat of the parental character in this respect. In this sense, therefore, the results of our life are transmissible to another, the child reaping the rewards and benefits of the father's doings. The same is true to a limited extent of mental characteristics and also of acquired mechanical skill. In some parts of Europe where communities are separated from each other and all devoted to some particular branch of handiwork, living by themselves, and following the same trade for generations, the result is that the children of these parents not only "take" to that kind of work naturally, as ducks to the water, but exhibit a natural aptitude for the work; thus showing that the skill and knowledge acquired by the parents are in a measure transmitted to the children. But while this law holds good mentally and socially and physically, it utterly fails morally. However good and holy or religious the parents may be in character and life, every child is born a sinner. Nothing religious is transmitted. It is one of the sad consequences of the fall, but it is real. This matter of religion becomes thus, intensely and exclusively, a personal matter; every soul has to go over the ground by itself and alone, deriving very little help from others. The piety of parents does not avail for the children; every one must repent and believe for himself or herself, or be lost.

It is thus seen that religion is not simply a quality of nature as some would have us believe. It is not something inhering in the disposition and character, needing only to be developed and brought out by Christian nurture and culture. It is rather a new creation in the soul wrought there by the

combined power of God's truth and spirit. It is a power that *comes into* the soul from Christ, not a power *evoked from* the soul itself, by proper appliances. This is a great and important distinction.

Nor is this all. While holiness is *not* transmissible, sin *is*. This law which works so uniformly and beneficently in all other departments of life, has been completely perverted and reversed in relation to morals. While the parents cannot house up holiness for their children, they can and do accumulate the terrific consequences of transgression and wickedness. Evil tendencies and proclivities are inherited far more readily and surely than good ones. We each bear about with us not only our personal sins, but also a greater or less load of sin which comes down to us from the past. Hence repentance is *doubly* necessary. We must be saved from the consequences and power of our own sins, and also saved from the power of evil inherited.

It is no wonder, then, that both John and Christ began their public ministry by preaching the same subject, in the same words; both of them saying to all around, "Repent, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Both of them saw that this was the first step to be taken, and until this had been taken no further steps were possible.

But what is repentance in itself, what is its fundamental and underlying idea? The original word means literally an *after-thought*, or a change of mind, a change of view. Now to think after, or take a second thought, is often to think differently, and to think more justly and truly; hence, to repent of the first thought. The idea pre-supposes that the mind has received some new and better light with regard to life and its duties, and its relations to God and man; which new light within, makes a *change* inevitable, a change of thought and purpose and intention.

And this without doubt is the beginning of repentance. The soul is convicted of sin by the combined power of God's truth and spirit. It sees now that its former views of life were wrong, and of course that its actions have all been

wrong. This afterthought or change of mind makes one not only resolve to turn over a new leaf in the book of life, but also to strive to get rid of the disastrous consequences of the old manner of life. It thus looks forward, backward, and upward, at the same time. It looks backward at its old course of sinful living, sees its enormity and wickedness, and is led to abhor it and turn from it, and to ask God to forgive it. It looks up to an outraged and innocent Judge, and is led to implore pardon and peace. It looks forward to the remainder of life, and also forward to the great day of God when its actions are to be weighed and judged, and calls upon God for strength to live a new, a holy, and an upright life.

The primary elements of repentance then are three. First, a change of mind and intention caused by new and better light or knowledge which enables the soul to see itself and God and the world in higher and truer aspects. Secondly, a change of conduct corresponding to this change of mind. As thought precedes action naturally, and action follows correct thought inevitably, so these two elements will be in harmonious proportion, necessarily. And thirdly, this change of thought and conduct will be accompanied by sorrow for the past, and strong crying to God for help to reform. The absence of either of these three ingredients vitiates the whole work. If a ship have three leaks and two be stopped, the third will surely sink the ship. So repentance that is not followed by a change of conduct is not worth anything; neither is a change of conduct that is not produced by a complete and radical change of mind of any value. This change of mind is so fundamental in true repentance that in the Scriptures it is likened to a new creation, a new birth; to old things passing away and all things becoming new. The soul sees itself and the world around differently, the Bible is a new book, the Church becomes more precious, and God holds a direct and immediate connection with all. Life instead of being an end in itself, is but a preparatory stage of existence for the life which is to come.

Of course, the strength and degree of this change and these

new views will vary with different minds, but there can be no genuine, biblical repentance in which no change appears. Neither is that repentance genuine which does not include sorrow for sin, and strong crying to God for mercy. There are a great many who will say, "I wish I had done differently; I might have done better. I am sorry I did not." But they do not follow this confession by asking God to forgive them. Now repentance is designed to lead to this point, precisely, and if it does not lead there, then no good results come therefrom. Repentance without amendment is like pumping water from a ship and not stopping the leaks. We all have afterthoughts and second thoughts which are better than the first ones; we all naturally gain a little new light by experience, day by day. But this is very different from the light imparted by God's truth and spirit which leads to conviction of sin, and broken-heartedness and deep contrition before him, and makes the soul cry out like blind Bartimeus, "O Lord, have mercy on me, have mercy on me."

There is very little danger of one's being too much in earnest about repentance, or too thorough in reform. Most souls fail in religious life because they are not earnest and thorough enough. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Genuine humility before God, and broken-heartedness and contrition of soul constitute the only soil out of which the plant of repentance will grow. Says the sainted Rutherford, "I pray you dig deep. Christ's palace-work and his new dwelling laid upon hell felt and feared, is most firm; and heaven grounded and laid upon such a fear, is sure work which will not wash away with wintry storms."

Does any one ask, how shall I secure this frame of mind? We answer, by asking God in prayer to show you all things in their true light and true relations. Perhaps no other direction is necessary than this one, simply pray for light and knowledge; "ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." Not simply ask once, but continually until you feel that God has heard and answered your cries and entreaties.

And what are the consequences or *results* of such repentance? It brings pardon or forgiveness of sins. In fact, this is the object of it. A long, dark catalogue of past transgressions must be washed away by the blood of the atonement, else they will rise up in the judgment and confront us like so many spectres and ghosts. We must feel, before we are saved, that God for Christ's sake (not for ours) has said to us, "Thy sins which are many are all forgiven; go in peace and sin no more." And this is a distinct and peculiar consciousness which the soul cannot feel until it has actually received the pardon. When Bunyan's Pilgrim started from the city of Destruction to seek the heavenly land, he felt weighed down by a great burden of guilt which he carried along with him and which he could not get rid of by his own efforts. And so he is pictured as carrying a great burden on his back. But by and by he came to the hill Difficulty, at the top of which stood the Cross. He began slowly to ascend. Foes were without and fears within. He was downcast and despondent. The air all about him was full of evil spirits whispering in his ear or tormenting him with doubts. But still he pressed on. At length, after many groanings and strugglings, he reached the top and threw himself down exhausted at the foot of the cross. At that moment his burden of sin and guilt was loosened, and rolled away down the hill, and the poor pilgrim never saw it any more.

Now, this is a picture or allegory of what takes place in the soul as one of the consequences or results of repentance. Repentance is seeking forgiveness at the foot of the cross, and pardon is the sense of release within. It may not be as vivid as this in every case, very likely it will not be; but something analogous to it, it must be. All must and will feel that God has pardoned the past, through the atonement provided by his son.

Furthermore, repentance brings a sense of peace to the soul; peace of conscience, peace of mind. Being created in God's image, a part of that image consists in the power of conscience to approve or condemn. God has not only written out his

law and placed it before us, but he has also written it out within us, and we carry it about with us wherever we go. The voice of conscience within, as far as it goes, is the same as the voice of God without and above. And this conscience, until it becomes dead and seared and wholly inoperative within, tells us, like a holy and upright judge, when we do right and when we do wrong. It says with an authority that cannot be questioned, "Thou shalt, and thou shalt not." And whenever we disobey its mandates then it reproves and stings and punishes. And of all the torments which one can feel, nothing is so fearful to bear as the stings of an angry conscience. It is the next thing to an angry God. It is likened in the Scriptures to the knawings of a worm that never dies, and the torment of a fire that is never quenched.

But proper repentance brings us a peace of conscience; not a deadness, but a sense of rest and approval. When we lie down at night instead of going to sleep with an aching pain of heart, the soul feels that its peace is made with God, and that if it dies before the morning light shall dawn, God will receive it to a better home above. When we go out or come in, instead of feeling a constant dread of disaster, there is a consciousness that God is over all, and will do nothing amiss. And at last, repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ will wash and cleanse the soul from every stain here, and prepare it for that everlasting fullness of rest and joy found only at God's right hand above. As says a noted preacher: "When a man undertakes to repent towards his fellow-men, it is like repenting straight up a precipice; when he repents toward law, it is like repenting into a crocodile's jaws; when he repents toward public sentiment, it is throwing himself into a thicket of brambles and thorns; but when he repents toward God, he repents toward all love and delicacy. God receives the soul as the sea a bather, and returns it again purer, whiter and happier than he took it."

CHAPTER V.

SIN AND PARDON.

"Alas! for the wildly wandering heart
 And its changing idol guests!
 It has roamed away to the world's far ends
 At the vagrant wind's behests.
 It loves on a worthless, treacherous world
 To bestow its high desires;
 And the lamp which it ought to be lighting in heaven,
 It kindles at idol fires.
 Full seldom it turns to its guiding chart—
 Alas! for the wandering heart."

"I need thee mighty Saviour!
 For I am full of sin;
 My soul is dark and guilty,
 My heart is dead within;
 I need a cleansing fountain
 Where I can always flee—
 The blood of Christ most precious,
 The sinner's perfect plea."

Cast off the sins thy holy beauty veiling,
 Spirit divine!
 Vain against thee the hosts of hell assailing,
 Christ's strength is thine!
 Drink from His side the cup of life immortal,
 And love shall lead the path to heaven's portal.
 SAVONAROLA.

"Thou knowest all—yet whither shall I go
 To leave my sins and with them leave my woe,
 Except to Thee who only help canst bring,
 And bid me live thy pardoning love to sing?"

I lay my head upon thy infinite heart,
 I hide beneath the shelter of thy wing,
 Pursued and tempted, helpless, I must cling
 To thee, my Saviour; bid me not depart."



WHAT is sin? The Bible answers, sin is a transgression of the Law. What is crime? The statute-book answers in the same words, crime is a transgression of the law. What then is the difference between sin and crime? In essence, in spirit, none at all. Sin is crime, and crime is sin. Crime is a word usually applied to *civil* offences, and sin to *moral* offences, but in both cases the moving principle is the same. One is an offence against man, the other against God, but both are transgressions of law which make the transgressor guilty, and subject him to penalty and punishment according to the nature of the offence. Consequently, every man who has ever broken one of God's laws, is a criminal in God's sight. He is looked upon as such, treated as such, and unless pardoned through Christ, will and must be punished as such at the last.

Outside of the Bible, sin is very generally regarded as simply a weakness, a fault, a failing, or an infirmity; something that all men are exposed to, and which therefore ought to be passed over lightly. You say to any man that he is a sinner, and he will readily admit the fact, sometimes with a smile even, and by looks and actions, if not by words, reply: "That is nothing strange or unusual. There is nothing remarkable or serious about that."

Yes there is something *very* serious about that. Is it a light thing to be a criminal in the eye of the civil law? To go about feeling that you are unsafe anywhere; that you are liable to be arrested any moment, and made to suffer the penalty of your crime? Undoubtedly, the most unhappy being on earth is a guilty criminal. By his transgression of the law, he has broken off his friendly relations with everything around and within him. He has broken off friendly relations with himself; he has disturbed the peace of his own mind and conscience and heart, and all the powers of his being rise up to

condemn him. He is out of friendly relations with society and with the State in which he lives. Yea, more, the very elements seem to combine against him; he is afraid of the whistling wind; he trembles at the rustling of a leaf. He is afraid to see his own neighbors; afraid of death; afraid of man, afraid of God. And why? Because he is a criminal; he has transgressed the law.

Now, which is greater, human law or divine law, the law of the State or the law of Heaven? Which is most binding and obligatory, the mandates of men or the mandates of God? All laws are binding and powerful to the degree that they are inherently just and right. A bad human law is sometimes more honored in the breach than in the observance, but when a law appeals to every sentiment of right and righteousness within the breast, then the law enforces itself, and all men unite in saying it must and shall be honored and obeyed. But what human law can be compared in the matter of justice, holiness and rightness with the holy and perfect law of God? Therefore, if human laws are binding and powerful because they are good, the laws of God are indeed a hundred times more so.

Again, a law is powerful and binding in proportion to the weight of authority that stands behind it. Thus, the laws of a state or a nation are felt and feared more than those of a single society or district, and a state criminal is regarded as tinged with a deeper dye of guilt than the mere offender against some purely local enactment. Then what solemnity and power there is in a trial before the Supreme Court of the nation, where the whole national power sits enthroned in state, and stands ready to descend in a crushing blow upon the life, or person, or property of the offender. But what human court can compare for a moment with the court of the Supreme Ruler above, who is the author of our lives and the maker of the world?—that court which sits in eternal session around the great white throne, where the books are ever opened, and the officers of justice stand ever ready to discharge their duty? Verily, then, if it is a terrible thing to be a criminal in the

eyes of men, how much more terrible to stand condemned as a sinner before God? All earthly penalties are not to be named beside the penalties of moral law. As Christ said, "Fear not those who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but I will forewarn you whom ye should fear. Fear him who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him."

Law, under all circumstances, is something not to be trifled with; is something that cannot be broken with impunity. Properly defined, law is a rule of action, prescribed by the supreme power of a state or nation, for the government of its subjects; a rule to which all rational beings are bound to yield obedience or be exposed to punishment. This is human law, applying only to conduct or external life. But what is Divine Law? It is not only a rule of action relating to conduct, but also a rule of action relating to thought, motives and feelings. While human law can only reach the outside, the divine law takes hold of the *heart*, as well as the life; regulates both the internal and external. Consequently, it is far easier to transgress divine law than human, because we sin in thought and feeling much more frequently than in deed, and the results are far more disastrous. This divine law was summed up by the Great Lawgiver himself in these two commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; and thy neighbor as thyself." All other moral statutes, he said, grew out of these two; and he that offended in one point was guilty of all.

By referring back for a moment to the definition first given, it will be noticed that Law is an enactment by the *supreme power* in every case; consequently it is the last and final utterance of that power, and from it there can be no appeal. We cannot go behind the law *power* to something stronger and higher, if we can behind the statute itself. While this is true with civil enactments, it is pre-eminently true of the laws of God. They are the embodiment of his own nature, and in them are found the eternal principles which govern his own action; consequently there is nothing behind or beyond God's

power as embodied in his holy law. It is his last and final utterance upon the subjects contained therein. There is no appeal from them, no repeal of them. Even God himself could not change his own law, without changing his own nature and being; for his law is simply a reflex of that nature and being.

It follows now that if God's laws are broken there is no escape for the transgressor. Man cannot change the law, neither can God without proper satisfaction, and when once broken, penalty and punishment must follow. The great wheels of Justice and Providence, impelled by the force that made and upholds the universe, go rolling on and over all those who willfully place themselves in their track, and there is nothing that can stop them but the satisfied holiness of Him who made them.

But is not God's law set aside by the atonement of Christ? Not in the slightest degree. When Christ took man's place before the Law, God treated him just as he will treat all sinners if they expose themselves to the fury of his vengeance. If the Law *could* have been set aside, or passed over, is it to be supposed Christ would have suffered as he did on the cross? Not at all; there would have been no need of such suffering. Of himself he did nothing amiss; he was sinless in character, he led an entirely sinless life; but he suffered on the cross and in the garden the penalty and punishment due to your sins and mine, reader. See him in that Garden! See him on the Cross! Behold the blackened sky, the rending rocks, the opening ground! Hark! hear the sufferer moan in the darkness. Hear him cry out in an anguish of soul that can never be known by us, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What does all this mean? What is it for? *Christ is enduring the penalty of God's broken law.* There could be no alleviation, no diminution of rigor in treatment, even though the victim was God's own Son. Having assumed man's obligations, he must pay the last farthing of the debt. And he did. We repeat it, therefore, no power can change, or repeal, or set aside moral law. Once broken, death must

follow, unless help is obtained from Him who died that man might live.

But the Bible speaks of being justified or pardoned by faith. How is this brought about? To justify is a legal term, meaning to clear or absolve from guilt. It calls to mind a prisoner at the bar. He has broken the law of the land, and is arraigned for trial, found guilty, and sentenced to death. He is a young man. His father steps up and offers to die in his stead; the government accepts the transfer, and the prisoner is released. The law cannot harm him now, for he is taken out of its grasp. So in religious substitution. By acts of sinful nature all men are prisoners at God's bar of justice, and under sentence of eternal death. But Christ in infinite love volunteers to take man's place, and the government of Heaven accepts the transfer. The sufferings and death of Christ are then declared to be an equivalent for the death of the whole world; and hence all those who believe in Jesus are released from the law's penalties as far as they relate to sins that are past. They are thereupon declared guiltless and stand justified before the law and before God.

Here, then, we see the nature of gospel pardon. It is far better than any earthly release can be. For example: a father might take his son's place in enduring the punishment allotted him, but he could not cleanse the son's *heart* from guilt. The son having actually committed a crime, has stained his soul with guilt as well as his name and character. The father might release him from the court and the prison and the scaffold, but as the son went out again into the world, he would go as a guilty man still. Before he could be perfectly free or pure, the crimson stains of sin and crime must be washed from *his heart*, as well as from his public name and record. And this no earthly power could do.

But when sinners are saved, and pardoned before God by faith in Christ, not only are they released from the hold of the law, not only declared guiltless and so released from eternal death and banishment, but at the same time they are made pure in heart. Cleansed outwardly and cleansed inwardly;

justified legally and made white and holy actually. What a great salvation in this! The Cross of Jesus satisfies God, and also changes the heart of man. Here is the two-fold action of redemption, one part relating to the law and one to the soul.

The guilty son referred to in the illustration, when he saw himself free and pardoned, would doubtless feel a momentary sense of peace and joy within, but if he was actually guilty, the old wound of remorse would soon re-open. The remembrance of his crime, the actual presence of guilt in his soul would be a constant source of torment to him, even if released from punishment and death. But in the case of the Christian believer who is justified before the law, and so released from death, there goes along with it an actual change of heart; so that his peace is not momentary, but constant and abiding. As the Scriptures declare, it is like a river, broad, deep, and full, never drying up, never flowing backward.

Again, the son would also have his life embittered constantly by the thought that although he had escaped destruction himself, yet he had forever put out the life of his father. But in the Christian plan of salvation, the substitute not only dies, but rises again and ever liveth at God's right hand; so that the sorrow for having caused Christ's death is speedily turned into rejoicing by reflecting that the Saviour burst the bonds of death after paying the penalty, and ascended up on high where he now waits to bless and receive his own.

Nothing could be more complete, or perfect than such a pardon. By the sufferings and death of Christ in man's behalf, the believer's past sins are expunged from the books of life above, and at the same time washed away within, leaving him pure, clean and guiltless, both legally and actually. Of course, he can go on and rush into sin again, and so become stained anew, but with regard to the past, God says, "As far as the East is from the West so far have I removed thy transgressions from thee." And again, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be made as white as wool; though red like crimson, they shall be as snow."

What is the price or condition of this pardon? Simply

faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this faith must be a true, inward, saving faith. The justification is a gospel justification, and it can only be enjoyed by a gospel faith on the part of the recipient. And what is this? It is a faith of *the heart*. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." Ordinary faith is nothing more than a mere mental apprehension, an assent or nod of the mind; it can be held without affecting the heart or life at all. It *is* held by men in general, one way and another; by the business-man toward his debtors, where it is called commercial faith. It is held by the scholar towards the statements he finds in books, and this is mere intellectual faith. It is held by the world in general towards the Bible and its contents, and this is simply historical faith. But the faith here mentioned which justifies and releases the soul from sin, is something *more* than all these, although it includes all these. It is a faith of the heart, which works by love. Its chief and distinguishing characteristic is, that it leads to a complete surrender of the will and mind to the control of another. Before any soul savingly believes on Christ, it first surrenders all *to* him, gives all up *for* him, loves him, and obeys him, and then it has gospel faith. This is believing with the heart. Henceforth the soul is not its own, but belongs to Christ.

To illustrate: A man traveling comes to the bank of a wide, perilous stream. He must cross it in order to gain the opposite shore where his treasure lies. The other shore is hidden by a veil of mist. He looks forward and can see only a few feet from where he stands. The sky is threatening overhead, and there strikes on his ear the roar of the waters in front. At the shore he sees a man with a small boat—only large enough in fact for two—one and the pilot. The traveler begins to question. "Can you take me across the river safely?" I can. "Do you warrant the passage?" I do. "How long have you been here?" Very many years—a long, long time. "Have you carried many across?" Yes, there is a large city full whom you will meet on the other side. "Is there any other way of getting across?" No safe way. Farther up the stream

is the remnant of an old bridge which promises well at the start, but it does not reach to the opposite bank; and although thousands upon thousands have tried it, not one among them all ever gained the other shore in safety. Very many come along here every day and inquire for the bridge and go forward; but, as I said before, the bridge is old and full of rottenness and pitfalls, and the lifeless corpses of these travelers come floating past every day. I see them every time I cross. "But do you not warn them of the danger?" Constantly, but they take no heed of what I say; they suppose I want them to patronize me. "What is your price for crossing?" Nothing at all; the government of the city on the other side furnishes the passage free to all who desire it. "But is not your boat small?" Yes, and purposely so; it was only intended for one at a time besides myself. The way across the stream is straight and narrow, and those who go must leave behind all their goods and companions for the time being, and entrust themselves, soul and body, with all their interests for time and eternity, entirely into my hands. They must obey me perfectly while crossing. In short, I take the whole charge of them, and they commit themselves wholly to my guidance. "Must I lose my goods and companions forever?" Your goods you will not need, and your companions can follow, one by one, if they will. And now, have you faith in what I say? If so, step in.

The traveler hesitates, looks forward and backward, and on either side, and then slowly repeats to himself, "I can but perish if I go, I am resolved to try. For if I stay behind, *I know* I shall forever die." And so, with fear and trembling he steps down into the boat, commits himself entirely to his Pilot, and is landed safely upon the farther shore. Now, this Pilot is Christ, the river is the river of life, the city is the New Jerusalem, and committing ourselves wholly to the boat, leaving goods and companions behind for the time being, is gospel or saving faith; is believing with the heart unto righteousness. This faith is an act of the whole being; the act of self-surrender.

As faith without works is dead, being alone, so *saving faith is invariably preceded by repentance, accompanied with confession, and followed by obedient action*; and this distinguishes it forever from all kinds of common or general faith. If Christ frees us, he is to have control of us from that time forward and forever. We are no longer our own, but his; soul, body and all.

A word more in regard to the *results* of this pardon of sin. Being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God. This peace is a permanent state, rather than a transient feeling, although it includes both. When the act of faith is accomplished, and the sentence of justification pronounced, this changes the attitude and relationship between God and our souls immediately, inasmuch as pardon is instantaneous in its effects. One hour we are rebels against God's government, the next, friends and peaceful subjects. One hour we are exposed to death and wrath, the next, free, pardoned, and happy. One hour, liable to feel the penalty of a broken law, the next, released from its grasp forever, unless we voluntarily put ourselves back again. One hour, in the book of life above there is a long, dark catalogue of sins charged against us, the next, the page is expunged and not a single blot or line remains. One hour, the soul is stained with crimson guilt, the next, the ruling power of sin is broken up, and the gradual process of whitening and cleansing is begun. One hour we stand out against God, defiant and stout-hearted, the next we are made humble and submissive. One hour, we are unpardoned sinners, the next, God's children and heirs with Christ. One hour we are lost, the next, saved. So great is this transformation wrought by justification through faith in Christ! We enter into a state of peace with God after a sinful war; peace within and peace above; peace of conscience and of mind; peace, springing from forgiveness, and leading on to purity and holiness.

Is it any wonder that God is angry with those who despise and reject such a blessing? The wonder is that his wrath does not burn against such like an oven, and consume them utterly.

And this it will do at the last. We must take either the law or the gospel and then carry it with us to the other world. Which will we have? Before we can be saved, we must be justified by faith and feel this peace with God. Have we all exercised saving faith in Christ? Are we ready to do it? Will we begin at once—to-day—now?



CHAPTER VI.


THE NATURE AND POWER OF FAITH.

"Nature wept when thou wert gone, but Faith
Can pierce beyond the gloom of death,
And in yon world so fair and bright
Beholds thee in refulgent light.

Nature sees the body dead—
Faith beholds the spirit fled;
Nature stops at Jordan's tide,
Faith beholds the other side;
Nature mourns a *cruel* blow,
Faith assures it is not so;
Nature tells a dismal story,
Faith has visions full of glory;
Nature views death's change with *sadness*,
Faith contemplates it with gladness;
Nature writhes and hates the rod—
Faith looks up and blesses God."

"The child leans on its parent's breast,
Leaves there its cares and is at rest;
The bird sits singing by its nest,
And tells aloud
His trust in God and so is blest
'Neath every cloud.

The heart that trusts forever sings,
And feels as light as it had wings;
A well of peace within it springs;
Come good or ill,
Whate'er to-day or morrow brings
It is His will."

HE Bible declares, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." What a sweeping, absolute assertion! Good works, zeal, energy, benevolence, uprightness of life, sweetness of disposition, kindness, faithfulness, steadiness, in short, everything within man is incomplete in God's sight until it springs from faith in the soul.

There are three processes by which we arrive at knowledge or come to conclusions. The first is by the testimony or evidence of the senses, which we call *sight*. Take up a book and both eye and finger tell the soul within, that a material object is before it. It possesses all the known properties of matter—hardness or density, extension or size, form, impenetrability, etc.—and if asked how we would *know* there was a book in the hand, we should at once confidently reply, because we can both *see* and *feel* it. This is one process of gaining knowledge, the most simple and obvious one of all, as well as the one most commonly and generally used.

The second process is through mental exercise or logical deduction which we call *reason*. This takes us into the region of the intangible and includes all that knowledge which comes to us from thought and study and reflection. By this kind of evidence we become convinced of the truths of science and philosophy such as, that the moon reflects the light of the sun, instead of its own light. This is a matter that we cannot determine by the first process nor can we know it through the testimony of the senses; but we know it from argument, analogy and experiment. It is a matter that we reason out, and so arrive at certainty. We observe all the facts, put them together, and then draw a conclusion, and say *we know*. And this process is just as legitimate, regular and valid as the first.

The third process is through the operation of the faith-faculty of the soul by which we take hold of the unseen world around and above and become convinced of the reality of the invisible. These three processes are like three successive steps in the scale of knowledge-getting; each higher than the last and all culminating in faith. The first deals with matter exclusively; the second with mind, science, philosophy and art; the third with the invisible and the unseen—with God, religion, and the soul. And each of these three is just as essential to complete life and action as the other two; each has its own ordained sphere of activity which the others cannot supply nor invade. Accordingly faith *supplies to us that which takes the place of actual demonstration*; and when a man has

true faith, he just as really believes a thing as though he saw it with his own eye, or reasoned it out with his own mind.

It will thus be seen that faith often transcends both sight and reason, and sometimes contradicts them. As an opponent of sight, it very closely resembles the action of its twin-sister, hope; for "hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Hope, properly, is the mingled expectation and desire of future good, while faith is stronger and goes deeper; being an inward conviction and assurance of the same good. But as the complement of sight, faith begins where sight leaves off, and carries the soul farther onward or upward. Again, faith and sight may, and often do travel together, although they always reach a point, sooner or later, when sight, becoming dimmed and fearful, retires, and then Faith has the field all to herself and shows her full strength and power and glory. Perhaps we cannot better set forth the comparative merit and office-work of these two powers, than by using an allegory.

A human soul looked out of its windows one day, and after gazing long and steadily above, exclaimed in impatient disquietude, "I am not satisfied with my present surroundings and portion; there must be some higher good attainable somewhere, and I am determined to seek it. The earth is good, but I sicken of its food alone; I feel that I want something richer and purer and nobler." No sooner had she ceased speaking, than two of her attendants came to her side, saying, "We will show you an abundance of treasures better than are found in any material mines; and if you will but follow us, we will lead you where those wants you speak of can be fully met." Most gladly will I go, the soul replied, and thereupon the three set out to find the Land of Fruition. Their route lay through the flowery fields and kingdoms of science, philosophy, art, and song, until they finally reached the utmost limits of human thought. At each stage of progress made, the soul, after receiving and enjoying all that her guides brought her from the different fields, made ever the same sad plaint: "The good you promised has not yet come

to me and my great want is yet unmet; is there nothing beyond?"

Her guides began to be in despair; but at last they said, "One thing more we can bring to thee, and then our limit is reached. In the kingdom of literature there is a Book in which, 'tis said, are disclosed treasures superior to all the earth can yield. They are not visible to us, but there is another attendant spirit that can be summoned, who holds the key to unlock all this hidden wealth, and even to reveal still greater and richer stores beyond." They brought the soul the Bible and then disappeared.

In the midst of desolation and sorrow, and not knowing what else to do, the soul opened the Bible and read: "Ask, and it shall be given; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened." "For he that asketh, receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth." Spirit of God, it cried, "Come to my relief, and show me the Way, and the Truth, and the Life." And quickly a brighter light began to shine around, and another guide came to her side saying, "O soul, thy companions were not able to give thee the good thou didst crave, nor were they able to lead thee to the land of fruition, because they are of the earth; their names are Sight and Reason; they have no power to scale the walls of the material and the actual. But I come from the land of light and rest above; "from the land of our God, and the home of the soul, where rivers of pleasure unceasingly roll, and the way-worn pilgrim reaches his goal on the ever-green mountains of life". Give me a place on the throne of your affections, and put thy hand in mine, never withdrawing it, and I can lead you safely within the crystal walls." With tears of joy and gratitude the soul surrendered itself to faith, and was saved.

But faith is not mere imagining, on the contrary it always rests upon a basis of either moral or tangible evidence. And here we must distinguish again between several varieties or kinds of faith which exist in life. First and most simple of all, is the faith of little children in their parents; a genuine, unsuspecting, hearty and beautiful faith, and the type of

Christian faith; a faith resting on both moral and tangible evidence; a faith that will remain strong until the evidence is taken away, and then it will speedily die, giving place to fear and dread. In other words, when the parent ceases to give evidence to the child of the sincerity of its love, then the child at once loses its faith. This evidence on which the child's faith rests, appeals to his *eye* and *heart*; it is seen in the parent's look, and tone, and words, and felt in the child's soul.

A second kind may be called business faith, but always, as in the first case, resting on evidence, and ceasing the moment that evidence is destroyed. One firm trusts another only and simply because the second convinces the first of its financial integrity and ability. And this kind of faith is so necessary and important, that it lies at the bottom of nearly all the transactions of business life.

A third kind may be termed historic faith; that which is exercised in regard to all books and records that come down to us from the past; but here, as heretofore, the books are valueless in our eyes, so far as they contain facts and documents, until they are well authenticated. This kind of faith many exercise with regard to Christ and the Scriptures, and suppose it to be all that is necessary to salvation; but they make a fatal mistake.

Again, distinctively Christian or Scriptural faith is no exception to this law. No man can exercise true faith in the Bible as the Word of God; or in Christ, as the Son of God and the Saviour of mankind, until the Bible and Christ come home to his soul as the most central and vital of all realities, and real things. The evidence for faith to rest on here, is partly moral, appealing to the soul rather than to the eye, and partly historic, satisfying the mind. In other words, there is external data sufficient to establish the existence of Christ, and the authenticity and credibility of the Gospel narratives, and this is supplemented by the strong internal response of our moral natures, telling us in a manner not to be set aside, that this is *the truth*, and the *truth of God*.

A faith which is purely blind and unreasoning, that rests on no sort of evidence whatever, we rightly denominate superstition; because it is a mere figment of an uncultured imagination. This kind is found principally among the degraded and ignorant heathen, bowing down to gods of wood and stone, and worshiping fire and water, beasts and serpents. A lack of evidence marks just the distinction between blind superstition, and true faith.

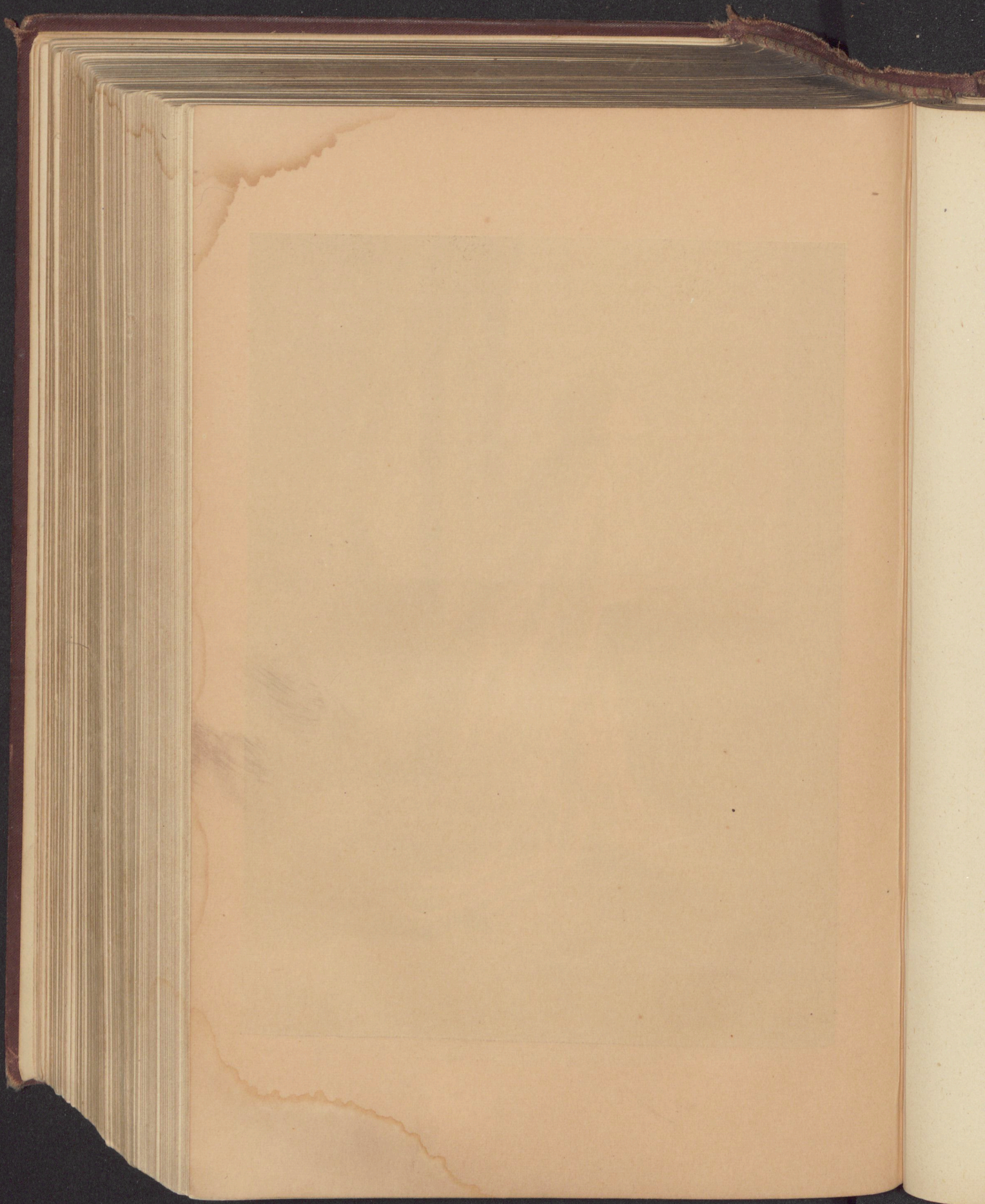
But faith to be distinctively Christian or saving in its nature, must come from the heart and work by love. And herein Christian faith differs from all other kinds. The faith of the heathen is made up of fear and dread, and leads only to outward ceremonies and forms. The business man's faith is wholly mental in its nature; and can be held or not without affecting the life; so is that of the student in regard to books. The faith of the child comes nearest to that of the Christian; but in this, the appeal to the eye is and must be always stronger than to the heart; whereas in distinction from this, stands out the declaration of inspired Christian experience that "with the heart alone man believeth unto righteousness."

We have often tried to sketch, mentally, the process of believing unto life, and this would be an outline of it. God first comes to the soul either through the printed page or through the living voice. Truth knocks at the gate of the mind and seeks admission. But the mind is pre-occupied, and says, "I cannot attend to you." Truth knocks again and again, and finally secures an entrance. It then exhibits before the bar of the mind its credentials; or in other words, submits its evidences; and after examination these are accepted and pronounced sufficiently valid and convincing.

Conversion however has not taken place yet—very far from it. This is only intellectual or historic faith; the main part of the work is yet to come. The mind sends down word to the heart or moral nature that Divine truth is present, and is earnestly claiming its loyalty, its obedience and its affection. The heart can now take one of two courses. It can hesitate and refuse this obedience and love; it can take the will, which



WATCHING AND WAITING. Page 616.



is the bolt of its door, and snap it into its fastenings, and thus bar the truth out, saying, "The throne of my affections is already occupied by my own selfish interests, and I don't want to be disturbed; I have no room for another King;" or, it can throw back the bolt of will and open the door, and give the truth audience and listen to its claims; and, discovering them to be of paramount and supreme importance, it can say: "I yield. Cast down Self that has so long occupied a throne of power, and do thou reign in and rule over my heart, my interests; my life. I do now give myself up in unreserved consecration to thee, and will henceforth live for thy glory, as I should have done long ago." Truth then comes in, occupies the throne of love, the intellect yields its obedience, and thereafter Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords; and thus the soul truly and savingly believes and passes from death unto life.

Having thus glanced at the *nature* of faith, let us now consider the second main thought proposed, viz; the *power* of faith. This world and the next are almost always represented in the Scriptures as opponents, each claiming dominion over life, over time, and action. And faith is held up as the agent by which this world is overcome and a victory gained for the other and better world. Or, stating it in other phraseology, this world stands as the representative of finite and created good, and the other, of infinite and eternal good; the one of things seen, the other of things unseen.

Every one knows by experience that the eye takes in evil by seeing it, and opens the soul to all the attractions and pleasures of this world, to the serious detriment and disadvantage of those interests which pertain to the next. We all know, too, that the soul is ever ready to follow the eye; that desires are enkindled by sight; and that the connection between the soul and the outward world, is not only intimate and close, through the bodily senses, but also most dangerous to its spiritual life and welfare. And hence the need of some power or principle in the soul by which the *inordinate* influence of this world upon one's spiritual well-being, can be at least partly counteracted.

And just this power or principle, God in his rich goodness and mercy has given us in the power of Christian faith; the power of taking hold of the unseen; the power which can bring down eternal realities into our souls, and make them even more vivid to us than the scenes of ordinary life; the power which can envelop us in a spiritual atmosphere; the power that can make us regard every action here, as the starting of a wave of influence which stops not in its course until it strikes against the shores of eternity.

Now, if any one asks *how* faith brings about this most desirable result, we answer: in the same way that the morning sun puts out the stars, by eclipsing them; by overcoming them with superior light and glory, by extinguishing them in brilliancy of a higher and stronger order. God does not act so unwisely as to command us to crucify our love for this world, and then give us nothing to take the place of it. On the contrary, by this divine and miraculous power of faith, he enables us to so connect ourselves with the future and eternal world, that *its superior attraction* shall overcome and render harmless the seductive evils and pleasures of this.

Thus, to take the place of the splendor and pleasures of earthly cities, Faith brings to view the city of the New Jerusalem, whose builder and maker is God, whose walls are jasper, and whose gates are pearl, and whose foundations are eternal; and Faith enables the soul to live within those gates and to walk those streets and to sit down beneath that tree of life. In the place of these earthly treasure-houses, Faith summons us to deposit enduring riches in heavenly vaults where no casualty can befall them, and where no burglar ever penetrates. To keep us from loving our homes with all their conveniences and luxuries too fondly, Faith points to a heavenly mansion in our Father's home above. To enable the soul to release itself from a thralldom to social folly and the gay vortex of pride and vanity and display, Faith lifts it up into communion and companionship with the holy and pure society of Heaven, and bids it slake its thirst at fountains whose waters inspire, but never degrade or intoxicate. For

robes of earthly beauty, Faith speaks of garments of glory that wax not old, and of a robe of righteousness in which all-perfect heavenly dress, our souls may forever shine. And while we are necessarily engaged in earthly traffic and commercial pursuits, Faith invites us to carry on holy trade and barter with the land that is filled with heavenly spices and provisions for immortal wants. And thus, at every point, Faith provides the soul with that which will offset and counteract the influence and deadly fascination of a life in the flesh.

The victory that overcometh the world is only secured by this power of a living faith; by being so persuaded of the truth of God's Word, and so filled with its light, and so surrounded by higher and better realities, and so impregnated with love for spiritual things and spiritual communion, that earthly objects and attractions shall lose their hold upon us, and cease to withdraw our feet from the heavenly highway to a truer and better life.

Does any one say that all these blessed results and consequences can never be realized in an earthly life? Then turn to the Bible and read of Abel and Noah and Abraham and Sarah and Jacob and Moses and David and Samuel, and then ask, were these men and women more favorably situated than are the favored dwellers in this nineteenth century? Did they have more light than we, or more spiritual advantages and privileges? Were they not of like passions with us, just as faulty and full of sin and the love of the world? And the answer to these questions will shame such a thought out of any candid mind.

Said Sir Humphrey Davy: "I envy not quality of mind or intellect in others, neither genius, power, wit or fancy; but if I could choose what would be most delightful, and I believe most useful to me, I should prefer a firm religious faith to every other blessing. For it makes life a discipline of goodness; creates new hopes when all other hopes vanish; throws over the decay and destruction of existence the most gorgeous of all lights; awakens life even in death, and from corruption and decay calls up beauty and divinity; makes an instrument

of torture and shame the ladder of ascent to paradise; calls up the most delightful visions of plains and amaranths, the gardens of the blest, and the security of everlasting joys. And where the Christian believer sees and enjoys all this, the sensualist and the skeptic view only gloom, decay, annihilation and despair."

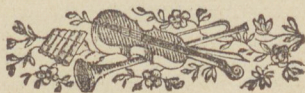
The fact is, faith as a power in life is even stronger than sight, for by constant sight, as J. B. Walker has remarked, "the effect of objects seen, grows less, whereas by constant faith the effect of objects believed in, grows greater. Personal observation does not admit of the influence of the imagination in impressing a fact; while unseen objects, realized by faith, have the auxiliary aid of the imagination, not to exaggerate them, but to clothe them with living colors and impress them upon the heart. And so the fact is true, that the more frequently we see, the less we feel the power of an object, while the more frequently we dwell upon an object by faith, the more we feel its power."

To the inquiry, how shall I gain this wondrous power? We reply: faith is the gift of God, and a fruit of the Holy Spirit within the soul. Jesus is set forth as its author and finisher, and through his intercession, the Spirit is given in answer to prayer. By diligent reading and study of the Scriptures and hearing of the Word; by fervent, earnest prayer for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit; by devout meditation on heavenly truths; by discipline and trial, at length the filmy mists of earth will break away, and the brighter glories of the upper realm begin to unfold. But think not to acquire this power of faith in all its fullness suddenly; imagine not that God will pour it into your souls, as oil is poured into a lamp; but expect it only as the result of persevering prayer and protracted Christian experience. Faith like every Christian grace commences feebly, but groweth brighter and brighter until it culminates in an open vision that shall be forever undimmed and uninterrupted above.

And in the pursuit of this primal Christian grace, Christ will be to us our best example. For he most emphatically was *in*

the world and not *of* it; he mingled with men but was separate from sinners; he walked the earth, but his soul was ever in the skies with his Father. "And like some column whose base is enveloped in an atmosphere of pollution, but on whose summit there streams perpetual sunshine; so Christ walked the earth below, but his soul was ever above, and in the light of that other world he viewed the concerns of this, and conducted all his ministrations to men." So must all live who would be his disciples and followers. And when, like some way-worn traveler who is fainting beneath a burning sun, but gathers new vigor by thinking of his home and loved ones at the journey's end, we grow faint from fatigue and are embarrassed by a thousand cares and are half heart-broken with grief, we must gather fresh inspiration and vigor by calling into exercise this faith-faculty of the soul and through it viewing the King in his beauty and the supernal glories of the land towards which we hasten.

"We need no change of sphere
To view the heavenly sights, or hear
The songs which angels sing. The hand
Which gently pressed the sightless orbs erewhile,
Giving them light, a world of beauty and the friendly smile,
Can cause our eyes to see the better land."



CHAPTER VII.

REGENERATION OR THE NEW BIRTH.

"Poor, wandering soul! I know that thou art seeking
Some easier way, as all have sought before,
To silence the reproachful inward speaking—
Some landward path unto an island shore.

The Cross is heavy to thy human measure,
The way too narrow for thine inward pride;
Thou canst not lay thine intellectual treasure
At the low footstool of the Crucified.

In meek obedience to this heavenly Teacher,
Thy weary soul can find its only peace;
Seeking no aid from any human creature,
Looking to God alone for thy release.

For poverty and self-renunciation,
The Lord yields back a thousand-fold;
In the calm stillness of regeneration
Comes joy we never knew of old."



AMONG the many notable chapters in John's gospel, is that one detailing the interview and conversation of Christ and Nicodemus. It forms, as it were, the impassable boundary-line between truth and error in regard to the "new man" in Christ Jesus, and the new life which Christianity introduces. One is inclined to feel that had not John written this gospel to supplement the three that already existed, and had not this conversation with Nicodemus been recorded, the system of Christianity, as a whole, would have been left incomplete.

Let us glance for a moment at the striking features of this interview. It occurred in the night, and probable late in the

night, when no other visitors would be present, and when there would be no fear of detection. It was an earnest, confidential interview; not one of mere courtesy. Very few, if any, hollow, conventional words and set phrases were uttered on either side. It was a fair, undisguised contact of two spirits, one human, the other divine-human; one eager to learn, the other anxious to teach; the subject matter before them being the most vital and profound that could possibly engage either divine or human thought.

In a limited and modified sense, the two *persons* then confronting each other were representatives of two dispensations; of two great epochs of time; two marked stages of development in God's redemptive plan. On the one side was Nicodemus, a favorable specimen of the better, more intelligent, more inquiring class of the Jews. He was a ruler; had authority; possessed wealth and titles; was looked up to as a guiding mind. He was a teacher of the law; disposed to examine matters and inquire into principles, although blinded as were all the Jews; he was evidently dissatisfied with the existing religious condition of his nation; was looking forward to a change for the better; had evidently kept his eye for some time upon the Prophet of Nazareth; had marked his life; had weighed his words; had closely studied his miracles. He was in a state of doubt and anxiety. "I will go to him" he thought, "and learn from his own lips." And so, when darkness had shrouded the city and the streets had become still and deserted, he sought Christ's temporary dwelling-place. Over against him sat the Lord Jesus Christ who alike baffles and needs no description.

Nicodemus had made his confession, and stated the condition of his thoughts. "And now master," he doubtless said, "tell me what is the fundamental principle of the system you propose to introduce." Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born from above (as the words may read) he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus stumbled at the words, as thousands have since; asked an explanation, which was given; and, more per-

plexed than when he came, departed to his home. But the all-important declaration had been made, "ye must be born again," and it never could be lost, nor never changed. There it has stood upon the page of scripture, and ever will stand, as the fundamental principle of Christianity, the standard of a true faith, the touch-stone of saving truth.

Out from this declaration of Christ, and this conversation with Nicodemus, there can come but one subject or doctrine, and that is, *the new birth*. This is the one specific idea which Nicodemus failed to grasp, and which thousands since his day, have also failed to grasp. What is it, therefore, to be born again, or born from above? What particular part of man is included in this expression? Where is the seat and source of the change?

The expression itself is figurative; still, it is a wonderfully apt and forcible figure. None other than unerring wisdom could have made so just and so happy a selection of terminology. Of course there is no literal, outward, physical birth. The mistake of Nicodemus was that he apprehended these words literally, and asked Christ, with profound amazement, how a man could be born when he was old. It is not strange, however, that Nicodemus made this blunder; the Jews as a nation, with rare exceptions, constantly perverted Christ's teachings, until the spirit of truth was sent to them to open the eyes of their understandings. But *we* must not imitate Nicodemus in this respect. The "outward man" as such, including size, shape, features, proportions, general outline and contour, are just the same before as after this new birth. The strength of physical passions and appetites is the same; bodily wants the same. Nothing is changed in man physically; no organs given, none taken away. The only effect of the new birth upon the body is to turn its activities into a nobler channel, and subdue and restrain its ungovernable lusts; in a sense, sanctifying its life by connecting it with higher purposes and spiritual aims.

And what is true of the organs and functions of the body is equally true of the intellect of man. Nothing is given here

in structure, or taken away, by the new birth. The faculties of the intellect are just the same before as after the change; no more, no less. The direction and moral character of intellectual activity is affected greatly by the birth, yea, affected vitally and radically, but not the powers that produce the activity. Reason, memory, imagination, perception, all remain intact. Argument as strong, wit as keen, penetration as profound, insight as sharp, logic as good, are produced by minds unregenerate as regenerate. Some of the greatest masterpieces of human thought and composition have been produced by such minds; although it is only fair to add, that no account is taken in this statement of that unconscious, indirect influence of Christianity on such minds, which reached them through the civilization by which they were nurtured, and from which in great measure they derived their culture and power.

There remains yet undescribed the deepest and the controlling part of man's nature; that part which governs his action, determines the moral character of his thoughts, directs his will; in a word, the ruling power in man. *This is the love of his heart.* Every man pursues that end and object of life which not only commends itself to his mind, but which he really and in his heart *loves*; and whenever there is antagonism between the decisions of reason and the love of the soul, as all know by experience, the love in the end triumphs and carries the man captive. Indeed this love so subjugates the intellect, that very speedily a man comes to *believe* just that which he loves; while the will of man is only the executive power that carries out the heart's desires. A man can no more go contrary to this ruling love of his moral nature, than a rivulet could reverse its progress and flow up a mountain-side, instead of down. The heart is the throne, and Love the king that sits upon it.

But right here we touch not only the center of human personality, but also the center and seat and source of evil in man. This ruling love in the soul, being a sinful love, not only controls but contaminates the man throughout. Partly by a transmitted, hereditary bias towards sin, and partly by

his own voluntary choice, every man by nature loves things earthly, more than things heavenly; loves sensuous and material good, more than higher, spiritual good; loves his own way better than God's way; loves his own projects and plans, his own ideas and notions better than God's revealed plans of life, better than God's revealed truth; loves himself, the creature, more than God, the Creator; loves this world, as an end of being, better than that which is to come.

Now, being "born again," or born from above, is to have this ruling, sinful love of the heart turned away from self and the world, to God and truth. Here is the precise, definite spot that religion touches and occupies in man; here is its fountain-head; here is its throne. When a man experiences religion, this love of his heart is turned about, as to the direction of its activities, from sin which is opposition to God, to fellowship and sympathy with, and belief upon Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, and as in himself constituting "the way, the truth and the life." The new birth then, is *a new love in the soul*; a love of spiritual good and of divine truth; a love of God as supreme, and of man as created in God's image; a love of Christ as God and man united, and so the great reconciler and mediator; a love of the Bible, as the word of God; a love of Christianity, as the product of Christ's teachings and sufferings in man's behalf.

By this change of heart, or, more accurately, this change of love *in* the heart, man's life, which was perverted by sin and turned against his own highest welfare, is restored to its true, normal state, and flows on according to divine directions in the channel which leads to ultimate and perfected glory at God's right hand. Christ becomes to such a one the second Adam; the second progenitor of the race; the Author and Giver of a new, true, higher and spiritual life; and as by the lapse of the first Adam, he became a slave to sin, and the love of his heart was towards and for sin, by the life and death and resurrection of the second Adam, as applied to his soul by the Spirit through faith, he becomes liberated from this bondage to sin, and is made free to serve righteousness; in other

words, he is born of the spirit, or born from above. Before this change in the direction of his love, he could indeed do as he pleased, but could only please to do wrong; for the sinful current of his heart held him fast. And he could no more of himself change that current than a man could lift himself from the ground with his own hands.

But why is this change or conversion of one's moral affections called a *new birth*? Birth includes life and being and organism; and the phraseology would indicate that one was, by this birth, created anew throughout. It *seems* indeed a little thing to change simply the direction of the love of a human heart, and then say the man is born again; but the change in the direction of this love *insures* a gradual change in the man throughout; because this love is the ruling power.

You drop a watch and twist the mainspring by the fall, so that instead of keeping true time, it runs on by a standard of measurement wholly its own and very far one-side of the acknowledged standard. You take the watch to a jeweler, and he turns back the mainspring into its former place, and so establishes the true, normal movement of the works throughout. What has he done? He has set the watch right, by setting the ruling, governing part of it right. In properly adjusting that, he affected it throughout. Somewhat like this is the change in the direction and nature of the love of man's heart by the power of God's spirit at conversion.

Take another illustration. When an insurrectionist with his followers rises up in rebellion against a government, and he, as the leader of the party, is captured, or gives in his submission to the regular, constituted authority, does not that one act in itself lead inevitably to the dispersion or surrender of all his adherents and retainers? Even so it is in the nature of man; when Love, as king and leader of all personal forces, submits to the authority of Christ, all the bodily and mental faculties follow in time the leading of the heart. And hence it is written, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."

Christ himself explained this process by the parable of the

mustard-seed to which he likened the kingdom of heaven. This seed, he said, was indeed the least of all seeds, but, *when it is grown*, it is the greatest among herbs and becometh a tree. So this change of one's moral affections from sin to holiness, is, indeed, so far as outward appearance goes, the least of all changes, but *when it is completed* it is the greatest of all transformations, and becometh a new existence.

For the birth of this Christ-ward affection in the soul produces of necessity a new purpose and aim in life; new motives and desires; new views and thoughts; new choices and deeds. And when all these are changed is not the man "born again?" Is he not a "new creature" in Christ? "old things having passed away, and all things becoming new?" As birth produces life, and life produces thought, feeling, willing, choosing, acting, so all these lead to development and expansion, which culminate in the perfectly redeemed state enjoyed by those who shall sit down at last with Christ on his heavenly throne.

Such, imperfectly delineated, is this fundamental doctrine of regeneration as set forth in the Bible under the figure of a new birth. Such is the precise and definite change which it contemplates in man's nature, and such are the consequences to which it leads. It is no wonder that Nicodemus failed to understand the import of Christ's words. He was a Jew and a teacher of the law; he had been trained in outward religious ceremonies exclusively; he knew but little, if anything, of inward religious life and power. And as he sat there confronting Christ, the omniscient eye of the master looked beneath the questioner's garb and outward seeming, and read easily and accurately the state of his heart. He knew well that before Nicodemus could break away from his strong Jewish prejudices, the force of his early education and religious training, the influence of his position in the nation, and the example of associates; before he could conquer the proclivities and biases of his mental and moral nature; before he could become a follower of the persecuted Prophet whose instructions he was then secretly seeking, a power must come upon him like the power of the spirit of truth, and must

change this ruling love of his soul. And hence, in answer to the ruler's questioning look and words, Christ said, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again."

But yet, Nicodemus was as favorably circumstanced, outwardly, for becoming a Christian as any one can be, consequently, what was indispensable to him, is equally so to all. These words of Christ to Nicodemus should come home to every soul with the power and pungency of a direct, personal application; because they *have* such an application. Said the herald of Christ to the Jews, "And now the axe is laid at the root of the tree." Old Testament symbol-worship, and temple worship, and all merely outward formalism was to close with the advent of Him who came "to thoroughly purge his floor, that he might gather the wheat into his garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." "The time cometh and now is," said Christ to the woman of Samaria, "when the true worshipers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

All outward forms in religion are only valuable in God's sight as they give utterance to an inward life. God being infinitely holy, and possessing infinite penetration and insight into character and motives, it is repugnant to all right conceptions of him to suppose for a moment that he could be imposed upon by a hollow semblance, a mere form of righteousness, when the ruling love of one's being was still unchanged. And yet, owing to the predominance of man's sensuous nature, the inevitable tendency of religious life in all ages is towards a soulless formalism. A certain amount of outward religious observance is apt to become the mere habit of respectable life, and habits of all kinds grow more and more thoughtless the longer they are continued.

Says Gotthold: "A wild stock has all its branches pruned away and is hewn down to a span's length. It is then split, has foreign shoots inserted into it, and is afterwards bound up. Then it not only adopts the strange shoots and nourishes them with its sap and vigor, but even permits them to gain the mastery so far as to make it forget its wildness, and bear beau-

tiful and delicious fruit. In like manner, if you take a branch of the wild olive and ingraft it upon a good olive, it becomes like a new creation. That which was useless or worse imbibes the virtuous qualities of the good olive and produces its fruit. So in regeneration. The sinner can never bring forth the fruits of grace till he is ingrafted into Christ and becomes a tree of the Lord's planting."



CHAPTER VIII.

BELIEVING ON CHRIST.

"O Christ! thou art the Way!

All ways are thorny mazes without Thee,
When hearts are pierced and thoughts all aimless stray,
In thee the heart stands firm, the life moves free:
Thou art the Way!

Thou art the Truth!

Questions the ages break against in vain
Confront the spirit in its untried youth.

Thou art the Truth:

Truth for the mind, grand, glorious, infinite,
A heaven still boundless o'er its highest growth.

Thou art the Light!

Earth beyond earth no faintest ray can give;
Heaven's shadeless noontide blinds our mortal sight;
In thee we look on God, and love and live:
Thou art our Light!

Thou art the Rock!

Doubts none can solve heave wild on every side,
Wave meeting wave of thought in endless shock;
On thee the soul rests calm amidst the tide:
Thou art the Rock!"



BELIEF in Christ as the manifestation of God in the flesh, is the one and only distinctive Christian belief. A belief in the general existence of God may be said to be a universal religious sentiment. Not only do all tribes and nations of men recognize the Divine Existence, but this belief is also common among the devils in hell, who are explicitly declared to believe and tremble. This belief is an ineradicable instinct of man's religious nature; one of those truths that find their way into the mind

and heart of man through every avenue of information incorporated in the structure and functions of his moral being. More than this, the whole universe proclaims this truth; the heavens above, the earth beneath, each flower and leaf upon the earth, each bird and insect that lives and moves, proclaim it. The sea roars it, the winds whisper it, the storm thunders it. Man's own moral nature responds to this truth; reason demands and accepts it, conscience announces and enforces it. Given a rational immortal soul, made in God's image, and a world around filled with clear evidences of Divine power and skill, and a belief in God's existence is inevitable. And this accounts for that ancient testimony of Plutarch's, given about the commencement of the Christian era, viz: "Go over the earth and you can find cities without walls, without temples of art, without culture, but a city without gods and sacrifices, no man ever saw."

It would indeed be strange, God having created the world and left the imprints of his workmanship upon it, and having created man in his own likeness and image, with rational and moral powers, if man, God's creature, living in a world of God's creation, should not be able to detect the evidences of his Creator's existence, and read the handwriting of his power and wisdom and glory.

There is nothing, therefore, really or distinctively Christian in a mere intellectual recognition of the existence of God, or in believing on God in a general, indefinite way. There is nothing praiseworthy or meritorious about it, for after a man believes on God in this way, he has done nothing more than is done by the most ignorant and degraded tribes of earth, nothing more than is done by the devils in hell. In believing on God in this general way, he has simply allowed his reason and conscience to work naturally and normally, and he believes because his corrupt heart and desires have not been able to crush the belief out.

Neither is there anything specially praiseworthy in a general belief in the historical existence of Jesus Christ as recorded in the four gospels. These four Gospels come down

to us bearing more evidences of truthfulness, both externally and internally, than any other writings of equal antiquity. No man whose mind is open to evidence of any kind can help believing that there lived in Palestine, over 1800 years ago, a most wonderful and extraordinary being whose name was Jesus. And to believe this is no more praiseworthy or meritorious than to believe in the historical existence of Cæsar, Socrates, or Hannibal. And yet a great many suppose that if they accept intellectually the mere facts of Christ's life and death, they are really and savingly believing on him in the gospel sense. Whereas, the truth is that every man who believes in history at all, is obliged to believe in the existence of Christ whether he wishes to or not. There is no escaping it, except by a universal historical skepticism. He who accepts the histories of Greece and Rome as valid and authentic, must also accept the four histories of the life of Jesus, as recorded by the evangelists, unless he be a man destitute of all candor and impartiality of thought. And only the most incorrigible now have the hardihood to question this point.

All through the New Testament it is constantly reiterated that a real, whole-hearted acceptance of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, constitutes, as we have already said, the only Christian belief; and that without such a belief, which includes not only intellectual recognition and acceptance of, but personal, unreserved surrender to Christ, no man is or can be a Christian. A general and even devout reverence for God will not save any. The demand is specifically that we believe in, accept of, and surrender to Christ, as the Son of God and as God manifest in the flesh, reconciling the world unto himself. Listen to such declarations as these: "The Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Here it is plainly taught that however much a man might try to reverence and love and worship God as the invisible Father, all such attempts would only incense the Father and make him more angry, if

there were not united with these attempts an equal recognition of the Son with the Father; yea more, unless the belief in the Son was prominent and pre-eminent, more near and vital than the belief in the invisible God could be, if separated from Christ. And again we read, "That all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him."

God, as to the nature of his being, is unknown and unknowable to man except through Christ. The heavens over our heads, indeed declare God's glory, but they declare nothing more, nothing further. The universe is packed full of the evidences of his existence, but they tell us nothing of what *kind* of a being he is, or what are his moral attributes. Even the Old Testament dispensation was imperfect in this respect. Christ told the Jews at one time, as they were boasting of their intercourse with God, that they had neither heard his voice or seen his shape at any time. We are also assured, and the statement justifies itself fully to our reason, that no man can see God and live.

The work of specially revealing God to men was emphatically and pre-eminent the work of Christ. There is hardly a moral attribute of God, now familiar to men, which is not thrown back upon him from the manifestation of it in Christ. We have taken the attributes of Christ which he personally manifested, have taken the revelations of God which Christ communicated unto men by his teachings, and transferred them to the Father; so that all, or nearly all, of our present knowledge of God has come to us through this source. Christ said to men, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." The heathen philosophers and sages of antiquity could demonstrate the *existence* of God, but they could tell nothing *what kind* of a being he was. That altar which Paul found at Athens tells the whole story; it bore the inscription, "To the Unknown God." The wise men of Athens knew and felt that there must be, and that there was such a being, but they could find out nothing more. Likewise, the knowledge which

the Jews possessed of God was very imperfect and very incomplete. And it has been only since the time of Christ that men could speak confidently and understandingly of the moral nature and attributes of God.

But Christ as the God-man is a being whom we can at least partially comprehend. He wears the semblance and exhibits in all points the very nature of man. We can attach some definite form and shape to him. We know what he did, and what he said. We have his teachings and his commandments. We know the manner of his life. He is a living, real, breathing personage to us. He is not human alone, not Divine alone, but Divine-human. We can reverence him and worship him, and we can approach him. He knows our frames, our joys and sorrows, our griefs and temptations. He is God, and therefore strong enough to deliver; he is man, and therefore approachable.

Now, it is just because God by the very infinitude of his being is so necessarily *removed* from man, and because Christ by his Divine-human personality can come so *near* to man, that makes just the difference between a belief in one and the other. The one belief is necessarily abstract, the other concrete; one is liable to be merely general and indefinite, the other must, if it is anything, be close, personal, and vital. Christ is too real, too near to us, to be believed on in a general, indefinite way. Every man is, and must be, either for or against him.

Hence, in every true and real conversion, the soul is brought by faith into new and distinct and conscious relations with Christ, as its Redeemer and Saviour. Before this gracious change, Christ is practically nothing to the soul; afterwards, he is all in all. Before, he stands simply as a historical personage whose life is found in the gospels, and who is said to have something to do with the matter of salvation, but just what the soul neither knows, definitely, or cares. Afterwards, Christ is both Lord and King, the Author of life and salvation, the end of the law, a personal Leader and Captain, a perfect Pattern and Model. By this gracious

change, the soul feels a new and distinct life within, which it is sure it derives directly from Christ, through the Holy Spirit. And the movings and workings of this new life, produces what is called Christian experience.

The importance of thoroughly recognizing and preserving this distinction in our thoughts cannot be overestimated. Not that there is any essential difference of nature between God and Christ, because in the deepest and truest sense, God is Christ and Christ is God. But in the economy of redemption, in the working of the plan of salvation, God has been pleased to reveal himself to man under a three-fold form, or as three persons, constituting the indissoluble and holy Trinity. And the *center* of this holy and sacred three, be it ever remembered by us, is Christ the Son.

Conversion does not change a man's essential relations with God the Father. He is as much a creature of God's power, and as dependent upon him before, as after belief; he is as much a subject and under the sway and dominion of God's government before, as after. The only change produced by conversion is in reference to the *attitude* which the soul occupies towards God, and God towards the soul. Before conversion, God is angry with us, and afterwards he is reconciled; and this is all the difference there is between men in their relations to God at different times. But more than this takes place at conversion with reference to Christ. Before believing, the soul knows little and cares less about Christ in any way. He is to such an one as a root out of dry ground, without form or comeliness, and possessing no beauty that it should desire him. Before believing, the soul feels under no obligations to Christ; it does not recognize him except in the slightest and most inconsequential manner. Before believing, conscience within does not naturally convict of sin as committed against Christ, but rather as against God, the lawgiver and ruler. Christ to an unbeliever is practically a superfluity in the universe; there is no special need of him, no special work for him to do. He figures conspicuously in the Bible, it is true, but nowhere else; and to such a soul the

Bible is a dead letter; therefore Christ is the same as a non-entity—simply a being on paper.

But how great the change produced in that soul who lovingly believes! Belief brings Christ at once into the foreground; he is the main actor, the chief personage. As God's anger is removed and his frown disappears and the law is satisfied, he seems to retire, and Christ comes to the throne. The Father crowns him, angels worship him, the soul receives, leans upon, adores, and loves him. Christ now becomes the soul's Lord, Redeemer, Saviour, King, and Leader. The soul enlists under his banner, and he becomes commander-in-chief. His will is law, his word final, his example the model for imitation. Or, changing the figure, the soul by faith is grafted into Christ, and henceforth feels Christ's life and love pouring into itself and constituting at once its strength and hope and joy. It only lives spiritually by connection with him, as the branch only lives when joined to the vine. Christ becomes the literal source of spiritual life to such a soul. As from Adam it drew natural life with depravity, so from Christ, the second Adam, and the new head of the race, it draws spiritual life with power to obey and love, and so to acquire, gradually, a real holiness of character. All this is included in coming into new and conscious relations with Christ, through a whole-hearted belief upon, and surrender to him.

We can now see that this distinct and new Christian consciousness, born of faith, constitutes the best and highest evidence of discipleship. This term, Christian consciousness, may be formidable to some, but it means simply *the mind knowing in itself*. We become conscious of an external object when we see it before us; we become conscious of an internal state *when we feel its power*. And by Christian consciousness we mean the mind's knowing with itself that it bears these new relations to Christ. The question is not, do we believe in the existence of God; we can't help believing it. The question is not, do we believe that Jesus of Nazareth lived in Palestine eighteen hundred years ago; we can't help

believing that, if we believe any history. But do we accept him as God manifest in the flesh, and have we unreservedly surrendered to him as *our personal Lord and Redeemer*, and are we daily following his example and obeying his words as the law and guide of our life? These questions will settle the matter of our belief at once. No one need be in doubt for a single moment. If Christ is to us all that has been stated, then we are Christ's indeed; if he is not, then he is saying to us, as he said to his disciples of old, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me."

Not many years ago there arose a school of critics in Germany known by the name of Rationalists. Professing to discard all belief in the inspiration of the scriptures, and having constructed and laid down their own canons and rules of critical testing, they proceeded deliberately to demolish the Bible, as they thought, by picking flaws in its statements and exhibiting what they were pleased to term its contradictions and inconsistencies. Being possessed of some mental calibre, and occupying prominent positions in the world of letters, they had, and are still having, considerable influence over the minds of the timid and hesitating.

But after a while a good and great man arose by the name of Schliermacher, who said to these critics, You can't destroy Christ in this way, for the real heart and root of the matter is beyond your reach altogether. While you are quibbling about the Bible records, *the active Christian consciousness* of every believing soul goes on steadily increasing and developing, and is an evidence by itself which overcomes the weight of your objections faster than you can produce them. This Christian consciousness which Christians have, must be an evidence of Christian life, and Christian life must come from personal faith-union with Christ himself, and you can't account for its existence in any other way. And so, if you should sweep away the Scriptures entirely, which of course you cannot do, there remains within this Christian consciousness undisturbed and untouched, and which bears its own independent and powerful testimony to the truth of all which

you deny. Tennyson put the same thought in the following form:

If e'er, when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, "Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep;
A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, "*I have felt.*"

Men saw the force of this reasoning, were reassured and strengthened, and Rationalism ever since has been comparatively harmless except to those who inwardly and strongly desire to embrace it.

How broad and well founded, therefore, the proposition announced at the outset of this chapter, viz: A belief in Christ, as God manifest in the flesh for the sake of the soul's personal redemption, is the real, and we may add, the only, distinctive Christian belief; and that unless the soul exercises this gospel faith in Christ, which includes acceptance of, and surrender to him, as its leader and Lord, it is not and cannot be converted in the true sense of that word.

But, on the contrary, if one has thus believed, to him applies the soothing and assuring words: "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." Though the heavens were removed, and the earth should fail, and all other supports give way, on Christ the everlasting rock, the soul can find a sure and safe foundation. To such an one,

"Christ and his love will be his blessed all
For evermore!
Christ and his light will shine on all his ways
For evermore!
Christ and his peace will keep his troubled soul
For evermore!"

CHAPTER IX.

CHRISTIAN LOVE.

"I ask Thee for a thankful love,
 Through constant watching, wise,
 To meet the glad with joyful smiles,
 And wipe the weeping eyes.
 For a heart *at leisure from itself*
 To soothe and sympathize.
 In a service that thy love appoints,
 There are no bonds for me,
 For my secret heart has learned the truth
 That makes thy children free—
 That a life of self-renouncing love
 Is a life of liberty."

"I love thee, O my God, but not
 For what I hope thereby,
 Nor yet because who love thee not
 Must die eternally.
 Not with the hope of earning aught,
 Nor seeking a reward;
 But fully, freely, as thyself
 Hast loved me, O Lord."



T the outset of this chapter, we must distinguish sharply between love as exhibited in the Bible, and all other forms of its manifestation. Commencing at the bottom of the scale, the lowest form of love is simply animal passion, commonly called sensuality. Closely akin to this in nature, is the love of food and drink and dress. One step higher, comes the love of that which contributes to mental pleasure and profit, such as love of books, scenery, intellectual association, etc. Still higher comes the love of parents for

children, the love of home and family, and natural brotherly love. Still higher yet, because purer and less selfish, is the love of country, or patriotism. And highest of all, is the love of God or Christian love.

All the lower forms of love mentioned are merely transient passions or feelings, now strong, then absent altogether. The next grade is very largely the result of mental habits and acquisitions; something that can and ought to be cultivated by all. The next higher, parental love, is an unselfish instinct, not the result of cultivation wholly, but partly native, and common to animals as well as human beings. Pure patriotism, or love of liberty and law and right, as such, not simply for self but for all, high and low, rich and poor, is probably the highest and purest natural affection of which fallen human nature is capable; because it is farthest removed from mere animal desire and takes hold of the deepest and noblest qualities of the soul.

But Christian love is *supernatural in its origin*. It is begotten in the soul by the Holy Spirit, and is one of his fruits. No man can know or feel Christian love unless his soul is open to receive heavenly communications, unless he is in immediate contact of spirit with God. For John says specifically and pointedly, "Love is of God, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

It follows, therefore, that if Christian love comes from God, it must be godlike in character and characteristics. There will always be certain marks by which it can be known. What are some of these? First, Christian love, like God, will be no respecter of persons, as such; will not be affected by any earthly and factitious distinctions, such as eminence of birth, the possession of wealth, power, beauty, fame, etc.; but on the contrary will regard highly those excellences of character which are of great value in themselves and in the sight of God, such as faith, humility, benevolence, Christian zeal—in a word, spirituality. Love of persons, as such, is simply a natural love, and not at all Christian or divine in its nature. Love of persons may be proper and may be sinful—

that depends entirely upon circumstances; but this and Christian love are never to be confounded, for they are just as distinct and separate in character as is the natural man and the spiritual man. One is earthly, the other heavenly. One takes note of the outside and external, the other of the internal and spiritual.

This natural love and a spiritual love, however, may coalesce, may exist together in the same mind and heart and at the same time and place, but still their existing together does not make them one and the same. It is common for all to love persons, as such; to love them for what they can do for us, or for what they *have* done for us; love them for their beauty and excellency, for their natural traits of character or disposition. There may be and often is a sort of flavor or relish about a person's conduct and appearance and words that suits our taste exactly, and we love such persons in spite of ourselves. And on the other hand, there are those whose presence is distasteful and repugnant to our feelings. But there is nothing Christian about all this, unless deeper than form or feature or words or looks, we discern the lineaments of a soul for which Christ died, and which is to live forever in happiness or misery.

True Christian love exists in its purest form, perhaps, when in exercise towards those who may be personally repulsive to us. Just as Christ when on earth mingled more freely with the despised outcasts, than with the chief priests and scribes, and walked and talked more with those whose characters stood at the farthest remove from his own, than with the outwardly high and moral, just so Christian love seeks especially to do good to those who are personally degraded, or unlovely and uncongenial. True Christian love will be just as strongly moved to labor with those whose personal presence is anything but pleasant or agreeable, as with the cultured and favored ones. It will visit homes where to remain over night would be the greatest cross imaginable. It will not shun hovel or mansion, palace or cottage. In short, it will lead one to do just as Christ the Master did; not be affected or

governed by person or position, but always having high regard for character, moral worth, and earnest need and want. Its objective point will always be the soul's spiritual condition rather than the bodily advantage or earthly, physical life of humanity.

This personal element in Christian love has been the cause of very much mischief both in Christian life and church life. The church is viewed by a large portion of its supporters as simply a social institution; a place where one can go on the Sabbath and have their religious sensibilities moved upon a trifle, where they can nod and bow to those whom they wish to recognize and pass the rest by, and where they can form themselves into little clans or cliques for mutual admiration and attentions. The idea of working for the good of souls as Christ worked, hardly enters their thoughts; and if it does, it comes as an unwelcome guest, and is not entertained. It may, or may not do harm for Christians to love each other as persons, provided this personal affection or dislike does not break up the exercise of the divine, spiritual love which lies underneath. But when personal considerations alone govern Christian or church life, the results are disastrous and lamentable in the extreme. One reason why many churches are not more homogeneous and united as solid, compact, working bodies, is because there is so little Christian love in them, and so much strong personal regard and dislike. As spirituality declines, so Christian love declines, for no one can dwell in love without first dwelling in God, and God in him; hence the way to regain a love for souls, as such, without regard to person, is first to love Christ and his cause and truth more deeply and warmly, and this union with Christ will inevitably bring about a union with one another.

Again, Christian love is *pure*, or in other words, first pure, then peaceable, and full of all good fruits. It is pure as opposed to selfish. It has often been asserted that Christian or divine love was more analogous to a mother's love than to any other known symbol; but when we come to examine the comparison closely, it utterly fails. Parental love is nothing

more than an instinct, primarily, although it often develops into something higher; and an instinct, moreover, that is common to animals as well as human beings. The bear will fight for her cubs and protect them and care for them to an extent that often surpasses any human affection. She will even die for their sakes more readily than many human parents. We all know of persons in whom this instinct is sadly deficient, and who do not seemingly care for their offspring half as tenderly as do the lower orders of life beneath them. Therefore we say there is nothing inherently divine or supernatural in parental love. It can be called an unselfish instinct only because all instincts dominate over reason, and act spontaneously. Every mother's love, when disconnected from the higher influences with which it often unites, has in it a very large amount of personal pride and selfishness, and is therefore not a type of true, Christian love; for besides being wholly personal in character, it is always born of the flesh and not of the spirit.

This however is not saying that a mother's love *cannot be made* a type of Christian love, for it often rises into that, and then it displays a strong, almost heavenly character which has made it the theme of song in all ages. But parental love, divested of its personal element, ceases to be merely parental love, but passes over into Christian love, and takes on a higher and supernatural character. It is now parental love exalted, or rather sublimated into spiritual and Christian love; and in this form it might be a true symbol of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in the soul, but not in its natural state. The nearest approach to true Christian love in the natural realm of life, would be seen in pure patriotism, or love of country and love of right and justice and truth, wholly irrespective of personal or selfish considerations. This patriotism, like Christian love, is love of man, as such, without regard to distinctions of birth, or color, or external condition; it is love of right and liberty regulated by law; it is love of truth and justice; it is a love of human welfare and human prosperity; of all that contributes to the genuine advancement of the individual in the scale

of being. But here the comparison ends; for patriotism does not aim to affect the souls and spiritual welfare of men only through their civil and social relations; but Christian love, while taking in all this, is principally concerned with the welfare of the soul when this brief life is over. It considers the spiritual side of man's being as first and foremost in importance, and aims as did Christ while on earth, to bring that out, and lead it forward in holiness and purity.

True Christian love then, cannot be selfish in character, it does not work merely for reward, it does not think about reflex influences and personal returns. For the moment these ideas predominate, it ceases to be Christian love. As Christ said, "If ye love those that love you, what thank have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same? If ye do good to friends only, what do ye more than others?" True Christian love leads one to imitate God who sendeth his rain upon the just and the unjust, expecting no return; in the words of Paul, "it suffereth long and is kind; it envieth not; it vaunteth not itself and is not puffed up; it seeketh not its own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; hopeth all things and endureth all things," that God may be honored and souls benefited and saved.

But as Christian love is supernatural in its origin, and derives both its name and characteristics from Christ, so the best delineation of it which can be given is an enumeration of the characteristics of the love which Christ exhibited. This love of Christ was, first of all, a *tender, patient love*. Its tenderness and patience were displayed perhaps most conspicuously in his continuous treatment of the chosen twelve. Christ had many difficulties to contend with, but none greater than his own disciples. How he bore with their faults and errors, their weaknesses and shortcomings! How kindly and tenderly he nursed their weak faith. How gently he corrected their mistakes, being always careful not to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax of genuine piety, and never refusing to instruct them over and over again on the same points.

Look for example at the disciples in a boat crossing the sea of Galilee in a storm. Notwithstanding they had seen so many displays of Christ's power before, had seen him cure the sick, raise the dead, feed the multitude miraculously, yet now when the wind blew a little too strongly, and the waves rolled uncomfortably, and they were getting wet, and there was more water in the bottom of the boat than there ought to be, and affairs looked threatening generally, they go to him in mingled alarm and terror, almost rebuke him with words of remonstrance and ask him to save them. Notice his reply. He readily complied with their wishes, rebuked the sea and the winds, instead of the disciples who deserved it, and then turned around to them and simply said with plaintive accent, "Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?"—and dropped the subject.

Take the case of doubting Thomas who refused to believe in the reality of Christ's resurrection until he could demonstrate the fact by the touch of his hands. The proofs of the resurrection were ample, and they all appeared to be convinced, but Thomas remained incredulous. Mere human love would have felt hurt at such an exhibition of unbelief, and would doubtless have said, "Well, if he wishes to be so obstinate, let him become convinced as best he may," and then left him. But Christ did not so. He saw that here was a soul in real difficulty; for the incredulity of Thomas was not a matter of obstinacy—if it had been, Christ might have left him—but rather of temperament and disposition. Thomas was slow in his mental processes, lacking the natural gift of faith; he was a man who came to his conclusions laboriously, and then held them firmly and tenaciously. And Christ knew that to leave Thomas as he was, with his turn of mind, was perhaps to throw him off forever; and so he appeared to Thomas when in company with the rest of the disciples, and accommodated himself to his mental and spiritual demands in the presence of them all. It was an amazing act of tender, patient love on the part of Christ; and see what wonders it wrought in that disciple's views and feelings. It brought out that noble con-

fession of divinity, the strongest but one in the whole gospel history, "My Lord and my God," and also fastened the soul of that disciple to the ways of truth forever. Looked at in one light, the demand of Thomas was unreasonable, but Christ saw it was the great turning-point of his spiritual history, and so his tender, patient love let itself down to the required examination.

But the greatest exhibition of tenderness and patience in Christ's love was seen on the Cross. In those last hours of Christ's life you see his character intensified and concentrated. What appears as good in his ordinary life is brought out in far clearer light by the scenes of the Crucifixion. As Christ hung there nailed to the wood, he was suffering intensely, unjustly, and innocently; and if there is anything that will make the human spirit irritable, it is to suffer unjustly. Yet, looking down upon his cruel and stony-hearted executioners, instead of upbraiding them, he tenderly prays for them, saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Then, looking round again he sees his mother and John standing there, and although his mother had frequently tried to hinder him in his work; had betrayed a spirit of non-appreciation, not to say hostility, with regard to his public course and life, yet mark how tenderly and patiently he loves her still! Instead of leaving her to her fate, he says to John, "Son, behold thy mother," and to her, "Woman," which was a title of respect, "behold thy son." And from that hour John took her unto his own home.

This love of Christ was also an *impartial* love. In his spiritual ministrations, Christ recognized no class distinctions. Although he knew they existed all around him, yet he expressly said that in religious life there was neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, bond nor free. And accordingly we find Christ now in the house of the rich Pharisee, and again with the poor and outcast by the wayside. If he paid attention to any one class more than another, it was the despised and oppressed. It was thrown at him as a taunt that he was a friend of Publicans and sinners and kept their company.

And it was true; not that their company was preferable to that of others, but he came to seek and save those who were lost, and in the fulfillment of that mission he passed by none.

On one occasion a certain wealthy Pharisee invited him to dine at his house, and Christ went in and sat down to meat. While there, a woman of the street came in, stole softly up to his couch, and began to break upon his feet an alabaster box of ointment and to wipe them with her hair. Christ spurned her not, neither encouraged her, but continued his meal. Looking across the table, he perceived a fierce conflict going on in his host's mind. Says Simon to himself, "What kind of a man is this, who will allow such a woman to stand there and anoint him? If he was a prophet, as he claims, he would read her character and send her away." Now here was a critical case, requiring wise and impartial treatment. Simon's prejudices were to be rebuked and answered, the penitent soul at his feet must be saved, and still no approval of her sin must be given. Not appearing to heed Simon's indignation and abhorrence, Christ opens the case, by saying: "Simon, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." He replied, "Master, say on." "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed him 500 pence, the other 50. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Which, think you, will love him most?" Oh how evenly and impartially the scales have been held here! 500 and 50; Simon and the woman both debtors, but with this difference in character. Then he went on: "Seest thou this woman? I entered thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, no kiss, but this woman hath not ceased to kiss my feet and to wash them with her tears. Therefore her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much."

Moreover, this love of Christ was a *strong and enduring* love. It never faltered or failed. It carried him through one painful experience after another, it carried him on to the painful close of his life. Human love, even when existing in purity is soon exhausted; vigorous when in prosperity, feeble in adversity. It is so easily turned aside from its object, so

weak, unstable, fickle! But in Christ no fires of persecution could consume, no waters of sorrow drown his love. "Having loved his own, he loved them *unto the end*." Notwithstanding at his trial his disciples all forsook him and fled, yet he met them after his resurrection just as affectionately as ever. Their bad conduct seemed to make no impression upon his spirit, or feelings.

And in that terrific Gethsemane experience, when the love of his heart and the greatness of the curse he must bear were contending for the mastery, his love was strong enough to endure the strain, and come out victorious. Who but Christ could have looked such a horrible death full in the face, and still have pressed on toward the cross? Such love, indeed, is as "high as heaven, broad as the earth, and deep as the sea."

But best of all, this love of Christ was pre-eminently a *self-sacrificing love*. Perhaps this was its most distinguishing trait. We love for the sake of being loved again; and unless the return love is prompt and satisfactory, our love soon ceases, or is very liable to grow cold. It is thus pre-eminently a selfish affection; but Christ's love was self-sacrificing all the way through. It *originated* in self-sacrifice.

No one in this world can ever realize what a sacrifice it was for Christ to leave heaven and come to earth at all. What a difference in the two places! What a difference in society and surroundings, difference in enjoyment and employment, difference in treatment and usage. What a stoop from the Infinite to the Finite; from the companionship of God to the companionship of guilty, hardened, persecuting sinners! Take a person of rare, delicate, refined susceptibilities, brought up in affluence, screened from contact with evil, and transfer him from that home of plenty and peace and honor, and compel him to become a homeless, penniless wanderer among those who not only did not understand or appreciate his worth, but who constantly hunted for his life, and you have only a faint analogy of the sacrifice of Christ in coming from the court of Heaven into that manger at Bethlehem—a very faint analogy, indeed. But yet his

love was equal to the descent, equal to the transfer, equal to the humiliation. But what an amazing act of condescension, what a stoop unparalleled when the Prince of Glory left his throne and allied himself with his guilty subjects!

Again, look at the poverty-stricken experiences of his boyhood and manhood; see what a contrast between being in heaven and working at a carpenter's bench on earth. And then, worst of all, to have no real companionship or sympathy while doing this work. As far as his earthly relations went, Christ lived a solitary, lonesome, home-sick life. No one understood him, no one entered fully into his spirit and plans. He walked the earth essentially and really alone. All the intercourse which strengthened or sustained him was carried on with his home above. Between him and every human being there was a natural and moral gulf which could not be bridged. He was sinless, all others were sinful; and this in itself separated him forever from all earthly companionship or equality. He could not be on a level with others, nor could others with him; for while they were of the earth wholly, he came from above. And so not only his birth, but his whole life was *one continued act* of self-sacrificing love. And how strong that love must have been, to have kept him up through it all!

But the greatest is not yet told. If his birth and life were acts of self-sacrificing love, what shall be said of his trial and crucifixion? It were humiliation enough if he had died easy and peaceful, surrounded by loving and loyal hearts; but to be insulted, jeered at, mocked, falsely accused, tortured, spiked to the cross like a brute, treated as a vile malefactor, oh, this was cruel to the last degree. And yet that love of his never gave way! It carried him through not only his outward sufferings, but through the darkest valley of all, viz.: the hiding of his Father's face. This last was all the comfort he had enjoyed from the beginning; on this he had leaned all the way through; and now to have this last solace removed, it is no wonder that he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit in wild and utter dismay. Medical men say that Christ died

literally of a broken heart; that his grief was such as to force blood and water into the heart in such quantities as to cause a literal rupture, and so to produce death instantly.

Lastly, this love of Christ was a *burning, indignant* love. Burning in the sense of consuming and destroying; indignant in the sense of avenging. This God who so loves us is not imbecile, or weak, or foolish, but rather a perfect being, and as such is capable of wrath and anger. The connection between love and hate is more intimate than many realize. One writer hath said that hate is only love turned over, as though love and hate formed the two sides of one and the same affection. And without doubt this is substantially true. All those books which profess to give the workings of a human heart that has been abused and betrayed, have a basis of terrible fact lying underneath them. Nothing can exceed the fierceness of that avenging spirit which is roused up in strong, tender, loving natures when suffering wrongfully. Take two hearts that have loved strongly and purely, and let that love be turned to hate by any wrong, wicked act, and how awfully bitter that hate becomes! There is nothing on earth which can be more cruel.

Now it follows that if love and hate are so closely connected, psychologically, the stronger the love, the more terrible the anger. And so it comes about that the most dreadful maledictions, the hardest and harshest words of denunciation, the most fearful curses that ever fell from human lips, came from this gentle, tender, patient, suffering, loving Christ. Read his words to those false-hearted moralists, the Pharisees; see him when he drove the buyers and sellers from the holy temple; hear him upbraid the cities which repented not at his coming; mark his words to Judas who betrayed him; and from all these examples learn that he who loves as no one ever loved before, can also have enkindled within him a fire of wrath that will burn to the lowest hell.

Now Christ asks of those who would be his followers not a love that equals his, but that which resembles it; not love of the same strength, but of the same kind. A pearl of dew

will not hold the sun, but it can hold a spark of its light. A child by the sea trying to catch the crystal spray, cannot hold the ocean in its tiny shell, but he can hold a drop of the ocean water. So with true Christian love as compared with Christ's love. It must be a genuine drop from His infinite sea.




CHAPTER X.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"Holy Ghost dispel our blindness,
Pierce the clouds of sinful night;
Come thou source of sweetest gladness,
Breathe thy life, and spread thy light.
Loving Spirit, God of peace,
Great Distributor of grace!

Manifest thy love forever;
Fence us in on every side;
In distress be our Reliever,
Guard and teach, support and guide.
Let thy kind, effectual grace
Turn our feet from evil ways;
Show thyself our new Creator,
And conform us to thy nature."

HO and what is the Holy Spirit, and what are his offices in the Church and in the world, are questions second in importance to none that can be viewed by a Christian mind. Christ said at one time that unless he should go away, (that is go back to the right hand of God above) the Spirit would not descend upon his people, and consequently the work in them and through them which the Spirit has since performed, would never have been accomplished.

There will always be more or less of mystery connected with these utterances of our Lord. Why the Holy Spirit could not operate when Christ was personally on earth, and why he did not operate more powerfully during the three years of Christ's personal ministry, are matters that can never be fully understood by us, until we understand all the relations

which exist between the three persons that compose the Triune Deity. The simple scriptural facts are, that the Spirit did *not* operate as powerfully as afterward until Christ went away and sent him down; and that, after he was sent, the work accomplished by him exceeded all that had been done before.

How many disciples Christ himself made when on earth we have no means of definitely ascertaining. Great multitudes followed him, and were healed by him and fed by him, and a great many believed on him in different parts of the country, but how many were spiritually regenerated, as they have been since the advent of the Spirit, we cannot say. Christ's life and ministry on earth were not a failure by any means, neither did they accomplish all that we would naturally think ought to have been accomplished, considering who the teacher and preacher was that labored.

Three things, without doubt, combined to make this difference. Christ had not yet died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. He had not yet risen again for our justification, and ascended up on high as our Intercessor and Advocate. The Holy Spirit had not yet taken his *full place* in the scheme of redemption. But at Pentecost, the sacrifice had been offered, and the resurrection and ascension were facts testified to by friends and enemies; then last of all the keystone of the spiritual arch, that which completed and held together and made effective all that had been done before, was dropped into its place, when "there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, filling the house where the disciples (120 in number) were gathered, and appearing as cloven tongues of fire, sitting upon each of them, and causing them all to be filled with the Holy Ghost, and to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

And as far as the Scriptures represent, had not this last work been performed, the arch would not have been complete, neither could it have stood firm. The scheme of redemption would have been defective, and the gospel shorn of its sin-subduing and heart-conquering power. The Church would not have been born as a propagating agency, and the millions

who have believed would never have enjoyed, as they have since, the blessings of spiritual power. Glorious day for man when the communication between heaven and earth was fully established; when an invisible cable-wire extended from every believing heart straight up to the eternal throne, on which messages could be despatched both ways, and by which God's light and love and power and blessing could be received and felt in human hearts and homes. A day hardly inferior to that in which the babe of Bethlehem was born, or that in which the heavens were shrouded in blackness, or that in which the great stone was rolled away from Christ's tomb.

The word *Comforter* in the Bible is not an adequate representation of the original term. In fact, there is no one English word that does represent it fully. It is found only five times in the New Testament; four times in two chapters of John's gospel which were spoken by Christ at one time just before his arrest, and once in the 1st letter of John (2: 2,) where it is translated *Advocate* and applied to Christ himself. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." *Paracletos* signifies primarily a helper, an assistant, a representative, as well as a comforter and an advocate, thus showing how many are the offices which the Holy Spirit performs in the work of salvation and sanctification, and how full of power and blessing he can be made to man's soul. It is significant also that Christ chose this word at a time when he wished to instruct his disciples fully concerning their future life and work, and also to take their minds off from himself and transfer them to this *other helper* which he was about to send them.

While reference is made to the Holy Spirit and his work some 300 times in the New Testament, yet he is called the *Paraclete* only five times. Why is this? We reply, it is to set forth the relation of the Holy Spirit to the triune Godhead, and also set forth the very important relation which he was henceforth to sustain to Christians and the world. Said Christ in the 14th chapter of John, "If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father and he shall give

you another comforter (or helper) that he may abide with you forever." Notice here that Christ places the Holy Spirit on a level with himself, thus making him God. *Another* comforter, another helper, another representative, like myself. And he shall be to you more than I have been. Therefore, "it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, he cannot come." This person whom Christ was to send, was to come from the Father, even as he had come, thus indicating equality of origin and equality in nature and power. As he had been God on earth, so henceforth the Holy Spirit was to be God in the human heart; only he himself had been visible, but the Spirit should be invisible. This other representative of God should in one sense take his place on earth, while he himself went back to the right hand of the throne to act as Mediator and Intercessor.

And thus the matter stands to-day and evermore. In the absolute and impenetrable depths of his own infinitude, dwelling in light that no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see and live, is God the Father, the Self-existent, the Eternal, the Changeless One. At his right hand, standing between the throne and the earth is God the Son, our Saviour and Mediator. But both of these are in heaven and away from us. We can pray unto them, but we cannot come near them. Have we, then, no God on earth? Are we bereft of the divine presence and power entirely? Ah, no; Christ made provision for this need when he sent into the world after his departure this *other* representative of God, the Holy Spirit, that he might abide with us forever. "Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him;" but Christians know him because they have been born again by his power, and he dwelleth with them, and is in them.

But we must indicate a few of the Spirit's special offices. When he comes to a soul he finds it spiritually insensible, paralyzed, blind. The Scriptures use concerning it the phraseology, "dead in trespasses and in sins," thus making it without spiritual life or motion; physically and intellectually and emotionally active, but destitute of spiritual life and power.

The soul can hear about the gospel, but cannot spiritually understand it, and has no desire to accept it. Sometimes the soul knows what it ought to do, but like a man paralyzed it cannot do what it wants to. As Paul says, "To will is present with me, *i. e.* I have power to will, my will operates freely, but how to perform, I find not," *i. e.* I cannot carry it out; I cannot do what I know I ought to do, and what I sometimes wish to do.

The Holy Spirit first accompanies some word of truth to the insensible mind. New views of self, of life, and of God now begin to crowd the mind and to produce deep agitation. Instead of being insensible, the soul begins to be awakened, begins to see and feel and desire. The Spirit continues to press all these new considerations upon it until its past sins loom up like overhanging mountains and threaten to crush it forever. It then begins to be in agony and cries out to God for mercy, and for the first time is led to pray.

Then having shown the soul its own lost state and led it to realize its sinful thralldom, the Spirit next turns the soul's attention to the remedy, and begins to take of the things of Christ and show them to the soul. This at first only aggravates the distress, because it adds a new accusing thought, viz: the thought of rejecting so long the means of salvation which God has provided. Finally, the Holy Spirit begins to give the soul power to believe, and it then surrenders itself entirely to him who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, and he that believeth on me, though he were dead yet shall he live." The soul now passes from a state of condemnation to one of justification, from insensibility to life, from blindness to sight, from paralysis to vigor.

Up to this point the Holy Spirit has applied the word of truth and set in motion a course of religious thought and reflection and meditation. Before the Spirit operated, the soul was careless, indifferent, proud, and self-complacent. It rejected as an insult what the Scriptures said concerning its essential and natural depravity. But the Spirit continues to use his sword, which is the Word of God, so vigorously that by and by the heart is all cut to pieces and broken up by

sharp strokes and rapid blows, and is glad to avail itself of any method of escape. Then the Spirit applies the blood of cleansing. This expression of course is figurative but very truthful, nevertheless. The real work is to get the soul to surrender itself to Christ, utterly and entirely, and then make it feel that Christ has received and pardoned it, and that henceforth Christ's merit is imputed to it. And then follows peace and pardon and joy, expressed in song and praise and prayer.

The Christian life has now commenced in the soul, but the Spirit's work is not yet done. Now, he is to enable the soul to grow in grace and in knowledge, to help it resist temptation and overcome sin, within and without; to help it pray the effectual fervent prayer that availeth much before God; to enable it to understand the Scriptures and feed upon them, and also enable it to work effectively and faithfully for the salvation of others.. All the work of sanctification is the Spirit's work. All the Christian graces are his fruits within.

In trying to state what the Spirit does for souls spiritually, the difficulty is rather to find what he does not do. The work of conviction is his, of enlightenment, of subduing, of believing, of understanding, of enabling the soul to pray and preach and exhort, of resisting evil, and growing in holiness. Says Dr. Jenkyn: "As the same shower blesses various lands in different degrees according to their respective susceptibilities, making the grass to spring up on the mead, the grain to vegetate in the field, the shrub to grow on the plain, and the flower to blossom in the garden; so the influences of the Holy Spirit, descending on the moral soil, produce convictions in the guilty, illumination in the ignorant, holiness in the defiled, strength in the feeble, and comfort in the distressed. As the Spirit of holiness he imparts a pure love; as the Spirit of glory he throws a radiance over the character; as the Spirit of life he revives religion; as the Spirit of truth he gives transparency to the understanding; as the Spirit of prayer he melts the soul into devotion; and as the Spirit of power he covers the face of the earth with works of faith and labors of love."

CHAPTER XI.


PRAYER.

"Prayer was not meant for luxury,
Or selfish pastime sweet;
It is the prostrate creature's plea
At his Creator's feet.

True prayer doth humbly set the soul
From all illusions free,
And teaches it how utterly
It hangs, O Lord, on thee."

"Blest is that tranquil hour of morn,
And blest that hour of solemn eve,
When, on the wings of faith upborne,
The world I leave.

For then a day-spring shines on me,
Brighter than morn's ethereal glow;
And richer dews descend from Thee
Than earth can know."

HE famous Welsh preacher, Christmas Evans, said of prayer that it was "the rope in the belfry: we pull it, and it rings the bell up in heaven." Mary, Queen of Scotland, used to say: "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men." With both of these characters, so opposite in themselves, prayer was real. And so it is, or must be, to all who would be Christians. It is a fact that God has condescended to put himself in real relations with men, so that their approaches unto him could be approaches unto a real, living being who knew what they said and was abundantly able to respond. This conception of reality is essential to the very existence of prayer. Before we can be said to pray at all we must believe and realize *thoroughly* that

God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Nothing is more vital, important, or absolutely indispensable than this. It is the secret of all effectiveness, as it is the source of all differences in prayer. One prayer is more powerful than another, simply because one suppliant is more real and true and sincere and believing than another. The mere form of words has nothing to do with prayer, but the underlying spirit is everything. And hence the Scriptures insist so strongly upon *faith* as an indispensable pre-requisite of prayer, because *faith makes God real to the soul*. It brings him before it as a ruling, reigning King and Creator and Father, and makes an approach unto him a real, vital act.

But prayer in itself is not only real, it is also *reasonable and entirely consistent*. It is the aim of much of heathen and modern philosophy, as well as the special teaching of the current scientific theorizing of our time, to convince the mind that prayer is an impertinence; that it is absurd to suppose that it can possibly do any good, or cause anything to be changed in the divine mind or in the divine method of working in the world. These would-be wise men very gravely affect to look down with a smile of pity and contempt upon what they are pleased to term the weakness and fanaticism of those souls, which, in undoubted sincerity of belief, look up to God in prayer and expect their prayers to be efficacious. And they assert as the reason for their views and feelings, the impossibility of ignoring, superseding or contravening established natural law.

There are two ways of meeting this objection; by a faith-argument and by logic. These objectors *assert* one thing and the Scriptures assert another, entirely contrary; so the whole matter is really a question of authority. Which knows the most and is the best entitled to credence, the Bible or modern science? Which carries with it the most weight of age and experience, of application and truth, of reverence and of power? Before the flippant assertions of these skeptics can supersede the declarations of the Bible, science and philosophy must first dislodge the Bible from the impregnable fortified posi-

tion it holds in human history and in human thought. And while they are busy at that, the world can keep on praying without much alarm as to the result. For if this position could have been carried, it would have been, long before now. Satan and all his forces on earth have endeavored through thousands of years to storm it, flank it, surround it, and undermine it, but there the Bible stands as it ever has stood, deep-rooted and eternal as the everlasting hills, serene and undisturbed as the face of the heavens.

The *logical* argument is as follows: No one will deny that God is an unchangeable being, knowing neither variableness nor the shadow of turning; no one will question the existence of established laws in the physical and moral worlds; but these two facts do not throw out the reasonableness of prayer, because prayer is not something that has sprung up *since* the laws were established, and which was not recognized in the divine thought at the time, but rather when these laws were first ordained and established, they were arranged with direct reference to the answering of prayer. In other words, in the original system of law, direct and special provision was made for prayer; a place, so to speak, was left for it and has been filled by it, from the days of Seth before the flood, down to the present time.

To deny this arrangement of law, is to deny God's omniscience and perfection of character; for it represents him as a being who did not think about prayer when he established the laws of the universe and so left that out by mistake; and it represents him as requiring prayer of men, when he knows all the while it never can be answered! Away with such shallow nonsense! Those who believe such a doctrine, ought to be very cautious and modest in calling any one else weak and fanatical.

The unchangeableness of the divine character, therefore, so far from being any obstacle to prayer, is rather its sure and certain guaranty. Prayer is sure to be answered when offered in accordance with the divine will, simply because God *is* unchangeable, and never fails to fulfill his word. If he were

fickle, the answers would of course be uncertain, but as he is immutable, the answers are sure. Neither is the existence of established law any obstacle to prayer, but rather, like the character of God, a pledge and surety of its success. For as God in the exercise of his wise omniscience and foreknowledge, seeing clearly the end from the beginning, made arrangements for the answering of prayer through all time, and incorporated those arrangements into the immutable system of law, it follows, that so long as any laws are in force, so long will prayer be answered when offered aright. Nay more; instead of prayer being an outside, disturbing force in this system of law, it is an integral part of the system—a link in the chain—and is even necessary to the very existence and working of the system as a whole; and instead of prayer being a superfluity in the universe, it is exceedingly doubtful whether the universe, under prevailing forces, could exist long without it.

Let no souls think, then, or feel, when they pray, that they are doing aught unreasonable or inconsistent in itself with any known perfection of God's character, or with any system of law which he has established in the realm of matter or of mind. For there is no act of a man's life more reasonable, or more in accordance with the dictates of his highest intelligence, as certainly there is none more in accordance with God's will and pleasure, or more thoroughly consonant with the established method of the divine government in the world, than is this act of prayer. Indeed, that is a rare and truly beatific moment for the soul when, closing its eyes to all outward impressions, it lays itself open to the divine inspection and pours out its desires and confessions and thanksgivings into the divine ear. Then, and then alone, does the human spirit attain unto its highest and truest possibility of exalted intercourse with a superior intelligence.

But what *good* does prayer do? What good has it done? Says Dr. Ryland: "Prayer has divided seas, rolled up flowing rivers, made flinty rocks gush into fountains, quenched flames of fire, muzzled lions, disarmed vipers and poisons, marshaled the stars against the wicked, stopped the course of

the moon, arrested the sun in its rapid race, burst open iron gates, recalled souls from eternity, conquered devils, and commanded legions of angels down from heaven. Prayer has bridled and chained the raging passions of men, and routed and destroyed vast armies of proud, daring atheists. Prayer has brought one man from the bottom of the sea, and carried another in a chariot of fire to heaven."

But all this is historic; what good does prayer do in individual lives, and in the practical working of events? We answer: prayer *helps God do his work in the world*. It does this in two ways. First by bringing the suppliant into that moral condition in which alone it is possible for God to bless him. This is called the *reflex* benefit of prayer. God cannot bless any soul while rolling in sinful indulgence, or while stoutly maintaining its attitude of defiant hostility. There must be repentance, submission, and a humble, loving return of the soul to God before blessings can descend upon it *from* him. And there is no exercise in the world so adapted to bring about this receptive state in the soul, as prostration in prayer. When men are on their knees begging for blessings, they place themselves, as it were, by that act, under the spreading branches of God's great tree of life, and all he has to do to answer such petitions is to shake the branches a little, and down comes the golden, life-giving fruit into needy and anxious hearts!

The parable of the prodigal son teaches that all that can be done for the soul while remaining in the far-off land of alienation and wandering, is to send the Spirit to work upon the conscience and if possible induce a return; as the Father did not set out to meet his son, until the son had first started to go back to his father, and even then the fatted calf was not killed until the return-journey was entirely completed, and the son was safe in his Father's house. A great many seem to think that God's plan of salvation is so accommodating in its nature that it goes through the world bending and curving this way and that, to suit individual peculiarities and notions; rather is it like an iron railway track, straight-forward and un-

bending, and all who would avail themselves of its blessings and privileges, must come where it is and fall in with its appointments; else the opportunity of salvation will sweep by and leave them behind. But prayer *takes us into the line* of God's movements and appointments. Sin in the soul acts like paralysis; it prevents the soul from moving toward God, and prevents God from moving toward the soul; as there ever is, and ever must be, an eternal and unquenchable hostility between sin and God. Therefore, one way by which prayer helps God carry on his work in the world is by so putting men into that condition of moral affinity and sympathy with him, through submission to his word and will, that he can fulfill his promises to them, and thus increase the effectiveness of his witnesses and workers in the world.

A second way in which the same result is brought about is by providing God, so to speak, with a channel of communication to other hearts. This can be called the *intercessory* benefit of prayer, and it is as real and great and important as the other. It is expressed in the couplet,

"Prayer is appointed to convey,
The blessings God designs to give."

What the Croton Aqueduct is to New York city, furnishing a channel through which water is conveyed from a distant lake to thousands of needy homes, that to the world is prayer. Shall we understand, then, that blessings have been bestowed upon men and upon the world which would not have been given had there been no prayer? We answer, such is the most emphatic teaching of the Scriptures throughout. The passages and instances are too numerous for citation; they are found on almost every page of both Testaments. Not that prayer ever *made* God do anything against his will, or against the principles of his government, but it has furnished both the occasion and the means of unnumbered mercies to men.

God blesses in answer to prayer, because it is his nature and will to do so; because such is a part of the eternal plan and arrangement established in the beginning, and because there seems to be an inherent necessity that divine favors should come to men through human media in order to be effective.

The spiritual current from God, which is the grand source and agent of heavenly blessings, is like electricity in the air; it demands a conducting medium, a wire on which to run, a channel through which to flow. And as, if you should take down all the wires in the land you would stop instantly all telegraphic communication, or if you should only remove a piece no longer than a finger's breadth, you would cause a fatal interruption of effectiveness until the breach was repaired, so if you should stop all the prayers in the land, you would instantly stop all spiritual communication between God and human souls. Not that this cessation would change God or his plan and method of working at all, but it would destroy the *conditions* of effectiveness and availability. And how abundantly and mournfully these facts have been illustrated in the history of religion on earth! How many thousands have grown cold and so become destitute of all spiritual communications and influences from God, because they ceased praying and thus cut the wire running from earth to heaven. How many churches have almost died out spiritually from the same cause. How many revivals have been nipped in the bud, or have been stopped even while in progress, because the workers ceased to pray in faith and work with heart and zeal. How many ministers' labors have been thwarted and rendered inoperative from the same fatal cause!

There is hardly any doctrine of scripture about which the world is so practically skeptical as about this one of the efficacy of prayer. Multitudes admit it in theory that fail to believe it in practice. Nor is there any doctrine concerning which it is easier to go astray than this; or easier to run to extremes either one way or the other. There should be a great deal of thought and attention paid to the proper understanding of this subject, as it is so vital to the interests of souls, and to the church of Jesus Christ in the world. Of course only those prayers are efficacious that are offered from right motives, and with a supreme deference to God's will; offered for things in themselves calculated to bless and benefit, rather than simply gratify; offered in faith and earnestness. But with these

limitations, which are unavoidable on account of the vast superiority of God to men, and the infinite excellence of his wisdom and knowledge, there is an open and unobstructed field, and an urgent command given to go in and occupy it.

And God is as much interested in our prayers, as we ourselves are, or can be. For the more true prayer there is in the world, the more he can bless, and the more will the world be brought into a right moral state before him. The more prayer there is, the more are hindrances removed from the progress of Christ's kingdom among men, and the more speedily will the redemption of the world be accomplished.

It follows, then, that prayer is at once a duty and a privilege for all. It is one of the legitimate spiritual weapons which men are to wield for the pulling down of sin's strongholds within, and for the upbuilding of the kingdom of righteousness without. It has been well said that prayer is not to be looked upon as a kind of spiritual luxury, or as a sweet, selfish exercise; but rather that souls are to present themselves before God to plead for certain definite, specific favors and mercies to meet certain definite wants and necessities, both in themselves and in others. Men are never to pray as a mere matter of form, but whenever real wants present themselves, then their requests should be made known unto God.

And as we value our soul's eternal happiness, the salvation of others, the extension of Christ's kingdom, the perpetuity and moral renovation of the world, the increase of power in the church, the fulfillment of God's decrees, the universal reign of righteousness, so we should pray; pray at all times and everywhere; pray whenever we feel a need, or a want; pray in public and in private; with our hearts, and with our lips. For, humanly-speaking, everything depends upon it. "We are laborers together with God." Christ intercedes in person before the throne; we intercede in his name on earth by prayer. The sick and sorrowing need our prayers; the tried and tempted need them; our fellow Christians need them; and the ungodly world needs them more than can be expressed. Yea, more and greater, in some high sense, God

in heaven needs them, that he may carry on and out his purposes of mercy toward the race.

"Traveler in the stranger's land,
Far from thine own household band;
Mourner, haunted by the tone
Of a voice from this world gone;
Captive, in whose narrow cell
Sunshine has no leave to dwell;
Sailor on the darkening sea—
Lift the heart and bend the knee!"

"With a God of peace above thee,
Canst thou languish or despair?
Tread thy griefs beneath thy feet,
Scale the walls of heaven with prayer.
'Tis the key of the apostle
That opens heaven from below;
'Tis the ladder of the patriarch
Whereon angels come and go!"




CHAPTER XII.

CONSCIENCE.

Oh, Conscience! thou tremendous power
 Who dost inhabit us without our leave,
 And art within ourselves another self,
 A master-self; * * * * *
 How dost thou light a torch to distant deeds,
 Make the past, present, and the future frown;
 How, ever and anon, awake the soul
 As with a peal of thunder to strange horrors
 Through the long, restless dream of life?
 YOUNG.

He that has light within his own true breast,
 May sit in the center and enjoy bright day;
 But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
 Benighted walks under a mid-day sun;
 Himself, his own dark dungeon.
 MILTON.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
 Yet thy spirit shall not sleep;
 There are shades which will not vanish,
 There are thoughts thou canst not banish.
 BYRON.

OD has set up two tribunals before which all men are, or are to be, arraigned for trial and judgment; one is in the soul, and the other is in the Bible. One is the bar of conscience, and the other, the bar of absolute or revealed truth. One is temporary and uncertain, the other, final and unerring. One constitutes a kind of lower court to the other, and its decisions may be reversed in the higher, or they may be approved, according to the facts and circumstances of the case. There is greater ability and more

light and a clearer exposition of law always in the higher tribunal; but still, the decisions and the condemnation of the lower court are not thereby to be despised. For should a man be condemned in *both*, as he is very liable to be if the case at first goes against him, nothing but the mercy of God can help him.

Dropping the figure, however, and speaking plainly, the human conscience, which is referred to in the simile, is a faculty implanted within the sentient soul for the purpose of telling us when we do right and when we do wrong. Its function is that of a moral judge; it is, literally, the moral judiciary of the soul. It does not make moral laws, it only passes sentence according to the standard set up, and the laws already accepted. The work of making moral statutes, in all cases where they are not clearly revealed, belongs to the intellect and reason, and these statutes, so made and accepted, are handed over to the conscience which immediately proceeds to pass sentence in accordance with their provisions. The intellectual faculties in council, constitute that mental and moral legislature or law-making power in the soul which is always in session; and conscience is the heaven-appointed judge to pass sentence according to the laws there laid down.

Hence it follows that the decisions of conscience must always vary according to the light and knowledge possessed. If the intellect and reason are darkened by sin or prejudice or ignorance or malice, the moral standard set up by such a mind will necessarily be defective and vicious; but yet conscience will pass sentence of approval or condemnation in accordance therewith. If a person has never enjoyed the light of Christianity, has never read the Bible, has never received right instruction, the moral standard in such an one must be low; his ideas of right and wrong must be erroneous; and so necessarily the decisions of his conscience will be very liable to be wrong.

And this accounts for the wide variation which we find in the decisions of this faculty under different circumstances and among different kinds of people. We have all recognized this

variation or difference, and have often wondered at it, and wondered how it could be. The conscience of one man tells him that such a course of conduct, or such an act is right or wrong, and the conscience of another man will tell him just the contrary. The conscience of a Christian accuses him if he does not follow and obey Christ, the conscience of a heathen mother accuses her if she does not throw her babe into the Ganges to be eaten up by the crocodiles. And on account of this wide variation or difference in the decisions of this faculty, men have been so puzzled and perplexed as to say, "Conscience is no moral guide at all; it has no original, inherent power. It is simply the result of education; men can grow their consciences as they do their vegetables, by proper cultivation and training."

But the general confusion of thought upon this subject has arisen wholly for the want of a little clear-headed mental philosophy. Men have confounded the operations of the intellect with those of the moral faculty. Men have thought that conscience in itself was the law-making power within, instead of merely a judge to interpret the law already laid down. And none can ever understand this variation and difference in conscience until they remember that it never makes moral laws, has no inherent power to do so, but its function is simply to pass sentence according to the laws already established by a previous action of the other mental and moral faculties.

Hence the decisions of conscience will always serve as a tolerably correct index of a man's mental and moral state or standing. If the mind is a heathen mind, the conscience will be heathen also. If a man has perverted his advantages, has become hardened and reckless and throws away all moral laws and considerations as many do, then the conscience will also become hardened and seared as with a hot iron, as the Scriptures declare. If a person is filled with prejudice, superstition, or ignorance, the decisions of his conscience will reflect the same condition. If a person is weak or sickly in mind, conscience will indicate it like a thermometer. And, on the

other hand, if a person is enlightened and properly trained, and above all, if a person has received and enjoyed the light of God's Word and of the indwelling spirit of truth, then the voice of his conscience will be to him as the voice of God, and to violate it will be to commit a positive sin.

In all cases, conscience is not to be violated unless it is opposed to some *known higher law*, and then, of course, its decisions are worthless and can be thrown aside. The heathen who has received no higher moral light than the light within, and cannot get any other, must obey the decisions of his conscience whether right or wrong. There is no other course left open to him. He must obey something and follow some moral guide, and until he has the light of truth and the light of life, conscience is his highest moral teacher. But the moment his mind has access to greater light and will not receive or use it, the case is changed. From being innocent and blinded, he will become doubly guilty because he does not heed the voice he hears, and because he does not try to make that voice clearer and more authoritative.

Hence it can be asserted that the voice of conscience, *when not opposed to any known higher law*, (mark and weigh well this qualifying clause, for it constitutes the line between truth and error in this matter); we repeat it, the voice of conscience, when not opposed to any known higher law, is not to be disregarded except with peril. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart." In such a case, the decision of this judge within, will be very likely to prove only the echo of the decision of the Judge above. This lower court will simply anticipate the verdict of the Supreme Tribunal. There are few worse sins than to go on violating the law of right in the human soul from day to day!

But while all are bound to heed the warnings of conscience, and commit sin if they disregard them, this obligation is increased tenfold in the case of a Christian. An evil man's conscience may be wrong, or may be silent and feeble, but a true Christian is one who has been enlightened from above, and his conscience is, or ought to be, more tender, active and

correct, than that of a hardened or worldly-minded man. And although such a conscience will not be always correct or all ways active, still it is more liable to be a hundred times over, especially if its possessor is daily living and walking with God.

As men recede from the written and revealed Word of God, or throw aside its teachings, the light of truth falls more and more dimly upon the mind, and the moral standard set up is proportionately weak or incorrect, until finally a point is reached where the mind has nothing but the feeble light of nature left, and even this is perverted and obscured by vicious habits, sinful indulgences, and wrong religious training; so that conscience can only sit and grope in the darkness, or act uncertainly and inconsistently according to the light it has.

There are few more horrible things to carry about with one than a *guilty* conscience. It is something that men cannot shake off or avoid. It follows them, it haunts them, it lies down with them at night. They have to face it in secret hours, meet it in the street, meet it everywhere. It is an invisible and omnipresent enemy. And how terribly it can sting the soul! It makes men afraid of themselves, afraid of God, afraid of death, afraid of everybody and everything. It is, in fact, an anticipation of the bitterness of hell.

"The mind that broods o'er guilty woes,
Is like the scorpion girt by fire;
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their captive close,
Till inly searched by thousand throes
And maddening in her ire,
One and sole relief she knows;
The sting she nourished for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain
She darts into her desperate brain.
So do the dark in soul expire
Or live like scorpion girt by fire;
So writhes the mind remorse has riven,
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven,
Darkness above, despair beneath,
Around it flame, within it death!"

But conscience can be made an instrument of blessing as well as of torture. Says the Bible: "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God;" confidence to come unto him as children come unto a parent for bread or for protection; confidence to ask him for mercies we need, for the pardon of our sins, and for greater light and love. Then have we confidence to come unto God in prayer for blessings upon others, and confidence to feel that our prayers will be heard and answered in God's own time and way; confidence to look up to him in filial gratitude and unpresumptuous trust.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE VOICE OF DUTY.

O Duty! daughter of the voice of God,
 Thou art a light to guide, a rod
 To check the erring, and reprove;
 Thou art also victory and law
 When empty terrors overawe.

WORDSWORTH.

Humble toil and heavenward duty—
 These will form the perfect man.

MRS. HALE.

"Birds by being glad, their Maker bless;
 By simply shining, sun and star;
 And we whose law is love, serve less
 By what we do, than what we are.
 Since service is the highest lot
 And angels know no higher bliss,
 Then with what good his cup is fraught
 Who was created but for this!"



HERE are times in every man's life when he is compelled to choose between two courses of conduct. Beckoning to him from one path he sees selfish inclination and a prudent regard for worldly good; and from the other he hears the words, "Ye ought to obey God." Peter and John were in just such a predicament when arrested at one time and commanded not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus Christ. But they said first to themselves and then to the magistrates, "We ought to obey God." This word *ought* embodied to their minds the law of conscience, the law of duty, and the law of right; and the authority of these three

combined was greater and higher than the authority of the Jewish Sanhedrim, or of self-interest and worldly prudence combined. Hence it is to be inferred that the voice of duty is the voice of God. The very word signifies that which we owe to God. Our duty is made up of our *dues*; that which we owe, and are under solemn obligation to perform. The idea of duty within us comes from the idea of right. It is an original instinct of our moral nature; a sentiment divinely implanted for moral purposes. As God made man in his own image and likeness, so he incorporated into the very texture of his moral constitution, a distinction between right and wrong; and as before said, the idea of duty is the correlative of the idea of right. If we see anything to be right, then we have a duty to perform in regard to it; and the duty is just as real and sacred as the nature and existence of the right itself. It is right to speak the truth; hence men are under obligation to speak it, and to speak it at all times. It is right to be honest, hence it is the duty of men to be honest; and so on through all the list of moral commandments. Everything that God says is right, hence men are under obligation to heed and carry out whatever he enjoins.

The foundation, therefore, of human duty is two-fold. First, the idea of duty flows from the idea of right, and the idea of right is implanted within the soul by virtue of its godlike nature and capacities. In other words, God put the idea of right into us when he created us in his own image; and once in possession of the idea of right, the idea of duty or of moral obligation inevitably follows.

If now we wish to go one step deeper and inquire, what constitutes right, we shall find that three things enter into it. Everything is right which is in accordance with the will and nature of God; this is one element. All morality and all right and all duty come ultimately from the All-perfect and immutable One who lives and reigns above. No God, no morality, no right, no religion, no anything in fact. God's nature, as revealed to us in his word and works, is the source of both the substance and the idea of goodness, truth and

purity. We refer everything in the last analysis back to God. What an argument this for the reality of his existence, as well as for the truthfulness of the Bible records concerning him and ourselves ! Human nature, depraved as it is, is not able to throw God out of its thought. What an evidence this that we are His offspring and the work of his hands. For if we did not come from God, and were not made in his image, as the Scriptures declare, how is it that in all our thinking God is an ever-present factor? How is it that in the last analysis our thought runs right back to Him as inevitably and spontaneously as the needle turns towards the pole? Why is it and how is it that when we have reached the conception of God as eternal, immutable, all-wise and all-perfect, our thought naturally comes to a halt, and rests itself there contentedly and securely? If no God existed, and we were not made in his image, would all this be so? Every mind utters a spontaneous No. Hence we say, right is made up of all that grounds itself in the nature of God. Whatever he says or does, is, and must be, eternally and immutably right; and whatever he forbids is wrong. And with our moral natures as they are, this cannot be otherwise and will never be changed.

Again, that is right which is in accordance with the truest and best interests of the world as a whole. Every man has in his mind a moral scheme according to which he knows or believes the world must move, if it moves harmoniously and prosperously; and all that falls in with this scheme in his mind he calls right; while that which opposes it he calls wrong. This moral scheme or plan in his mind comes there partly by original endowment, as all moral ideas come, and partly by his reading and reflection and education. The study of the Bible and the knowledge of God's character derived therefrom, especially have much to do with its formation and clearness. In every devout and well-balanced mind this scheme is a kind of transcript of God's plan.

Hence we are led to say that all things are right which contribute to the highest and truest and best interests of the world together; while everything is wrong which disorganizes,

undermines, upsets, or overthrows that which should exist; everything which takes the world away from God and God's plan. There are certain rules and regulations in society which every one pronounces right, because every one knows unless these rules and regulations exist and are carried out, society cannot exist. And the same is true of civil government. Consequently, all minds lay it down as one of their fundamental tenets that every practice, habit and custom of the world which injures its own highest and best welfare is wrong; while all that contributes thereto or enhances that welfare is right.

Further: that is also right which contributes to the highest and best welfare of each individual being, composing the world. All men have a moral scheme of their own lives. They have an idea of that which is for their best good; they also know what will injure them materially. They know how they should live and act with reference to all the varied objects and interests which surround them. They know that a departure from a certain course will be wrong, because it will destroy or break down the true order of life which they believe that God has established. And their idea of right and duty has reference more or less to this moral scheme in their minds. They feel under obligations to conform to this plan of God concerning them. They know it to be wrong to do or say anything which will injure the highest and best good of their souls.

Here, then, is the threefold source of our idea of right. That is right which God commands; that is right which contributes to the highest and best good of our fellow-beings about us; and that which contributes to our own best and highest good. Now, if man was an unfallen being all would go along smoothly. His idea of right and of duty would be identical; there would be no conflicting interests to come in between duty and its fulfillment. The moment anything right was presented to the mind, there would be a spontaneous movement of soul in the direction indicated. But as it is, both right and duty have to fight for their lives and contend stoutly for every inch of ground they occupy. The conflicting interests are so

numerous and powerful that right and duty are often pushed aside or compelled to stay in the background. And hence arises a great moral and religious conflict which is going on in every human heart all over the world, between what it *ought* to do, and what it would *like* to do, between duty on one hand, and inclination or pleasure on the other.

For example: here is an act which we feel and know that we ought to perform. Conscience urges it and reason approves of it. We ought to do it, because it is our duty to do it, and it is our duty because the act in itself is a right act; one which God enjoins and which is in harmony with the truest interests of self, and the world in which we live. On the contrary, here is another act which we ought *not* to perform. It is a wrong act. And why wrong? Either because God has forbidden it, or because it is injurious in itself, both to self and the world around. Thus these words, "ought" and "ought not," stand as representatives of the combined voice of God, conscience, divine right, and human duty. When we feel and know that we ought to do this or that, the "ought" here is not only the voice of duty to us, but also the voice of God. Said Peter and John to the magistrates, "We *ought* to obey God rather than men." Why? Because it was their duty to do so. And why their duty? Because it was right. And why right? Because God had commanded it and because such a course would contribute to the best welfare of their own souls, and the world around.

It is quite common among the careless and thoughtless to pay little or no attention to the dictates of conscience in this respect. It is quite common to hear persons say with a laugh, "Yes, I suppose I ought to do thus and so, but then, we ought to do a great many things that we do not do, so that isn't of much consequence." But if duty is not of much consequence, then God is not of much consequence; for whenever we feel the *ought* pressing upon the mind and heart, we feel the pressure of God's truth, to disobey which is to die. Whenever we hear the *ought* speaking in tones of persuasion or admonition or warning, we hear the voice of duty and of God speaking.

To disobey the *ought* is to disobey God, and thus commit sin and wrong ourselves.

The number of influences opposing this sentiment of duty in the mind and heart, are manifold and some of them are quite powerful. Let us take the case of Peter and John as a sample, and compare our condition with theirs. In their case the first thing opposing the idea of duty was the command of the civil authority. The Sanhedrim was the highest Jewish tribunal, and it had commanded them under pain of severe penalties not to teach or preach in Jesus' name. This opposition of the civil authority without, would naturally awake within them the idea of self-preservation, personal safety, and worldly prudence. Should they heed these, or obey duty? They decided without much debate that they would cling to duty, and let their personal safety take care of itself; and so they said to themselves and to the magistrates, "We ought to obey God," and we are determined to do it, irrespective of personal consequences. In this land and at this day we have no civil authority to confront the voice of duty, but we have that which perhaps is worse, viz:—an irreligious public sentiment. . On the whole, we think it would be easier to defy and break through a positive civil enactment, than this negative, indefinite, yet all-powerful public feeling or opinion against the commands of God. And so it comes to the same issue after all; we have the voice of God on one side and the voice of men on the other, and are called upon to decide which we will heed and obey. The contest here is between *duty* and *inclination*, between what we ought to do, and what we would like to do.

The disciples had to break away from the mass and follow their individual convictions of right and duty; and in so doing they had to be singular, and to take a position in advance of those about them. They had to stand where they could feel no help from earthly friends or associates. And so it is now, and so it will be forevermore. When the dictates of God and the dictates of an unbelieving world come into collision; when right and duty are on one side, and custom and prevail-

ing public sentiment on the other, then no one is a Christian or can be a Christian, until, like Peter and John, he says "I *ought* to obey God, rather than men," and I am determined to do it, irrespective of personal consequences.

Again, in the case of Peter and John, there were all of the *selfish* influences opposing the *ought*, such as love of ease, love of pleasure, desire for personal advancement, etc. They might have said, "Now, if we keep on, we shall hurt ourselves more than any one else; we shall bring ourselves into reproach and contempt; we shall destroy our own comfort and happiness; in short, we shall make ourselves miserable and wretched in every way. Besides, we shall be pointed out as disturbers of the public peace, and we shall incur the displeasure of those who are good, honorable, upright, and law-abiding citizens. They might have weighed all these matters in their minds, but whether they did or not, the law of conscience, the law of duty and the law of God triumphed; and they said, "We ought to obey God" and therefore we *will* obey him.

The same or a similar contest between duty and self-interest goes on in each soul not entirely given over to hardness and blindness. And what a struggle it is at times! There is the love of ease, the love of sinful pleasure, the desire for personal advancement, the craving of ambition and lust, all pulling one way, and on the other side, there is this all-powerful sentiment of duty; there is the feeling of the "ought" and the "ought not;" there is the voice of conscience, and of right, and of God; and what a battle there is in the breast over these great moral issues and questions relating to personal choice and conduct! Sometimes indeed it seems the heart would be rent asunder by the fierceness of the shock; but in every Christian soul the *ought*, the sentiment of duty, finally conquers. No person is a Christian, or can be one, until selfishness in all forms gives way before the voice of duty (which is the voice of God), whenever the two come into collision. That which is agreeable is not always the most useful, and that which is pleasant is not always the best. Present enjoyment

must always be sacrificed when it stands in the way of higher and more lasting good.

Suppose Peter and John had heeded the voice of self-interest instead of the voice of duty, how disastrous would have been the result! They would have lost all that they tried to gain; ease, pleasure, personal honor and all; while, as it was, never thinking of self-interest, or at least not heeding it, being willing to give themselves up entirely to the guidance of duty, they gained all the happiness and honor which they did not seek. And hence the truth of the Saviour's words, "He that seeks to save his life shall lose it, but he that is willing to lose his life for my sake the same shall find it."

This sentiment of duty, this feeling and knowledge expressed by the word *ought*, is designed of God to be the great REGULATOR of every Christian life. It is easy enough to obey God's commandments when the soul is full of warm, strong feeling; when the tide of love is high; but these seasons are short and inconstant, and when it is ebb-tide in the soul, there must be some great *principle* to govern life; and this regulating principle is the voice of duty, which is the voice of God. Does the question ever arise, why should we obey God? Let the sufficient answer be, because we *ought* to. Do not try to add any other inducement to that simple voice of duty, the feeling of the *ought* in your heart and mind. Bring yourselves to this standard, and your life will cease to be fitful and uncertain, now up, now down, now one thing, now another; but as the sentiment is duty is constant, so your action will be the same.

Why should we pray? Because we ought to, and that is enough. Why should we labor for souls? Because we ought to. Why should we live a correct and consistent Christian life? Because we ought to. This is our duty. Why should we give money to God's cause? Because we ought to. Why should we refrain from all sinful and vicious habits? Because we ought to. Why should we discountenance all wrong? Because we ought to; wrong is injurious. Why should we

love and serve God? Because we ought to. It is God's command and hence right.

And so all through the Christian life. This sentiment of duty, this feeling of the *ought*, must govern and control us in all that we do and say for God and human welfare. To let self-interest govern us, is to let the idea of pleasure govern us; to let worldly prudence govern us, to let the fear of man, the love of praise, the love of ease, the dictates of wicked authority govern us, is to give ourselves over to serve the devil. But to ask simply, "What is right? What does God command? What is duty?" and then to do it courageously and humbly, is to be a Christian.




CHAPTER XIV.

TIME AND ETERNITY.

"Dropping down the troubled river,
 To the tranquil, tranquil shore;
 Dropping down the misty river,
 Time's willow-shaded river,
 To the spring-embosomed shore;
 Where the sweet light shineth ever,
 And the sun goes down no more.

Dropping down the winding river,
 To the wide and welcome sea;
 Dropping down the narrow river
 To the blue and ample sea,
 Where no tempest wrecketh ever,
 And the sky is fair and free."

—
 "Where the glory brightly dwelleth,
 Where the new song sweetly swelleth
 And the discord never comes;
 Where life's stream is ever laving,
 And the palm is ever waving,
 That must be the Home of homes!"

 **NOTHING** is truer in the world of fact than this: time, left to itself, inevitably runs to waste; and when once gone, the soul has no bugle-call with which to summon back the years that have flown, like birds, away. Hence the control of time is a prize, because it incloses such vast possibilities of achievement. A day or a month or a year, seems an ordinary thing, viewed superficially; but who can estimate the results which may flow therefrom? All that makes life pleasant or profitable, all that confers distinction and renown,—wealth, fame, happiness, love, beauty, virtue

goodness,—hang pendent, like golden fruit, from the boughs of this tree of Time. To the scholar, it can bring that knowledge which is power; to the business-man, fame, and to the maiden the rewards of love and home. Every moment, therefore, as it flies, goes freighted with incalculable value. What the air is to birds, or the sea to fishes, that to the soul is Time. Time builds all our cities, constructs our highways of travel and transportation, and develops the resources of our fields and forests. Time builds up our benevolent institutions and carries forward all ameliorating and industrial enterprises. Time establishes kingdoms and overthrows monarchies and empires. It develops the resources of human life and character, making the mind an instrument of untold power in the management of the world; enabling it to forge thoughts of such power that, when fitly expressed, they become like the calls of a trumpet in the ears of mankind; enabling it to set in motion agencies and movements which affect the destiny of generations and nations. In a word, Time constitutes the foundation-soil out of which the plant of achievement springs, and on which it displays all its beauty and fruitage.

But, added to these material and mental possibilities inclosed in the germ of Time, there are also possibilities of spiritual culture and improvement. In time, we can establish a connection with heaven, and can form friendships with the pure and good, below and above; can partly at least overcome the power and dominion of sin in the soul; can link our life and destiny with Jesus Christ, the world's Creator and Redeemer; can become the recipient of angelic ministrations, and make ourselves an heir of God to an inheritance beyond the skies.

More than this, the rising sun of every morning gives us all a fresh start in life. Our mental and bodily powers are recuperated and re-invigorated. Waking from unconscious sleep, is waking up to new possibilities of achievement and conquest. All the avenues of industry open up afresh each new day, and present new and added features of interest, and greater opportunities for success. The beauties and glories

of the outer world, the genial light, the varying landscape, the majestic forests and rolling rivers, hill and dale, mountain and lake, cloud and sky, are all given us to use or enjoy each new day. Knowledge and acquirement become more and more vast each day. Experience has broadened and deepened, so that the mistakes of yesterday can be avoided or counteracted by the enlarged wisdom which we bring to the work of the morrow.

Time also possesses great value from the fact of its intimate relation to Eternity. It is not enough to say that Time is the prelude to Eternity, because it is more than this; it not only goes before, but also determines the character of the hereafter. For Eternity will take us up just where, and just as Time leaves us. If there were no hereafter, if this life and this world were all we had, then this succession of years would not be a matter of particular notice. Time would only be valuable to us for what it brought from day to day. But this is not the case. It is not only true that Eternity is an ocean and Time a rill running into it, but the rill preserves its individuality even when joined with the ocean. This rill is not lost and absorbed in the sea, but maintains its own character forever. Better is it to say that Eternity is a temple and Time the ante-room to it, because there can be no change of garments when once ushered within. Time and Eternity lie like two contiguous apartments, side by side, with but a thin veil or partition between. The actions in one are initiatory and determinative of those in the other. In one we strike the opening notes of an anthem that is not only to be ceaselessly prolonged, but prolonged in the same joyful or joyless strain in which it is commenced.

A stone cast into the midst of a pond or lake produces immediately around it a little circling wave; this gives rise to a second, larger and wider than the first, and the second produces a third, and the third a fourth, each larger and wider than the preceding one, until the influence of the first wave is felt to the uttermost shores. So it is with our words and deeds in Time; they reach out in ever-widening circles until

their influence is felt upon our lives and characters forever.

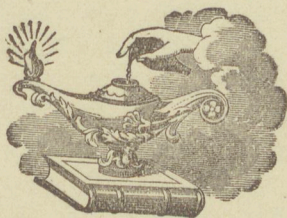
Previous to the building of Solomon's temple at Jerusalem, the materials were all prepared at a distance from the site to be occupied. Some were prepared in the forests of Lebanon, other materials in other places, and when completed they were brought to Jerusalem and set up. Can we not see, if there had been defects in the preparation of the materials, those defects would have appeared and remained in the temple as finally erected? Even so it will be with each man's temple of character. In time, we are working out the materials to be transported to eternity and there set up as the habitation of our souls forever. And whether the building is to be marred and imperfect, or whether it shall be to us a mansion of glory and beauty, depends upon the manner and completeness of the preparations here.

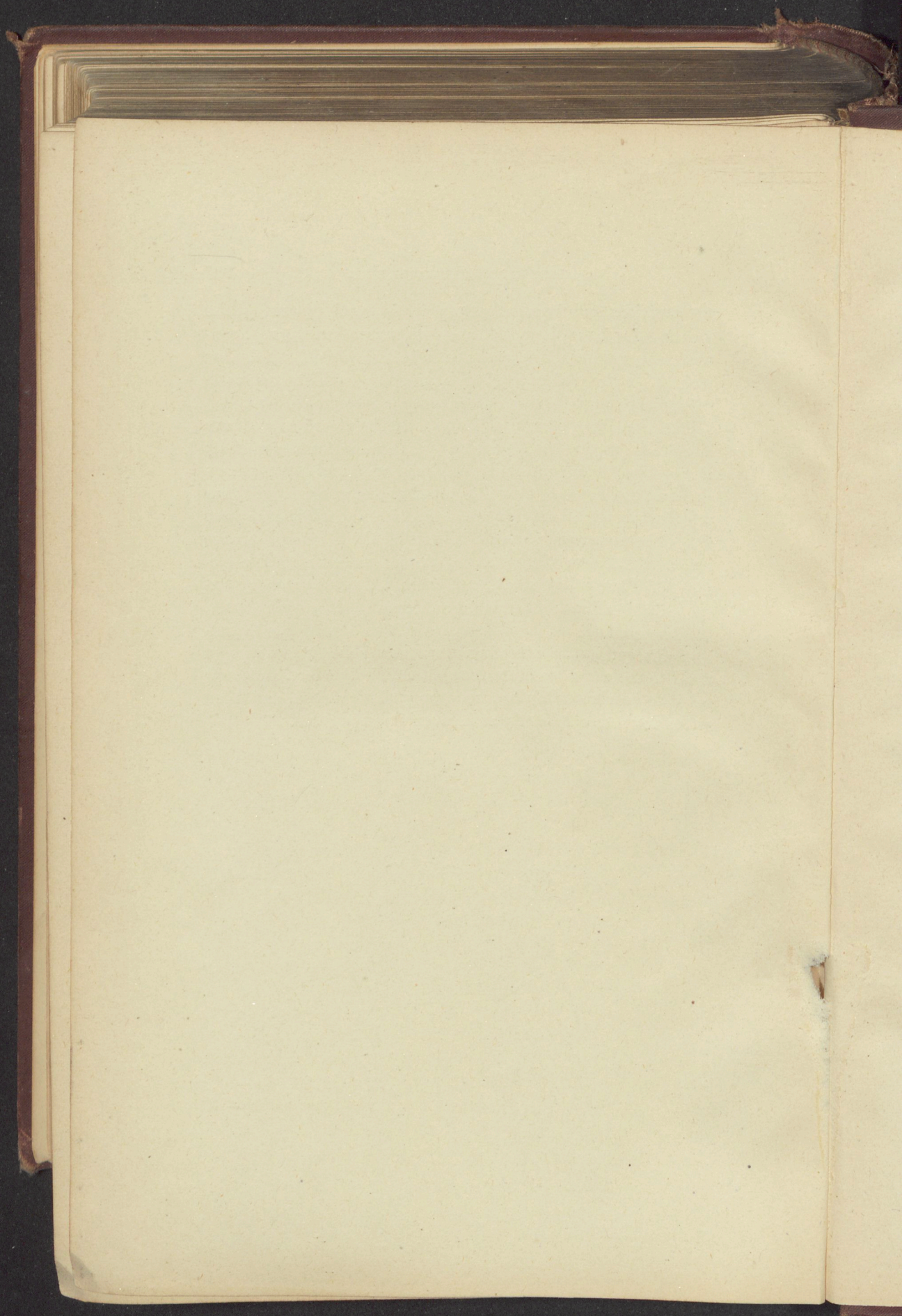
Time not only merges into Eternity, but colors it; and whether the tints are to be golden and bright, or sombre and dark, will depend upon how we use the brush and hues below. Time also molds, as well as colors; for as is the pattern here, so will the materials be fashioned there. Time cuts the garments of Eternity; and whether our covering shall be a robe of righteousness or of sin, depends upon the improvement of these passing years.

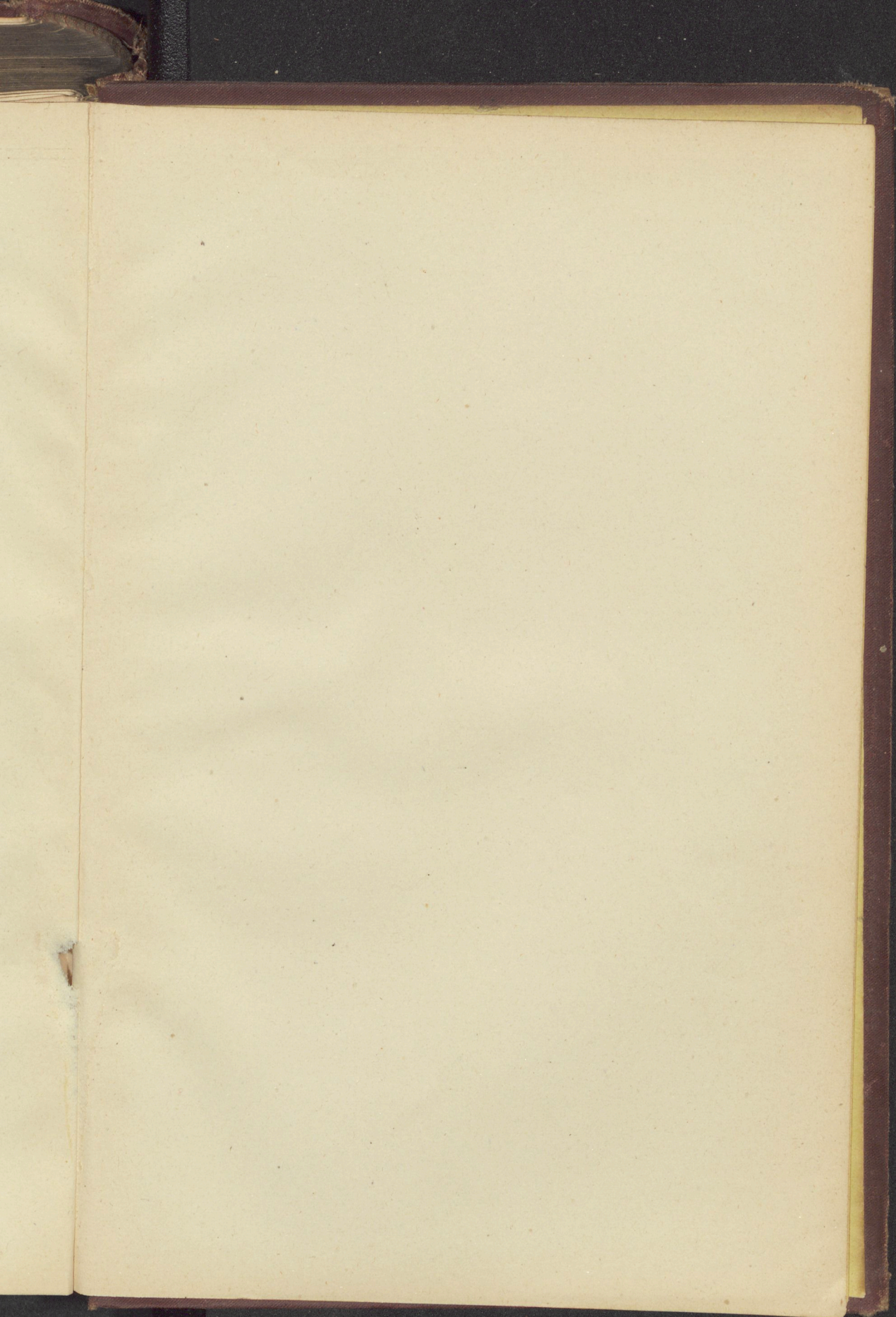
Now to redeem time from the control of evil will cost a large amount of resolute determination and earnest endeavor. All virtues and all blessings have their price; and if one desires to make these his own, he must pay the price of them. Nothing that we most need in life ever comes to us of itself; it must always be redeemed or bought up by paying something for it. If the scholar desires knowledge, he must pay for it, and frequently it costs him not only the sacrifice of ease and pleasure, not only days and nights of toil, but even his health and strength. If the business-man desires wealth, he must pay the price of it; and frequently that price is the loss of honor and character, to say nothing of harassing care and devouring anxiety. If the woman desires to be a leader of fashionable society, she must pay the price and penalty of

the position; and frequently the price is worth more than the object gained, for she not only has to surrender all sweet contentment and inward peace, but also her moral welfare. And so it is with the redeeming or buying up of Time; it costs something to get it out of the hands and control of evil.

The on-rolling stream of Time must be served as we serve any other stream that we desire to utilize for human welfare; it must be turned out of its naturally wild and often useless channel, and made to flow into another one where it will turn wheels and propel machinery. And when both water-power and time-power are thus forced out of their natural course into a useful one, they are said to be redeemed. The element of Time is like all other elements, fire or water for example, a good and indispensable servant, but a bad master. If Time controls us, it will surely drift us downwards to endless misery; but, controlling it, we can yoke it as a winged steed to the car of resolute thought and holy effort, and compel it to bear us safely and honorably through life, and then set us down triumphantly at Heaven's pearly gates.







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