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MYSTIC IMMANENCE
THE INDWELLING SPIRIT

BY THE VENERABLE BASIL WILBERFORCE, D.D.

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FOREWORD

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MYSTIC IMMANENCE

Infinite Immanent Mind

"Whose is this image and superscription?"—ST. MATT. xxii. 20.

The question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" is suggestive, first, of the deeper meaning of a harvest festival, and that is the recognition in public worship that the material universe is the visible thought of God. What is the principle by which everything came into being? Physical science has now reduced all material things to a primary ether, universally distributed, whose innumerable particles are in absolute equilibrium.[#] The initial movement, then, which began to concentrate material substances out of the ether could not have originated with the particles themselves, and we are logically compelled to acknowledge the presence of a Creative Intelligence exercising volition. That Creative Intelligence exercising volition, that Parent Mind, has impressed His image and superscription upon all that is—upon the life and beauty of the animal world, upon the marvels of the vegetable world, the prolific fruits of the earth, the gorgeous flowers with which church and altar are decorated to-day. Whose is their image and superscription? Whom do they manifest? Whence come their life and their beauty? To understand the deeper meaning of a church decorated with fruits and flowers we must have risen to some conception of the Invisible Intelligence that is realizing itself in concrete phenomena. Everything in the physical world is what it is by reason of a spirit-organism or mind-form which relates it to the Universal Mind, and the Universal Mind is that Divine activity which St. John calls the Word, the Logos, the Originator in creative activity. "Through every grass-blade," says Carlyle, "the glory of the present God still beams." It does, and therefore a harvest festival suggests, not only the obvious duty of profound thanksgiving to a bounteous Father—that goes without saying—but also a reverent mental recognition of the intense nearness of God, that "Earth's crammed with

Heaven and every common bush afire with God."

[#] *Cf.* Troward's Edinburgh Lectures.

So the first thought of to-day is that the world is ruled by Mind and not by Matter, that "there is a soul in all things, and that soul is God," that in the true philosophy of Creation every atom, every germ, has within it a principle, a life, a purpose, a degree of consciousness appropriate to its position in the scheme of things. That consciousness, that mind, differs in magnitude in its different manifestations; higher in the insect than in the vegetable, higher in the animal than in the insect, and occasionally there is evidenced in the animal a shrewdness which implies observation and close reasoning. For example, recently I was at Christchurch, in Hampshire, and was conducted by Mr. Hart over his unique museum of birds, representing the life-work of an expert and enthusiast. He told me many most interesting things, and amongst them the following:

It is well known that the cuckoo makes no nest of its own, but places its eggs in the nest of one of the smaller birds. Now, in order to deceive the bird amongst whose eggs the cuckoo intends to place its own egg, the cuckoo causes the egg it is about to lay to assume the colour and markings of the eggs of the small bird who is to be the foster-mother. Mr. Hart showed me over forty cuckoos' eggs, each one coloured to imitate the natural egg of the bird whose nest the cuckoo had commandeered. This had been done with extraordinary accuracy, from the bright blue of the hedge-sparrow's egg to the dull olive of the nightingale's egg, and even the peculiar markings, like notes of music, of the yellow-hammer's egg, had been imitated.

Consider the extraordinary mental power implied. The cuckoo has first to decide which nest she will lay under contribution. She has then to study the colouring of the eggs in that nest; then, with some amazing exercise of the creative power of thought, she has to cause her unlaidd egg to assume that colour. She then lays it on the ground, and, carrying it in her beak, carefully places it amongst the eggs of the little foster-mother. What an intense, ever-present reality is the Infinite Mind! What a glorious thought it is that the Eternal Purpose is everywhere! When the heart grows faint and the hands weary, how sustaining it is to know that there is no chance, no mere machinery—everywhere purpose, intelligence, evolution, love!

Now, obviously the operation of the Originating Mind in all that is differs in quality of self-realization in proportion to the receptive capacity of the matter in which it is immanent. It is not sufficient for us intellectually to affirm the immanence of God in a blade of grass, but it is for us to carry the thought higher, and not to rest until we have realized that Divine immanence is in a far more intense degree in ourselves. Man is the crown of Creation, and when our Lord took that coin in His hand and asked the question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" He was stimulating thinkers to consider man's unique place in the cosmic order, and man's true relation to the Universal Originating Spirit; and when a man has really found that, he is well on his way to the region of understanding and realization.

These Pharisees were no obscurantists. Some of them were Essenes, some Therapeuts, some Mystics; and when the Lord asked "Whose is this image?" their minds would automatically have reverted to the profound declaration of human origins in the Book of Genesis: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." They would have realized that the question was a suggestion for a thought-excursion. It was. It was a hint at the transcendent truth of the elemental inseparability of God and man. It was an appeal to a Divine fact in man; it was a reiteration of His dogma, "The kingdom of Heaven is within you"; it was a reaffirmation of the truth that nothing can ever really change the central current of man's purpose, and regenerate man's nature, but the clear recognition of his dignity, his responsibility, his potentiality, as a vehicle for the manifestation of God. If they had brought to Jesus some utterly degraded specimen of the human race, as they brought Him that silver didrachma, and asked Him the question, "'Whose is the image and superscription' on this man?" (and they virtually did this when they brought Him the woman taken in adultery) there could have been but one reply—"In the image of God created He him"; and that which God has once impressed with His image, though that image may be defaced and overlaid, is His for ever, and the impress can never be obliterated.

You remember Tennyson's words:

"For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you

"Stamped with the image of the King." The thought touches human life at many points, theological, personal, practical. The theological lesson from the human coin stamped with the Divine image is one of the utmost importance as a stimulus to spiritual growth. It is the transcendent twin-truth of the Eternal humanity in God, and the Eternal Divinity in man; that inasmuch as all that is must have pre-existed, as a first principle, in the mind of the Infinite Originator, and as the highest of all that is, so far as we at present know, is man, the archetypal original of man must be in the hidden nature of the Infinite Mind; and therefore man, however buried and stifled for educative purposes in the corruptible body, is in his inmost ego indestructible, and inseverably linked to the Father of Spirits. God needs man as a vehicle for Self-Manifestation. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork"; but only man—mental, moral, volitional man—can declare the nature of God and manifest the qualities of God. As God's power is revealed in the wheeling planet, God's nature is revealed in the thinking man. Man is therefore the special sphere of the self-manifestation of the Originating Mind. We humans are personal spirits who have proceeded from God into matter, and "the image and superscription" of the Creative Sovereign Power, whence we came, remains for ever indelibly impressed upon our inmost *ego*, and must work in us, and will work in us, until at last it unites our conscious mind fully with God. Inasmuch as humanity is the chosen vehicle of the self-expression of the moral qualities of the Originating Spirit, humanity will, through much initial imperfection and through many changes, evolve upwards and onwards, until at last it shall be complete in Him, and the preordained purpose of the Originating Spirit be completely fulfilled. He who believes this must be, theologically, a universalist.

There follows the personal lesson. The moral evolution of humanity is not automatic, it is not generic, it is not impersonal. It is individual, in accord with the personal equation of each one. Though it is a necessary philosophic truth that our true *ego*, our imperishable centre, is in the universal, and not in the imprisonment of what we now call personality, still we shall never lose our individuality, we shall always know that "I am I and no one else." "With God," said De Tocqueville, "each one counts for one," and each one must work out his own salvation. You and I will not drift onwards in a vague, impersonal stream called "the race." Each one of us is a responsible life-centre in which God has expressed Himself, and we have to become moral beings, and a moral being is not machine-made—he must be grown; he is the product of evolution, and for the purpose of evolution he must emerge triumphant from resistance, as every flower, every grape, every grain of corn in this church has emerged triumphant. In other words, he must be exposed to what, with our present imperfect knowledge, we call evil. It is just here that the analogy of the coin comes in. Man is a composite being—he possesses an inferior animal nature, a lower region of appetite, perception, imagination, and tendency; in other words, to carry on the analogy used by our Lord, there is a reverse side to every human coin. Don't overpress the analogy, but note that to every current coin there is a reverse side, and when you are looking at that side you cannot see the King's image. Generally on the reverse side there is some device representing a myth, or tradition, or national characteristic. For example, on the reverse side of this denarius, or silver didrachma, that they brought to our Lord, was a representation of Mercury with the Caduceus. Hold in your hand an English sovereign. Think of our Lord's analogy. Let the mind wander back into the distant past, and consider the ages during which that sovereign has been in the making: the precipitation of the chemical constituents of gold in prehistoric times, when the planet was emerging from the fiery womb that bore it; the forcing of the metal into the cells of the quartz under the incalculable pressure of the contracting, cooling world; the ages upon ages of concealment in the depths of the earth; the discovery of the metal, and all that was implied; the toil of the miners, the smelting, the refining, the alloying; and, at last, the stamping with the image and superscription of the reigning sovereign. And once stamped in the Mint it is an essential item in the economy of a great empire. It is legal tender—no man may refuse it in payment; at his peril does any man clip it or take from its weight. The image and superscription of the reigning sovereign gives it its dignity, its sphere of usefulness, even its name. Now turn it over; you can no longer see the image of the King. What is this on the reverse side? Another device, an heraldic design, symbolical of the traditions and myths of the nation; a transition from the real to the illusory, a representation of St. George fighting the dragon. "Whose is this image and superscription?" Whose handiwork is this? Examine closely the reverse side of a sovereign. Close to the date you will see some minute capital letters. They are the initials of the talented chief engraver to the Mint in the reign of

George III., the designer of both sides of the coin which Ruskin said was the most beautiful coin in Europe, the English sovereign. Who is the engraver who has stamped the reverse of every human coin with the mythical designs of our human imagination, the pleasing illusions of our natural self-life, the device of our outer and common humanity, the conditions of our flesh-and-blood existence? Do you really believe that this was done by some powerful enemy of the Most High? The mythical, demonized objectification of what we call evil is greatly in the way of clear thought. St. Paul is careful to point out, in Romans viii., that there is only one Originator, and He can never be taken by surprise. Paul says man was "made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by God." The same omnipotent hand that stamped the King's image stamped also the reverse of the coin. The device on the reverse side of the human coin is the device of human heredity, the qualities of temperament, the race-memories which belong to the region of animal life-power. We have had "fathers of our flesh," the Apostle reminds us. They have transmitted to us, by human generations, tendencies appertaining to corporeal life. There is nothing to deprecate in these tendencies in themselves; they are all within the majestic lines of nature. Obviously, if we concentrate all our attention on the reverse side of the coin, if we persist in imagining that our animal nature is our real self, we forget that the King's image is on the other side. We can only see one side at a time, and while we gaze at the reverse side, and the other side is hidden, doubt, depression, pessimism, sense of separateness from God, are the inevitable result.

What is the moral of the analogy? It is this: Do not always harp upon the worst side of yourself. We are bound to become what we see ourselves ideally to be. The higher your ideal of yourself, the more rapid your spiritual growth; see yourself ideally as Divine, and you will become it. Remember, you cannot see both sides of the coin of yourself at once. When you are discouraged by the prominence of the animal nature; when you are prone to give way to appetite or temper, or despondency, or self-detestation, instantly force yourself to turn over, as it were, the coin of yourself; "reckon yourself," as Paul says, "alive to God"; forcibly detach your attention from the reverse side; think intensely into the other side. Say, "I am spirit, I am the Lord's; His image is stamped on me, His life is in me. His eternal purpose is my perfection, my true ego is His Divine Life; I am a personal spirit, thought-begotten by the Father-Spirit in His own image and likeness, made subject to the vanity of human birth, that through the bondage of corruption I may attain to the conscious liberty of the glory of Sonship. This body is not I, not the real I." The thought, when persisted in, becomes creative; it restores the equilibrium; it helps the at-onement of the two sides of the coin, the human and the Divine, making, as the Apostle says, "of the twain one new man."

The same rule applies as to our judgments of others. Remember, we cannot see both sides of the human coin at once, and therefore our judgments are literally one-sided. This they are in both directions. The people we admire are not deserving of all the worship we give them; the people we dislike are not as black as we paint them. Some people live with only the reverse side visible, but always there is the other side of the coin. I have never honestly tried mentally to turn over a human coin of this description without finding the King's image often defaced and covered with accretions, but always there. If asked of the most degraded, "Whose is this image?" I should not hesitate in my reply: "The qualities, potentialities, of Spirit are here though hidden." The conclusion is, Never despair of anyone, and never despise thy brother man; always believe the best of other people; be sure that the name of the Eternal Father is impressed on their true *ego*. That Divine name is ineradicable. In the end it will save the worst, though, it may be, "yet so as by fire."

The practical lesson scarcely needs enforcement. "Whose is this image and superscription?" asks the Head of humanity of the human items that make up the race. A recognition of the fact that the real *ego* in every man is Divine would be the golden key which would unlock the most puzzling of the social problems of the age. The prominent evils which degrade humanity would pass away before it, and in private life love would reign instead of harsh criticism. If the answer were clearly and intelligently given to the question, "Whose is this image and superscription?" and it were recognized that humanity is God-souled, and that the Originating Spirit is the self-evolving image in all, it would not only mitigate our personal judgments of others, but it would break down the prejudices which now divide us. The regenerating transforming mission of love would knit souls together, there would be no "Eastern question," for, in God, there are no Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Russians, Austrians, there are only men.

The universality of the Divine impress, the certainty that every individual life-centre is a manifestation of God, should convince us that "one is our Father and all we are brethren." To know that humanity is God's child, though it has a side weighted with crime, brutality, and

degradation, should stimulate us, first, always to see the best side in people we dislike, and, secondly, to associate ourselves with all ameliorating work for humanity in a vast Empire city like London. The human coins are sometimes for a while lost, and it is our duty to find them. Our Lord once drew a vivid picture of a search for a lost coin. He implied that it was the Church's fault (for the woman in that parable is the Church) that the coin was lost. He suggested that we should light a candle and stir up the dust from the unswept floor of our distorted social conditions, and actively, eagerly search for His God-stamped human coins till we found them. To keep others and to make others happy is the road to personal happiness, that is implied in the conclusion of that allegory of the lost coin. The successful searcher is represented as calling upon friends and neighbours to rejoice with her, for she has found the coin which was lost. To manifest love and help to make others happy is the highest credential for the future life beyond, for "Heaven is not Heaven to one alone. Save thou one soul, and thou mayest save thine own."

Spirit, Soul, Body.

"A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps."—PROV. xvi. 9.

A profound philosophy underlies that inspired maxim. Man is a threefold being, composed of spirit, soul, and body, and this proverb indicates the true relation which should exist between these three functioning centres in each individual man. Soul is the region of the intellect, where a man does his conscious thinking. Soul "deviseth man's way" and plans details. Spirit, the innermost being, the immortal *ego*, Infinite Mind differentiated into an individual life-centre, when not grieved, controls soul, and of this control soul is sometimes conscious, but more often not conscious. Body, the external part of man's being, the association of organs whereby the spirit comes into contact with the physical universe, ought to obey soul, controlled by spirit, and then all is well. That is the ideal relation between the three functioning centres in individual man. Spirit is the seat of our God-consciousness. Soul is the seat of our self-consciousness. Body is the seat of our sense-consciousness. In the spirit God dwells; in the soul self dwells; in the body sense dwells. The at-one-ment is the realized equipoise of these functioning factors in the complex mechanism of the individual man. The body, with its senses, subject to the soul with its conscious mind. The soul, with its conscious mind, subject to the spirit which is Divine. And when a man knows this inter-relation, and gives spirit the pre-eminence, he does not sin. Disharmony, or, as we call it, sin, when it is mental, is the assertion of self, seeking its life and its happiness through human intelligence only. Sin, when it is bodily, is the assertion of animal appetite, seeking its life and its happiness through the senses only. Harmony lies in the soul-self, of which the conscious mind is the functioning power, seeking its life and its happiness in obedience to spirit, thinking itself into conscious oneness with spirit, the inmost shrine of our complex nature. Then, as Soul will be no longer functioning from the plane of material conditions, Body obeys Soul, and thus, though a man's conscious mind "deviseth his way," Spirit "directeth his steps."

There is a restful universalism in this analysis, because spirit is the true man. Spirit is "the kingdom of heaven within." Spirit is "the Father within you." The one ever-lasting impossibility to man is to sever himself from immanent spirit. A man's soul may have so wrongly "devised his way" as to be derelict; the nightmare of life may have been so heavy that a man has not recognized that the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven within him are committed to him. He may not yet have awakened to the truth that God's intensity dwells within him; he may even plunge into animalism; he may pass out of this life still in his dream, but, though he knows it not, whatever his mind may devise, the Lord, Immanent Spirit, will still "direct his steps" to the ultimate issue. Into whatever educative school a human being may pass. Spirit goes with him. "If I go down into Hades, Thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy right hand lead me." And where Spirit is, there is Love—tireless, patient, remedial, effective, and "at last, far off, at last," every wandering derelict human being will "arise and go to its Father." I know that you cannot make another person see what you see yourself, but I long to encourage all to believe it, to test it, to live it, to proclaim it. Some think I err by ceaselessly reiterating the same truth. I cannot help it; it is the ideal I am striving to attain myself. I must give it to others. As Whittier said:

"If there be some weaker one,
Give me strength to help him on.
If a blinder soul there be,
Let me guide him nearer Thee."

I desire to encourage all to aim at conscious identification with Spirit, and to bear witness by the peace it brings into their lives.

"That to believe these things are so,
This firm faith never to forego,
Despite of all which seems at strife
With blessing, all with curses rife,
That this is blessing, this is life."

The Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for the eighth Sunday after Trinity help the attainment of this mental attitude. The Epistle touches upon a question of importance to those who are learning the glorious truth of the Immanence of God. Do not let concentration upon your oneness with Infinite Spirit Immanent hinder your consciousness of Infinite Spirit Transcendent—that is, external to you. The Lord Jesus, knowing that the human mind can only cognize in terms of human experience, gave us the name "Father" to help us mentally to personify Infinite Spirit Transcendent—that is, external to us. The Lord Jesus was intensely conscious of the Immanence of God, He called it "the Father in Him," but He also prayed definitely to the Father outside Him. St. Paul suggests that when we pray to undifferentiated Spirit, who is God outside us, we should use the familiar [Transcriber's note: familiar?] affectionate title "Abba." The Lord Jesus is only recorded to have used this title once, at the moment of His deepest agony, and it is in suffering, physical or mental, that you most want it. It is a declaration of your estimate of God, and therefore important, because the ability of Divine Love to help and soothe you is conditioned by your appreciation of Him and your mental attitude of receptivity towards Himself. So in those times of deepest darkness, when He seems most absent, it is well to address Him by the tenderest name, and say, Abba, Father. "Abba, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."

Let us consider the Collect. How it redeems our Liturgy from its leaven of Augustinianism! How it silences the obscurantists who accuse believers in universal restitution of going beyond the Church's teaching! Is this collect an authoritative formula of the Church, or is it not? "O God, whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in Heaven and on earth." In other words, a man's conscious mind may wrongly "devise his way," but "the Lord will direct his steps." Saturate your mind with that thought. Speak to the universal Spirit outside you and individualize Him. Say, "Abba, Father, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in Heaven and on earth, though my heart may be 'devising my way' wrongly and tortuously, I know Thou wilt 'direct my steps' into Thy purpose." In that attitude of mind you know that God will be in whatever happens to you. This gives you a great freedom in worshipping Infinite Spirit. You feel yourself emancipated from all traditional conceptions, and you feel in yourself the aspiration of Faber when he wrote:

"Oh, for freedom, for freedom in worshipping God,
For the mountain-top feeling of generous souls,
For the health, for the air, of the hearts deep and broad,
Where grace, not in rills, but in cataracts rolls!"

It is well to face the principle underlying these words of the collect: Abba, Father, "ordereth all things both in Heaven and on earth." Then, as His will is man's sanctification, the logical conclusion is an absolute ultimate universalism.

The absurdity of the paradox that man by wrongly "devising his way" can ultimately defeat the predestined purpose of Infinite Originating Mind is self-evident. Sophocles and Plato taught that omnipotent purpose governed the apparently accidental phenomena of life, and the writer of the book of Proverbs says plainly: "A man's heart may devise his way," but "the Lord will direct

his steps." That is the inspired statement of the problem. Milton thought the problem insoluble, and describes the fallen angels exercising their minds on "fixed fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute," and being "in wandering mazes lost," I really think it only needs common sense. Infinite Mind expresses Himself in individual human life-centres that He may realize His own qualities and have millions of separate entities to love and, after education, to love Him. Is it conceivable that He would so overdo His creative work as to produce beings with a superior will to Himself capable of resisting Him through the endless ages, and putting His purpose to complete confusion? Is it not obvious that He would only give them enough will to train them? The will of man, such as it is, has its clearly-defined sphere. It is with his will he "deviseth his way," and that "devising his way" is the test of his life; but he can no more escape the ultimate purpose of Abba, Father, than a material substance on this planet can escape the law of gravitation. Obviously we have volition, we have the power to "devise our way." This must be so for two reasons. First, Originating Spirit desires to realize His highest qualities in man. Therefore, man must have liberty to withhold his co-operation or he would be only an automaton. Mechanical moral qualities would not be moral any more than your watch is moral. To receive and to distribute the nature of the Divine mind, not mechanism, but mental acquiescence is necessary. "The heavens declare the glory of God," but they do it mechanically, not morally. The solar system is a perfect work of mechanical creation, but the planet cannot leave its appointed orbit. Man can. If man obeyed God, only as a planet revolves in its orbit, he would "declare the glory of God," but he would not be a man; that is, he would not be a mental centre in which the Originating Mind could realize Itself. Then, again, without being free to disobey, we could never become moral beings. The antagonistic pressure of non-moral inclinations challenges our highest self, and as we make, within our limited sphere, correct choice between alternatives presented, we are built up Godward or the reverse. But inasmuch as Infinite Spirit and His vehicles are elementally inseverable, and "Abba, Father, ordereth all things," though wrong choice, and the selection of lower standards, will occasion pain and unrest, and delay the evolution of the Eternal purpose, and grieve the Spirit within us. Creative Spirit is Omnipotent, to defeat Him is impossible. He will ultimately, in ways of His own, "direct man's steps" without turning him into an automaton. When once you perceive that man in his inmost nature is the product of the Divine Mind, imaging forth an image of Itself, you are certain that no negation can finally frustrate the evolution of the Divine principle which is the inmost centre in us all. It must ultimately blend with the ocean of uncreated life whence it came, and whither from all Eternity it is predestined to return, for Infinite Mind has declared of His human children, "Ye shall be perfect." Of course, we must ourselves "open out the way." In that obligation lies the function of our Will and our responsibility for using the Keys of our own Kingdom of Heaven within.

As Browning expresses it so grandly in "Paracelsus":

"There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around,
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in.
... TO KNOW
Rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light
Supposed to be without."

Those who use the Keys of their Kingdom of Heaven know, and "open out the way." And for those who don't know, though they blunder terribly and suffer in the blundering, the Immanent Spirit "directs their steps." Do you say this implies fatalism, submission to impersonal destiny destructive of independence and self-reliance? The Gospel negatives the suggestion, and demonstrates that this "ordering all things" is not the despotic overrule of an irresistible law, but the immanent influence of an omnipotent Providence ceaselessly suggesting to the Soul of man. The Lord Jesus said: "I can do nothing of Myself, the Father in Me doeth the works." Was that fatalism? No, the Lord Jesus was consciously working out the thoughts, the ideas of the Immanent Spirit, and the Epistle says; "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." "Joint-heirs with Christ," that is, that the same spirit that was in perfection in the Christ is germinally in us, and though we may not yet be conscious of it, we are co-partners in the same

splendid inheritance. Again, the prevalence of evil is to some a stumbling-block. They say God is all, and all is God, and God is Love, resistless, resourceful, perfect. He "ordereth all things both in Heaven and on earth," why, then, this discord between the heart that "deviseth the way" and the Lord who "directeth the steps"? why all this misunderstanding? Have we not learnt the answer? It is an interesting study in human psychology to note how thoughtful men will stumble over the answer. I am always repeating the axiom: Even God cannot make anything except by means of the process through which it becomes what it is. He is making moral beings. He can only make moral beings by means of the process through which a moral being becomes what he is, and that is, by having the opportunity of being non-moral. Therefore Infinite Spirit, who can never make a mistake, is responsible for the conditions under which what we call evil becomes possible, because by those conditions alone can men become moral beings, and these conditions underlie the three functioning centres in the complex mechanism of human beings.

That is the inner meaning of that metaphor about gathering grapes from thorns and figs from thistles in the Gospel. The thorn and the thistle, the grape and the fig, do not signify separate types of men. If so, the force of the metaphor would fail, and Necessitarian Calvinism would be established.

The thorn and the thistle are obeying God's own law of heredity and affinity by producing only thorns and thistles; they would violate the law of their being if they produced grapes and figs. It is an allegory of our separate selves, of that complex nature which differentiates us from the immanence of God as subconscious mind in the vegetable and the animal. Each man is the soil in which the "soul-man" and the "body-man" produce thorn and thistle, and the "spirit-man" produces grape and fig. The opposing functioning centres in the same individual strive for the mastery, and from this very striving emerges the perfected life of the Child of God, and that is where the possibility of what we call evil comes in. Our own limited minds teach us that God's thought-forms, imaged forth from the womb of Infinite Mind, could never attain Self-consciousness unless associated with matter in some definite form. That association with matter involved body with its "thorn and thistle" tendencies, which tendencies are the training-ground of the individual, and this training will be complete when the "spirit-man," through the "soul-man," controls the "body-man," and he can say with Paul: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection."

As vehicles of spirit we have the capacity of living by a definite effort and purpose the higher life, the fruit-bearing life, and, as we live it, we weaken and starve the thorn-bearing life. "We are debtors," says the Apostle, we, who have received the Keys of our own Kingdom of Heaven within—"we are debtors not to live after the flesh."

No one needs the pulpit to tell them what is the life "not after the flesh." Every purposeful encouragement of the Divine nature within, every clinging to principle in time of temptation, every masterful conquest over bodily desires by forcing the mind away from sense impressions into recollection of the Divinity within, every quenching of anger by a kind and gentle word, ministers to the fruit-bearing life and withers the thorn.

In one word, the higher life is the continuous conscious blending of the human mind with the Infinite Mind. Remember conscious mind is part of the "soul-man," and our ability to gain dominion over the physical body develops as we use our will to blend our thought-power with the Infinite Mind, for the "spirit-man" influences the "body-man," through the channel of the "soul-man," which is the seat of mind.

Begin it by suffering the indwelling Spirit to realize itself as love.

The Master taught us that to manifest love is to live not as an isolated unit but in terms of the larger life of humanity. When He was asked, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He replied with the parable of the Good Samaritan. Manifest love to theological and political opponents, and unlovable people generally, and the thorn and thistle within you will have a poor chance of life.

When you express love you are functioning from Spirit. Then "soul-man" and "body-man" must obey. "Soul-man" must help for will is part of "soul-man." Watch yourself. Keep the tongue from evil and the lips that they speak no guile. Never allow yourself to repeat that which will prejudice your hearer against another. Don't repeat a scandal. It causes an evil thought-atmosphere to prevail; it thwarts the God within; it grieves the Spirit more fatally than breaches of the moral law.

This, then, is the message of to-day. Use your will to keep your mental faculties in conscious realization of your true relation to Infinite Mind, as one of His vehicles, and you will not grieve the Spirit. Know that God is the Spirit within you, and never forget that He is also Abba, Father, outside you. Abba, Father, longs for us far more than we long for Him. Around us always are the

everlasting arms. He knows our imperfections and weaknesses of character far better than we know those of our own children, and our Lord said: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good gifts to them that ask Him?"

"Out of the Everywhere into Here."

"Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word, wherefore receive with meekness the inborn Word."—ST. JAMES i. 18, 21 (R.V.).

Though I have repeatedly spoken on the words of the Epistle for the fourth Sunday after Easter, I simply cannot pass them by now. They illuminate conspicuously the thesis that we were "thought-forms" in the womb of Infinite Mind before we were "body-forms" in this terrestrial school, and they affirm the closeness of our intimacy with Infinite Mind and the obviousness of our life's duty. Grant the axiom that the power of Infinite Mind to realize in us, and express through us, and externalize love in the circumstances of our life, is strictly conditioned by our appreciation of what Infinite Mind is in Itself, then the more familiar, the more reverently tender, our estimate of Originating Spirit, the more will It be able to manifest in our lives.

St. James in the words I have quoted has suggested to us a conception of Infinite Creative Mind so exalted, so metaphysical, and yet so personal, that, if by spiritual consciousness we can grasp it, we possess the highest possible estimate of the All-Conscious Life-Principle whence we came. St. James says: "He brought us forth with the Word," "He willed us forth from Himself by the Logos." In the Greek there is, of course, no personal pronoun, and, indeed, it is a paradox to put the masculine personal pronoun before this Greek word, *apekúêsen*, a word used, and only used, for the birth of a child from its mother; it has no other meaning. Imagine the motherly tenderness of this metaphor. Can it be used by accident? Does it not suggest the words: "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb?" Can Infinite Mind forget the individual life-centre which has come forth from its creative thought-womb? You say this is emotion, this is sentiment. Quite so; that is exactly what is needed; our relations to Originating Mind are too formal, too cold, too perfunctory, too theological.

The Mother-Soul, *apekúêsen*, "brought us forth," "bore us," body-formed us, that by separation we might come to know our Parentage as we could never have known it if we had remained in the womb of Creative Mind, just as between human child and mother there can be no conscious cognizing intercourse till they are separated.

I pray that I may realize how profoundly this inspired metaphor of St. James reaches into the deep things of God. It proves that the irrevocability of Divine Immanence in man is not the product of human speculation, but an authoritative revelation. As the child in the womb receives the nature of the mother, and is born into the world bearing that nature, part of the mother, a repetition of the mother, so have we come into this world with a Divine nature within us, which is our real self, our eternal humanity. It is true for us, when it is not yet true to us, that we are the offspring of the Infinite Parent-Spirit by a process more intimate than anything implied by the word "creation."

What a glorious confidence ought to be inspired by this assurance! How it ought to alter our outlook upon life! The nature and perfections of God, as Omnipotent Love and Wisdom, are germinally within us, and are gradually advancing mankind, by an agency ultimately irresistible, to a more and ever more perfect condition. Based on this proposition of St. James, final restitution stands upon an impregnable foundation; the terrifying problem of evil, while it remains as an urgent motive for action, loses its power to perplex. As an Infinite Motherliness is the sole producing agent of all that is, and as all that is must have been in the thought-womb of Infinite Motherliness before coming into existence, the whole mystery of the dark side of life must be within the purpose of the eternal order, and there can be no independent rival to the Author of the Universe. Again, this amazing revelation of the Creative Motherliness should help us in realizing the oneness of humanity. It should stimulate us to generous strivings for better social conditions and more brotherly relations between man and man. It ought to make impossible the international jealousies which provoke taunts and defiances between European nations which ultimately issue in the misery and wickedness of war. Above all, it should impress

upon us the dignity, the priceless dignity, of every individual human life, as drawn directly from the Originating Spirit.

I desire to apply this thought. I will take myself. I ask, "What am I?" Now, don't imagine that you honour God by calling yourself a poor worm and a miserable sinner, whatever you may justly feel; it is gravely discourteous to the Supreme Source of your being. Say: "I am a human life, a personal spirit, body-formed into terrestrial birth. I recognize that I have a double consciousness, that two distinct planes of thought and initiative compose my life: the one is the natural or the animal man, the product of evolution through the operation of the Cosmic Mind; the other is the spiritual man, the essential inner nature, equipped with all the potentialities and the qualities of the Infinite Creative Mother-Soul. In the recognition of this duality lies the wisdom of life; in the reconciliation of these two planes of consciousness lies the battle of life; and in the supremacy of the higher plane of consciousness lies the victory of life. I recognize my limitations, and I regretfully acknowledge my many defeats."

Upon what does victory depend? It depends upon our use of our will-power in constraining our mental faculty to rise above the mere sense-impressions of our lower consciousness, and intensify upon the eternal fact of our oneness with the Infinite Life from which we have come forth as a child comes from its mother's womb. St. James puts it perfectly clearly. He does not perplex us with theological casuistry or schemes of salvation; he just bids us use our Divine heredity. He says Infinite Mind has given birth to you by the Logos, the Word. Creative Motherliness has "brought you forth (*apekúêsen*) by the Logos," wherefore "receive with meekness the 'Logos Emphutos,' the 'inborn Word,' 'the hereditary Divine nature,' which is able to save your souls." "With meekness"—that is, with receptivity. Mentally practise Divine self-realization, become conscious that the Logos, which is the mystic Christ, the image and nature of the Mother-God, is within you, "inborn." Be receptive to its promptings, acknowledge it, recognize it, realize it, appeal to it; put away purposely what St. James calls "all superfluity of naughtiness"—an expression which each must interpret for himself. Strengthen it by inhibiting wrong thoughts, by secret communion with it, and it will rapidly evolve, and as it grows it will externalize in the conditions of your life, it will become more and more a power in the affairs of your daily duty, it will build up your character, it will bring you into right relations with your fellow-men, and make you kind to others. As it awakens the nature of the Infinite Mother-Soul within you it will teach you what is God's ideal of humanity—namely, that God's true son is not one perfect man, though one perfect Man alone realized the ideal, but the whole multitudinous race of men, of which race God is the Father, the Mother, the Soul, the Glory, and the Eternity.

Now, how do I know this? How can I be certain of this? How do I know that the "Logos Emphutos," the inherited nature from the prolific Mother-Spirit, is within me and "able to save my soul"? I might have arrived at the knowledge by induction, as did Charles Kingsley when he said that logic required him to believe that there must have been, or will be, an Incarnation. I arrive at it by Revelation; the central figure of the Christian Revelation proves to me incontestably the fact.

This "Logos Emphutos," this inborn Word, this hereditary witness of the close and tender relationship between ourselves and Creative Motherliness, this "urge" of the Creative Mother-Soul, is a universal principle. It is not easy to define it; but what existence is to being, what the spoken word is to thought, what the lightning-flash is to electricity, that the Logos is to the Creative Mother-Soul—its expression, its activity, its self-utterance. The Logos is the quality of Originating Mind that forms, upholds, sustains all that is. "Without the Logos was not anything made that was made"; "in the Logos all things consist." "By the Logos," says St. Paul, "the heavens were made." The Logos is the one life in all, the cosmic mind in all—in the mineral, the crystal, the lower order of animal life, and above all, in its highest function, it is the dominating power in the soul of man, and in the angels and archangels of the higher spheres of light and life.

It has always been so. The early Aryans, 1700 B.C., knew it; but generations of wrong thinking have darkened human minds to their Divine origin as possessors of the "Logos Emphutos." Infinite Mind, therefore, "in the fulness of time," specialized the "Logos Emphutos," for purposes of recognition and observation, in one perfect life-centre. We call this "The" Incarnation, as if the Lord Jesus alone were the Incarnate Son. If so, He would profit us little. He could in no sense be our model and our brother. Incarnation is a universal Principle, of which universal Principle the Lord Jesus is the specialization in absolute perfection. "The Logos," says St. John, "was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory full of grace and truth." That is, the universal principle of the Divinity of humanity, as the outbirth of the Mother God, was manifested in Jesus of Nazareth in such full-orbed completeness that the qualities and perfections

of the Parent God were displayed in Him, and the full result upon human character of this Divine Immanence, the realization of which had before been vague and without outline, was shown forth in Him, that men might know what power was in them, and what the indwelling Spirit of God was making of them. This embodiment of the Logos, called Jesus, did not stay long in the limitations of the flesh, but long enough to manifest the splendid Divine potentiality of a man in whom the Logos rules. The human beings that He came to illuminate killed His body. Plato long ago prophesied that if a perfect man appeared the world would crucify Him, and Plato was right. And the Gospel records His farewell. He says: "It is expedient for you that I go away."

Now, before we consider what He meant by that saying, just brush the dust off this foundation-stone—the dust of accumulated dogmatic limitations, and theological "schemes of salvation," and all the rest. The Christian revelation is a complete and intelligible philosophy, and it secures your position. Infinite Mind, brooding Creative Motherliness, has expressed itself by materializing its thoughts in the phenomena of the universe, and body-forming its highest thought in human beings. That man is the highest expression and self-realization of the Creative Mother-mind, is the guarantee that man's consciousness mirrors the infinite Mother-mind as the dewdrops mirror the sun. It follows that if there were an absolutely perfect human being, that human being would be so God-inhabited that he would be able to say, "I and Infinite Mind are one; he that hath seen Me hath seen Infinite Mind." Now Jesus is this perfect human being. The Divine ideal was specialized, completely expressed, in His individual personality. The Divinity of Jesus means that He was the full embodiment of the qualities and principles of the Creative Motherliness, the Infinite Spirit. So in Jesus, God is no longer a vague abstraction, because I can interpret the Universal Mind through the specialization in Jesus:

"Space and time, O Lord, that show Thee
Oft in power, veiling good,
Are too vast for us to know Thee
As our trembling spirits would;
But in Jesus, yes, in Jesus, Father, Thou art understood."

But more; in Jesus I can also understand myself. Infinite Mind sent Jesus to be a complete full-orbed specimen of what I am potentially myself. The principles that He embodied, the "Logos Emphutos" that became flesh in Him, are not peculiar to Him, but universal, so that we can claim identity with Him. St. John says: "As He is, so are we in this world"; St. Paul says: "The Christ"—that is, the "Logos Emphutos"—"is in you the hope of glory"; and He Himself said: "I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you."

That is why He said: "It is expedient for you that I go away." He came to teach that the "inborn Word" is universal; it is the Mother-God repeating Itself in all Souls; and if this truth were to be realized and appreciated, it was expedient that the visible Personality in which it was specialized should be removed, in order that men might mentally universalize the manifestation, and learn that this spirit of Sonship, this Divine nature, this distribution of the Creative Being, belongs to all men, as the hope of their existence, the ideal of their life, the leaven of their humanity, the assurance of their perfection.

He did not really leave us. He said that if He did not go the Comforter could not come. He is the Comforter. He identified Himself completely with the coming of the Holy Ghost; He speaks of Pentecost as His second coming; He says, "I will not leave you comfortless," "I will come unto you"; and St. Paul, in 2 Cor. iii. 17, in emphatic terms, declares, "Now the Lord"—meaning the Lord Jesus Christ—"is that Spirit."

Our Lord also said, "When He is come He will convict the world of sin." Do you know something of this? He meant that when Divine Sonship, the inborn Word that was specialized in Him, begins to stir in a man, to make itself felt, there is a new principle in him which cannot tolerate the lower nature, but torments it. Until the "Logos Emphutos" is awakened there is no real consciousness of sin. Philo taught that where the Logos had not stirred in a man there was no moral responsibility; but "when He has come," when something has taught you that you came out from the Mother-Soul, that you are an expression of God, how you hate yourself for past sin; and if from deeply ingrained habit you are sometimes now selfish, irritable, unkind, impure, the punishment comes quickly in the painful sense of disturbed harmony, and you are miserable till restored. This is "the Spirit of Jesus," "the Christ in you," the "Logos Emphutos," call it the Holy Ghost if you like, convicting you of sin.

One final thought. This very intimate relationship to the Mother-Soul unfolds the limitless

capacities of our being. All the power of the Kingdom of Heaven is at our disposal if we will mentally claim it. Remember, the moral issues of life are mental. It is a fundamental law of conscious life that by metaphysical telepathy we can have immediate communion with Infinite Life. Our minds can focus the Divine Presence, and we may speak to the world's Creator as intimately as a child would prattle to its mother. Then consider what ought our moral life to be? Not obedience to a conventional category of social maxims, but an expression of the Infinite Mind, and our daily prayer should be, "May my conscious mind perceive that Thy life, Thy thoughts, Thy spirit are within me, and that Thou art seeking to realize Thyself and manifest Thy love through me."

Again, inasmuch as the whole must include its parts, and as we can mentally attract the attention of the whole, we can most assuredly attract the attention of any beloved individual personality in the spirit world by wireless thoughtography; not drawing them down into these denser elements that they have left, but lifting our spirit-self into the ethereal element where they abide, for when we are realizing God we are summoning them. That is a communion that breaks down the barrier between two worlds, and enables us to say, "With angels and archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most High."

Last Words.

"We live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."—1 THESS. iii. 8.

The last Sunday of a year suggests a moral balancing of accounts. I will not burden you with retrospect; what is the good? Nor will I waste your time with anticipations—always a futile speculation. The only thing that matters is the present. How do we stand—now, to-day? That is important both to pupil and to pupil-teacher. There is something intensely pathetic, something that arouses an echo in my own heart, in the way Paul interweaves the "we" and the "ye" in that sentence. This great prototype, "We live if ye stand fast," of all subsequent ministrants to souls recognizes the close interdependence of spiritual welfare between himself and those he had been commissioned to teach. The truth of human solidarity, and the responsibility of each soul to minister to its neighbour, reaches its climax in such a relationship as that existing between Paul and the Church in Thessalonica. He had laboured to kindle the dormant capacities of their souls, while training his own. His life had not been easy. Festus said he was mad. The magistrates at Philippi scourged and imprisoned him. Demas forsook him, and his colleague Peter withstood him. Moreover, he had constant weakness of health, his thorn in the flesh tormented him, but the one only thing he cared for was that souls awakened under his ministry should not fall back. He speaks as if his very life hung upon their continued perseverance in the truth he had taught. "We live," he says—"we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." It is as if he had said, "Ye are the very travail of my soul; life will not be worth living to me; it will be darkened by shadow, if ye, the souls whom I have influenced, fall away when I am no longer with you." More than that he felt that he would be measured by the result of his work. I imagine that all ministers must feel the same, and, without presumption, may in the same way suggest to their people, as one additional motive for striving for the grace of perseverance, the motive of contributing to the life-joy of the human instrument through whom they have gained some light. The thought obtrudes itself aggressively at one of these way-marks, these sign-posts in the passage of time, which remind one of the uncertainty as to the continuance of existing conditions. Not that "uncertainty" matters in the least. I dislike the word "uncertainty"; the one certainty is that all is well, as God is All and God is Love; when you know that, you don't talk about "uncertainty":

"All unknown the future lies—Let it rest.
God who veils it from our eyes—Knows best.
Ask not what shall be to-morrow—Be content,
Take the cup of joy or sorrow—God has sent."

Of course, every pupil-teacher in God's school knows that he, personally, is nothing—nothing but a voice crying in the Wilderness. Nevertheless, he has one desire in the fulfilment of which his happiness here, and perhaps in the other dimension, is closely concerned; it is that his fellow-pupils should "stand fast in the Lord." "In the Lord," mark you—"in the Lord." Not in fidelity to some ethical standard—not in the shibboleths of some acceptable so-called school of thought, not in the excluding externalisms of some particular denomination—those are all incidents which have their place—but "in the Lord." To define exhaustively the meaning of "in the Lord" would be to recapitulate the whole curriculum; but to be "in the Lord" is a spiritual acquisition attained by systematic thinking into God, and "standing fast in the Lord" is using the will to compel the conscious mind to hold the thought till it becomes a normal attitude. To be "in the Lord" is to have discovered your true relation as an individual to the Infinite Originating Spirit. It is to have recognized that God is known only by the mind, and that mental force is "that you have the likeliest God within your soul"; and with the aid of that mental force to have thought yourself out of objective Deism into the truth of the universally diffused Creative Mind, Immanent, Transcendent, and Paternal. It is to have realized what Wordsworth calls the Sense Sublime of—

"Something far more deeply interfused,
A Motion and a Spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

This "sense sublime," which is spiritual consciousness, is a sense which, once awakened, Materialism can never stamp out, though it is very possible to be unfaithful to it. It is a thrilling consciousness of penetrating Divine Mind everywhere. This "sense sublime" is an hereditary instinct in our nature which makes "feeling after God" automatic. This "sense sublime," added to the natural demand for a conception of God under some conditions of personality, has been the foundation of all religions. It was the foundation of the higher Deism of the Jewish theology, which possessed beautiful characteristics in spite of its anthropomorphism. Isaiah was full of the "sense sublime," and he bids us create "thought-forms" and think of Infinite Spirit as men would think of their mothers—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." "Use your imagination," he would say, "to conceive that the tenderness of a mother feebly represents the watchful love, the protecting care, of Jehovah towards the human race; for a human mother may forget her child, 'Yet will I not forget thee,' saith the Lord."

Beautiful and consoling as is Isaiah's conception of God as Universal Mother, it is still Deistic, it still leaves the Infinite Intelligence as a Person, which He is not. It does not answer the philosophic problem of how mentally to specialize the Infinite Mind while at the same time preserving mentally the conception of its universality. The Gospel of the "Word made Flesh," the revelation of the Incarnation, solves that problem.

In the Christian revelation the words "Absolute," "Infinite Mind," and the rest, are relieved of impersonality and vagueness. We see that earth's teeming millions are not created, designed, or fashioned, or even generated in the physical sense. They are to God what words are to thoughts—expressions, utterances of the Infinite Mind of God. Each human being is an individual vehicle or life-centre in which the Infinite Mind expresses, manifests itself. Each human life is the reproduction in an individuality of qualities which the Infinite Creative Mind perceives within itself and desires to realize. Now, if the sum-total of these universally diffused qualities of the Infinite Mind could be specialized in one absolutely perfect individual life-centre, we should be able to recognize the personalness of the Infinite Mind and estimate the qualities and principles of the Originating Spirit. And in Jesus we have this unique specimen, this concentration in one individual life-centre, and we know what God is because in Jesus dwelt "all the fulness of the God-head bodily." More than this. The Universal, specialized in Jesus, enables us to understand how God is immanent in us; for the Lord Jesus declared that our relationship to the Infinite Mind was essentially and potentially of the same nature as His, that we too have "the Father in us." He emphatically declares: "I go to My Father and to your Father." Thus is Jesus the Mediator, or Uniting Medium, between God and man. Thus does "God in Christ reconcile the world to Himself," for in the perfectly God-inhabited man is revealed the transcendent truth that God and man, in inherent eternal unity, are one. When we think into this self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ, when we recognize what it implies—namely, that the personality of Infinite Spirit is manifested in the objective Christ, and that the mystic Christ is in all, and that every human being is a potential Jesus—we have realized what it is to be "in the Lord." If only we could stand

fast in this truth! If we restless, capricious human beings could but exercise our wills, our power of self-compulsion, in holding our conscious minds fast to this thought, it would reconstitute the whole of our character and being, because it would readjust our mental relations with the material environment and sense-impressions in which we live.

It alters the whole outlook on life to know you personally are an idea in the mind of God, and that you have the power within you to identify yourself with God's purpose. Your entire theology is expanded; for to begin to know God as He is in Himself is to become a convinced Universalist and a denier of the essentiality of evil, though you hate evil as you never hated it before. So to be "in the Lord" is not to be staggered by the existence of evil. The imperfection that seems to mar the perfection of the economy of the world is recognized as a necessary condition for the production of the highest good, one of its objects being to make you hate it. The proposition which I constantly reiterate is clear, logical, conclusive. God is All, All is God; God is the only *ousia* (substance) in the universe. This negation of good which we hate, this contrast, either is or is not part of universal order. If it is part of universal order, then, in spite of all seeming paradox, it is of the "all things that work together for good." If it is not part of His universal order, then the philosophy of Infinity is shattered, and we are confronted with another creative originator in the universe, in everlasting antagonism to the good God—a paralyzing Dualism, which is only another name for Atheism. God is All, God is Love, God is Omnipotent, and God is Immanent. Therefore it is certain that a hidden purpose of benevolence and love, incomparably higher than would be accomplished by the abolition of what we call evil, must have actuated the Infinite Mind when He "thought-created" phenomena. Clearly it is an impossibility, even to Omnipotence, to make moral beings, in whom He could realize His highest quality of love, without giving them a measure of volition, which volition had to pass the test of the complex education and temptations of earth-life, with all that it entails; and His purpose is so high and glorious that its ultimate consummation will justify and vindicate all the apparently inexplicable means He adopts in bringing it about.

Once more—though I fear I cause that string to vibrate too often, but out of the heart the mouth speaketh—to "stand fast in the Lord" is to be unspeakably uplifted and supported when crushed under the sorrow of bereavement. "Standing fast in the Lord"—you know that every separate individual human being is a product of the Divine Mind, imaging forth an image of Itself on the plane of the material. Consequently, each Individual and the Originating Spirit are essentially inseverable. Therefore human souls strongly linked by love are inseverable, and, though visibly separated, are merged in one another, and spirit with spirit does meet. "The Communion of Saints" is to you who are "standing in the Lord" not a theological dogma, but a fact of being. You do not believe, you know, that the casting off of the body, the passing out of sight of the temporary corporeal enslavement, causes no separation between you and those who are living now in a world of duller life, where the limitations of the physical do not exist. We may be unconscious of the intensity and reality of this communion, because our spiritual self, our real man, is still in the educative isolation of the flesh; but the beloved departed know that the only real home of the spirit is the Universal, and that there is no limitation of time or space where they are, and that as thought-transference on the physical plane is acknowledged as a scientific fact, nothing can hinder the transmission of mind-impulse on the spiritual plane, especially when we remember that there is a force greater, according to St. Paul, than Faith, and greater than Hope, and that is Love. If Faith can penetrate into the spirit-world, cannot Love? God is Love, and "Love never faileth."

If you are "standing fast in the Lord" the vibration of your love penetrates into God's hidden world. The method is the mental process of thinking yourself into conscious realization of the Presence of Universal Spirit, and then, with that thought sustained, thinking strongly of the loved one you want in the spirit world. They catch the impulse of your telepathic, God-inspired, love-thought, and respond to your spirit, and sometimes you will be definitely conscious of the response through the percipient mind. Another test of standing fast in the Lord is the increase of your usefulness in the world. The service for others, of one who is standing fast in the Lord, will manifest itself mainly in three spheres: the sphere of action, of example, of intercession. First you will have a new enthusiasm and desire to work in the sphere of definite remedial activity on this temporal, this material plane. You know that there is nothing but God, therefore you recognize that the material plane is one of God's spheres of love and sacrifice. Being "in the Lord" does not imply a life of indolent contemplation. It implies "coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty," like that consecrated sister of humanity, Sister Dora. You remember, I have often repeated it, how, after a laborious day in her hospital, her rest was constantly broken by the

sound of the bell placed at the head of her bed to be rung whenever any sufferer wanted her, and on that bell was engraved the motto, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." I often try to remind myself of that. As every member of the race is God-inhabited, every claim made upon us—though of course we must consider each claim with due discretion—is the Master's voice saying, "Remember, I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be perfect in us."

Then, again, standing fast in the Lord gives you a new power of expressing, manifesting, the Immanent God by your life, your example. The highest duty in life is manifesting God. You will find that the words in my prayer, "May my highest aim this day be to manifest God and to make others happy," become your normal attitude. It will be as natural to you now to give a gentle answer to a deliberate provocation as formerly it was natural to give an irritable reply. You will take your own line on principles of moral rectitude, heedless of the strife of tongues, but with perfect respect for the expressed opinions of others who wholly differ from you. Then it is hardly necessary to point out that "Standing fast in the Lord" is to be a power in intercession. God has taught us that there is no sphere in which the soul, that really recognizes its relation to Infinite Spirit, can more effectually help and bless others. I cannot define these "thoughtographs" of mental causation on the spiritual plane, but it is impossible to measure the cumulative force of united intercession.

Intercession does not mean that you have importuned an objective Omnipotent Being to do a kindness to one of His subjects, though in human language we seem thus to express it. It is, that having found your true relation as an individual to the Universal Originating Spirit, and your sympathy and pity being drawn to some case of need, you specialize, by the power of your thought, the All-surrounding Infinite Love, and focus it, direct it, to the particular case of need, and Infinite Love thinks, wills, and expresses Himself through you. When Paul said, "Brethren, pray for us," he knew that loving, sympathizing, healing thoughts, projected like wireless-telegraphy vibrations from united God-inhabited hearts, were the life of God in man reaching forth to quicken, stimulate, and support a brother man. I have been upheld in physical and mental weakness by a stream of kindly sympathy, radiating Divine creative energy. I once before expressed my gratitude in the words of an American divine:

"Beneath the shelter which your prayers have reared,
Quiet and blest,
The storm which struck me down no longer feared,
Secure I rest."

That is what this wireless spiritual telegraphy does—it frees the mind from fear. To free the mind from fear is to strike at the root of many a physical and mental trouble.

I have been withheld recently from taking an active part in this Divine work, but I have a sheaf of letters of thanksgiving. I give extracts from two:

You prayed for a young girl who was about to face an examination for a post and who was tormented with nervous headache. The letter says: "It was a positive miracle; there was not a headache after that night, and the examination was passed most successfully."

Again, you prayed two Sundays in succession for a youth in the North of England. The letter says: "He was dying; the doctors had given him up, and he himself had no thought of recovery. He is well and a new man; people are expressing the greatest astonishment, declaring that no one understands it. They do not know the explanation." These cases are not that an Objective external God did something kind because we asked Him, but that the Immanent Universal Mind used our sympathy, and our yearning to help, in bringing about that which He also desired, but for the fulfilment of which He needed the focussed love and desire of the individual life-centres in which He is Immanent. That is one way of "coming to the help of the Lord against the Mighty."

Now these recapitulations imperfectly express my meaning when I ask you to "Stand fast in the Lord." The end of a year is a time when a register of results is justifiable, and an occasion for a fresh start is recognized. I ask you to make a resolution that you will be spiritually self-supporting, and independent of external aid, and that, whether the pupil-teacher to whom you have become accustomed is in the flesh or out of it, you will "Stand fast in the Lord," for his sake as well as your own. "We live, if ye stand fast." It is so, it must be so, for the test of a teacher is the perseverance of the taught. To fall away from a great principle because the temporary enunciator of that principle is removed, is to condemn that enunciator as a failure, and perhaps to send him to his account without his golden sheaves.

"Ah, who shall then the Master meet
And bring but withered leaves?
Ah, who shall at the Saviour's feet,
Before the awful judgment seat,
Lay down for golden sheaves
Nothing but leaves, nothing but leaves?"

In the words of Shakespeare I say, "Hereafter in a better world than this I shall desire more love and knowledge of you"; meanwhile remember, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," all the power you can possibly need is at your disposal, you need no helper to give it you, it is yours now.

"O be strong, then, and brave, pure, patient, and true;
The work that is yours let no other hand do.
For the strength for all need is faithfully given
From the fountain within you—the Kingdom of Heaven."

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