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Author: Francis Greenwood Peabody

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Mornings in the College Chapel

SHORT ADDRESSES TO YOUNG MEN ON PERSONAL RELIGION BY FRANCIS GREENWOOD PEABODY, PLUMMER PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN MORALS IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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TO

MY BELOVED AND REVERED COLLEAGUES

THE PREACHERS TO THE UNIVERSITY

AND TO THE SACRED MEMORY OF

PHILLIPS BROOKS

OF THE FIRST STAFF OF PREACHERS

WHO BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH AMONG US

IN GRATEFUL RECOLLECTION OF

HAPPY ASSOCIATION IN THE SERVICE OF

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

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In the conduct of morning prayers at Harvard University, the Preachers to the University usually say a few plain words to interpret or enforce the Bible lesson which has been read. The entire service is but fifteen minutes long, so that this little address must occupy not more than two or three minutes, and can at the best indicate only a single wholesome thought with which a young man may begin his day. It has been suggested to me that some of these informal and brief addresses, if printed, may continue to be of interest to those who heard them, or may perhaps be of use to other young people in like conditions of life; and I have therefore tried to recall some of these mornings in the College Chapel.

It is now ten years since it was determined that religion in our University should be regarded no longer as a part of College discipline, but as a natural and rational opportunity offering itself to the life of youth. It was a momentous transition, undertaken with the profoundest sense of its seriousness and significance. It was an act of faith,—of faith in religion and of faith in young men. The University announced the belief that religion, rationally presented, will always have for healthy-minded young men a commanding interest. This faith has been abundantly justified. There has become familiar among us, through the devotion of successive staffs of Preachers, a clearer sense of the simplicity and reality of religion, which, for many young men, has enriched the meaning of University life. No one who has had the slightest part in administering such a work can sum up its present issues without feeling on the one hand a deep sense of personal insufficiency, and on the other hand a large and solemn hope.

I have indicated such sources of suggestion for these addresses as I noted at the time of their delivery, but it may well be that some such indebtedness remains, against my will, unacknowledged.

CAMBRIDGE, October, 1896.

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Mornings in a College Chapel

I

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Hebrews xii. 1.

(FIRST DAY OF COLLEGE TERM)

No one can look for the first time into the faces of a congregation like this without thinking, first of all, of the great multitude of other lives whose love and sacrifice are represented here. Almost every single life which enters our chapel is the focus of interest for a whole domestic circle, whose prayers and anxieties, whose hopes and ambitions, are turning toward this place from every region of this land. Out from behind our congregation stands in the background a cloud of witnesses in whose presence we meet. There are the fathers, earning and saving, that the sons may have a {2} better chance than they; there are the mothers with their prayers and sacrifices; there are the rich parents, trembling lest wealth may be a snare to their sons; and the humble homes with their daily deeds of self-denial for the sake of the boys who come to us here. When we meet in this chapel we are never alone. We are the centre of a great company of observant hearts. And then, behind us all, there is the still larger fellowship of the past, the historic traditions of the university, the men who have adorned it, the inheritances into which we freely enter, the witnesses of a long and honorable associated life.

Now this great company of witnesses does two things for us. On the one hand, it brings responsibility. The apostle says in this passage, "that apart from us they should not be made perfect." Every work of the past is incomplete unless the present sustains it. We are responsible for this rich tradition. We inherit the gift to use or to mar. But, on the other hand, the cloud of witnesses is what contributes courage. It sustains you to know that you represent so much confidence and trust. It is strengthening to enter into this rich inheritance. You do not have to begin things {3} here. You only have to keep them moving. It is a great blessing to be taken up thus out of solitude into the companionship of generous souls. Let us begin the year soberly but bravely. Surrounded by this cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which most easily besets us, and let us run with patience the race that is immediately set before us in the swiftly passing days of this college year.

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II

"NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO, BUT TO MINISTER"

Mark x. 35-45.

The disciples in this passage were looking at their faith to see what they could get out of it. They wanted to be assured of a prize before they took a risk. They came to Jesus saying: "We would that Thou shouldest do for us whatever we ask." But Jesus bids them to consider rather what they can do for their faith. "Whosoever," He says, "would be first, is to be the servant for all, for even the Son of man comes not to be ministered unto, but to minister." I suppose that when a man faces a new year of college life, his first thought is of what it can do for him. He has studied the college programme, asking himself: "What can I get out of this?" and now he looks into the year, with all its unknown chances, and asks of it: "O unknown year, what happiness and friendship and instruction may I get from you? Will you not bring to {5} pass what I desire? I would that thou shouldest do for me whatever I ask." Then the spirit of Jesus Christ meets him here and turns his question round: "What are you going to do for the college during this coming year? Are you going to help us in our morals, in our intellectual life, in our religion? Are you going to contribute to the higher life of the university? For what do you come here,—to be ministered unto, or to minister?"

Of course a man may answer that this is an impossible test; that there is nothing that he can give to a great place like this, and everything he can receive. But he little knows how the college from year to year gets marked for good or evil by a class, or a group within a class, or sometimes a few persons, as they pass in and out of our gates. Sometimes a group of young men live for a few years among us and leave behind them a positively malarial influence; and some times a few quiet lives, simply and modestly lived among us, actually sweeten and purify our climate for years together. And so in the quiet of our prayers we give ourselves, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. {6} Nowhere in the world is it more true that we are members one of another, and that the whole vast institutional life is affected by each slightest individual. Nowhere in this world is there a better chance to purify the spirit and tone, either of work or of sport, and nowhere can a man discover more immediately the happiness of being of use. The recreation and the religion, the study and the play, of our associated life, are waiting for the dedication of unassuming Christian men to a life which offers itself, not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

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III

THE TRANSMISSION OF POWER

John xvii. 22.

This was the glory which Jesus Christ claimed for himself—to take the glory of God and glorify with it the life of man. "The glory that thou hast given me I have given them." It was not a glory of possession, but a glory of transmission. It was not his capacity to receive which glorified him, it was his capacity to give. In most of the great pictures of the glorified Christ there is a halo of light encircling and illuminating his face. That is the fictitious glory, the glory of possession. In a few such paintings the light streams from the Master's face to illuminate the other figures of the scene. That is the real glory, the glory of transmission.

And such is the only glory in life. A man looks at learning or power or refinement or wealth and says: "This is glory; this is success; this is the pride of life." But there is really nothing glorious about possession. It may be most inglorious and mean,—as {8} mean when the possession is brains or power as when it is bonds or wheat. Indeed, there is rarely much that is glorious or great about so slight or evanescent a thing as a human life. The glory of it lies in its being able to say, "The glory that thou hast given me I give to them." The worth of life is in its transmissive capacity. In the wonderful system of the telephone with its miracle of intercommunication there is, as you know, at each instrument that little film of metal which we call the transmitter, into which the message is delivered, and whose vibrations are repeated scores of miles away. Each human life is a transmitter. Take it away from its transmissive purpose, and what a poor insignificant film a human life may be. But set it where it belongs, in the great system where it has its part, and that insignificant film is dignified with a new significance. It is as if it said to its God: "The message which Thou givest me I give to them," and every word of God that is spoken into it is delivered through it to the lives that are wearily waiting for the message as though it were far away.

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IV

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Matthew v. 16.

At the first reading there certainly seems to be something of self-assertion and self-display about this passage, as if it said: "Let your light so shine that people may see how much good you do." But, of course, nothing could be farther than this from the spirit of Jesus. Indeed, his meaning is the precise opposite of this. For he is speaking not of a light which is to illuminate you, but of a light which is to shine from you upon your works; so that they, and not you, are seen, and the glory is given, not to you, but to God. Such a light will hide you rather than exhibit you, as when one holds a lantern before him on some dark road, so that while the bearer of the lantern is in the darkness, the path before him is thrown into the light. The passage, then, which seems to suggest a doctrine of self-display, is really a teaching of self-effacement. Here is a railway-train thundering along some evening {10} toward a broken bridge, and the track-walker rushes toward it with his swinging lantern, as though he had heard the great command, "Let your light shine before men;" and the train comes to a stop and the passengers stream out and see the peril that they have just escaped, and give thanks to their Father which is in heaven. And this is the reward of the plain, unnoticed man as he trudges home in the dark, —that he has done his duty well that night. He has not been seen or praised; he has been in the shadow; but he has been permitted to let his little light shine and save; and he too gives thanks to his Father in heaven.

Here, again, is a lighthouse-keeper on the coast. The sailor in the darkness cannot see the keeper, unless indeed the shadow of the keeper obscures for a moment the light. What the sailor sees is the light; and he thanks, not the keeper, but the power that put the light on that dangerous rock. So the light-keeper tends his light in the dark, and a very lonely and obscure life it is. No one mounts the rock to praise him. The vessels pass in the night with never a word of cheer. But the life of the keeper gets its dignity, not {11} because he shines, but because his light guides other lives; and many a weary captain greets that twinkling light across the sea, and seeing its good work gives thanks to his Father which is in heaven.

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V

THE CENTURION

Matthew viii. 5-11.

One of the most interesting things to observe in the New Testament is the series of persons who just come into sight for a moment through their relation to the life of Jesus Christ, and are, as it were, illuminated by that relationship, and then, as they pass out of the light again, disappear into obscurity. They are like some western-fronting window on which the slanting sun shines for a moment, so that we see the reflection miles away. Then, with the same suddenness, the angle of reflection changes, and the window grows dark and insignificant once more. This centurion was such a person. Jesus perhaps never met him before, and we never hear of him again, and yet, in the single phrase, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel," Jesus stamps him with a special character and welcomes him with a peculiar confidence. How is it that there is given to him this abrupt {13} commendation? Why does Jesus say that he shows more faith than Israel itself? It was, of course, because of the man's attitude of mind. He comes to Jesus just as a soldier comes to his superior officer. He has been disciplined to obedience, and that habit of obedience to his own superiors is what gives him in his turn authority. He obeys, and he expects to be obeyed. He is under authority, and so he has authority over his own troops, and says to one soldier Go, and to another Come, and they obey. Now Jesus sees in an instant that this is just what he wants of his disciples. What discipline is to a soldier, faith is to a Christian. A religious man is a man who is under authority. He goes to his commander and gets orders for the day. He does not pretend to know everything about his commander's plans. It is not for him to arrange the great campaign. It is for him only to obey in his own place, and to take his own part in the great design. Perhaps in the little skirmish in which he is involved there may be defeat, but perhaps that defeat is to count in the victory for the larger plan. Thus the religious man does not serve on his own account. He is in the hands of a general, who overlooks {14} the whole field. And that sense of being under authority is what gives the religious man authority in his turn. He is not the slave of his circumstances; he is the

master of them. He takes command of his own detachment of life, because he has received command from the Master of all life. He says to his passions, Go; and to his virtues, Come; and to his duty, Do this; and the whole little company of his own ambitions and desires fall into line behind him, because he is himself a man under authority. That is a soldier's discipline, and that is a Christian's faith.

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VI

SPIRITUAL ATHLETICS

1 *Timothy* iv. 8.

There is this great man writing to his young friend, whom he calls "his own son in the faith," and describing religion as a branch of athletics. Bodily exercise, he says, profiteth somewhat. It is as if an old man were writing to a young man today, and should begin by saying: "Do not neglect your bodily health; take exercise daily; go to the gymnasium." But spiritual exercise, this writer goes on, has this superior quality, that it is good for both worlds, both for that which now is, and that which is to come. Therefore, "exercise unto godliness." "Take up those forms of spiritual athletics which develop and discipline the soul. Keep your soul in training. Be sure that you are in good spiritual condition, ready for the strain and effort which life is sure to demand." We are often told in our day that the athletic ideal is developed to excess, but the teaching of this passage is just the opposite of {16} the modern warning. Paul tells this young man that he has not begun to realize the full scope of the athletic ideal. Is not this the real difficulty now? We have, it is true, come to appreciate exercise so far as concerns the body, and any healthy-minded young man to-day is almost ashamed of himself if he has not a well developed body, the ready servant of an active will. We have even begun to appreciate the analogy of body and mind, and to perceive that the exercise and discipline of the mind, like that of the body, reproduces its power. Much of the study which one does in his education is done with precisely the same motive with which one pulls his weights and swings his clubs; not primarily for the love of the things studied, but for the discipline and intellectual athletics they promote. And yet it remains true that a great many people fancy that the soul can be left without exercise; that indeed it is a sort of invalid, which needs to be sheltered from exposure and kept indoors in a sort of limp, shut-in condition. There are young men in the college world who seem to feel that the life of faith is too delicate to be exposed to the sharp climate of the world of scholarship and {17} have not begun to think of it as strengthened by exposure and fortified by resistance.

Now the apostolic doctrine is this: "You do not grow strong in body or in mind without discipline and exercise. The same athletic demand is made on your soul." All through the writings of this vigorous, masculine, robust adviser of young men, you find him taking the athletic position. Now he is a boxer: "So fight I not as one that beateth the air." Now he is a runner, looking not to the things that are behind, but to the things before, and running, not in one sharp dash, but, with patience, the race set before him. It is just as athletic a performance, he thinks, to wrestle with the princes of the darkness of this world, as to wrestle with a champion. It needs just as rigorous a training to pull against circumstances as to pull against time. It appears to him at least not unreasonable that the supreme interest of an immortal soul should have from a man as much attention and development as a man gives to his legs, or his muscle, or his wind.

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VII

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

Matthew xiv. 23.

One of the most striking passages in modern literature is the paragraph in Mr. Spencer's First Principles, in which he describes the rhythm of motion. Motion, he says, though it seems to be continuous and steady, is in fact pulsating, undulatory, rhythmic. There is everywhere intermittent action and rest. The flag blown by the breeze floats out in undulations; then the branches oscillate; then the trees begin to sway; everywhere there is action and pause, the rhythm of motion.

The same law holds good of the conduct of life. Its natural method is rhythmic, intermittent, work

alternating with rest, activity and receptivity succeeding one another, the rhythm of life. The steady strain, the continuous uniformity of life, is what kills. Work unrelieved by play, and play unrefreshed by work, grow equally stale and dull. Activity without reflection loses its grasp; meditation {19} without action sinks into a dream. Jesus in this passage had been absorbed in the most active and outward-going ministry; and then, as the evening comes, he turns away and goes up into the mountain and is there alone in prayer.

We need to take account of this law of the rhythm of life. Most of the time we are very much absorbed in busy, outward-looking activity, overwhelmed with engagements and hurry and worry; and then in the midst of this active life there stands the chapel with its summons to us to pause and give the reflective life its chance. That is one of the chief offices of religion in this preposterously busy age. Religion gives one at least a chance to stop and let God speak to him. It sends the multitudes away and takes one up into the solitude of the soul's communication with God. One of our Cambridge naturalists told me once of an experiment he had made with a pigeon. The bird had been born in a cage and had never been free; and one day his owner took him out on the porch of the house and flung the bird into the air. To the naturalist's surprise the bird's capacity for flight was perfect. Round and round he flew {20} as if born in the air; but soon his flight grew excited, panting, and his circles grew smaller, until at last he dashed full against his master's breast and fell on the ground. What did it mean? It meant that, though the bird had inherited the instinct for flight, he had not inherited the capacity to stop, and if he had not risked the shock of a sudden halt, he would have panted his little life out in the air. Is not that a parable of many a modern life,—completely endowed with the instinct of action, but without the capacity to stop? Round and round life goes, in its weary circle, until it is almost dying at full speed. Any shock, even some severe experience, is a mercy if it checks this whirl. Sometimes God stops such a soul abruptly by some sharp blow of trouble, and the soul falls in despair at his feet, and then He bends over it and says: "Be still my child; be still, and know that I am God!" until by degrees the despair of trouble is changed into submission and obedience, and the poor, weary, fluttering life is made strong to fly again.

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VIII

"THAT OTHER DISCIPLE"

John xx. 8.

About fifty years ago, one of the most distinguished of New England preachers, Horace Bushnell, preached a very famous sermon on the subject of "Unconscious Influence," taking for his text this verse: "Then went in also that other disciple." The two disciples had come together, as the passage says, to the sepulchre, but that other disciple, though he came first, hesitated to go in, until the impetuous Peter led the way, and "then went in also that other disciple."

There are always these two ways of exerting an influence on another's life, the ways of conscious and unconscious influence. A few persons in a community have the strength of positive leadership. They devise and guide public opinion, and may be fairly described as personal influences. But such real leaders are few. Most of us cannot expect to stand in our community like the centurion of the {22} Gospel and say to one man: Come, and he cometh; and to another: Go, and he goeth; and to a third: Do this, and he doeth it. Most of us must take to ourselves what one of our professors said to a body of students: "Be sure to lend your influence to any good object; but do not lend your influence until you have it." On the other hand, however, there is for all of us an unavoidable kind of influence; the unconscious effect on another's life, made not by him who preaches, or poses, or undertakes to be a missionary, but simply by the man who goes his own way, and so demonstrates that it is the best way for others to follow. That is what Laurence Oliphant once called, "living the life;" the kind of conduct which does not drive, but draws.

Peter might have stood before the sepulchre, and tried all in vain to influence and urge his friend to come in with him, but instead of this he simply enters, and then, without any conscious persuasion on his part, that other disciple enters too. So it is that a man to-day just takes his stand among us in some issue of duty, not dragging in allies to help him, but quietly standing on his own isolated conviction, and some day "that other {23} disciple" just comes and stands by him for the right. Or a man is passing some morning the door of this Chapel, and just slips in and says his prayer, and falls into the habit of worship from which he had of late been falling out, and some day as he sits here, as he supposes, quite out of the circle of his friends, he turns and finds "that other disciple" sitting by his side. Or a man enters just a little way into the power of the religious life, just enough to feel how incomplete is his

faith, and how little he can do for any one else, and one day as he gropes his way toward the light he feels a hand reaching out to his, and "that other disciple" gives himself to be guided by the strength which had seemed to its possessor until that moment weakness. Here is the encouragement and the interpretation of many an insignificant and apparently ineffective life. Positive and predetermined influence few of us can boast of possessing, but this unconscious influence not one of us can escape. And indeed, that is the profounder leadership even of the greatest souls. One of the most extraordinary traits in the ministry of Jesus Christ is his undesigned persuasiveness. He does not seem to expect {24} a generally accepted influence. He recognizes that there are whole groups of souls whom he cannot reach. Only they who have ears to hear, he says, can hear him. He just goes his own great way, misinterpreted, persecuted; and at last the world perceives that it is the way to go, and falls into line behind him. When he puts forth his sheep, he goes before them, and they follow him. It is simply the contagion of personality, the magnetism of soul, the spiritual law of attraction, which draws a little soul toward a great soul, as a planet is drawn in its orbit round the sun.

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IX

MORAL TIMIDITY

John xxi. 22.

The trouble with Peter in this passage is the sense of his own incapacity. Jesus comes to him with the great command: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep;" as though Peter were appointed to take the lead among his followers. And then Peter shrinks back, not because of disinclination, but because of sheer self-distrust. Who is he that he should assume the leadership? He has failed once, perhaps he may fail again. "Lord," he says, "there is John; is not he the man to lead? He never made a mistake as I did. What is he to do?" And then Jesus says: "What is that to thee? The question is not whether you are the best man to do this thing. You are simply called to do it as best you can. If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me."

There is a great deal of this moral timidity in college life. Any man of reasonable {26} modesty sees about him plenty of men better able to be leaders in good service than he is. It seems audacious for him to pose as fit to lead. "There is John," he says, "a far better man than I; what is he to do?" Then the spirit of Jesus again answers: "What is that to thee?" Here is the thing to be done, the stand to be taken, and here are you. Of course, there is much that you cannot do. Of course there are many that might do it better. But the call happens to be to you: "Follow thou me." It is not a call to any exciting or dramatic service. It is simply the demand that one takes his life just as it is, and gives it as he can to the service of Christ. "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs;" give yourself to humble and modest service; live your own life without much anticipation of influence or effectiveness; with all your insufficiency and frequent stumbling, follow thou me; and in that simple following you are showing better than by all eloquence or argument how others ought to go, and you are helping and strengthening us all.

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X

THE HEAVENLY VISION

Acts xxvi. 19.

The great transformation in St. Paul from a persecutor to an apostle of Christianity was a sudden revelation. He saw a heavenly vision and was not disobedient unto it. But this is not the common way of life. It does not often happen that character is transformed and the great decision irrevocably made in an instant. It is not as a rule true that:—

"Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of truth with falsehood, for the good or evil side."

Most lives proceed more evenly, without any such catastrophic change. And yet, it is none the less true that in a very large proportion of lives there come, now and then, in the midst of routine and uniformity, certain flashes of clearer vision, disclosing the aims and ideals of life, as though one should be traveling in a fog along a hillside, and now and then the breeze should sweep the mist away, and the

road and its end be clear. {28} Now, loyalty to such a vision is the chief source of strength and satisfaction in a man's life. Sometimes a young man comes to an old one for counsel about his calling in life, and the young man sums up his gifts and capacities and defects. He will be a lawyer because he has a turn for disputation, or an engineer because he is good at figures, or a minister because he likes the higher literature. All such considerations have, of course, their place. But by no such intellectual analysis is the fundamental question met. Many men fail in their lives in spite of great gifts, and many men succeed in spite of great defects. The fundamental question is: "Has this young man had a vision of what he wants to do? Has a great desire disclosed itself to his heart? Has the breeze of God blown away the mists of his confusion and shown him his ideal, very far away perhaps, yet unmistakable and clear?" Then, with all reasonable allowance for gifts and faults, the straighter he heads toward that ideal the happier and the more effective he is likely to be. When he thus follows his heart, he is working along the line of least resistance; and when his little work is done, however meagre {29} and unimportant it may be, he can at least give it back to God, who gave it to him to do, and say: "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

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XI

THE BREAD AND WATER OF LIFE

John vi. 35. *Revelation* xxii. 17

Here, in the Gospel, the message of Christ is described as the bread of life, and, here, again, in the Book of Revelation, as the water of life. Bread and water—the very plainest, most essential, every-day needs, the forms of nourishment of which we rarely think with gratitude, but which on no day we go without.

A great many people seem to think that religion is a kind of luxury in life, a Sunday delicacy, an educated taste, an unessential food, which one can, at his discretion, take or go without. But to Jesus Christ religion is no such super-imposed accessory; it is simply bread and water, the daily necessity, the fundamental food, the universally essential and normal satisfaction of the natural hunger and the human thirst. Let us, of all things, hold fast to the naturalness, simplicity, and wholesomeness of the religious life. Religion is not a luxury added to the normal life; it is the {31} rational attitude of the soul in its relation to the universe of God. It is not an accident that the central sacrament of the Christian life is the sacrament of daily food and drink. This do, says the Master, so oft as ye eat and drink it, in remembrance of me.

And how elementary are the sources of religious confidence! They lie, not in remote or difficult regions of authority, or conformity, or history, but in the witness of daily service, and of commonplace endeavor. "The word is very nigh thee," says the Old Testament. The satisfying revelation of God reaches you, not in the exceptional, occasional, and dramatic incidents of life, but in the bread and water of life which you eat and drink every day. As one of our most precious American poets, too early silent, has sung of the routine of life:—

"Forenoon, and afternoon, and night!—Forenoon,
And afternoon, and night!—Forenoon, and—what?
The empty song repeats itself. No more?
Yea, that is Life: make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
And Time is conquered, and thy crown is won." [1]

[1] E. R. Sill. Poems, p. 27 "Life." Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1888.

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XII

THE RECOIL OF JUDGMENTS

Matthew vii. 1.

When Jesus says "Judge not that ye be not judged," he cannot be forbidding all severity of judgment, for no one could be on occasion more severe, or unsparing, or denunciatory than he. "Woe unto you, hypocrites," he says to some of the respectable church-leaders of his time. "Beware of false prophets," he says in this passage, "for they are inwardly ravening wolves." No, Jesus certainly was not a soft-spoken person or one likely to plead for gentle judgments so as to get kindness in return. What he is in fact laying down in this passage is a much profounder principle,—the principle of the recoil of judgments. Your judgments of others are in reality the most complete betrayal of yourself. What you think of them is the key to your own soul. Your careless utterances are like the boomerang of some clumsy savage, often missing the mark toward {33} which it is thrown, and returning to smite the man that threw it.

This is a strange reversal of the common notion in which we think of our relation to other lives. We fancy that another life is perfectly interpretable in its motives and aims, but that our own lives are much disguised; whereas the fact is that nothing is more mysterious and baffling than the interior purposes of another soul, and nothing is more self-disclosed and transparent than the nature of a judging life. One man goes through the world and finds it suspicious, inclined to wrong-doing, full of capacity for evil, and he judges it with his ready gossip of depreciation. He may be in all this reporting what is true, or he may be stating what is untrue; but one truth he is reporting with entire precision,—the fact that he is himself a suspicious and ungenerous man; and this disclosure of his own heart, which, if another hinted at it, he would resent, he is without any disguise making of his own accord. The cynic looks over the world and finds it hopelessly bad, but the one obvious fact is not that the world is all bad, but that the man is a cynic. The snob looks over the world and finds it hopelessly {34} vulgar, but the fact is not that the world is all vulgar, but that the man is a snob. The gentleman walks his way through the world, anticipating just dealing, believing in his neighbor, expecting responsiveness to honor, considerateness, high-mindedness, and he is often deceived and finds his confidence misplaced, and sometimes discovers ruffians where he thought there were gentlemen; but this at least he has proved,—that he himself is a gentleman. Through his judgment of others he is himself judged, and as he has measured to others, so, in the final judgment of him, made either by God or men, it shall be measured to him again.

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XIII

THE INCIDENTAL

Luke xvii. 5-15.

"As they went, they were healed." The cure of these sick men was not only remarkable in itself, but still more remarkable because of the way in which it happened. They came to Jesus crying: "Master, have mercy on us," and He sends them to the priest that they might show themselves to him and get his official guarantee that they were no longer lepers. So they must have expected that the cure, if it was to come at all, would happen either under the hands of Jesus before they started, or under the hands of the high priest after they arrived. But it did not come in either of these ways. As they went, they were cleansed. Not in the moment of Christ's benediction, nor yet in the moment of ecclesiastical recognition, but just between the two they were healed.

There is something like this very often in any man's deliverance from his temptations {36} or cares or fears. A man, for instance, sets himself to his intellectual task, but as he studies it is all dark about him, and his mind seems dull and heavy, and no light shines upon his work, and he goes away from it discouraged. But then, by some miracle of the mind's working, such as each one of us in his own way has experienced, his task gets solved for him, not as he works at it, but as he turns to other things. Suddenly and mysteriously, sometimes between the night's task and the morning's waking, his problem clears up before him, and as he goes, his mind is cleansed. So a man goes out into his life of duty-doing. He tries to do right, and he makes mistakes; he does his best, and he fails. But then his life goes on and other duties meet it, and out of his old mistakes comes new success, and out of the discipline of his conscience brought about by his failures comes the power of his conscience, and by degrees—he hardly knows how—his will grows strong. So perhaps it happens that a man some morning kneels down and says his prayer, and then rises and goes out into the world, the same man with the same cares and fears on his shoulder, as though {37} there had been no blessing from his prayer. He passes out into the day's life all unchanged. But then, as it sometimes happens through God's grace, as he goes, life seems soberer and plainer, and, by the very prayer he thought unanswered, he is healed. Not in the great hour of his petition, but as he trudges along the dusty road of life the cleansing comes to him, and the burden which he prayed might be taken from him, and which seemed to be left to bear, drops

unnoticed by the way.

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XIV

LEARNING AND LIFE

Romans xii. 1.

The letters of Paul, varied as they are in their purpose, have one curious likeness. Each goes its way through a tangled argument of doctrinal discussion, and then in almost every case each issues, as it were, into more open ground, with a series of practical maxims for the conduct of life. If you are looking for profound Biblical philosophy, you turn to the first part of Paul's epistles. If you are looking for rules of moral conduct, you turn to the last part. And between these two sections there is, as a rule, one connecting word. It is the word "therefore." The maxims, that is to say, are the consequences of the philosophy. The theology of Paul is to him an immediate cause of the better conduct of life. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord,"—he says to the Ephesians. "If, therefore, there is any comfort in Christ," he says to the Philippians, {39} "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercy of God," he says to the Romans.

We hear much in these days of the practical perils of the intellectual life; the spiritual risks of education, the infidelity of scholars, as though one who dealt much in the speculations of philosophy would lose the impulse to the devout and generous life; and certainly there are scholars enough whose learning has shrivelled up their souls. But the attitude of Paul toward the general question of the relation of learning to life is this,—that the better philosopher a man is, so much the better Christian he is likely to be; that hard thinking opens naturally into strong doing; that while not all religion is for scholars, there is a scholar's religion, and while not all sin comes from ignorance, much foolish conduct comes of superficial philosophy. Let us take courage to-day in this natural association of philosophy and life. The world needs piety, but it needs in our time a new accession of rational piety, or what the apostle calls "reasonable service." The world needs enthusiasm, but it still more urgently needs intelligently directed enthusiasm. Remember that the same man who laid {40} the foundation for the whole history of Christian theology and philosophy was at the same time the most practical of counsellors concerning Christian duty and love. He explores with a free mind the speculative mysteries of religious philosophy, and then, perceiving the bearing of these researches on the conduct of life he proceeds as from a cause to an effect, and writes: "Therefore, my brethren, I beseech you, present yourselves a living sacrifice."

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XV

FILLING LIFE FULL

Matthew v. 17.

The Jews thought that Jesus had come to destroy their teaching and to abandon all their splendid history, though Jesus repeatedly told them that his purpose was not destructive; that he wanted to take all that great past and fill it full of the meaning it was meant to bear; to fulfill, as this famous verse says, their law and prophets. A great many people still think that Jesus comes to destroy. The religious life appears to them a life of giving up things. Renunciation seems the Christian motto. The religious person forsakes his passions, denies his tastes, mortifies his body, and then is holy. But Jesus always answers that he comes not to destroy, but to fill full; not to preach the renunciation of capacity, but the consecration of capacity.

Here is your body, with all its vigorous life. It is a part of your religion to fill out your body. It is the temple of God, to be kept {42} clean for his indwelling. Not the ascetic man, but the athletic man is the physical representative of the Christian life. Here is your mind, with all the intellectual pursuits which engross you here. Many people suppose that the scholar's life is in antagonism to the interests of religion, as though a university were somehow a bad place for a man's soul. But religion comes not to destroy the intellectual life. It wants not an empty mind but a full one. The perils of this age come not from scholars, but from smatterers; not from those who know much, but from those who think they

"know it all." When our forefathers desired to do something for the service of their God, one of the first things they regarded as their religious duty was, as you may read yonder on our gate, to found this college. And here, once more, are your passions, tempting you to sin. Are you to destroy them, fleeing from them like the hermits from the world? Oh, no! You are not to destroy them, but to direct them to a passionate interest in better things. The soul is not saved by having the force taken out of it. It is, as Chalmers said, the expulsive force of a new affection which redeems one from his {43} old sin. How small a thing we make of the religious life; hiding it in a corner of human nature, serving it in a fragment of the week; and here stands Jesus Christ at the centre of all our activities of body and mind and will, and calls for the consecration of the whole of life, for the all-round man, for the fulfilment of capacity. In him, says the scripture, is not emptiness, but fullness of life.

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XVI

TAKING ONE'S SHARE OF HARDSHIPS

2 *Timothy* ii. 3.

Here is one of the passages where the Revised Version brings out more clearly the meaning.[1] The Old Version says: "Endure hardness;" as though it were an appeal to an individual. The Revised Version in the margin says: "Take thy part in suffering hardship;" take, that is to say, your share of the hardship which belongs to the common cause. "Come in with the rest of us," it means, "in bearing the hard times." There were plenty of hard times in those days. Paul was a prisoner in Rome; Nero's persecution was abroad. When the aged Paul, however, writes to the young man whom he affectionately calls his beloved child, he does not say to him: "I hope, my beloved child, that you will find life easier than I have, or that the times will clear up before you have to take the lead." He says, on the contrary: {45} "The times are very hard. Come in with us then and take your share of the hardship."

A great many people in the modern world are trying to look at life in quite an opposite way. They want to make it soft and easy for themselves and for their sons. The problem of life is to get rid of hardness. Education is to be smoothed and simplified. Trouble and care are to be kept away from their beloved children. Young people are to have a good time while they can. The apostle strikes a wholly different note. Writing to a young man of the modern time he would say: "There is a deal of hardship, of poverty, of industrial distress in the world, and I charge you to take your share in it! Are you not old enough to enlist in Christ's army? At your age, college men twenty-five years ago were brigadier-generals, dying at the head of their troops. Take your place, then, in the modern battle. Be a good soldier, not a shirk or a runaway."

When that extraordinary man,—perhaps the most inspiring leader of men in our generation,—General Armstrong, was first undertaking his work for the negroes in Virginia, he wrote a letter to a friend in the North, {46} saying: "Dear Miss Ludlow: If you care to sail into a good hearty battle, where there is no scratching and pin-sticking, but great guns and heavy shot only used, come here. If you like to lend a hand when a good cause is short-handed, come here." Could any brave man or woman resist a call like that? It was a call to arms, a summons to a good soldier of Jesus Christ. The problem of a soldier is, not to find a soft and easy place in life, with plenty to get and little to do, but "to take his share of hardship," and as the passage goes on, "to please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

[1] This change of reading is finely commented on by F. Paget, *The Hallowing of Work*, p. 57. Longmans, 1891.

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XVII

CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ephesians iv. 13.

We hear much in these days of Christian unity, and many programmes and platforms and propositions are presented to us, as though religious unity were a thing to be constructed and put

together like a building, which should be big enough to hold us all. But in this splendid chapter religious unity is regarded by the apostle, not as a thing which is to be made, but as a thing which is to grow. "There is," he says "one body and one spirit; there is a unity of the faith. But we do not make this unity; we grow up into it as we attain unto a full-grown man; we attain unto it as a boy becomes a man, not by discussing his growth, or by worrying because he is not a man, or by bragging that he is bigger than other boys, but simply by growing up. Thus, as people grow up into Christ, they grow up into unity. The unity comes not of the assent of man to certain propositions, but of the ascent of man to {48} the stature of Christ. And so what hinders unity is that we have not got our spiritual growth. It takes a full-grown mind to reach it. It takes a full-grown heart to feel it. The unity is always waiting at the top. Religious progress is like the ascent of a hill from various sides. Below there is division, obstructive underbrush, perplexity; but as the top is neared there is ever a closer approach of man to man; and at the summit there is the same view for all, and that view is a view all round. The climbers attain to the measure of the stature of Christ, and they attain at the same time to the unity of the faith.

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XVIII

THE PATIENCE OF FAITH

Mark iv. 28.

Jesus here falls back, as he so often does, on the gradualness of nature. Life, he says, is not abrupt and revolutionary in its method; it is gradual and evolutionary: the seed is sown and slowly comes to fruitage; the leaven silently penetrates the lump; the grain grows, first the blade, then the ear, finally the full corn. The best things in the world do not come with a rush. Some things have to be waited for. Faith is patient. And this he says, not only against the nervous hurry of life, which is, as we all know, cursing the American world to-day, but also against the spiritual impatience which is to be observed in every age. The most marked illustration of it to-day is in our dealings with the social movements of the time. It is the impatience of the reformer. He wants to redeem the world all at once. As Theodore Parker said of the anti-slavery cause: "The trouble seems to be that God {50} is not in a hurry, and I am." Thus we are beset by panaceas which are to regenerate society in some wholesale, external, mechanical way. When such a reformer not long ago presented some quick solution of the social question, and it was criticised, he answered: "Well, if you do not accept my solution, what is yours?" as though every one must have some immediate cure for the evils of civilization. But the fact is, that the world is not likely to be saved in any wholesale way. A much wiser observer of the social situation has lately said: "When any one brings forward a complete solution of the Social Question, I move to adjourn." Jesus, let us remember, saved men one at a time. The patience of nature taught him the patience of faith; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn.

Or, again, we are afflicted in our day by the impatience of the theologian. He wants to know all about God. It seems somehow a depreciation of theology to admit that there is anything which is not revealed. But the fact is that the wisest feel most the sense of mystery. The only theology which is likely to last is one which admits a large degree of {51} Christian agnosticism. As one of our University preachers once said: "We do not know anything about God unless we first know that we cannot know Him perfectly." [1] How superb, as against all this impatience of spirit, are the reserve and patience of Christ. Accept doubts, he says. Bear with incompleteness. Give faith its chance to grow. First the blade, then the ear, and then the harvest. There are some things which youth can prove, and some which only the experience of maturity can teach, and then there are some mysteries which are perhaps to be made plain to us only in the clearer light of another world.

[1] Henry van Dyke, D. D., *Straight Sermons*, p. 216, Scribners, 1893.

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XIX

THE BOND-SERVANT AND THE SON

Luke xvii. 7-10.

"We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which it was our duty to do." It seems almost as if we must have misread this passage. Can one who has done his duty be called an unprofitable servant? Shall one have no credit because he has done what is right? This seems strange indeed. But Jesus in reality is contrasting two ideas of duty,—the duty of a bond-servant and the duty of a son. The duty of a slave is to do what is demanded of him. He accomplishes his stint of work, his round of necessities, his grudging service, and for doing that duty he gets his hire and his day's work is done. Sometimes we see workmen for the city in the roadway, doing their duty on these terms, and we wonder that men can move so slowly and accomplish so little. They have done their duty, but they are unprofitable servants. Now against this, Jesus sets the Christian thought of duty, which {53} grows out of the Christian thought of sonship. A son who loves his father does not measure his duty by what is demanded of him. No credit is his for obeying orders. He passes from obligation to affection, from demand to privilege. And only as he passes thus into uncalled-for and spontaneous service does any credit come. There is no credit in a man's paying his debts, earning his hire, meeting his demands. The business man does not thank his clerk for doing what he is paid for. What the employer likes to see is that service beyond obligation which means fidelity and loyalty. Do you do your work for wages, for marks, from compulsion? Then, when you lie down at night, you should say: "I have done that which it was my duty to do, and I am ashamed." Do you do your work for love's sake, for the life of service to which it leads, for generous ambition and hope? Then with all your sense of ineffectiveness and incapacity you may still have that inward peace and joy which permits you to say: "I have done but little of what I dreamed of doing, but I have tried, at any rate, to do it unselfishly and gladly,—not as a bond-servant, but as a son."

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XX

DYING TO LIVE

2 *Corinthians* iv. 13.

Paul repeatedly described his spiritual experiences under physical figures of speech; and most of all he writes of himself as living over in his spiritual life the incidents of the physical life and death of Jesus. He is crucified with Christ; he is risen with Christ; he bears about in his body the dying of Christ. "Death worketh in us, but life in you." This sounds like exaggerated and rhetorical language. It seems a strange use of words to say that the death of self is the life of the world. But consider how it was with this man Paul. He had been ambitious, sanguine, impetuous, and it had all come to nothing, and worse than nothing. He had been led to persecute the very faith which he had soon found to be God's truth. And then he gives up everything. He throws away every prospect of honor and public respect and social ambition. He simply dies to himself, and gives himself {55} to the service of Christ; and, behold, that death of self is the beginning of life and courage to generation after generation of Christian followers.

The same story might be told of many a man. Just in proportion as self-seeking dies, life begins. A man goes his way in self-assertion, self-display, the desire to make an impression, and he seems to achieve much. He gets distinction, glory, the prizes of life. But one thing he fails to do; he fails to quicken spiritual life in others. His work is stained by self-consciousness, and becomes incapable of inspiration. It is life to him, but death to the things that are trusted to him. Then some day he absolutely forgets himself in his work. He buries himself, as we say, in it. His conceit and ambition die, and then out of the death of self comes the life of the world he serves. That is the paradox of life. Life is reproduced by sacrifice. The life that is lost is the only life that is saved. The dead self is the only life-bearer. Only the man who thus sinks himself in his cause is remembered as its apostle.

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XXI

CARRYING YOUR OWN CROSS

Mark viii. 34.

"If any man will come after me," says Jesus, "let him take up his cross and follow." Notice that it is his own cross. This is a different picture of Christian discipleship from that which is commonly presented. We are used to thinking of people as abandoning their own lives, their passions and desires, their own

weakness and their own strength, and turning to the one support and safety of the cross of Jesus Christ. We remember that familiar picture of the woman who has been almost overwhelmed in the sea of trouble, and is finally cast up by the waves of life upon the rock where she clings to the cross which is set there as a refuge for her shipwrecked soul. Now, no doubt, that refuge in the cross of Christ has been to many a real experience. "Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee," has been, no doubt, often a sincere confession. But that is not the {57} state of mind which Jesus is describing in this passage. He is thinking, not of some limp and helpless soul clinging to something outside itself, but rather of a masculine, vigorous, rational life, which shoulders its own responsibility and trudges along under it. Jesus says that if a man wants to follow him, he must first of all take up his own burden like a man. He sees, for instance, a young man to-day beset by his own problems and difficulties,—his poverty, his temper, his sin, his timidity, his enemies; and Jesus says to him: "That is your cross, your own cross. Now, do not shirk it, or dodge it, or lie down on it, or turn from it to my cross. First of all, take up your own; let it lie on your shoulder; and then stand up under it like a man and come to me; and as you thus come, not limply and feebly, but with the step—even let it be the staggering step—of a man who is honestly bearing his own load, you will find that your way opens into strength and peace. The yoke you have to carry will grow easier for you to carry, and the burden which you do not desire to shirk will be made light."

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XXII

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Matthew v. 3.

Whom does Jesus call the blessed people? First of all, he says, they are the "poor in spirit." And who are the poor in spirit? It sometimes seems as if Christians thought that to be poor in spirit one must be poor-spirited—a limp and spiritless creature, without dash, or vigor, or force. But the poor in spirit are not the poor-spirited. They are simply the teachable, the receptive, the people who want help and are conscious of need. They do not think they "know it all;" they appreciate their own insufficiency. They are open-minded and impressionable. Now Jesus says that the first approach to his blessedness is in this teachable spirit. The hardest people for him to reach were always the self-sufficient people. The Pharisees thought they did not need anything, and so they could not get anything. As any one thinks, then, of his own greatest blessings, the first of them must be {59} this,—that somehow he has been made open-minded to the good. It may be that the conceit has been, as we say, knocked out of him, and that he has been "taken down." Well! it is better to be taken down than to be still up or "uppish." It is better to have the self-complacency knocked out of you than to have it left in. Humility, as Henry Drummond once said, even when it happens through humiliation, is a blessing. Not to the Pharisee with his "I am not as other men are," but to the publican crying "God be merciful to me, a sinner," comes the promise of the beatitude. The first condition of receiving the gift of God is to be free from the curse of conceit. The spiritually poor are the first to receive Christ's blessing. They have at least made themselves accessible to the further blessings which Jesus has to bestow.

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XXIII

THE MOURNERS

Matthew v. 4.

Whom does Jesus call the blessed people? How strange it sounds when he answers: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Blessed, that is to say, are not only the people who, as we say, are in sorrow; but blessed are all the burdened people, the people who are having a hard time, the people who are bearing their crosses, for they are the ones who will learn the deeper comfort of the Gospel. It is the same promise which is repeated later in another place: "Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This does not mean that mourning is blessed for its own sake, or that the only way to be a Christian is to be sad. It simply calls attention to this fact, that every life is sure to have some hardness, or burden, or cross in it. If you have none, it simply shows that you have not really begun to live. And Jesus says that the farther you go into {61} these deep places of experience, the more you will get out of his religion. There are some phases of life where it makes little

difference whether you have any religion or not. But let the water of trouble go over your soul, and then there is just one support which keeps you from going down. Religion, that is to say, is not a thing for holidays and easy times. Its comfort is not discovered until you come to a hard place. The more it is needed, the stronger it is. How strange it is that the people who seem most conscious of their blessings and sustained by a sense of gratitude are, as a rule, people who have been called to mourn. It is not resignation only which they have found; it is light. They have been comforted through their sorrows. Their burden has been made easy and their yoke light.

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XXIV

THE MEEK.

Matthew v. 5.

Whom does Jesus call the blessed people? Again he answers: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." And who are the meek? We think of a meek man as a limp and mild creature who has no capacity to hurt or courage to help. But that is not what the Bible word means. Meekness is not weakness. The Book of Numbers says that Moses was the meekest man that ever lived; but one of the first illustrations of his character was in slaying an Egyptian who insulted his people. The meek man of the Bible is simply what we call the gentle-man—the man without swagger or arrogance, not self-assertive or forthputting, but honorable and considerate. This is the sense in which it has been said of Jesus that he was the first of gentlemen. Now these people, the gracious and generous,—not the self-important and ostentatious,—are, according to Jesus, in the end to rule. {63} They are not to get what we call the prizes of life, the social notoriety and position, but they are to have the leadership of their time and its remembrance when they are gone. Long after showy ambition has its little day and ceases to be, the world will remember the magnanimous and self-effacing leader. He does not have to grasp the prizes of earth; he, as Jesus says, "inherits the earth." It is his by right. The meek, says the thirty-seventh Psalm, shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in abundance of peace. The meek escape the quarrelsomeness of ambition. They live in a world of peace and good-will. And when we sing of peace on earth and good-will to men, we are only repeating the beatitude of Jesus: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

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XXV

THE HUNGER FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Matthew v. 6.

Whom does Jesus call the blessed people? "Blessed," he goes on, "are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." The New Testament repeatedly states this doctrine, which sounds so strangely in our ears. It is the doctrine that a man gets what he asks for—that his real hunger will be filled. We should say that just the opposite of this was true—that life was a continued striving to get things which one fails to get—a hunger which is doomed to stay unsatisfied. But Jesus turns to his followers and says: "Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find," and in the same spirit turns even to the hypocrites and says again: "They also receive their reward." Conduct, that is to say, fulfils its destiny. What you sow, you reap. The blessing which is sufficiently desired is attained. What you really ask for, you get. The only reason why this does not {65} seem to be true is that we do not realize what the things are which we are asking for and what must be the inevitable answer to our demand. We ask, for instance, for money; and we expect an answer of happiness. But we do not get happiness, we only get money, which is a wholly different thing. We ask for popularity and reputation, and we expect these gifts, when received, to last; but we have asked for something whose very nature is that it does not last. It is like asking for a soap-bubble and expecting to get a billiard-ball. We cannot work for the temporary and get the permanent. If, then, it is true that we are to get what we want, then the secret of happiness is to want the best things and to want them very much. If we hunger and thirst for base things we shall get them. Oh yes, we shall get them; and get the unhappiness which comes of this awful discovery, that as we have hungered so we are filled. And if we are really hungry for righteousness, if we want to be good, as a thirsty man wants water, if, as Jesus says of himself, our meat is to do the will of Him who sends us, then that demand also will be supplied. "He satisfieth the

longing soul," {66} says the Psalmist, "and filleth the hungry soul"—not with success, or money, or fame, but with that which the soul was hungry for—"with goodness." The longing soul has sought the best blessing, and it has received the best blessedness.

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XXVI

THE MERCIFUL

Matthew v. 7.

Whom does Jesus call the blessed people? "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." This repeats in effect the later words of Jesus: "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." The merciless judgment passed on others recoils upon one's own nature and makes it hard and mean and brutalized. The habit of charitable judgment of others is a source of personal blessedness. It blooms out into composure and hopefulness, into peace and faith. How wonderful these great calm affirmations of Jesus are! They are directly in the face of the most common views of life, and yet they are delivered as simple axioms of experience, as matters of fact, self-evident propositions of the reason. It is not a matter of barter of which Jesus is speaking. He does not say: "If you treat another kindly he will be kind to you. The merciful man will get mercy when he needs it." That {68} would not be the truth. The best of men are often judged most mercilessly. Jesus himself gives his life to acts of mercy, and is pitilessly slain. This beatitude gives, not a promise to pay, but a law of life. To forgive an injury is, according to this law, a blessing to the forgiver himself. The quality of mercy blesses him that gives as well as him that takes. The harsh judge of others grows hard himself, while pity softens the pitier. Thus among the happiest of people are those whose grudges and enmities have been overcome by their own broader view of life. It is as though in the midst of winter the warmer sun were already softening the frost. They are happy, not because others are kinder to them, but because that softer soil permits their own better life to germinate and grow. The merciful has obtained mercy; the blesser has received the blessing.

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XXVII

THE PURE IN HEART

Matthew v. 8.

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." That, I suppose, is the highest and deepest proposition which ever fell from human lips. Without the least argument or reasoning about it, as a thing which is perfectly self-evident, Jesus announces that purity of heart leads to the knowledge of God. Your character clarifies your creed. A theologian who wants to be profound must be pure. Consecration brings with it insight. The perfect knowledge of God is to be attained only by the perfectly consecrated life. The human soul is a mirror on which the light of God shines, and only the pure mirror reflects the perfect image. What a word is this to drop into the midst of the conflicting theologies and philosophies of the time, of the disputes between the people who think they know all about God, and the people who think they cannot know Him at all! Do you want to be {70} sure that God is directing and supporting you in all your perplexing experiences of life? You cannot see God in these things except through a perfectly purified heart. Clarify the medium of vision, and truth undiscerned before breaks on the observer's sight. A mile or two from here skilful artisans make those great object-glasses with which the mysteries of the stars are disclosed. The slightest speck or flaw blurs the image, but with the perfect glass stars unseen by any eye throughout the history of the world are to be in our days discovered. It is a parable of the soul. Each film on the object-glass of character obscures the heavenly vision, but to the prepared and translucent life truth undiscernible by others breaks upon the reverent gaze, and the beatific vision is revealed to the pure in heart.

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XXVIII

THE TWO BAPTISMS

Luke iii. 16.

THE WEEK BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

Among the persons who group themselves about Jesus, the most dramatic and picturesque figure is certainly that of John the Baptist. There is in him a most extraordinary combination of audacity and humility. He is bold, denunciatory, confident; but at the same time he is self-effacing and preparatory in his work. He never thinks of his service as final; after him is to come a man who is preferred before him. There is always the larger work than his to follow. There are in him the most beautiful humility and the most absolute bravery, and this makes perhaps the rarest combination of traits which a character can show. It is all summed up in his doctrine of the two baptisms: the baptism by water, which John is to bring, and the baptism by the Holy Ghost and by fire, which is to be brought by Jesus. Water is, of course, the symbol of cleansing, the washing away of {72} one's old sins, an expulsive, negative work. Fire is the symbol of passion, enthusiasm, flame. It is illuminating, kindling, the work of the Holy Ghost. One of these baptisms prepares for the other. First a man must be clean and then he may be passionate. First, the fire of his base affections must be washed away and then the fire of a new enthusiasm may be lighted. And only that second step makes one a Christian. It is a great thing to have life cleansed, and its conceits and follies washed away. But that is not safety. The cleansing is for the moment only. It is like that house which was swept and garnished, but because it was empty was invaded by tenants worse than the first. The only salvation of the soul lies in the kindling of a new passion, the lighting of the fire of a new intention, the expulsive power, as it has been called, of a new affection.

So it is in our associated life. We need, God knows, the baptism of John, the purifying of conduct, the washing away of follies and sins; but what we need much more is the fire of a moral enthusiasm to burn up the refuse that lies in the malarious corners of our college life, and light up the whole of it {73} with moral earnestness and passionate desire for good. That is to pass from the discipleship of John to the discipleship of Jesus, from the baptism by water to the baptism by fire, from the spirit of the Advent season to the spirit of the Christmas time.

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XXIX

THE WISE MEN AND THE SHEPHERDS

Matthew ii. 1-11; *Luke* ii. 8-10.

One Gospel tells of one kind of people who saw a star in the East and followed it; and another Gospel tells the same story of quite an opposite kind of people. Matthew says that the wise men of the time were the first to appreciate the coming of Christ. Luke says that it was the plainest sort of people, the shepherds, who first greeted that coming. There is the same variety of impression still. Many people now write as if religion were for the magi only. They make of it a mystery, a philosophy, an opinion, a doctrine, which only the scholars of the time can appreciate, and which plain people can obey, but cannot understand. Many people, on the other hand, think that religion is for plain people only; good for shepherds, but outgrown by magi; a star that invites the superstitious and ignorant to worship, but which suggests to scholars only a new phenomenon for science to explore.

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But the Christmas legend calls both, the wise and the humble, to discipleship. Religion has both these aspects, and offers both these invitations. Religion is not theology. There are many things which are hidden from the magi, and are revealed to simple shepherds. But religion, on the other hand, is not all for the simple. The man who wrote that there were many things hidden from the wise and prudent, was himself a scholar. It was like that dramatic day, when Wendell Phillips arraigned the graduates of this college for indifference to moral issues, while he who made the indictment was a graduate himself. The central subject of the highest wisdom to-day is, as it always has been, the relation of the mind of man to the universe of God.

Thus both these types of followers are called. Never before was the fundamental simplicity of religion so clear as it is now; and never before was scholarship in religion so needed. Some of the secrets of faith are open to any receptive heart, and some must be explored by the trained and disciplined mind. The scholar and the peasant are both called to this comprehensive service. The magi and the shepherd

meet at the cradle of the Christ.

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XXX

THE SONG OF THE ANGELS

Luke ii. 8-14.

We are beginning to feel already the sweep of life that hurries us all along to the keeping of the Christmas season; our music already takes on a Christmas tone, and we begin to hear the song of the angels, which seemed to the Evangelists to give the human birth of Jesus a fit accompaniment in the harmonies of heaven.

This song of the angels, as we have been used to reading it, was a threefold message; of glory to God, peace on earth, and good-will among men; but the better scholarship of the Revised Version now reads in the verse a twofold message. First, there is glory to God, and then there is peace on earth to the men of good-will. Those, that is to say, who have the good-will in themselves are the ones who will find peace on earth. Their unselfishness brings them their personal happiness. They give themselves in good-will, and so they obtain peace. That is the true spirit {77} of the Christmas season. It is the good-will which brings the peace. Over and over again in these months of feverish scrambling for personal gain, men have sought for peace and have not found it; and now, when they turn to this generous good-will, the peace they sought comes of itself. Many a man in the past year has had his misunderstandings or grudges or quarrels rob him of his own peace; but now, as he puts away these differences as unfit for the season of good-will, the peace arrives. That is the paradox of Christianity. He who seeks peace does not find it. He who gives peace finds it returning to him again. He who hoards his life loses it, and he who speeds it finds it:—

"Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

That is the sweet and lingering echo of the angels' song.

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XXXI

THE SECRET OF HEARTS REVEALED

Luke ii. 30-35.

The prophecy of the aged Simeon for the infant Christ was this,—that through him the secrets of many hearts should be revealed. Jesus, that is to say, was not only to read the secrets of others' hearts, but he was to enable people to read their own hearts. They were to come into self-recognition as they came to him. They were to be disclosed to themselves. You know how that happens in some degree when you fall in with other exceptional lives. You meet a person of purity or self-control or force, and there waken in you kindred impulses, and you become aware of your own capacity to be better than you are. The touch of the heroic discovers to you something of heroism in yourself. The contagion of nobleness finds a susceptibility for that contagion in yourself.

So it was that this disclosure of their hearts to themselves came to the people who met with {79} Jesus Christ. One after another they come up, as it were, before him, and he looks on them and reads them like an open book; and they pass on, thinking not so much of what Jesus was, as of the revelation of their own hearts to themselves. Nathanael comes, and Jesus reads him, and he answers: "Whence knowest thou me?" Peter comes, and Jesus beholds him and says: "Thou shalt be called Cephas, a stone." Nicodemus, Pilate, the woman of Samaria, and the woman who was a sinner, pass before him, and the secrets of their different hearts are revealed to themselves. It is so now. If you want to know yourself, get nearer to this personality, in whose presence that which hid you from yourself falls away, and you know yourself as you are. The most immediate effect of Christian discipleship is this,—not that the mysteries of heaven are revealed, but that you yourself are revealed to yourself. Your follies and

weaknesses, and all the insignificant efforts of your better self as well, come into recognition, and you stand at once humbled and strengthened in the presence of a soul which understands you, and believes in you, and stirs you to do and to be what you have hitherto only dreamed.

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XXXII

THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST

These are the last words of most of the Epistles of the New Testament. They are the last words of the New Testament itself. They are commonly heard as the last words of Christian worship; the most familiar form of Christian benediction. But what is the grace of Jesus Christ? Grace is that which acts not for duty's sake, but for sheer love and kindness. What is the grace of God? It is just this overflowing benevolence. Who is the gracious man? It is he who gives beyond his obligations, and seeks opportunities of thoughtful kindliness. What is the grace of Christ? It is just this superadded and unexpected generosity.

So the life of duty and the life of grace stand contrasted with each other. The duty-doer thinks of justice, honesty, the reputable way of life. But grace goes beyond duty. Duty asks, What ought I to do? Grace asks, What can I do? Where duty halts, grace begins. It touches duty with beauty, and makes it fair instead of stern. Grace is not looking {81} for great things to do, but for gracious ways to do little things. In many spheres of life it is much if it can be said of you that you do your duty. But think of a home of which all that you could say was that its members did their duty. That would be as much as to say that it was a just home, but a severe one; decorous, but unloving; a home where there was fair dealing, but where there was little of the grace of Jesus Christ.

Thus it is that the grace of Jesus Christ sums up the finest beauty of the Christian spirit, and offers the best benediction with which Christians should desire to part. As we separate for a time from our worship, I do not then ask that we may be led in the coming year to do our duty, I ask for more. I pray for the grace of Jesus Christ; that in our homes there may be more of considerateness, that in our college there may be a natural and spontaneous self-forgetfulness, a free and generous offering of uncalled-for kindness. Some of us are able to do much for others, to give, to teach, to govern, to employ. There is a way of doing this which doubles its effect. It is the way of grace. Some of us must be for the most part receivers of instruction or {82} kindness. There is a way of receiving kindness which is among the most beautiful traits of life. It is the way of grace. No one of us, if he be permitted to live on in this coming year, can escape this choice between obligation and opportunity, between the way of life which is discreet and prudent and the way of life which is simply beautiful. When these inevitable issues come, then the prayer, which may lead us to the higher choice, must be the prayer with which the Bible ends; the benediction of the Christian spirit; even this,—that the grace of Jesus Christ may be with us all.

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XXXIII

THE EVERLASTING ARMS

Deuteronomy xxxiii. 27.

"Underneath are the everlasting arms,"—that was the repeated burden of the great men of Israel. They lived in the midst of national calamities and distresses. They were defeated, puzzled, baffled. The way looked dark. Then they fall back on the one great re-establishing thought: after all, it is God's world. It is not going to ruin. Changes which seemed tremendous are not fatal or final. Israel dwells in safety, for God holds us in his arms.

We need some such broad, deep confidence as we enter a new year. We get involved in small issues and engrossed in personal problems, and people sometimes seem so malicious, and things seem to be going so wrong that it is as if we heard the noise of some approaching Niagara. Then we fall back on the truth that after all it is not our world. We can blight it or help it, but we do not {84} decide its issues. In the midst of such a time of social distress, Mr. Lowell in one of his lectures wrote: "I take great comfort in God. I think He is considerably amused sometimes, but on the whole loves us and

would not let us get at the matchbox if He did not know that the frame of the universe was fireproof." That is the modern statement of the underlying faith and self-control and patience which come of confessing that in this world it is not we alone who do it all. "Why so hot, little man?" says Mr. Emerson. "I take great comfort in God," says Mr. Lowell; and the Old Testament, with a much tenderer note repeats: "Underneath are the everlasting arms."

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XXXIV

THE COMFORT OF THE TRUTH

John xiv. 14, 16.

Jesus says that he will send a Comforter, and that it will be the spirit of the truth. Many people say just the opposite of this. If you want comfort, they think that you must not have truth. Is not the truth often an uncomforting and uncomfortable thing? Too much truth seems dangerous. The spirit of the truth is a hard, cold spirit. Should not a comforter shade and soften the truth? But Jesus answers there is nothing so permanently comforting as the truth. Why, for instance, is it that we judge people so severely? It is not as a rule that we know the whole truth about them, but that we know only a fragment of the truth. The more we know, the gentler grow our judgments. Would it not be so if people who judge you should know all your secret hopes and conflicts and dreams? Why is it again that people are so despondent about their own times, their community, the tendency of things? It is because {86} they have not entered deeply enough into the truth of the times. The more they know, the more they hope. And why is it that God is all-merciful? It is because He is also all-wise. He knows all about us, our desires and our repentances, and so in the midst of our wrong-doing He continues merciful. His Holy Spirit bears in one hand comfort and in the other truth. How does a student get peace of mind? He finds it when he gets hold of some stable truth. It may not be a large truth, but it is a real truth, and therefore it is a comfort. How does a man in his moral struggles get comfort? He gets it not by swerving, or dodging, or compromising, but by being true. The only permanent comfort is in the sense of fidelity. You are like a sailor in the storm; it is dark about you, the wind howls, the stars vanish. What gives you comfort? It is the knowledge that one thing is true. Thank God, you have your compass, and the tremulous little needle can be trusted. You bend over it with your lantern in the dark and know where you are going, and that renews your courage. You have the spirit of the truth, and it is your comforter.

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XXXV

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians vi. 14-17.

In this passage the apostle is thinking of the Christian life as full of conflict and warfare. It needs what he calls the good soldier of Jesus Christ, and for the moment St. Paul is considering how such a soldier should be armed for such a war. He is like some knight of the Middle Ages, standing in his castle-yard and serving out to his vassals the weapons they need for the battle which is near at hand. "Take all your armor," he says. "This is no holiday affair, no dress parade. You are to fight against principalities and powers. So take the whole armor of God." And then he puts it into their hands. There is, however, one curious thing about this armor. It has but one offensive weapon. The soldier of Jesus Christ is given, to defend himself from his enemies, the shield of faith, the tunic of truth, the helmet of salvation; but to fight, to overcome, to disarm, he has but one weapon,—the {88} sword of the spirit. Is it possible, then, that the Spirit of God entering into a man can be to him a sword; that a man's character has this aggressive quality; that a man fights just by what he is? Yes, that seems to be the apostle's argument. Looking at all the conflicts and collisions of life, its differences of opinion, its causes to be won, he thinks that the best fighting weapon is the spirit of a man's life. Behind all argument and persuasion the only absolute argument, the final persuasion, is the simple witness of the spirit. When a man wants to make a cause he believes in win, his aggressive force lies not in what he says about that cause, but in what that cause has made of him. He wins his victory without striking a blow when he wields the sword of the Spirit. He comes like the soft, fresh morning among us, and we simply open our windows and yield to it, greeting it with joy. It is the air we want to breathe, and we

accept it as our own.

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XXXVI

LIFE IS AN ARROW

John xiv. 6.

When Jesus says: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," he names the three things which a man must have in order to lead a straight life. Such a man must have first a way to go, and then a truth to reach, and then life enough to get there. He needs first a direction, and then an end, and then a force. Some lives have no path to go by, and some no end to go to, and some no force to make them go. Now Jesus says that the Christian life has all three. It has intention, the decision which way to go; it has determination, the finding of a truth to reach; it has power, the inner dynamic of the life of Christ. Life, as has been lately said by one of our own preachers, is like an arrow. It must have its course, it must have its mark, and it must have the power to go.

"Life is an arrow, therefore you must know
What mark to aim at, how to bend the bow,
Then draw it to its head, and let it go." [1]

[1] Henry van Dyke, D. D., in the *Outlook* for Feb. 23, 1895.

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XXXVII

THE DECLINE OF ENTHUSIASM

Revelation ii. 1-7.

I do not propose to consider the character or intention of this mystical Book of Revelation. However it may be regarded, it is first of all a series of messages written in the name of the risen Christ to the churches of Asia, singling out each in turn, pointing out its special defects, and exhorting it to its special mission; and there is something so modern, or rather so universal about these messages to the churches that in spite of their strange language and figures of speech they often seem like messages to the churches of America to-day. First the word comes to the chief church of the region, at Ephesus. It was a great capital city, with much prosperity and splendor, and the church there abounded in good works. The writer appreciates all this: "I know thy works, and thy toil and patience, and that thou canst not bear evil men." It was a substantial, busy city church. What was lacking in the church {91} of Ephesus? It had fallen away, says the message, from its first enthusiasm. It had "lost its first love." The eagerness of its first conversion had gone out of it. It had settled down into the ways of an established church, with plenty of good works and good people, but with the loss of that first spontaneous, passionate loyalty; and unless it recovered this enthusiasm "its candlestick would be removed out of its place," and its light would go out.

How modern that sounds! How precisely it is like some large church in some large city to-day, a respectable and respected and useful church, a Sunday club, a self-satisfied circle; and how it explains that mysterious way in which, in many such a large church, a sort of dry-rot seems to set in, and even where the church seems to prosper it is declining, and some day it dies! It has lost its first love, and its candle first flickers and then goes out.

Indeed, how true the same story is of many an individual inside or outside the church, perfectly respectable and entirely respected, but outgrowing his enthusiasms. He becomes, by degrees, first self-repressed and unemotional, then a cynical dilettante. How you wish he {92} would do something impulsive, impetuous, even foolish! How you would like to detect him in an enthusiasm! His life has moved on like the river Rhine, which has its boisterous Alpine youth, and then runs more and more slowly, until in Holland we can hardly detect whether it has any current.

"It drags its slow length through the hot, dry land,

And dies away in the monotonous strand."

That is the church of Ephesus, and that is the man from Ephesus, and unless they repent and regain their power of enthusiasm their light goes out. Ephesus lies there, a cluster of huts beside a heap of ruins, and the future of the world is with the nations and churches and people who view the world with fresh, unspoiled, appreciative hope.

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XXXVIII

THE CROWN OF LIFE

Revelation ii. 8-10.

The Church of Ephesus needed a rebuke; the Church at Smyrna needed an encouragement. The first was a prosperous, busy church, without spiritual vitality, and the prophecy was that its light should go out. The second was a persecuted church, with much tribulation and poverty, and the promise was that for its faithfulness it should have a crown of life. And if the traveller, as he stands among the ruins of Ephesus, cannot help thinking how its candle-stick has been removed, so he must think of the reward of fidelity, as he stands among the busy docks and bustling life of Smyrna.

A crown of life! There is no discovery of experience more important in a man's life than the discovery of its legitimate rewards. A man undertakes to do the best he can with his powers and capacities, and inquires some day for the natural reward of his fidelity. Shall he have gratitude, or recognition, or praise? Any one of these things may come {94} to him, but any one of them, or all of them, may elude him; and all sooner or later show themselves to be accidents of his experience, and not its natural and essential issue. Then he discovers that there is but one legitimate reward of life, and that is increase of life, more of power and capacity and vitality and effectiveness. What is the reward of learning one's lessons? Marks, or praise, or distinction, may come of this, or they may not. The legitimate reward is simply the power to learn other lessons. The expenditure of force has increased the supply of force; the use of capacity has developed capacity. What is the reward of taking physical exercise? It is not athletic prizes, or athletic glory; it is strength. You have sought strength, and you get strength. The crown of athletic life is increase of athletic vitality. What is the reward of keeping your temper? It is the increased power of self-control. What is the reward of doing your duty as well as you can? It is the ability to do your duty better. Out of the duty faithfully done opens the way to meet the larger duty. You have been faithful over a few things, and you become the ruler over many things.

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And what is the crown of the whole of life lived faithfully here? It is not a crown of gold or gems in another life; it is simply more life; a broader use of power, a healthier capacity, a larger usefulness. You are faithful unto death, through the misapprehensions and imperfections and absence of appreciation or gratitude in this preparatory world, and then there is offered to you inevitably and legitimately the crown of a larger, more serviceable, more effective life.

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XXXIX

THE HIDDEN MANNA AND THE WHITE STONE

Revelation ii. 12-17.

Both of these are Jewish symbols. One refers to that food which, as Moses commanded, was kept in the sanctuary and eaten by the priest alone; the other apparently refers to a sacred stone worn by the priest, with an inscription on it known only to him. Both symbols mean to teach that the Christian believer has an immediate and personal intimacy with God. There is no sacerdotal intermediation for him. He can go straight to the altar and take of the sacred bread. He wears on his own breast the mark of God's communication. It is the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers; the highest promise to a faithful church. But on this white stone, the message says, there is a name written which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. How quickly that goes home to many a faithful life. Hidden from all that can be read by {97} others is the writing which one bears upon his own breast, legible only to

himself and to his God. Think how hardly and carelessly people try to judge one's life, to read its characteristics of strength or weakness. Think how we all thus deal in hasty judgment, stamping our neighbors as jovial or moody, generous or selfish, as kind or stern, as sinner or saint; while all the time, deeper than any interpretation of ours can reach, there is the central sanctuary of the man's own soul, where is worn against his breast the real title which to his own consciousness he bears, and which may quite contradict all external judgments. What is written on that interior life? What is that name you bear which no man knoweth save you;—that life of yourself which is hidden with Christ in God? That is the most solemn question which any man can ask himself as he bends to say his silent prayer.

Is it just your own name, the badge of selfishness; or is it some vow of irresponsibility,—Am I my brother's keeper?—or is it just a sheer blank white stone, marking a life without intention or character at all? Or is there perhaps written there the pure {98} demand to be of use?—"For their sakes I sanctify myself;"—or is there written on your heart the name of God, or of his Christ, so that this interior maxim reads: "I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me"?

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XL

THE MORNING STAR

Revelation ii. 18-28.

The morning star is the symbol of promise, the sign that the dawn is not far away. Thyatira was a little place, with a weak church, with small hopes and great discouragements, much troubled by the work of a false prophetess, tempted by "the deep things of Satan," as the message says, and yet to it the promise is committed, that it shall have authority over the nations, and receive "the morning star." It was the same great promise that had been already given to the early Christians: "Fear not, little flock, for it is my Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It was the same amazing optimism which made Jesus look about him, as he stood with a dozen humble followers, and say: "Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, they are white already to my harvest."

There is certainly passing over the world in our day a great wave of intellectual and {100} spiritual discouragement and despondency. What with philosophical pessimism and social agitations and literary decadence and political corruption and moral looseness, a great many persons are beginning to feel that the end of the century is an end of faith, and are not able to discern in the darkness of the time any morning star. As one distinguished author has said: "This is not a time of the eclipse of faith, but a time of the collapse of faith." It was much the same in the times of Thyatira. There was the same luxury and self-indulgence in the Roman world, the same social restlessness, the same intellectual despondency. Now, who is it that can view these perturbations of the world with a tranquil and rational hope? I answer, that it is only he who views his own time in the light of the eternal purposes of God. The religious man is bound to be an optimist, not with the foolish optimism which blinks the facts of life; but with the sober optimism which believes that—

"Step by step, since time began,
We see the steady gain of man."

It may be dark as pitch in the world of speculative thought, but religion discerns the {101} morning star. It believes in its own time. It believes that somehow "good will be the final goal of ill." Even in the perplexities and disasters of its own experience it is not overwhelmed. It is cast down, but not destroyed. It is saved by hope. It lifts its eyes and beholds through the clouds the gleam of the morning star.

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XLI

LIVING AS DEAD

Revelation iii. 1.

Was there ever a message of sterner irony than this to the Church of Sardis: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead"! We may suppose that it was a church of apparent prosperity, with all

the machinery of church life, its ritual, and officers, and committees, all in working order; and yet, when one got at the heart of it, there was no vitality. It was a dead church. It could show—as the passage says—no works fulfilled before God. It was like a tree which seems all vigorous, but which, when one thrusts into the heart of it, proves to be pervaded by dry-rot. There are plenty of such churches still,—churches which have a name that they are living, but are dead. They are counted in the denominational year-book; they go through the motions of life; but where is their quickening, communicating, vitalizing power? What are they but mechanical, formal, institutional things, and how sudden sometimes, like {103} the falling of a dead tree, is the collapse of a dead church!

There is the same story to tell of some people. They have a name that they are living, but they are practically dead. For what is it, according to the New Testament, which makes one live, and when is it that one comes to die? "To be carnally minded," answers St. Paul, "is death, and to be spiritually minded is life." "He that heareth my sayings," answers Jesus, "hath passed from death into life." What a wonderful word is that! It is not a promise that the true Christian shall some day, when his body dies, pass into an eternal life. It is an announcement that when one enters into the spirit of Christ he passes, now, in this present world, from all that can be fairly called death, into all that can be rationally called life. Under this New Testament definition, then, a man may suppose himself to be alive and healthy, when he is really sick, dying, dead. A man may perhaps, as he says, see life, while he may be really seeing nothing but death. Or a man may be, as we say, dying, and be, in the New Testament sense, full of an abundant and transfiguring life.

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And so it becomes an entirely practical question, which one may ask himself any morning, "Am I alive to-day, or am I dead? Is it only that I have the name of living, a sort of directory-existence, a page in the college records, a place in the list of my class, while in fact there is dry-rot in my soul? Or is there any movement of the life of God in me, of quickening and refreshing life, of generous activity and transmissive vitality? Then death is swallowed up in victory, and I am partaking even in this present world of the life that does not die."

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XLII

THE OPEN DOOR

Revelation iii. 8.

A few years ago, at the first service of the college year, one of our preachers took for his text this message to the church at Philadelphia: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door;" and it has always seemed to me to represent with precision the spirit of our worship here. We have abandoned the principle of compulsion. We do not force young men of twenty to come here and say their prayers. We simply set before them an open door. The privilege of worship is permitted to them from day to day, and religion stands among us, not as a part of college discipline, but as the supreme privilege of a manly human soul. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Indeed, this same text represents the spirit of our whole university life. What we call the elective system is a method of invitation and persuasion. It multiplies opportunities. It does not compel the allegiance of the indifferent. He that is lazy, let him be lazy still. {106} The university sets before the mind of youth its open door.

And this, indeed, is what one asks of life. What should a free state in this modern world guarantee to all its citizens? Not that equality of condition for which many in our days plead, the dead level of insured and effortless comfort, but equality of opportunity, a free and fair chance for every man to be and to do his best. That land is best governed where the door of opportunity stands wide open to the humblest of its citizens, so that no man can shut it.

And what is the relation of religion to the life of man, if it be not of this same enlarging and emancipating kind? Here we are, all shut in by our routine of business and study and preoccupation, and religion simply opens the door outward from this narrowness of life into a larger and a purer world. It is as if you were bending some evening over your books in the exhausted air of your little room, and as if you should rise from your task, and pass out into the night, and the open door should deliver you from your weariness and your self-absorption, as you stood in the serene companionship of the infinite heavens and the myriad of stars.

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XLIII

BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK

Revelation iii. 20.

To the church at Philadelphia it was promised that the door should be opened; but here was a church at Laodicea which had deliberately shut its door on the higher life. It was a church that was neither cold nor hot, a lukewarm, indifferent, spiritless people, and to such a people, willfully barring out the revelations of God, comes the Christ in this wonderful figure, standing at the door like a weary traveller, asking to be let in. Such a picture just reverses the common view which one is apt to take of the religious life. We commonly think of truth as hiding itself within its closed door and of ourselves as trying to get in to it. We speak of finding Christ, or proving God, or getting religion, as if all these things were mysteries to be explored, hidden behind doors which must be unlocked; as if, in the relation between man and God, man did all the searching, and God was a hidden God.

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But the fundamental fact of the religious life is this,—that the power and love of God are seeking man; that before we love Him, He loves us; that before we know Him, He knows us; that antecedent to our recognition of Him must be our receptivity of Him. Coleridge said that he believed in the Bible because it found him. It is for the same reason that man believes in God. God finds him. It is not the sheep which go looking for the shepherd, it is the shepherd who finds the sheep, and when they hear his voice, they follow him.

This is not contrary to nature. The same principle is to be noticed in regard to all truth. Take, for instance, any scientific discovery of a physical force, like that which we call the force of electricity. There is nothing new about this wonderful power. It has always been about us, playing through the sky, and inviting the mind of man. Then, some day, a few men open their minds to the significance of this force, and appreciate how it may be applied to the common uses of life. That is what we call a discovery; it is the opening of the door of the mind; and one of the most impressive things about science to-day is to {109} consider how many other secrets of the universe are at this moment knocking at our doors, and waiting to be let in; and to perceive how senseless and unreceptive we must seem to an omniscient mind, when so much truth, standing near us, is beaten back from our closed minds and wills. It is the same with religious truth. Here are our lives, shut in, limited, self-absorbed; and here are the messages of God, knocking at our door; and between the two only one barrier, the barrier of our own wills. Religious education is simply the opening of the door of the heart. A Christian discipleship is simply that alertness and receptivity which hears the knocking and welcomes the Spirit which says: "If any man will but open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

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XLIV

HE THAT OVERCOMETH

Revelation xxi. 7.

In each one of these letters to the churches there is repeated like a refrain, a sort of *motif* which announces the character of all,—this final phrase: "He that overcometh." He is to receive the promise, he is to inherit these things, he is to be the stone in the temple of God. The reward and blessing are to be not for the shirks or runaways or easy-going of the world, but for those who, taking life just as it is with all its hardness, overcome it. It is the manly summons from the soft theory of life to the principle which one may call that of progress through overcoming resistance.

A great many lives are spoiled by the soft theory of life. They expect to get out of life a comfort which is not in it to give. They go about looking, so to speak, for a "soft course" in the curriculum of life, hoping to enroll in it and be free from trouble. They ask of their religion that it shall make life easy and safe and clear. But the trouble is {111} that the elective pamphlet of life does not announce a single soft course. The people who try thus to live are simply courting disaster and despair. Some day, perhaps in some tragic moment, every man has to learn that life is not an easy thing, but that it is at times fearfully and solemnly hard. Nothing is more plainly written on the facts of life than this,—that

life was meant to be hard. Trouble and disaster, and the inevitable blows of experience, are absolutely certain to teach this truth sooner or later, and the sooner one learns it the better for his soul. And if life was not meant to be easy, what was it meant for? It was meant to be overcome. It stands before one like the friction of the world of nature, which is always seeming to retard one's motion, but which makes really the only condition under which we move at all. If there is to be any motion through life, then it must be by overcoming its friction. If life was meant just to stand still, then it might stagnate in a soft place; but life was meant to move, and the only way of motion is by overcoming friction, and the hardness of the world becomes the very condition of spiritual progress. What we call the rub of life is {112} then what makes living possible. What we call the burdens of life are the discipline of its power. Not to him who meets no resistance, nor to him whose shoulder is chafed by no cross, but to him who overcometh is the promise given that God will be his God, and that he shall be God's son.

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XLV

THE PRODIGALITY OF PROVIDENCE

Matthew xiii. 1-9.

I wish to dwell for several mornings on this parable of the sower, and for to-day I call attention to the air of prodigality which pervades this story. There seems to be an immense amount of seed wasted. Some of it falls on the roadway; some of it is snatched away by the birds; some of it is caught among the bushes. Yet the sower proceeds in no niggardly fashion. He strides away across the field scattering the seed broadcast, far beyond the border where he expects a crop, for he knows that, though much shall be wasted, whatever seed may fall on good ground will have miraculous increase. There may be prodigality of waste, but there shall be prodigality of reproduction. If but one seed in thirty takes root in good soil it may produce thirty or sixty or a hundred fold.

Such is the prodigality of Providence. And it comes close to many experiences, and {114} interprets many perplexities of life. A man goes his way through life scattering his efforts, distributing his energy, doing his work as broadly and generously as he can, and some day he notices what a very large proportion of all that he does comes to nothing. Much of the soil where he sows seems hard and barren, and he might as well be trying to raise wheat on a stone pavement. It seems to be simply effort thrown away. But then some other day this man makes this other discovery,—that some very slight effort or endeavor or sacrifice or word has been infinitely more fruitful than he could have dreamed. It was an insignificant thing which he did, but it happened to fall at the right time in the right place, and he is almost startled at its productiveness.

And so he takes his lesson from the prodigality of Providence. Of course it will happen that the great proportion of his efforts will come to nothing. Of course he is to be misjudged and ineffective and barren of results; but if only one word in a hundred falls in the right soil, if only one effort in a hundred touches the right soul, the hundred-fold fruitage brings with it ample {115} compensation. Thus he strides cheerfully over the fields of life with the broad swing of an unthrifty mind, expecting that much of his seed will fall among the thorns and rocks, but with faith that the harvest—even if he is not himself permitted to reap it—is yet made safe through his fidelity to that prodigal Providence which miraculously multiplies the little he can do, and makes it bear fruit, sometimes a hundredfold.

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XLVI

THE HARD LIFE

Matthew xiii. 1-9.

Let us look still further at this parable of the sower. There are described in it various kinds of lives on which God's influences fall, and fall in vain. The first of these is the hard life,—hard, like a road, so that the seed lies there as if fallen on a pavement, and gets no root, and the pigeons come and pick it up. We usually think of the hard life as if it were a life of sin. We speak of a hardened sinner, of a hard man, as of persons whom good influences cannot penetrate. But the hard soil of the parable is not that of sin. It is that of a roadway, hardened simply by the passing to and fro. It is the hardening effect of habit.

Sometimes, the passage says, your life gets so worn by the coming and going of your daily routine, that you become impenetrable to the subtle suggestions of God, as if your life were paved. Some people are thus hardened even to good. They lose capacity for impressions. {117} Some people are even gospel-hardened. They have heard so much talk about religion that it runs off the pavement of their lives into the gutter. Thus the first demand of the sower is for receptivity, for openness of mind, for responsiveness. Give God a chance, says the parable. His seed gets no fair opportunity in a life which is like a trafficking high-road. Keep the soil of life soft, its sympathy tender, its imagination free, or else you lose the elementary quality of receptiveness, and all the influences of God may be scattered over you in vain.

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XLVII

THE THIN LIFE

Matthew xiii. 1-9.

The first thing which hinders God's seed from taking root is, as we have seen, hardness,—the life which is trodden down like a road; an impenetrability of nature, which is not a trait of sinners only, but of many privileged souls. The second sort of unfruitful soil is just the opposite of this. It is not the unreceptive, but the impulsively receptive life. It is not too hard, or too soft, but it is too thin. It is a superficial soil which has no depth of earth, and so with joy it receives the word; but the seed has no depth of earth and quickly withers away. This sort of soil receives quickly and as quickly lets go. It is like that unstable man of whom St. James writes and who is like the wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. We see the wave come flashing up out of the general level, catching the sunshine as it leaps and crowned with its spray, and then we look again for it, and where is {119} it? It has sunk again into the undistinguishable level of the sea.

Thus the parable turns to this instability and says: "It is bad to be hard, but it is bad also to be thin." When tribulation or persecution arises, something more than impulsiveness is needed to give a root to life. How strongly and serenely Newman writes of this:—

"Prune thou thy words, the thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul
And turn to purpose strong.
But he who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Faints when hard service must be done,
And shrinks at every blow."

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XLVIII

THE CROWDED LIFE

Matthew xiii. 1-9.

In the parable of the sower the third kind of soil is one which is very common in modern life. The first soil was too hard, and the second too thin, and now the third is too full. It is overgrown and preoccupied. Other things choke the seed. There is not room for the harvest. The influences of God are simply crowded out. And of what is life thus so full? Of two things, answers the parable. For some it is full of the cares of this world, and for some it is full of the deceitfulness of riches. Care is the weed that chokes plain people, and money is the weed that chokes rich people. Sometimes a poor man wonders how a rich man feels. Well, he feels about his money just as a poor man does about his cares. His wealth preoccupies him. It is a great responsibility. It takes a great deal of time. It crowds out many things he would like to do. The poor man says that {121} money would free him from care, but the rich man finds that money itself increases care. Thus they are both choked by lack of leisure, one by the demands of routine, and one by the burdens of responsibility. And this parable says to both these types of life: "Keep room for God." It comes to the scholar and says: "In this busy place reserve time to think

and feel; do not let your cares choke your soul." And then it goes out to the great scrambling, money-getting world, and sees many a man hard at work in what he calls his field, watching for things grow in his life, and finding some day that he has been deceived in his crop. He thought it was to come up grain and it turns out to be weeds. He sowed money and expected a harvest of peace; and behold! he only reaps more money. That is the deceitfulness of riches.

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XLIX

THE PATIENCE OF NATURE

Matthew xiii.; *Mark* iv. 27.

The parable of the sower, which begins with its solemn warnings against the hard life, the thin life, and the crowded life, ends with a note of wholesome hope. Who are they who bring forth fruit in abundance? They are, the parable says, not great and exceptional people. The conditions are such as any life can fulfil. It is an honest and good heart which hears the word and keeps it and is fruitful. Nothing but sincerity and receptivity is demanded. A plain soil is productive enough. God only needs a fair chance. He only asks that life shall not be too hard, or too thin, or too crowded.

This is a saying of great comfort to plain people. And yet, even for these, one last demand is added,—the demand for patience. If fruit is to be brought forth it must be "with patience." The autumn comes, but not all at once. Jesus is always recalling to us the gradualness of nature; first the blade, {123} then the ear, then the full corn. Nothing in nature is in a hurry. It is not a movement of catastrophes, it is a movement of evolution. And so the last word of the parable is to the impetuous. What a hurry we are in for our results. We look about us among the social agitations of the day and demand a panacea; but God is not in a hurry. Delay, uncertainty, doubt, are a part of Christian experience. It brings forth its fruit with patience. It is like these lingering days of spring, when one can discern no intimation of the quickening life; and yet one knows that through the brown branches the sap is running, and slowly with hesitating advance the world is moving to the miracle of the spring.

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L

THE DISTRIBUTION OF TALENTS

Matthew xxv. 14-30.

The parable of the talents takes up the side of life which is not emphasized in the parable of the sower. In the story of the sower God is doing the work and man is receptive of his influence. In the story of the talents God is a master who leaves his servants to do his work, and the parable is one of activity. These men are responsible agents. Life is a trust. That is the natural teaching of the parable. All these men are accountable; there has been given to them that which is not their own, a trust from God, to be used in his service. But then enters the extraordinary teaching of this parable as to the fact of diversity. We talk of men as created free and equal. The cry of the time is for equality of condition, for leveling down the rich, and leveling up the poor; for paying the genius and the hod-carrier alike; time for time, and man for man. But this parable stands for no such definition of {125} equality. It recognizes diversity. Some have many talents and some have few. To each is given "according to his several ability." Diversity of condition is accepted as a natural feature of human life, just as the hills and valleys make up the landscape. The parable does not make of life a prairie.

Where then, in this diversified life, is justice, the social justice which men in our time so eagerly and so reasonably claim? There is no justice, answers the parable, if the end of life is to be found in getting the prizes of this world; for some are sure to get more than others. The justice of this diversity is found only in its relation to God. It is in the proportional responsibility of these holders of different gifts. Of those to whom much has been entrusted much will be required; of those who are slightly gifted the judgment will be according to the gift. There is no absolute standard. The judgment is proportional. One man may accomplish less than another, and yet be more highly rewarded, for he may do the less conspicuous duty laid on him better than the man with the larger trust does his. The parable humbles the privileged and encourages the disheartened. {126} There is no distinction of reward between the

five-talent man and the two-talent man. Each has done his own duty with his own gifts, and to each precisely the same language of commendation is addressed. They have had proportional responsibility, and they have identical reward. Both have been faithful, and both enter into the same joy of their Lord.

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LI

THE LAW OF INCREASING RETURNS

Matthew xxv. 14-30.

The parable of the talents adds to its doctrine of responsibility a second teaching. It is its doctrine of interest; the return to be looked for from investment in the spiritual life. The economists have a law which they call the law of diminishing returns; but Jesus calls attention to the converse of that principle,—the law of increasing and accelerated returns. We see this principle on a great scale in the world of money. Money has a self-propagating quality. It breeds money. If you should ask a very rich man how he accumulated his fortune he would tell you that the first savings involved great thrift and wisdom or great good luck, but that after a while his wealth flowed in upon him almost in spite of himself. He began to get money, and the more he got the more easily he got more. Now this law, says Jesus, which is so obvious in the business world, is true in a much deeper way of the {128} spiritual life. Knowledge, power, faith, all grow by investment. Use of the little makes it much; hoarding what you have leaves it unfruitful. Do you want to know more? Well, put what you now know to use. Invest it, and as you seem to spend it, it increases, and you have found the way to the riches of wisdom. Do you want faith? Well, use what faith you have. Try the working hypothesis of living by faith. Our ancestors in New England trading used to send out on their ships what they called a "venture." They took the risks of business. There is a similar venture of faith, which says: "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." He who sends the venture of his faith over the ocean of his life may look for a rich cargo in return. To the faithful in the few things the many things are revealed. That is the law of increasing returns.

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LII

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF WEALTH

Matthew xxv. 14-30.

In the parable of the talents the use of money is of course only an illustration of spiritual truth. Yet the story has its obvious lessons about the uses of money itself. The five-talent man is the rich man; and his way of service makes the Christian doctrine of wealth. And, first of all, the parable evidently permits wealth to exist. It does not prohibit accumulation. Jesus is not a social leveler. His words are full of tenderness to the poor, but when a certain rich young man came to him, Jesus loved him also; and when one man asked him, saying: "Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me," Jesus disclaimed the office of a social agitator, saying: "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you." Thus Jesus cannot be claimed for any pet scheme which one may have of the distribution of wealth. But let not the Christian {130} think that on this account the Christian theory of wealth is less sweeping or radical than some modern programme. The fact is that it asks more of a man, be he rich or poor, than any modern agitator dares to propose. For it demands not a part of one's possessions as the property of others, but the whole of them. The Christian holds all his talents as a trust. There is in the Christian belief no absolute ownership of property. A man has no justification in saying: "May I not do what I will with mine own?" He does not own his wealth; he owes it. The Christian principle does not divide the rich from the poor; it divides the faithful use of whatever one has from its unfaithful use. Wealth is a fund of five talents of which one is the trusted agent; and to some five-talent men who have been faithful in their grave responsibilities, the word of Jesus would be given to-day as gladly as to any poor man: "Well done, faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

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LIII

THE AVERAGE MAN[1]

Matthew xxv. 22.

In the parable of the talents the man that gets least general attention is the man that stands in the middle. The five-talent man gets distinction, and the one-talent man gets rebuke, but the two-talent man, the man with ordinary gifts and ordinary returns from them, seems to be an unexciting character. And yet this is the man of the majority, the average man, the man most like ourselves,—not very bad, and not very remarkable. As has been said: "God must have a special fondness for average people, for He has made so many of them." Now, the average man stands in special need of encouragement. One of the most serious moments of life is when a man discovers that he is this sort of man. It comes over most of us some day that we are not going {132} to do anything extraordinary; that we are never likely to shine; that we are simply people of the crowd. Nothing seems to take the ambition and enthusiasm out of one more than this recognition of oneself as an average man. Then comes Jesus with his word of courage. "Your work," he says, "is just as significant, and rewarded with precisely the same commendation as the work of the five-talent man." The same "Well done" is spoken to both, and it may be that the more heroic qualities are in the man with fewer gifts. To make great gifts effective may be easy, but to take common gifts and make them yield their best returns—that is what helps us all. There is not a more inspiring sight in life than to see a man start with ordinary capacity and to see his power grow out of his consecration. Looking back on life from middle age, that would be the story one would tell of many a success. One sees five-talent men fail and two-talent men take their place; average gifts persistently used yielding rich returns, and the promise of usefulness lying, not in abundant endowments of nature, but in the using to the utmost what moderate capacities one has soberly accepted as trusts from God.

[1] Read also, on this and the following subject, the kindling sermons of Phillips Brooks: "The Man with Two Talents," vol. iv. p. 192; "The Man with One Talent," vol. i. p. 138.

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LIV

THE OVERCOMING OF INSIGNIFICANCE

Matthew xxv. 24.

The parable of the talents was specially given to teach Christians not to be discouraged because Christ's kingdom was delayed. The one-talent man is its real object, and the lessons of larger endowment are only by the way. The one-talent man is not the bad man, for to him also God gives a trust, but this man is given so little to do that he thinks it not worth while to do anything. He is not the many-gifted five-talent man, or even the average two-talent man, but he is simply the man of no account. The risk of the five-talent man is his conceit; the risk of the two-talent man is his envy; the risk of the one-talent man is his hopelessness. Why should this insignificant bubble on the great stream of life inflate itself with self-importance? Why should it not just drift along with the current and be lost in the first rapids of the stream? Now Christ's first appeal to this sense of insignificance is {134} this,—that in the sight of God there is no such thing as an insignificant life. Taken by itself, looked at in its own independent personality, many a life is insignificant enough. But when we look at life religiously and recognize that it is a trusted agent of God, then the doctrine of the trust redeems it from insignificance. You have not much, but what you have is essential to the whole. The lighthouse-keeper on his rock sits in his solitude and watches his little flame. Why does he not let it die away as other lights in the distance die when the night comes on? Because it is not his light. He is its keeper, not its owner. The great Power that watches that stormy coast has set him there, and he must be true. The insignificant service becomes full of dignity and importance when it is accepted as a post of honor and trust. So the unimportant life gets its significance not by its own dimensions, but by its place in God's great order, and the most wretched moment of one's life must be when he discovers that he has been trusted by God to do even a little part and has thrown his chance away. The one-talent man thought his trust not worth investing, and behold, the account of it was called for with the rest. He {135} had in his hands a trust from God and had wasted it, and there was nothing left for him but the weeping of regret and the gnashing of teeth of indignant self-reproach.

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LV

CAPACITY EXTIRPATED BY DISUSE

Matthew xxv. 29.

The parable of the talents begins with its splendid encouragement to those who have done their best, but it ends with a solemn warning and with the stern announcement of a universal law. It is this,—that from him who does not use his powers there is taken away even the power that he has. The gift is lost by the lack of exercise, or as Horace Bushnell stated the principle, the "capacity is extirpated by disuse."

This principle has manifold illustrations. The hand or muscle disused withers in power. The fishes of the Mammoth Cave, having no use for their eyes, lose them. Mr. Darwin in an impressive passage of his biography testifies that he began life with a taste for poetry and music, but that by disuse this aesthetic taste grew atrophied so that at last he did not care to read a poem or to hear a musical note. So it is, says Jesus, with spiritual insight and power. Sometimes we see a man of intellectual {137} gifts lose his grasp on spiritual realities, and we ask: "How is it that so learned a man can find little in these things? Does not he testify that these things are illusions?" Not at all. It is simply that he has not kept his life trained on that side. His capacity has been extirpated by disuse. He may know much of science or language, but he has lost his ideals. We hear a young man sometimes say that he has grown soft by lack of exercise. Well, if you live a few years you will see people who have grown soft in soul, and you will see some great blow of fate smite them and crush them because their spiritual muscle is flabby and weak. Ignatius Loyola laid down for his followers certain methods of prayer which he called "Spiritual Exercises." So in one sense they were. They kept souls in training. The exercise of the religious nature is the gymnastics of the soul, and the disuse of the religious nature extirpates its capacity. That is the solemn ending of the parable of the talents. From him who does not use his power there is taken away even the power that he hath.

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LVI

THE PARABLE OF THE VACUUM

Matthew xii. 38-45.

It is easy to see where the emphasis of this parable lies. It is on the impossible emptiness of this man's house. A man casts out the devil of his life and turns the key on his empty soul and feels safe. But he cannot thus find safety. That is not the way to deal with evil spirits. Back they come, crowding into his life through the windows if not through the doors, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. If the parable had been told in modern times it might have been called the parable of the vacuum. A man's life is a space which refuses to be empty. If it is not tenanted by good the evil knocks and enters it. There is no such thing as an unoccupied life. Nature abhors a vacuum.

Here is one of the most common mistakes of human experience. A man often thinks that the less occupied his life is the safer it is. He casts out his passions, he denies his {139} desires, he abandons his ambitions, and so seeks safety. But his life is attacked by new perils. The lusts and conceits of life cannot be barred out of life; they must be crowded out. The old passion must be supplanted by a new and better one. The very same qualities which go to make a great sinner are needed to make a true saint. A man's soul is not safe when the vigor and force are taken out of it. It is safe only when the same passion which once threatened ruin is converted to generous service; and the same physical life that seemed an enemy of the soul has become the instrument of the soul. The saved life is not the empty life, but the full life. Jesus comes not to destroy men's natures, but to fill their capacities full of better aims. The only way to overcome evil is to have the life preoccupied by good.

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LVII

CHRISTIANITY AND BUSINESS

Luke xvi. 1-12.

This is a difficult parable. There is a quality of daring about it which at first sight perplexes many people. It is the story of a steward who cheats his master, and of debtors who are in collusion with the fraud, and of a master praising his servant even while he punishes him, as though he said: "Well, at least you are a shrewd and clever fellow." It uses, that is to say, the bad people to teach a lesson to the good, and one might fancy that it praises the bad people at the expense of the good. But this is not its intention. It simply goes its way into the midst of a group of people who are cheating and defrauding each other and says: "Even such people as these have something to teach to the children of light."

I once heard of a father whose son was sentenced to the Concord Reformatory for burglary. The father stood by the bars of the cell and heard the boy's story, and then {141} with tears in his eyes he turned to the jailer and said: "It is a terrible sorrow to have one's boy thus disgraced, but"—and his face brightened a little—"after all he was monstrous plucky." So Jesus, out of the heart of this petty group of persons snatches a lesson for Christians. It is this: "Why should not the children of light be as sagacious as these rascals were? Why should pious people be so stupid?" Jesus looks on to the needs that must occur in his religion for sagacity, prudence, discretion, and the perils that will come to it from sentimentalism, mysticism, silliness, and he asks: "Why is it that the children of this world are so much shrewder than the children of light?"

How closely his question comes to the needs of our own time! Why is it that in our moral agitations and reforms the bad people seem so much cleverer than the good ones; that political self-seeking gets the better of unselfish statesmanship; that the liquor dealers defeat the temperance people; that competition in business is so often cleverer than coöperation in business? What does Christianity need to-day so much as wisdom? It has soft-heartedness, but it lacks {142} hard-headedness. It has sweetness, but it lacks light. It has sentiment, but it needs sense. How often a man of affairs is tempted to feel a certain contempt for the Church of Christ, when he turns from the intensely real issues of his week-day world to the abstractness and unreality of religious questions! How fictitious, how unbusiness-like, how preposterous in the sight of God is this internecine sectarianism and impotent sentimentalism where there might be the triumphant march of one army under one flag! Let us learn the lesson which even the grasping, unscrupulous world has to teach,—the lesson of an absorbed and disciplined mind giving its entire sagacity to the chief business of life.

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LVIII

MAKING FRIENDS OF MAMMON

Luke xvi. 1-10.

Mammon means money, and the purpose of this parable is to teach Christians their relations to that world of which Mammon is the centre,—the world of business interests and cares. Jesus says that this world is neither very good nor very bad. It is simply unrighteous. It has no specific moral quality about it. He says further that you cannot serve this world of Mammon and serve God also. You must choose. What then can you do in your relation to Mammon? You can do one of three things. You may, first, make an enemy of Mammon; or secondly, make a master of Mammon, or thirdly, make a friend of Mammon. Many people in Christian history have made an enemy of Mammon. They have regarded the world of business as a godless world which should be shunned. They have run away from it to the ascetic, unworldly life. That is the spirit of the whole monastic retreat from the battle of {144} practical life,—a reaction full of the beauty of self-denial, but still a retreat. The battle of life has to go on, and the best troops have run away. On the other hand, a great many persons have made a master of Mammon. They are simply the slaves of money. That is the vulgar materialism of the modern world. But Jesus says that neither of these attitudes towards Mammon is the Christian relation. The Christian is to make a friend of Mammon; to welcome it, and to use it, to discover the good in it and learn its lessons; to mould it into the higher uses of life. Here is a potter working in his clay. It is a coarse material which he uses and his hands grow soiled as he works; but it is not for him to reject it because it is not clean, but for him to work out through it the shapes of beauty which are possible within the limits of the clay. Just such a material is the modern world. It is not very clean and not very beautiful; but the problem of life is to mould out of its uncleanness the shapes of beauty which it contains. To run away from life—that is easy enough; to yield to its evil—that is still easier; but to be in the world and to mould it—that is the {145} real problem of the Christian life. And here is the real test of Christian character. The saints of the past have been for the most part men who fled from the world, but the saint of to-day is the man who can use the world. He is the man of business who amid looseness of standards keeps himself clean.

He is the youth in college who without the least retreat from its influences moulds them to good. He is not the runaway from the world of Mammon, nor yet its slave; he makes a friend of Mammon for the service of God.

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LIX

COMING TO ONE'S SELF

Luke xv. 17.

When he came to himself he said: "I will arise and go to my father." This is one of those gospel sentences which contains within itself a whole system of theology, a doctrine of man and of God and of the relation of the one to the other. He came to himself. It was not then himself that had gone away into a far country. It was an unreal, fictitious self. He had been insane, beside himself, and now, as his better life starts up in him, he comes to himself. As his father said of him, he had been dead and was alive again. The renewal of the good self in him was the resurrection of his true personality.

How deep that goes into one's doctrine of human nature! Never believe that the sinning self is the true self. Your real personality is the potential good in you. The moment that good springs into life you have a right to say: "Now I know what I was {147} made for. I have come to life. I have discovered myself." And then there is the religious aspect of this same self-discovery. No sooner does this boy come to himself than he says, "I will arise and go to my father." The religious need follows at once from the self-awakening. Nay, was not the religious need the source of the self-awakening? What was it that brought him to himself but just the homesickness of the child for his father's house? His self-discovery was but the answer of his soul to the continuous love of God. Before he ever came to himself the father was waiting for him. Antecedent to the ethical return was the religious quickening. That is the relation of religion to conduct. You make your resolutions, but it is God that prompts them. Your self-discovery is the drawing of the Father. Your true self is his son. How natural it all is,—an infinite law of love at the heart of the universe—that is the centre of theology; a world that permits moral alienation through the free will of man,—that is the problem of philosophy; he came to himself,—that is the heart of ethics; I will go to my Father,—that is the soul of religion.

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LX

POPULARITY

Luke xix. 37-43; *Matthew* xxi. 17-23.

(PASSION WEEK—MONDAY)

The ministry of Jesus is as a whole not easy to arrange in any fixed chronology. The order of events seems often to vary in the different gospels, and sometimes these unstudied narratives seem in positive conflict. But as the story draws to its close the paths of narrative begin to converge, and as we approach the last days and enter on the last week the incidents of each day become perfectly distinct, and one can trace the life of Jesus as it moves on from his triumph of Palm Sunday to his tragedy of the cross. As we enter then to-day on the anniversary of the last week of the life of Jesus, the week before Easter Sunday, let us glance at some of the hurrying events. And for today consider the contrast which presents itself between the entrance of Jesus at Jerusalem on Sunday morning, and his return to the city by the same road on this Monday {149} morning of his last week. Yesterday he came over the brow of the Mount of Olives, surrounded by an enthusiastic throng, the centre of their popularity. To-day he comes along the same road, unattended and alone, the crowd slinking away from him, his popularity gone. And how does he bear himself through these shillings of opinion? He simply does not manifest any consciousness of change. He is as undisturbed by neglect as he was yesterday by success. On Sunday, while the people were spreading their branches beneath his feet, he looked across the valley to the city and wept as he looked; and to-day, coming with no popular applause, he enters straight into the city and asserts to its leaders his supreme authority. In the midst of popularity he seems saddened, and in the midst of neglect he seems stirred to a defiant boldness. In short, he is unscathed alike by what seems to be success and what seems to be failure. He goes his way through it

all with his eye on that great end which gives him peace amid the throng, and courage amid the solitude.

That is the only way in which one can maintain himself among the shifting currents {150} of popularity. It comes and goes like a tide. The man who tries to lean on it is simply swept by the rising tide into self-conceit, and then stranded by the ebb of that same tide on the flats of despair. Popularity is as fickle as the April winds, and one can trust it as little as he dare trust the New England climate. It is only he who can be wholly self-controlled amid the triumphs of his Palm Sunday who can move on with equal self-control to the bearing of the cross with which that same week may close.

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LXI

TWO QUESTIONS ABOUT CHRISTIANITY

Luke xx. 19-38.

(PASSION WEEK—TUESDAY)

The Sunday of the last week of Jesus was all triumph, the Monday was all neglect, the Tuesday was all controversy. He returns once more from Bethany to the city, and he finds the opposition at its height. At once he is set upon by two kinds of people and asked two kinds of questions as to his mission and aim. One question was political, or as we now are saying sociological. What did he think about taxation? What was his attitude toward the government? Was he encouraging social revolt? Was he an anarchist or a socialist? The other question was theological. What did he think about the future life? How would marriage be arranged in heaven? Was his theology orthodox? All this must have seemed to Jesus malicious enough, but I think that the deepest impression he had of such questions {152} must have been of their stupidity. How was it possible that after months of public teaching any one could suppose that such problems were in the line of his intention. Here he was, trying to bring spiritual life among his people,—the life of God to the souls of men,—and here were people still trying to find in him a political schemer or a metaphysical theologian.

Yet there are questions of much this nature still being asked of Jesus. Some honest persons are still insisting that Christ's religion is a system of theology, and some are trying to make of it a course in social science, and neither of them seem to notice that the last day of general teaching which was permitted to him on earth was largely devoted to demonstrating that he was neither a social agitator nor a theological professor. Christianity is not a scheme or arrangement, social or theological, like a railway which men might build either to accelerate the business of life or to take one straight to heaven. Christianity provides that which all such mechanism needs. It is a power, like that electric force which makes the equipment of a railway move. A church is a power-house for the {153} development and the transmission of the power that makes things go. Cut off the power, and the theological creeds and social programmes of the day stand there paralyzed or dead. Communicate to them the dynamic of the Christian life, and the power goes singing over all the wires of life and sets its mechanism in motion, as though it sang upon its way: "I am come that these may have my life, and may have it abundantly."

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LXII

AN UNRECORDED DAY

(PASSION WEEK—WEDNESDAY)

We have traced from day to day the life of Jesus through the earlier days of its last week, its triumph of Sunday, its solitude of Monday, its controversies of Tuesday. On each of these days Jesus has come over the hill from Bethany into the city, and has returned to the village at night. And now we come to the last day before the Passover and the betrayal; the last chance to meet his enemies and to enforce his cause. What then does Jesus do on this last Wednesday of his life? So far as we know, he does nothing at all. It is a day without record. There is no New Testament passage from which I can read about it. He appears to have stayed at Bethany, perhaps with his friends, perhaps for a part of the day

alone. His work was done, and he used this last day for quiet withdrawal.

What self-control and reserve are here! How would one of us have been inclined to conduct himself, if he found himself with just {155} one more day for active service? "One more day," he would have said; "then fill it with the best works and the best words; let me stamp my message on my time; let me fulfil the work which was given me to do." But Jesus has no such lust of finishing. He simply commits his spirit to his Father, and awaits the trial and the cross. And perhaps on that unrecorded day his real agony was met, and his real cross borne. Perhaps as he went up on that hillside, which still overlooks the little village of Bethany, and looked at his past and at his future, the real spiritual conquest was attained; for he comes back again to Jerusalem on Thursday morning, not with the demeanor of a martyr but with the air of a conqueror; and when Pilate asks him if he is a king he answers him: "Thou hast said it."

So it is with many a life. It has its great days,—its Palm Sundays of triumphs, its Good Fridays of cross-bearing, and these seem the epochs of its experience; but when one searches for the sources of its strength, they lie—do they not?—in some unrecorded day, as the sources of an abundant river lie hidden in some nook among the hills.

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LXIII

THE ANSWER TO PRAYER

Luke xxii. 39-48.

(PASSION WEEK—THURSDAY)

On Thursday morning of his last week Jesus sends two of his friends before him into Jerusalem to prepare the Passover meal, while he does not himself enter the city until the afternoon. There he meets his friends, and after the supper he takes the bread and wine and with entire naturalness asks them, as they eat and drink, to remember him. Then he talks with them and prays with them, and they go out again on the road toward Bethany; and coming to a little garden at the foot of the hill called the Mount of Olives he bids his companions wait while he goes, as his custom was, to pray.

We hear much discussion about prayer and its possibilities,—what we can pray for and what God can do in return, and what is the true answer to prayer. But what a silence comes over all such questionings when one notices that this prayer of Jesus uttered thus {157} in this most solemn hour was not, in the sense of these discussions, answered by his God. It was the moment of the supreme agony of Christ. The falseness of friends, the blindness of his people, the malice of their leaders,—all these things seem more than he can bear. "Let this cup pass from me," he prays, and, behold, his prayer is not accepted, and what he asks is denied, and the cup is to be drunk. And yet in a far deeper sense his, prayer is answered. "Thy will be done," he prays,—not in spite of me, or over me, but through me. Make me, my Father, the instrument of thy will; and so praying he rises with absolute composure and kingly authority, and goes out with his prayer answered to do that will.

What should we pray for? Why, we should pray for what we most deeply want. There is no sincerity in praying for things which are fictitious or abstract or mere theological blessings. Open to God the realities of your heart and seek the blessings which you sincerely desire. But in all prayers desire most to know the will of God toward you, and to do it. Prayer is not offered to deflect God's will to yours, but to adjust your will to His. When a ship's captain is setting out on a {158} voyage he first of all adjusts his compasses, corrects their divergence, and counteracts the influences which draw the needle from the pole. Well, that is prayer. It is the adjustment of the compass of the soul, it is its restoration from deflection, it is the pointing of it to the will of God. And the soul which thus sails forth into the sea of life finds itself—not indeed freed from all storms of the spirit, but at least sure of its direction through them all.

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LXIV

AN IMPOSSIBLE NEUTRALITY

John xviii. 28-38.

(PASSION DAY—FRIDAY)

The story of Friday in this last week of Jesus begins with this meeting with the Roman governor, and certainly few persons in history would be more surprised than Pilate at the judgment of the world concerning him. If Pilate felt sure of anything it was that he did not commit himself in the case of Jesus. He undertook to be absolutely neutral. See how nicely he poises his judgment. On the one hand he says: "I find no fault in him," and then on the other hand he says: "Take him away and crucify him;" First he washes his hands to show that he is innocent of the blood of this just person, and then he delivers Jesus to the Jews to take him away. It was a fine balancing of a judicial mind, and I suppose he withdrew from the judgment hall saying to himself: "Whatever may happen in this case, at least I am not responsible." But what does history think {160} of this judicial Pilate? It holds him to be a responsible agent in the death of Jesus. He was attempting a neutrality which was impossible. The great wind was blowing across the threshing floor of the nation, and the people were separated into two distinct heaps, and must be counted forever as chaff or as wheat. He that was not with Christ was against him, and Pilate's place, even in spite of himself, was determined as among those who brought Jesus to his cross that afternoon.

I was once talking with a cultivated gentleman who volunteered to tell me his attitude toward religion. He wished me to understand that he was in sympathy with the purposes and the administration of worship. He desired that it should prevail. He welcomed its usefulness in the university. But as for himself it appeared better that he should hold a position of neutrality. His responsibility seemed to him better met by standing neither for religion nor against it, but in a perfectly judicial frame of mind. He did not take account, however, of the fact that this neutrality was impossible; that it was just what Pilate attempted, and just wherein he failed. If he {161} was not to be counted among those who would by their presence encourage worship, then he must be counted among those who by their absence hinder its effect. On one side or other in these great issues of life every man's weight is to be thrown, and the Pilates of to-day—as of that earlier time—in their impossible neutrality are often the most insidious, although most unconscious opponents of a generous cause.

And so to-day on this most solemn anniversary of religious history, while it is, as the passage says of this interview with Pilate, "yet early," let us set before ourselves, the issue just as it is now and just as it was then. This morning demands of any honest-minded man an answer to the question: "On which side do I propose to stand?" It is not a demand for absoluteness of conviction or unwavering loyalty, but it is a summons to recognize that Jesus Christ died on this day largely at the hands of intellectual dilettanteism and indifferentism,—the peculiar and besetting sin of the cultivated and academic life. On which side, then, do I propose to stand; with the cultivated neutral and his skillful {162} questioning: What is truth? or with the prisoner who in this early morning says: "Every one who is of the truth heareth my voice;" with Pilate in his neutrality or with Jesus on his cross?

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LXV

THE FINISHED LIFE

John xix. 30.

(PASSION WEEK—SATURDAY)

The last word of Jesus as he gives up his spirit is: "It is finished." But was it what could be called a finished life? Was it not, on the contrary, a terribly unfinished life, prematurely cut short, without any visible effect of his work, and with everything left to live for? Surely, if some sympathetic friend of Jesus had been telling of his death, one of the first things he would be tempted to say would be this: "What a fearful pity it was that he died so soon! What a loss it was to us all that he left his life unfinished. Think what might have happened if he could only have lived to sixty and had had thirty years for his ministry instead of three!" And yet, as Jesus said, it was a finished life; for completeness in life is not a thing of quantity, but of quality. What seems to be a fragment may be in reality the most perfect thing on earth. You stand in {164} some museum before a Greek statue, imperfect, mutilated, a fragment of what it was meant to be. And yet, as you look at it, you say: "Here is perfect art. It is absolutely right; the ideal which modern art may imitate, but which it never hopes to attain." Or, what again shall we say of those young men of our civil war, dying at twenty-five at the head of their troops, pouring out all the promise of their life in one splendid instant? Did they then die prematurely? Was not

their life a finished life? What more could they ever have done with it? Why do we write their names on our monuments so that our young men may read of these heroes, except that they may say to us that life may be completed, if one will, even at twenty? All of life that is worth living is sometimes offered to a man not in a lifetime, but in a day.

And that is what any man must set before him as the test and the plan of his own life. You cannot say to yourself: "I will live until I am seventy, I will accomplish certain things, and will attain a certain position;" for the greatest and oldest of men when they look back on their lives see in them only a fragment of what they once dreamed that they {165} might do or be. But you can design your life, not according to quantitative completeness, but according to qualitative completeness. It may be long or short, but in either case it may be of the right stuff. It may be carved out of pure marble with an artist's hand, and then, whether the whole of it remains to be a thing of beauty or whether it is broken off, like a fragment of its full design, it is a finished life. You give back your life to God who gave it, perhaps in ripe old age, perhaps, as your Master did, at thirty-three, and you say: "I have accomplished, not what I should like to have done, but what Thou hast given me to do. I have done my best. It is finished. Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

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LXVI

ATTAINING TO THE RESURRECTION

Philippians iii. 11.

(MONDAY AFTER EASTER)

This is certainly a very extraordinary saying of St. Paul—that he hopes to attain unto the resurrection from the dead. We are so apt to think of the resurrection as a remote truth, to be realized in some distant future, when some day we shall die and live again, that the very idea of attaining to such a resurrection now is not easy to grasp. But here we have a resurrection which can be attained any day. "I have not already attained," says St. Paul, "but I press on." It is possible, that is to say, for a man to-day, who seems perfectly healthy, to be dying or dead, and for a man to rise from the dead to-day and attain to the resurrection.

And thus the fundamental question of the Easter season is not: "Do I believe that people when they die shall rise again from the dead?" but it is "Have I risen from the dead {167} myself?" "Am I alive to-day, with any touch of the eternal life?" Mr. Ruskin describes a grim Scythian custom where, when the king died, he was set on his throne at the head of his table, and his vassals, instead of mourning for him, bowed before his corpse and feasted in his presence. That same ghastly scene is sometimes repeated now, and young men think they are sitting at a feast, when they are really sitting at a funeral, and believe themselves to be, as they say, "seeing life," when they are in reality looking upon the death of all that is true and fair. And on the other hand the most beautiful thing which is permitted for any one to see is the resurrection of a human soul from the dead, its deliverance from shame and sin, its passing from death into life. As the father of the prodigal said of his boy, he was dead and is alive again, and in that coming to his true self he attains, as surely as he ever can in any future world, unto the resurrection from the dead.

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LXVII

SIMON OF CYRENE

Luke xxiii. 20-26.

This Simon, the Cyrenian, was just a plain man, coming into town on his own business, and meeting at the gate this turbulent group surging out toward the place of crucifixion, with the malefactor in their midst. Suddenly Simon finds himself turned about in his own journey, swept back by the crowd with the cross of another man on his shoulder, and the humiliation forced upon him which there seemed no reason for him to bear.

How often that happens in many a life! You are going your own way, carrying your own load, and

suddenly you are called on to take up some one else's burden,—a strange cross, a home responsibility, a business duty; and you find yourself turned square round in the road you meant to go. Your plan of life is interrupted by no fault of your own, and you are summoned to bear an undeserved and unexpected cross.

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And yet, how certain it is that this man of Cyrene came to look back on this interruption of his journey as the one thing he would not have missed? When others were remembering the wonderful career of Jesus, how often he must have said: "Yes, but I once had the unapproached privilege of bearing his cross for him. On one golden morning of my life I was permitted to share his suffering. I was called from all my own hopes and plans to take up this burden of another, and I did not let it drop. It seemed a grievous burden, but it has become my crowning joy. I did not know then, but I know now, that my day of humiliation was my day of highest blessedness.

"I think of the Cyrenian
Who crossed the city-gate,
When forth the stream was pouring
That bore thy cruel fate.

* * * *

"I ponder what within him
The thoughts that woke that day
As his unchosen burden
He bore that unsought way.

* * * *

"Yet, tempted he as we are!
O Lord, was thy cross mine?
Am I, like Simon, bearing
A burden that is thine?

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"Thou must have looked on Simon;
Turn, Lord, and look on me
Till I shall see and follow
And bear thy cross for Thee." [1]

[1] Harriet Ware Hall, *A Book for Friends*, p. 90. (Privately printed.) 1888.

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LXVIII

POWER AND TEMPTATION

Matthew iv. 1-11.

All these temptations of Jesus came to him through the very sense of power of which he could not but be aware. Here was this great consciousness of capacity in him to do wonders, to display himself, to get glory. How should he use his gifts? Should it be for himself, for honor, for praise, or should it be for service, for sacrifice, for God? The devil's temptation was that Jesus should take the gifts of which he was conscious and make them serve his own ends of ambition or success. The first great decision in the work of Jesus Christ was the decision of the end to which his powers should be dedicated; the use to which his powers should be put.

The same fundamental decision comes to every young man in his own degree. Here are your gifts and capacities, great or small. What are you to do with them? Are they for glory or for use? Are they for ambition {172} or for service? The sooner that decision is made the better. Some people have never quite done with that temptation of the devil. They go on trying to direct their gifts to the end of reputation, or wealth, or dominion; and they attain that end only to find that it is no end, and that their lives, which should have grown broader and richer, have grown shrunken, and meagre, and unsatisfied.

Such a life is like a fish swimming into the labyrinth of a weir. It follows along the line of its vocation until the liberty to return grows less and less; and, at last, in the very element where it seems most free, it is in fact a helpless captive. The man's occupation has become his prison. He is the slave of his own powers. The devil has withered that life with his touch.

And then, on the other hand, you turn to lives which have given themselves to the life of service, and what do you see? You see their capacity enlarged through use, you see small gifts multiplied into great powers. Few things are more remarkable in one's experience of life than to see men who by nature are not extraordinarily endowed achieve the highest success by sheer dedication of their {173} moderate gifts. Their capacities expand through their self-surrender, as leaves unfold under the touch of the sun. They lose themselves and then they find themselves. The devil tempts these men, not with a sense of their greatness, but with their self-distrust; yet he tempts them in vain. Their weakness issues into strength; their temptation develops their power. The angels of God have come and ministered unto them.

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LXIX

LOVING WITH THE MIND

Mark xii. 30.

In the great law of love to God and love to man which Jesus repeats as the law of his own teaching, there is one phrase that seems not wholly clear. You can love God with your heart and your soul; you can even increase your strength by love; but how can you love with the mind? Is it not the very quality of a trained mind to be unmoved by love or hate, dispassionate and unemotional? Is not this the scientific spirit, this attitude of criticism, with no prejudice or affection to color its results?

Of course one must answer that there is much truth which can be discovered by a loveless mind. Yet there is, on the other hand, much truth which cannot be discerned without love. There are many secrets of literature, of art, of music, and of the higher traits of character as well, into which you cannot enter unless you give your mind to these things with sympathy and affection and responsiveness; loving them, as Jesus says, with the mind. One {175} of our preachers has lately called attention to the new word in literature which illustrates this attitude of the mind.[1] When people wrote in earlier days of other people and their works they wrote biographies or criticisms or studies, but now we have what are called "appreciations;" the attempt, that is to say, to enter into a character and appreciate its traits or its art, and to love it with the mind. Perhaps that is what this ancient law asks of you in your relation to God, to come not as a critic, but as a lover, to the rational appreciation of the ways of God. Here is the noblest capacity with which human life is endowed. It is a great thing to love God with the heart and soul, to let the emotions of gratitude to Him or of joy in his world run free; but to rise into sympathetic interpretation of his laws, to think God's thoughts after Him, and to be moved by the high emotions which are stirred by exalted ideas,—to love God, that is to say, with the mind,—that, I suppose, is the highest function of human life, and the quality which most endows a man with insight and power.

[1] Rev. Leighton Parks, D. D., in a sermon at the Diocesan Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Boston, May, 1895.

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LXX

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER?

Genesis iv. 9.

Cain was the first philosophical individualist; the first "laissez-faire" economist. When God asked: "Where is Abel?" Cain answered: "What responsibility have I for him? My business is to take care of myself. Am I my brother's keeper?" But the interesting fact is that Cain had been his brother's keeper though he declined responsibility for him. He refused to be responsible for his brother's life, but he certainly was responsible for his brother's death. He refused to be his brother's keeper, but he was

willing to be his brother's slayer. There are plenty of people to-day who are trying to maintain this same impossible theory of social irresponsibility. They affirm that they have no social duty except to mind their own business; but that very denial of responsibility is what makes them among the most responsible agents of social disaster. They deal with their affairs on the principle that they are nobody's {177} keeper, and so they are stirring every day the fires of industrial revolt. We are passing through dark days in the business world, and there are many causes for the trouble, but the deepest cause is Cain's theory of life. "Where is thy brother?" says God to the business man to-day,—"thy brother, the wage-earner, the victim of the cut-down and the lockout?" "Where is thy brother?" says God again to the unscrupulous agitator, bringing distress into many a workman's home for the satisfactions of ambition and power. And to any man who answers: "I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?" the rebuke of God is spoken again: "Cursed art thou! The voice of thy brother crieth against thee from the ground."

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LXXI

PROFESSIONALISM AND PERSONALITY

1 *Corinthians* xii. 31.

The wonderful chapter which follows this verse becomes still more interesting when one considers its connection with the preceding passage. Paul has been looking over the life of his Christian brethren, and he sees in it a great variety of callings. Some of his friends are preachers,—apostles and prophets, as he calls them. Some are teachers, some are doctors, with gifts of healing; some are politicians, with gifts of government. The apostle speaks to them as though he were advising young men as to the choice of their profession, and he says: "Among all these professional opportunities covet the best; take that which most fills out and satisfies your life." But then he turns from these professional capacities and adds: "Be sure that these gifts do not crowd out of your life the higher capacity for sympathy. For you may understand all knowledge and speak with all tongues, and if you have lost thereby {179} the personal, human, sympathetic relation with people which we call love you are not really to be counted as a man. You are nothing more than an instrument of sound, a wind instrument like a trumpet, or a clanging instrument like a cymbal." That is the apostolic warning to the successful professional man,—the warning against the narrowing, self-contented result which sometimes taints even great attainments and professional distinction. Covet the best. Be satisfied with nothing less than the highest professional work of doctor, politician, or teacher. But beware of the imprisoning effect which sometimes comes of this very success in professional life, the atrophy of sensibility, the increasing incapacity for sympathy, for public spirit, for charity,—an incapacity which makes some men of the highest endowments among the least serviceable, least loving, and least loved of a community. "If," says the apostle, "in the gain of professional success you lose the higher gift of love, you are no longer a great man; you are not even to be described as a small man. You are 'nothing.'"

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LXXII

THE CENTRAL SOLITUDE

John xvi. 32.

In one of Frederick Robertson's sermons he speaks of the conduct of life as like the conduct of atoms, which have a certain attraction for each other, but at a certain point of approach are repelled and do not touch. There is in every large life a certain central solitude of this kind into which no other soul can enter. Some persons fear this solitude, some rejoice in it, but the use of it is the test of a man's life. A very near friend of Dr. Brooks's once heard of a man who said that he knew Dr. Brooks intimately; and this friend said: "No man ought to say that. Not one of us knew Dr. Brooks intimately. There was a central Holy of Holies in his life, into which none of us ever entered." So it was. And this preservation of an inner privacy for the deeper experiences of life is what proves a soul to be peaceful and strong. Guard your soul's individual life. In the midst of the social world keep a place for the {181} nurture of the isolated life, for the reading and for the thoughts which deal with the interior relations of the single soul to the immanent God.

"Thyself amid the silence clear,

The world far off and dim,
His presence close, the bright ones near,
Thyself alone with Him."

That is what makes a man strong under the tests of life. He is not a parasitic plant deriving its life from some other life; he is rooted deep in the soil of the Eternal. As was said of John Henry Newman, such a man is never less alone than when alone. "He is not alone, because the Father is with him."

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LXXIII

IF THOU KNEWEST THE GIFT OF GOD

John iv. 10.

We usually notice in this story the great words of Jesus—perhaps the deepest and richest series of utterances that have ever fallen from human lips. Yet it is almost as striking to notice the attitude of mind in which the woman remained throughout these wonderful scenes. She seems to have been entirely oblivious of the situation, and unaware that anything great was going on.

Jesus speaks to her of the living water, and she thinks it must be some device which shall save her coming with her pitcher to the well. Then Jesus looks on her with infinite pathos and says: "If you only knew the gift of God, and who it is that is now speaking to you!" But she does not know, and shoulders her pitcher and trudges home again, reporting only that she has seen some one who appeared a wonderful fortune-teller, and never dreaming that the greatest words of human history had been spoken to her, and her alone.

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If thou knewest the gift of God!—to have had one's opportunity in one's hands and to have let it slip; to have had the Messiah sitting by you and not to have recognized Him; to have thought it just a commonplace day when the most sacred revelations of God were occurring,—that is about the saddest confession that any one can make. And yet, that is what might happen to any one any day. No one can be sure when the great exigencies of life are likely to occur. He looks forward to great things to be done in some more favoring future, and, behold, the insignificant incidents of to-day are the greater things which he does not discern. He looks forward to the discovery of God in some difficult intellectual achievement, and meantime the daily task is full of revelation, and as he wakes to the morning the new day stands by him and says: "If you only knew the gift of God, and who it is that speaks to you today." And at last perhaps he begins to realize that the ordinary ways of daily life are the channels of God's revelation, and then there

"Comes to soul and sense
The feeling which is evidence

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That very near about us lies
The realm of spiritual mysteries.
With smile of trust and folded hands,
The passive soul in waiting stands,
To feel, as flowers the sun and dew.
The one true life its own renew."

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LXXIV

THE WEDDING GARMENT

Matthew xxii. 11-14.

Here is a man who has the feast offered to him, but is not clothed to meet it. He is unprepared and is therefore cast out. He does not wear the wedding garment and therefore is not fit for the wedding

feast. This seems at first sight harsh treatment; but one soon remembers that it was the custom of an Oriental feast to offer the guest at his entrance a robe fit for the occasion. "Bring forth the best robe," says the father of the prodigal, "and put it on him." This man had had offered to him the opportunity of personal preparation and had refused it. He wanted to share the feast, but he wanted to share it on his own terms. He pressed into the happiness without the personal preparedness which made that happiness possible.

Every man in this way makes his own world. The habit of his life clothes him like a garment, and only he who wears the wedding garment {186} is at home at the wedding feast. The same circumstances are to one man beautiful and to another, at his side, demoralizing. You may have prosperity and it may be a source of happiness, or the same prosperity and it may be a source of peril. You may be at a college and it may be either regenerating to you, or pernicious in its influence, according as you are clothed or unclothed with the right habit of mind. God first asks for your heart and then offers you his world. The wedding feast is for him alone who has accepted the wedding garment.

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LXXV

THE ESCAPE FROM DESPONDENCY

1 *Kings* xix. 1-13.

This is God's word to man's despondency; and when we strip this man's story of its Orientalism, it is really the story of many a discouraged, despondent man of to-day. Elijah has been doing his best, but has come to a point where he is ready to give up. His enemies are too many for him. "Lord," he says, "it is enough. I have had as much as I can bear. I am alone and Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." So he goes away into solitude, and looks about him for some clear sign that God has not deserted him. But nothing happens. The great signs of nature pass before him, the storm, the lightning, and the earthquake, but they only reflect his own stormy mood. The Lord is not in them. Then, within his heart, there speaks that voice which is at once speech and silence, and it says to him: "What doest thou here, Elijah," and behold, the man is convicted. For when he {188} reflects on it he is doing nothing at all. He is sitting under a tree, requesting that he may die. He has fled from his duty and is hiding in a cave. Then the voice says to him: "Get up and go and do your duty. You might sit here forever and get no light on your lot. The problem of life is solved through the work of life. The way out of your despondency is in going straight on with the work now ready to your hand. Answers to great problems are not so likely to come to people in caves, as along the dusty road of duty-doing. Not to the dreamer, but to the doer come the interpretations of life. Elijah, Elijah, what doest thou here?"

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LXXVI

THE DIFFICULTIES OF UNBELIEF

Matthew xxiii. 24.

We are often very much impressed by the difficulties of religious belief. It seems hard to attain any absolute, convinced faith. There are doubts and obscurities which every one feels, and these questionings are often stirred into activity by the mistaken efforts of the defenders of the faith. There is even a special department in theological teaching known as Apologetics, or the defense of faith; as though religion had to be always on the defensive, and as if the easiest attitude of mind, even of the least philosophical, were the attitude of denial. But did you ever consider the alternative position and the difficulties which present themselves when one undertakes absolutely and continuously to deny himself the relations of the religious life? Did you ever fairly face the conception of a logically completed unbelief, a world stripped of its ideals, with no region of spiritual hopes or of worship, a {190} world absolutely without God, a permanently faithless world? What is the difficulty here? The difficulty is that these aspects of life, though they are often hard to maintain, are harder still to abandon. Faith has its perplexities, but no sooner do you eliminate the spiritual world than you are confronted with a series of experiences, emotions, and intimations which are simply inexplicable. That was perhaps partly what Jesus had in mind when he met the Pharisees. "You find it hard to believe in me," he said. "Ah, yes, but is it not still harder altogether to refuse me? You are quite alive to the

smaller difficulties of my position, but you seem to be quite unaware of the difficulties of your own position. You busy yourself with straining out the gnat which floats on the surface of your glass, but you do not seem to observe the residuary camel."

So with his splendid satire Jesus turns the critical temper back upon itself. Difficulties enough, God knows, there are in every intellectual position, and intellectual certainty usually means the abnegation of the thinking faculty.

But many persons strain out the little difficulties and swallow the great ones. What is, {191} on the whole, the best working theory of life?—that is the only practical question. Under which view of life do the facts, on the whole, best fall? Especially, what conception of life holds the highest facts, the great irresistible spring-tides, which sometimes rise within the soul, of hope and love and desire? So Browning's Bishop, turning on his critic, says:—

"And now what are we? unbelievers both,
Calm and complete, determinately fixed
To-day, to-morrow, and forever, pray?
You'll guarantee me that? Not so, I think.
In nowise! All we've gained is, that belief,
As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
Confounds us like its predecessor. Where's
The gain? How can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us? The problem's here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
* * * * * * *
What have we gained then by our unbelief
But a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt.
We called the chessboard white,—we call it black."

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LXXVII

KNOWING GOD, AND BEING KNOWN OF HIM

Galatians iv. 9.

It is very interesting to come so close to a great man as we do in this passage, for the Apostle seems to be discovered here, correcting himself. It is as if he had written one teaching to the Galatians, and then crossed it out and written another. "You know God," he says, "or rather you are known of Him." He is asking himself why the Galatians should in a given case do their duty, and he answers: "Because they know God; they are aware of His purposes and laws, and having this rational understanding of Him they know how to act as His servants." "But no," he goes on to say, "that is not the real impulse of their duty. What holds them to their best is rather the thought that God knows them, that He gives them their duty, and that they obey." It is like the position of a soldier under his commander. The soldier does not expect to know {193} all about the plan of the campaign, but what keeps him to his best is the knowledge that some one knows about it; that the commander overlooks the field; that each little skirmish has its place in the great design. That is what makes the soldier go down again into the smoke and dust of his duty with his timidity converted into faith.

Knowing God,—that is theology; being known of Him,—that is religion. Both theology and religion have their influence on conduct. It is a great thing to know that one knows God. There is power in a rational creed. But, after all, the profoundest impulse for conduct is to know that beneath all your ignorance of God is His knowledge of you; that before you loved Him, He loved you, that antecedent to your response to Him was His invitation to you. Thus it is that a man looks out into each new day and asks: "What is to hold me to-day to my duty?" Well, first of all, everything I may learn ought to help me.

It is all God's truth, and, as I get a grasp on truth and stand on its firm ground, my conduct is steadier and assured. But, after all, the deeper safety lies in this other confession, that I am known of God; that I {194} am not merely an explorer, searching for truth, but guided and controlled as ever under the great taskmaster's eye; known of Him, with my ignorance of Him held within His knowledge of me, until the time comes when at last I shall know even as also I am known.

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LXXVIII

FREEDOM IN THE TRUTH

John viii. 32.

"The truth shall make you free;"—that is one of the greatest announcements of a universal principle which even Jesus Christ ever made.

But the Jews began to ask of him: "How can one be a disciple of your truth and yet be free? Is not that discipleship only another name for bondage? We are free already. We are in bondage to no man. Why then should we enter into the servitude of obedience to your truth?" And to this Jesus seems to answer: "That depends upon what it is to be free. It is a question of your definition of liberty. You seem to believe that to be free one must have no authority or leadership or master. But I say unto you that there is no such liberty. You must be the servant of something. You must be under the authority of your law, or your superstition, or your God, or yourself. Freedom on any other terms is not freedom, it is lawlessness. {196} Indeed it may be more like slavery than freedom."

What is a free country? Not a country without law,—a country of the anarchist,—but a country where the law encourages each citizen to be and to do his best. A free country gives every man a chance. It opens life at the top. It invites one's allegiance from the things which enslave to the things which enlarge. And that is the only liberty,—a transfer of allegiance, a higher attachment, which sets free from the lower enslavements of life. Suppose a man is the slave of a sin, how does he get free? He frees himself from his sin by attaching himself to some better interest. Sin is not driven out of one's life; it is crowded out. Suppose a man is the slave of himself, sunk in the self-absorbed and ungenerous life, how does he get free? He gets free by finding an end in life which is larger than himself. He becomes the servant of the truth, and the truth makes him free. Suppose a man asks himself, "What can religion do for me? It does not solve all my problems, or satisfy all my needs. What then does religion do?" Well, first of all, it gives one liberty. It detaches one's life from {197} the things which shut it in, and attaches it to those ideal ends which give enlargement, emancipation, range to life. God speaks to you of duty, of self-control, of power in your prayers, and then you go out into the world again, not as if all were plain before you, but at least with a free heart, and a mind not in bondage to the world of circumstance or of trivial cares. The truth of God, so far as it has been revealed to you, has made you free. You have found the perfect law, the law of liberty.

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LXXIX

THE SOIL AND THE SEED

Matthew xiii. 1-9.

It takes two things to make a seed grow. One is a good seed, and the other is a good soil. One is what the sower provides, and the other is what the ploughman prepares. God's best seed falls in vain on a rock. Man's best soil is unfruitful till the sower visits it. Now the tilling of the soil of life is what in all its different forms we call culture, and the expansion of God's germinating influence is what we call religion. Some people think that either of these alone is enough to insure a good crop. Some think that culture makes a man fruitful, and some think religion is a spontaneous growth; and some even talk of a conflict between the two. But culture does for a man just what it does for a field. It deepens the soil and makes it ready, and that is all. The merely cultivated man is nothing more than a ploughed field which has not been sown, and when it comes to the proper time of harvest has a most {199} empty and untimely look. And religion alone does not often penetrate into the unprepared life. Sometimes, indeed, it seems to force its way as by a miracle, and take root, as we see a tree or shrub growing as it seems

without any soil in which to cling. But in the normal way of life the seed of God falls in vain upon a soil which is not deepened and softened to receive it. It waits for preparedness of nature, for the obedient will, the awakened mind, the receptive heart;—and all these forms of self-discipline are comprehended in any genuine self-culture.

Culture and religion—here they meet in university life. Most of your time is given to culture. What are you doing? You are enriching and spading up the soil of life. That is the test of culture. Is it quickening, deepening, stimulating the mind? Is it opening the imagination and training the will? Then it is true culture and not that spurious cultivation which spreads over life gravel instead of fertilizers. Culture prepares the soil; and then in sacred moments, perhaps in your worship here, perhaps in the solitude of your own experience, or perhaps in the busiest moments of your day, God, the sower, comes, scattering {200} His seeds of suggestion and His minute influences for good over the heart, and what He needs is a receptive mind and an awakened heart; the life of man ready for the life of God, and the descending influences of God finding depth of earth within the life of man.

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LXXX

THE LORD'S PRAYER, I [1]

Matthew vi. 1-15.

From day to day we gather here and repeat together the Lord's Prayer. One is tempted sometimes to wonder whether in this daily repetition the prayer keeps its freshness and reality. I will not say that even if it becomes a mere form it is useless in our worship. It is something even to have a form so rich in the associations of home and of church, of the prayers of childhood, and the centuries of Christian worship. And yet this prayer is first of all a protest against formalism. "Use not vain repetitions," says Jesus, and then he goes on to give this type of restrained, unswerving, concentrated prayer.

While the prayer, however, is a protest against formalism it is itself extraordinarily beautiful in form. When a clear mind {202} expresses a deep purpose its expression is always orderly, and the petitions of the Lord's Prayer do not unfold their quality until we consider the form in which they are expressed. Look for a moment at the order of these petitions. There are two series of prayers. The first series relate to God, His kingdom, and His will; the second series deal with men, their bread, their trespasses, and their temptations. The Lord's Prayer, that is to say, reverses the common order of petition. Most people turn to God first of all with their own needs. The Lord's Prayer postpones these needs of bread and of forgiveness, and asks first of all for God's kingdom and His will. Thus it is, first of all, an unselfish prayer. When a man comes here and prays the Lord's Prayer, he, first of all, subordinates himself; he postpones his own needs. He subdues his thoughts to the great purposes of God. He prays first for God's kingdom, however it may come, whether through joy and peace or through much trouble and pain; and then, in the light of that supreme and self-subordinating desire for the larger glory, the man goes on to ask for his own bread and the forgiveness of his own sin.

[1] See also, F. D. Maurice, *The Lord's Prayer*, London, 1861; Robert Eyton, *The Lord's Prayer*, London, 1892; H. W. Foote, *Thy Kingdom Come*, Boston, 1891.

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LXXXI

THE LORD'S PRAYER, II

OUR FATHER

Matthew v. 21-25.

I have said that the Lord's Prayer is by its very form an unselfish prayer. This same mark of it is to be seen in another way by the word with which it begins. It does not pray: "My Father, my bread, my trespasses." It prays throughout for blessings which are "ours." Not my isolated life, but the common life I share is that for which I ask the help of God. Even when a man enters into his inner chamber and

shuts the door, and is alone, he still says: "Our Father." He takes up into his solitary prayer the lives which for the moment are bound up in his. He thinks of those he loves and says: "Our Father." He sets himself right with those he does not love, reconciles himself with his brother, and says: "Our Father." He joins himself with the whole great company of those who have said this prayer in all the ages, and have found peace {204} in it, and with that great sense of companionship the solitude of his own experience is banished, and he is compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, living and dead, as he bends alone, and in his half-whispered prayer begins to say: "Our Father."

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LXXXII

THE LORD'S PRAYER, III

FATHER AND SON

Galatians iii. 26; iv. 6.

The fatherhood of God has become so familiar a phrase that we hardly realize what a revolution of thought it represents. In the whole Old Testament, so the scholars say, God is spoken of but seven times as Father; five times as Father of the Hebrew people, once to David as the father of his son Solomon, and once as a prediction that sometime men would thus pray. And so when Jesus at the beginning of his prayer says: "After this manner pray, Our Father," he is opening the door into a new conception of God's relation to man.

And what is this conception? It is the recognition of kinship. It is the conviction that the spiritual life in man is of the same nature as the spiritual life in God. The child's kinship to the parent involves the natural inheritance of capacity and destiny. "If children," says St. Paul, "then heirs, heirs of God, and {206} joint heirs with Christ." "Because we are sons we cry, Abba, Father." We are not Greek philosophers interpreting the causes of nature or the world of ideas; we are not Hebrew prophets representing a sacred nation; we are children, with the rights and gifts of children, and the assurance of a father's confidence and love. All this great promise the humblest Christian claims when he begins to pray the Lord's Prayer. He says, "I am not a brute, I am not a clod, I am a partaker of the Divine nature; I claim the promise of a child. And that sense of kinship summons me to my best. I pray as my Father's son, and as his son I bear a name which must not be stained. *Noblesse oblige*. There are some things which I cannot degrade myself to do because my position forbids them. There are some things to which I could not attain of myself, but which are made possible to me as my Father's son. I accept the unearned privilege of my descent; I claim the great inheritance of the kinship of God, and out of my self-distrust and weakness I turn to self-respect and strength, when I pray: 'Our Father.'"

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LXXXIII

THE LORD'S PRAYER, IV

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

Exodus xx. 1-7.

I suppose that to many a reader the prayer: "Holy be Thy name," means little more than: "Let me not be profane; help me to keep myself from blasphemy." But it is not likely that Jesus began his prayer with any such elementary desire as this; or that our first prayer need be only a prayer to be kept from irreverence. The name of God to the Hebrews was much more than a title. His name represented all His ways of revelation. The Hebrews did not speak the name of God. It was a word too sacred for utterance. Thus the man who begins the Lord's Prayer in that Hebrew spirit first summons to his thought the things which are the most sacred in the world to him, the thoughts and purposes which stand to him for God; the associations, memories, and ideals which make life holy, and asks that these may lead him into his own prayer. {208} What he says is this: "My Father, and the Father of all other souls, renew within me my most sacred thoughts and all the holy associations which are to me the symbol of Thyself. Give to me a sense of the sanctity of the world. Set me in the right mood of prayer. And as I thus reverently look out on Thy varied ways of revelation and of righteousness, help me to bring my own spirit into this unity with Thyself, to make a part of Thy holy world, and humbly to begin

my prayer by hallowing Thy name."

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LXXXIV

THE LORD'S PRAYER, V

THY KINGDOM COME

Luke xvii. 21.

The prayer that the kingdom of God might come had long been familiar to the Hebrews. They had been for centuries dreaming of a time when their tyrants should be overcome and their nation delivered and their God rule. But all this desire was for an outward change. Some day the Romans and their tax-gatherers should be expelled from the land and then the kingdom would come. Jesus repeats the same prayer, but with a new significance in the familiar words. He is not thinking of a Hebrew theocracy, or a Roman defeat; he is thinking of a human, universal, spiritual emancipation. There dawns before his inspired imagination the unparalleled conception of a purified and regenerated people. Never did a modern socialist in his dream of a better outward order surpass this vision of Jesus of a coming kingdom of God.

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But to Jesus the means to that outward transformation were always personal and individual. The golden age, as Mr. Spencer has said, could not be made out of leaden people. The first condition of the outward kingdom must be the kingdom within. The new order must be the product of the new life. That is the doctrine of the social order in the Lord's Prayer.

We too are looking for outward reform in legislation and economics. It is all a part of the movement to the kingdom of God. Yet any outward transformation which is to last proceeds from regenerated lives. The kingdom of God is within before it is without. Do you want a better world? Well, plan for it, and work for it. But, first of all, enter into the inner chamber of your prayer, and say: "Lord, make me a fit instrument of thy kingdom. Purify my heart, that I may purify thy world. I would live for others' sakes, but first of all that great self-sacrifice must be obeyed: 'For their sakes I sanctify myself, Reign thus in me that I may rationally pray: Thy kingdom come!'"

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LXXXV

THE LORD'S PRAYER, VI

THY WILL BE DONE

Luke xxii. 39-46.

The Lord's Prayer begins as a prayer for the great things. It prays for a sanctified world: "Holy be Thy name." It gives form to that great hope: "Thy kingdom come." It deals with the means of that great coming: "Thy will be done." The coming of the kingdom and the hallowing of the name are to happen through the doing of the will.

I suppose that most prayers which ask that God's will may be done are prayers of passive acquiescence and resignation. We are apt to pray "Thy will be done," as though we were saying: "Let it be done in spite of us and even against our wills, and we will try to bear it." But that is not the teaching of the Lord's Prayer. "Thy will be done;"—by whom? By the man that thus prays! He prays to have his part in the accomplishment of God's will, even as Jesus prays in the Garden: "Thy will be done," and then rises and {212} proceeds to do that will. The prayer recognizes the solemn and fundamental truth that the will, even of God Himself, works, in its human relations, through the service of man. Here, for instance, is a social abuse. What is God's will toward it? His will is that man should remove it. Here is a threat of cholera, and people pray that God's will be done. But what is God's will? His will is that the town shall be cleansed. And who are to do His will? Why, the citizens. Typhoid fever and bad drainage are not the will of God. The will of God is that they should be abolished. Social wrongs are not to be

endured with resignation. They simply indicate to man what is God's will. And who is to do God's will in these things? We are. The man who enters into his closet and says: "Thy will be done," is asking no mere help to bear the unavoidable; he is asking help to be a participator in the purposes of God, a laborer together with Him, first a discerner and then a doer of his will. "Our Father," he says, "accomplish Thine ends not over me, or in spite of me, but through me,—Thou the power and I the instrument,—Thine to will and mine to do."

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LXXXVI

THE LORD'S PRAYER, VII

DAILY BREAD

The Lord's Prayer begins with the desire for the great things, the universal needs; a holy world, a kingdom of righteousness, the will of God fulfilled. Then, in the light of these great things it goes on to one's personal needs, and prays, first of all, for the present, then for the past, then for the future. The prayer for the present is this: "Give us our daily bread,"—our bread, that is to say, sufficient for to-day, enough to live on and to work by, just for today. The prayer is limitative. It puts restraint on my desire and limit on my ambition. It does not demand the future. It looks only to this present unexplored and unknown day. "Give us in this day what is necessary for us, fit to sustain us,—strength to do thy will, patience to bring in thy kingdom, grace to hallow thy name."

Into the midst of the restless anticipations of modern life, its living of to-morrow's life in {214} to-day's anxiety, its social disease which has been described as "Americanitis," and which, if it is not arrested, will have to be operated on some day at the risk of the nation's life, there enters every morning in your daily prayer the desire for quiet acceptance of the day's blessings, the dismissal of the care for the morrow, the sense of sufficiency in the bread of to-day:—

"Lord, for to-morrow and its needs I do not pray,
Keep me from stain of sin, just for to-day.
Let me both diligently work, and duly pray,
Let me be kind in word and deed, just for to-day.
Let me no wrong or idle word unthinking say,
Set thou a seal upon my lips, just for to-day.
Let me be slow to do my will, prompt to obey,
Help me to sacrifice myself, just for to-day.
So for to-morrow and its needs, I do not pray,
But help me, keep me, hold me, Lord, just for to-day."

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LXXXVII

THE LORD'S PRAYER, VIII

FORGIVENESS

Luke xii. 1-3.

We come to the petition in the Lord's Prayer which is the easiest to understand and the hardest to pray,—the prayer that we may be forgiven as we forgive. This prayer does not, of course, ask God to measure His goodness by our virtues. We should not dare to ask that God would deal with us just as we have dealt with others. It is the spirit of forgiveness for which we pray. "Give us forgiveness," we ask, "because we come in the spirit of forgiveness." The spirit of forgiveness, that is to say, is the condition and prerequisite of the prayer for forgiveness. If you do not love your brother whom you have seen, how can you truly pray to God whom you have not seen? If a man comes to his prayer with hate in his heart, he makes it impossible for God to forgive him. He is shutting the door which opens into the spirit {216} of prayer. Right-mindedness to man is the first condition of right prayer to God.

The traveler in Egypt sometimes looks out in the early morning and sees an Arab preparing to say his prayers. The man goes down to the river-bank and spreads his little carpet so that he shall look toward

Mecca; but before he kneels he crouches on the bank, and cleanses his lips, his tongue, his hands, even his feet, so that he shall bring to his prayer no unclean word or deed. It is as if he first said with the Psalmist: "Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity; purge me of my sin; make me a clean heart; renew in me a right spirit;" and then with a right spirit in him, he bends and rises and bows again in his prayer. The petition for a forgiving spirit prepares one in the same way to say his morning prayer. It cleanses the tongue; it washes the motives; it purifies the thoughts of their uncharitableness; and then, in this spirit of forgiveness even toward those who have wronged him, the Christian is clean enough to ask for the forgiveness of his own sin.

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LXXXVIII

THE LORD'S PRAYER, IX

TEMPTATIONS

James i. 12-17.

This passage from the Epistle of James is a commentary on the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. When we pray: "Lead us not into temptation," it is, as James says, not God who tempts, for God tempteth no man. The temptation comes through our misuse of the circumstances which God offers us as our opportunity. We turn these circumstances into temptations.

Every condition of life has these two aspects. It is on the one hand an opportunity, and it is on the other hand a temptation. God gives it as an opportunity and we misuse the opportunity and it becomes our temptation. The rich have their special and great opportunity of generous service for the common good, and yet through that very opportunity comes their special temptation. The poor are saved by their lot from many temptations of self-centred and frivolous luxury, but are much tempted {218} by their poverty itself. The healthy have a great gift of God, but they are tempted by that very gift to recklessness, inconsiderateness and self-injury. The sick receive peculiar blessings of patience and resignation, but are much tempted to selfishness and discontent. The business man is tempted by his very knowledge of the world to the hardness of materialism; the minister is tempted by his very indifference to the world to unsophisticated imprudence. Wherever on earth a man may be he must scrutinize his future, and calculate his powers, and face his problems, and pray: "My God, prevent my vocation from becoming my temptation. Let me not put myself where I shall be tried over much. Save me from the peculiar temptation of my special lot. Deliver me from its evils and lead me not round its temptations, but through them into its opportunity and joy."

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LXXXIX

SIMPLICITY TOWARD CHRIST

2 *Corinthians* xi. 3.

In listening, as we have done, from day to day to Bishop Vincent, there has repeatedly come to my mind this phrase: The simplicity that is in Christ; or, as the Revised Version more accurately translates it, the simplicity that is toward Christ,—the power which is often so much greater than eloquence, of an obviously genuine, sincere, simple Christian life.

But when one inquires into the nature of this Christian simplicity, which is one of the fairest blooms of character, it turns out to be, so to speak, not so simple a trait as it at first appeared. Of course, there is a kind of simplicity which is a survival of childhood, a guileless, childish ignorance; but when a man is simple in a childish way, he is only what we call a simpleton. Christian simplicity is not a survival but an achievement, wrought out of the struggles and problems of maturer life. It is not an infantile but a masculine trait.

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What then is simplicity? The Latin word means singleness, unmixedness, straightforwardness. It is sometimes used of wood which is straight-grained. What simplifies life is to have a single, specific

direction in which to grow, a straight-grained, definite intention, the possibility of a straightforward life. The scattered, divergent, wavering life,—what is this but what we call the dissipating career? It abandons self-concentration and steadiness; it dissipates its energy. It does not mean to begin wrong, but because it has no fixity of direction it becomes, as we say, dissipated. And what is it, once more, which gives direction, unity, simplicity, to life? That is made plain in this same passage. It is the simplicity, says the New Version, which is toward Christ. What gives straightforwardness is not the condition in which we are, but the ideal toward which we are heading. What simplifies life is to say something like this: "I do not pretend to know all about religion, or duty, or Christ, but I do propose to live along the line of life which I will call toward Christ. I propose to think less of what I may live by, and more of what I may live toward." When a man makes this decision he has not indeed {221} solved all the problems of life, but he has amazingly simplified them. Many things which had been perplexing, disturbing, confusing, now fall into line behind that one comprehensive loyalty. He has, as it were, come out of the woods, and found a high road. It is not all level, or easy; there is many a sharp ascent in it, and many a shadowy valley. But at least the way is clear, and he knows whither it leads, and he has found his bearings, and he trudges along with a quiet mind, even though with a weary step, for he has emerged from the bewildering underbrush of life into the simplicity which is toward Christ.

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XC

OPEN OUR EYES

2 *Kings* vi. 17.

(END OF COLLEGE TERM)

This young man did not see things as they really were, because, as we say in smaller matters, he did not have his eyes open. He saw the horses and chariots of Syria round about him, and the enemy seemed too strong for him, and then Elisha prayed: "Lord, open his eyes," and the young man saw that over against his enemies there was a host of spiritual allies, so that "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."

As we look back over this closing college year with all its problems and duties, its conflicts and fears, it is with something of this same sense that we have not half known the powers which were on our side. Sometimes we have thought the enemy too strong for us, and it looked as if cares and fears, troubles and misunderstandings were likely to defeat us, and the battle of life might be lost. The {223} problems of the world about us have seemed very grievous, and the perplexities of the life within very perilous. And now God comes to us at last and opens our eyes, and we look back and say: "What a good year, after all, it has been." There never has been so good a year for the college as this. There never has been so good a year for the world. With all the social problems and agitations that seem so threatening about us, this is, after all, the best year that God has ever made. And in our personal conflicts, how plain it is that the forces of heaven have been behind us. No man has thought a true thought, or done an unselfish deed this year without a backing which now discloses itself as very real. Behind our doubts and fears have been the horses and chariots of fire. Lord, open our eyes, that we may see these spiritual allies and enlist ourselves in the ranks of their omnipotence.

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XCI

THE WORD MADE FLESH

John i. 1-14.

(END OF COLLEGE TERM)

I do not enter into the deeper philosophical significance of this great chapter, but any one can see on the very surface of it the general truth on which Christianity rests its claim. God's government of the world is here described as operating through His word. God simply speaks, and things are done. God says: "Let there be light," and there is light. The universe is God's language. History is God's voice. By His word was everything made that is made. Then, when the fullness of time has come this language of

God is made life. What God has been trying to make men hear through his word, He now lets them see through his life. His word becomes flesh. The life becomes the light of men. That is the most elementary statement of the doctrine of the incarnation. It is the transformation of language into life.

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Let us take this great truth into our own little lives as we part on this last day of common worship. God has been speaking to us His word in many ways through our worship here; in our silence and in our song, in Bible and in prayer, in the voice of different preachers, and in the voice of our own consciences and hearts. And now what is our last prayer but this, that this word may be made flesh, that this worship may be transformed into life, that these messages of courage, of hope, of composure, of self-control, may be incarnated in this life of youth; that out of the many words here spoken in the name of God, here and there one may become flesh and walk out of this chapel and out of these college grounds in the interior life of a consecrated young man. The life is the light of men. May it be so with us here. May the spirit of him in whose life is our light, enlighten the lives which have gathered here, and lead them through all the obscurities of life, and brighten more and more before them into a perfect day.

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